



**STAKEHOLDER EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF WORK
INTEGRATED LEARNING:
A CASE STUDY OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMME AT THE
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

This thesis is submitted in completion of the requirements for the

Degree of Masters in Management Sciences
specialising in Public Relations Management in the
Faculty of Management Sciences at the

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DECLARATION

I, **Bajabulile Patricia Mavundla**, hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own work and findings. All sources used in this study have been recognised and acknowledged accordingly.

Signature:

Date :October 2021

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ABSTRACT

Unemployment is currently a global challenge. Therefore, South Africa cannot be exempted. Statistics show that there is a high percentage of unemployed graduates in South Africa due to a lack of required skills as per the industry requirement. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is considered to be the key role driver in order to reduce the high rate of unemployable graduates. WIL was proposed by both the Department on Higher Education and Training and the Council on Higher Education (CHE2011) as a strategy to combat the challenge of unemployment facing graduates in South Africa.

The aim of this study was to explore the expectations and perspectives of employers, co-ordinators and students involved in the Public Relations WIL programme at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban, South Africa. The study further aimed to propagate knowledge of stakeholder expectations and to identify gaps and strengths in the expectations of all stakeholders.

This study utilised a qualitative approach and a convenience sampling technique to acquire participants. The population centred on N=46 participants, which included N=30 students registered for Public Relations Practice, N=1 DUT WIL Coordinator and N=15 Industry Supervisors. The participants were selected based on their involvement in the WIL Programme in 2016. In-depth interviews, observations and focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher to collect primary data from the focus groups, WIL employers and the DUT WIL Coordinator.

The study revealed WIL as an important component of the Public Relations Programme. The findings further outlined that transition was necessary for PR WIL students and that the importance of placement within the Public Relations Industry is a necessity to provide proper opportunities for PR WIL students to experience

professional life, with the notion that such experience will promote knowledge development.

The study concluded that all students had a common objective of WIL, which was to put into practice what they had learnt in class in a practical working environment. They indicated that the time-frame was too limited to conclude all the tasks in a space of six months.

The study makes recommendations for the additional contributions to the PR WIL programme offered at DUT.

KEYWORDS: Work Integrated Learning, communication tools, PR WIL Programme, Industry, KwaZulu Natal

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DUT	Durban University of Technology
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
SA	South Africa
DHET	Department of Higher Education
HET	Higher Education and Training
CHE	Council on Higher Education
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
PR	Public Relations
PRWIL	Public Relations Work Integrated Learning
NPO	Non-profit organisation
UoT	University of Technology
HE	Higher Education
DoE	Department of Education
UNISA	University of South Africa
UKZN	University of KwaZulu Natal
NMU	Nelson Mandela University
TVET	Technical and Vocational Training
HEQF	Higher Education Qualification Framework
HEQC	Higher Education Qualifications Council
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Swart (2012:367) reveals that in South Africa, the value of Work Integrated Learning requires further research and the expectations of various stakeholders will form part of future research projects. This means that partnerships need to be founded on the active participation of learners, academics, workplaces and university coordinators in order to facilitate a transition beyond teaching orientation and to demonstrate effective learning arrangements through WIL.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) published the Good Practice Guide for WIL, a document with guidelines to assist those involved in education to consider the educational purpose and role of WIL in teaching and learning. This was published as a result of concerns that students were not skilled enough for Industry (CHE 2011).

This study explores the expectations and perspectives of employers, university co-ordinators and students involved in the Public Relations WIL programme. It aims to propagate knowledge of stakeholder expectations and to identify gaps and strengths in expectations amongst all stakeholders.

WIL coordinators, WIL mentors and PR WIL students are a significant stakeholder group in the Public Relations Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Programme at the Durban University of Technology (DUT). Thus, a strong partnership has been formed with the various stakeholder groups. According to Winberg, Engel-Hills, Garraway, Jacobs and Volbrecht (2006: vii –viii), partnerships and networks of all kinds have entered higher education collaboration and these activities have the potential to initiate wide-ranging beneficial economic effects. This collaboration is the

frontrunner for partnerships, which are also a very important aspect for effective work integrated learning programmes.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Programme Coordinators, WIL employers and Public Relations students play a crucial role as a stakeholder group. The Public Relations Work Integrated Learning Programme (PRWIL) at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) has been in existence for more than 20 years.

This study therefore aims to assess the expectations of the various stakeholders involved in Work Integrated Learning within the Public Relations Programme at the DUT.

This study embraced a qualitative research paradigm. Employers, students and the university WIL co-ordinator were interviewed to explore their expectations and their perspectives of WIL and its role in achieving the goal of partnership for the benefit of the success of the WIL programme.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at Universities of Technology (UOTs) is a mechanism to assist students and other stakeholders to benefit from what should be a mutually beneficial engagement. Work integrated learning is a socio-cultural experience that shapes interpretations, meaning schemes and knowledge formation. Experiences in this type of contextualization are difficult to teach or learn in other environments because the workplace provides unique pedagogies that form useful epistemological tools for facilitation (Choy and Delahaye 2009).

Williams and Lemmer (2003:142) cite that in Australia and the United Kingdom, the Departments of Education and Employment have been more active in promoting the vocationalization of its system of education, where it is most notably implemented at

the UOTs. Work-based learning degrees are being established, in which learning occurs primarily in the workplace.

With the above in mind, it is evident that WIL placements will help to provide a foundation for an investigation into the effectiveness of the WIL programmes by the Durban University of Technology.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There were number of challenges relating to the offering of WIL, including the lack of a government subsidy; a lack of sufficient placements for students; a lack of sufficient manpower in UoTs to deal with the placement of students; a lack of sufficient training opportunities in KZN; and the lack of efficient communication between various stakeholders involved in the WIL programme.

A good WIL programme will ensure that the work experience is tied to its relevance, structure and organisation. Accordingly, this study intends to assess Stakeholder group expectations of WIL in the Public Relations programme at the DUT. The Public Relations Industry is diverse and each sector has different expectations of the University WIL programme and therefore trains students differently.

This study therefore, attempts to assess the expectations of the Public Relations WIL coordinator, industry WIL mentor and PR WIL students as stakeholders involved in the WIL process for the betterment of the Public Relations WIL programme and for effective collaboration between universities, students and industry.

1.4 BENEFICIARIES OF THE STUDY

Students are the main beneficiaries of a WIL programme and the primary goal is student learning and experience in the workplace. WIL coordinators, Industry WIL mentors and PR WIL students are significant stakeholders in the Public Relations Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Programme at the Durban University of Technology (DUT).

The key elements of the WIL Programme are the WIL Programme Coordinator and the WIL mentor. Research by Wessels and Jacobsz (2010:167-186) reveal that both industry (supervisors of students) and higher education institutions (Heads of academic departments) strongly agree that this strategy of learning is beneficial. Therefore, through both the Coordinator and the Mentor, students develop a sense of what information will be most useful for their future career paths and then devote more attention to them.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are a number of challenges relating to the offering of WIL. This includes a lack of government subsidy, lack of sufficient placements for PR students, a lack of sufficient manpower in the Universities of Technology to deal with the placement of students, the lack of sufficient training opportunities in KZN for Public Relations and the lack of efficient communication between various stakeholders involved in the WIL programme.

A good WIL programme ensures that the work experience is tied to its relevance, structure and organisation. Accordingly, this study intends to assess Stakeholder group expectations of WIL in the Public Relations programme at the DUT. The Public

Relations Industry is diverse and each sector has different expectations of the University WIL programme and therefore trains students differently.

This study will therefore assess the expectations of the university WIL coordinator, industry WIL mentor and PR WIL students as stakeholders involved in the WIL process for the betterment of the WIL programme and for effective collaboration between universities, students and industry.

1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to investigate the stakeholder expectations and the perceptions of the WIL programme within the Public Relations Programme at DUT in KZN.

The objectives of the study are:

- To assess perceived effectiveness of the WIL programme in relation to industry needs;
- To assess the perceptions of the PR WIL students, WIL Co-ordinator and WIL Industry mentors of the current WIL Programme; and
- To assess whether there is a need for Industry to make recommendations on the curriculum for current and future effectiveness.

It is anticipated that through focus group discussions and interviews, the researcher will be able to gain an understanding of the above objectives.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

Hunt (2006) cited in Samadi (2013:24) describes WIL as a pedagogy incorporating elements of experiential learning, problem-based learning, flexible learning, situated

learning and action learning. It also includes cooperative learning and reflective learning. According to Franz (2008), WIL is a programme which is integrative and cooperative and has an action-based methodology and pedagogy that are concerned with improving professional practice and employability.

These definitions perceive WIL as a component of learning that could facilitate this process: it is a socio-cultural experience which shapes knowledge formation and the interpretation of information.

Opportunity for academic learning

Work placement also provides an opportunity for academic learning and procedural knowledge, but this happens within a context that necessitates other forms of learning that are not available in an academic environment (Pitout 2009:176,184).

However, Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis (2000), cited in Calmeyer, De Kok, Hardy, Lapinsky, Marco, Matloa, Mbatha, Moshupi, Nhlapo, Olivier, Petersen, Pochee, Pretorius, Rebello, Rogers, Salajee, Simelane and Taljaard (2011:73), simplified the definitions by specifically describing four stages of learning: (a) experience, (b) observation, (c) reflection, which leads to the development of new ideas and (d) experimentation, which leads to further experience. These stages exhibit the full picture of what WIL is and what the WIL programme necessitates.

WIL and employability

In many parts of the world, undergraduate employability is becoming an important aspect of degree programmes and WIL is being considered to improve graduate employability. In Australia, WIL in undergraduate degrees has attracted considerable attention in recent years as an instrument for enhancing professional practice and developing work-readiness to the standard which industry expects of new graduates

(Choy and Delahaye 2009:1-2). Jackson (2013) cites that such programmes, which build student confidence, add to their appreciation of the importance of employability skills and provide an introduction to the workplace.

Role of SA HET in WIL programme

In South Africa, there have been modification since the publication of the Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF) in 2007, as WIL has been perceived as a priority in certain higher education institutions (South Africa 2012). The Department of Higher Education and Training, through the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition project, raised a concern that many students complete their academic programmes without acquiring skills and competency, which increases the statistics for incompetent graduates. Therefore as the Department of Education (2005) reported, South Africa treats the challenge to build human capital seriously.

The Council on Higher Education published a Good Practice Guide for WIL (CHE 2011:4), comprising of four modalities for WIL, one of which is workplace learning. In its "Good Practice Guide" (CHE 2011:4-55), the Council on Higher Education (CHE) uses "WIL as an umbrella term to describe curricular, pedagogic and assessment practices across a range of academic disciplines that integrate formal learning and workplace concern". It has indicated that this integration can occur through a range of WIL activities.

The document ensures that "the students that graduate from their programmes are prepared for the world in which they will live and work". Such responsibility and accountability is on both the employer and the learner.

Role of public and private sectors in WIL programme

Wessels (2005:22) reveals that the mission of the WIL department is to match the educational needs of learners with the human resource needs of the private and

public sectors, policies and regulations. It provides a guide for the learners, the employer and the institution to adhere to. At DUT, these multidisciplinary partnerships jointly develop a WIL programme in a holistic manner.

Key players on WIL programme

The key elements of the WIL Programme are the WIL Programme Coordinator and the WIL mentor. Research by Wessels and Jacobsz (2010:167-186) shows that both industry (supervisors of students) and higher education institutions (Heads of academic departments) strongly agree that this strategy of learning is beneficial. Therefore, through both the Coordinator and the Mentor, students develop a sense of what information will be most useful for their future career paths and devote more attention to them.

The time spent in the workplace is part of an academic programme and the DUT PR programme provides academic credit for structured job experience. PR Practice 3, also referred to as WIL, is a mandatory module that students undertake by completing six months of training in order to graduate. According to Van Jaarsveld (2008:143-161), WIL is generally a contractual arrangement between the faculty and outside agencies. Therefore training should be holistic, rather than task focused, and students have to be encouraged to develop new ideas by exploring their subject matter in the actual workplace.

However, the effectiveness of the training depends on the roles and responsibilities of the WIL coordinators and WIL mentors from industry. The guidance that students are given has to be regular and constant. Coordinators and mentors thus need to have the necessary knowledge and experience required to give appropriate guidance (McNamara 2013: 189).

PR WIL coordinators have a responsibility to furnish the students with procedures relating to WIL Policy that clearly communicate the expectations, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved. Those procedures have to be in line with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act 75 of 1997) of South Africa (2008). Such collaboration between academics and industry should explicitly link academic theory and work practice with the intention of achieving learning outcomes (Murphy 2008:2).

The PR WIL student is an important partner in the WIL programme that links the WIL coordinator and the WIL mentor, thus enforcing both communication and partnership amongst the stakeholder groups. Samadi (2013:23-25) perceives WIL as experiences that provide a bridge for the student between the academic present and their future – an opportunity to apply and merge theoretical knowledge gained in academic studies to “real world” workplace practical experiences and to prepare the student for a career by providing an opportunity to develop relevant professional skills. Jackson (2013: 99-145) concurs that WIL develops graduate employability by enhancing skills outcomes such as team-work, communication, self–management and problem solving.

Therefore, WIL students from the onset need to take the responsibility and perform to the best of their ability. For a student’s workplace experience to be successful, the organization should offer the student the opportunity to work with various staff members.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 Research design

In this study, the qualitative research approach was used because such an approach seeks to gain a first-hand, holistic understanding of the phenomena of interest (Reid 1999, as cited in Delpont and Fouche, 2005:74). The nature of this research is such that more comprehensive source data is required for analysis and it will enable the researcher to investigate the responses to the questions from the perspectives of both the students and the supervisors. In-depth interviews will be done to learn more about the phenomenon (Maree 2007:15). The qualitative method therefore will enable a deeper understanding of the issues.

- ***Qualitative***

The analysis of data generated from in-depth, semi-structured interviews involved transcribing the recordings of the discussion, generating common categories, themes and patterns within the data and coding (De Vos, et al. 2005:338).

- ***Population/target population and sample population***

According to Gerard (2013:76), the term population in social science refers to the units of interest to the research. In this research, the target population was the 2016 WIL cohort which comprised approximately 70 WIL students, 1 DUT WIL coordinator and 50 industry WIL mentors. The population is N= 121.

- ***Sample population***

A sample population is a sub-group of the population that the researcher is interested in (Kumar 2011:193). It is used to save time as well as financial and human

resources. The sample population was N= 46: 30 students registered for Public Relations Practice 3 in 2016, N=1 WIL coordinator and N=15 employers.

The employers were selected from Consultancies, Non-Profit Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, academia, government, private companies, public-private partnerships, and limited tertiary and corporate sectors. The sample was selected from Durban and surrounding areas.

- ***Sampling method***

This study utilised a convenience sampling approach. Convenience sampling is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study. The advantages of convenience sampling include simplicity of sampling and ease of research, as well as cost-effectiveness, with data collection occurring in a short period of time (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005:56). Samples obtained will be regarded as being representative of the relevant population (Kumar, 2011:199).

The researcher found it convenient to use this method because of the easy access to the PR WIL students when they return from WIL placements. The industry mentors from the organisations where the students were employed will be interviewed. The WIL co-ordinator or those involved with WIL in the Public Relations programme were interviewed.

- ***Data collection process***

Table 1: Data collection process

Sample	Sample size	Target Population	Data collection tool
Students registered for Public Relations Practice 3	70	30	Focus Groups - 5 6 students per in-depth interview Recorded
WIL Employers(mentors)	50	15	In-depth interview Recorded
DUT WIL Coordinator	1	1	In-depth interview Recorded
TOTAL	121	46	

- ***Case study***

Thomas (2011:8) defines a case study method as a kind of research that concentrates on one thing, looking at it in detail, not seeking to generalise from it. Yin and Davis 2007 cited in Yin (2009:18) describe a case study as a method a researcher would use because he wanted to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth. Such understanding encompasses important contextual conditions because they are highly pertinent to the phenomenon under study.

In essence, case study research comprises an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis. That implies that a case study is not limited to being a data collection tactic alone or even a design feature alone (Stoecker 1991 cited on Yin 2009:18).

Therefore, this study only focussed on registered DUT PR WIL students in placement, PR WIL employers and the WIL Coordinator responsible for PR students.

- ***Data collection methods***

In trying to reach the target, two methods of data collection will be used: the first method will be Focus groups with the students and the other will be one-on-one interviews with the WIL employers, WIL coordinator and students who could not attend focus groups meetings.

- ***Focus Groups***

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:361) cited in Morgan (1997:6) describe focus groups as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. The reasons for choosing this method is because Morgan (1997:2) cited in De Vos et al. (2011:373-374) states that they serve as the principal source of data, and are useful when multiple viewpoints or responses are needed on a specific topic. De Vos et al. (2011:361-362) mentioned that a focus group has its own group dynamics that bring out aspects which would not have been anticipated by the researcher and would not have emerged with the individuals. Therefore, focus groups shorten the period of time spent on individual interviews since diverse viewpoints and responses can be obtained at the same time.

The disadvantage of focus groups are that it can be quite costly and they require researchers who are skilled in group processes. Bias may also be a problem (De Vos, et al. 2011:374).

- ***One-on-one Interviewing as an information collection method***

One-on-one interviews will be conducted with both the Industry WIL mentors and the WIL Coordinators. The number of interviewees is relatively small. Therefore the researcher will meet them at an agreed venue.

The venue for meeting with WIL coordinators and WIL mentors will be determined when receiving a reply from the invitation letter to participate (attached), then a meeting will be scheduled by telephone call and/or sending out an email.

According to Hennink (2011:118) and Creswell (2011:160), open-ended questions enable the interviewee to expand with prompting and follow up with questions which refine an area if there are misunderstandings. Therefore, the researcher asked open-ended questions.

- ***Data analysis***

The purpose of the data analysis, as described by De Vos, et al. (2005:333), is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data.

Analysis of data generated from the in-depth, semi structured interviews will involve transcribing the recordings of the discussion, generating common categories, themes and patterns within the data and coding (De Vos, et al. 2005:338).

- ***Pre-test***

The purpose of pre-testing is to try and limit the problems that might arise during the actual data collection process. Some of those problems might be the length of the interview and ambiguous questions (The Age Encyclopaedia of Social Science, 2004:1).

Pre-testing was carried out amongst WIL Industry mentors and WIL learners from the 2014 registered group who are not part of the sample population. Their background is of relevance in that it facilitates constructive criticism of the questionnaire. The purpose of administering a pre-test is to get the participants to read through and answer the questionnaire in order to identify any ambiguity in the questions; any repetition of information requested; any question that may be construed as being offensive; and any critical information that was inadvertently left out.

- ***Delimitations/scope***

This study only focussed on registered DUT WIL students, PR WIL employers and WIL Coordinators responsible for PR students during placement. The aim was to assess the expectations and perceptions of the WIL Co-ordinators, WIL industry mentors and students involved in Work Integrated Learning within the Public Relations Programme at DUT. Work Integrated Learning Programme Coordinators, Academic Mentors, employers and Public Relations students play a crucial role as a stakeholder group in the Public Relations Work Integrated Learning Programme at DUT.

As students are scattered in Durban CBD and around KZN, the study was therefore conducted in the Province of KwaZulu Natal in Durban and the surrounding areas.

Participants' responses were confined to the registered PR Practice 3 students and WIL stakeholders.

This study therefore explored the expectations of employers, university coordinators and students involved in the PRWIL programme. It aimed to propagate knowledge of stakeholder expectations and to identify gaps and mismatches in expectations between all stakeholders.

- ***Validity and Reliability***

Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Face-to-face interviews and questionnaire are valid instruments of collecting data (Swetnam 2000:30). The questions in the interview schedule and questions for the focus group interviews were compared with the objectives of the study to ensure validity.

Given that each research paradigm has its flaws, triangulation was used for confirmation and completeness purposes. In triangulation, a researcher deploys different methods- interviews, census data, documents and the like – to “validate” findings (Leedy 2014:124).

According to Piot, Bartos, Ghys, Walker and Schwartlaender (2006:246), reliability refers to the ability, consistency or dependability of an instrument which is reliable, measures accurately and reflects the time score of the attributes under investigation.

The questionnaire will be validated through pre-testing. Past students and past WIL mentors were randomly selected for the pre-testing.

- ***Ethical considerations***

In conducting research, ethical considerations require that it is the right of respondents to be aware of their rights. Ethical issues to be observed in research include: informed consent, right to anonymity and confidentiality, right to privacy, justice, beneficence and respect for persons (Lutabingwa and Nethonzhe: 2006, 697-699).

Ethical clearance was obtained from DUT. Anonymity and confidentiality issues will be addressed before embarking on the research and an agreement/consent form will be signed. Participants were recruited without any form of coercion.

- ***Anonymity and confidentiality***

The concepts of anonymity and confidentiality are closely linked in case study research. Anonymity is the protection of a research participant's or site's identity. Confidentiality is the safeguarding of information obtained in confidence during the course of the research study (Encyclopaedia of Case Study research, 2010:1).

Anonymity and Confidentiality was exercised in order to get full cooperation from the participants.

Anonymity and Confidentiality issues were addressed before embarking on the research and an agreement/consent form will be signed. Subjects were provided with a letter of information and a consent form which they were requested to sign.

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the background and the objectives of the study. The next chapter will outline the literature that was reviewed to inform a theoretical basis for the research and the design of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines Work Integrated Learning from an international and a national perspective. It assesses legislature on WIL in South Africa, partnerships in the WIL programme, industry WIL programmes, WIL in South African Higher Education institutions and stakeholders associated with WIL at UoTs.

The first section of this chapter describes WIL in the South African Higher Education system and further reviews this from an international perspective, looking at Australia, Germany and Ireland and WIL in a developing country, Thailand. The second section of this chapter explores the WIL programme in relation to policies and legislation. The third section focuses on key stakeholder groups in the WIL programme. Finally, this chapter focuses on the relationship between the institution and the employer and how this can be strengthened.

According to Andrews and Higson (2008:413), interpersonal competencies; professionalism; reliability; the ability to cope with uncertainty; the ability to work under pressure; the ability to plan and think strategically; the capability to communicate and interact with others, either in teams or through networking; good written and verbal communication skills; information and communication technology skills; creativity and self-confidence; good self-responsibility are important for a WIL candidate. This reveals that a universities' pedagogy alone cannot fully equip students with the necessary skills to survive in the world of work and therefore, the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programme must encompass all of the above in terms of developing a student.

Additionally, WIL policies from the different tertiary institutions demonstrate that the element of learning is an integral part of WIL.

2.2 CONTEXT OF WORK INTERGRATED LEARNING (WIL)

High statistics of unskilled graduates is a threat to the economy of the country as the labour force needs ready graduates, thus post-school education is perceived as an instruction that can play a key role. According to Andrews and Higson (2008:411), universities across the globe are increasingly required to produce highly skilled graduates who are able to respond to the ever-changing and complex needs of the contemporary workplace. Students can benefit from a balanced programme that will incorporate the skills needed by the labour workforce as well as the WIL programme from the university.

Du Pre (2009:26 cited in Rakoma 2013:3) suggests that a WIL programme benefits both the students and employers as graduates “hit the ground running” when they enter the workplace. Therefore, the WIL programme in any higher education institution attempts to ensure that the graduates are well-equipped with the skills and knowledge needed in the workplace.

2.2.1 Integration of WIL into the curriculum

The HEQC (2004:33) states that HEIs will require that students undergo service learning and applied learning which is directed at specific community needs and is integrated into an academic programme and curriculum. Hence there are different types of workplace learning and some post-school academic programmes that are offered in some institutions, such as private colleges, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and universities, which require that students do practicals that are either credit-bearing or not credit-bearing. Costly (2007:1) concurs that work based learning programme and modules are the important component for different institutions. Work-based learning programmes and modules have authority and standing not only from validation in HEIs but also, frequently, from recognition

that is based in legitimate organizations and communities outside the university, including Governments.

Lester and Costley (2010:562-565) state that work-based learning refers to all and any learning that is situated in the workplace or arises directly out of workplace concerns. Lester and Costley further explained that learning at work can be negotiated work-based learning as there is a correlation between learners, the university and often employers or other stakeholders. Although work-based learning has a feature of learning and is reflective, this type of learning does not fit particularly well with the popular division of university programmes into either taught or research based. Therefore, work-based learning focusses on any learning in the workplace and learning is not necessarily work-related learning. However, Work Integrated Learning is dissimilar.

2.2.2 WIL as academic learning and procedural knowledge

According to Du Plessis (2015:21), WIL is a term which embodies a clear distinction between itself and some theories of work (place)-based learning. McNamara (2013:183) states WIL is a means of developing graduate attributes and employability skills. It suggests that the country that produces a high number of unskilled graduates is perceived as lacking/failing in their skills programmes and that results in labour workforce loss. Academic activities have to incorporate the workplace needs into their programmes to achieve a goal of enriching the labour workforce. European Union (2013: 2) concur that a lack of workplace experience and the related skills and competences is one of the factors contributing to the "skills gap" in the EU today.

It cannot be assumed that just any WIL is beneficial to the students. Jackson (2017:2) states that only Quality WIL prepares students prior to their practice-based learning experience, meaning that the WIL module has to be structured in a manner that communicates to the stakeholders as in Figure1 below. Figure 1 below shows how the structured WIL programme functions and it provides a detailed overview

and dependence of the meaningful interaction of the stakeholders and the success of a WIL programme.

Keller and Kim (2011:52) supports the notion that WIL is an educational activity that integrates theoretical learning with the application in the workplace with the involvement of the key person in the process, which is the University WIL Coordinator. As seen in Figure 1, the two-way mirror reveals where teaching and learning processes occur and the university is instrumental in maintaining the interaction between other stakeholders during the process as they reflect through the WIL Coordinator who gives meaning to WIL.

2.2.3 The role of the university in facilitating placements

The university plays a pivotal role in facilitating the placement and both the industry and the students are able to make sense of the WIL through the WIL Coordinator who acts as a 'mirror' for both to see through the expected projects and tasks and a compass on how far have they mastered the assigned responsibilities.

According to Pitout (2009:176,184) WIL provides an opportunity for academic learning and procedural knowledge, but this happens within a context that necessitates other forms of learning that are not available in an academic environment. Hence the industry should be a relevant work placement for WIL students to acquire other skills like interpersonal and career development.

The above discussion is a clear indication that there is no WIL programme without including industry, who are clearly the stakeholders in any WIL program.

Similarly, the partnership between the university and industry is incomplete without WIL students. Govender and Wait (2017:49) perceive WIL to strategically inspire students to embrace prospective future careers, thereby contributing to economic innovation and growth. The author has a broader picture of the WIL programme as

WIL is perceived as a motivator to suitable students and there is room for expected performance.

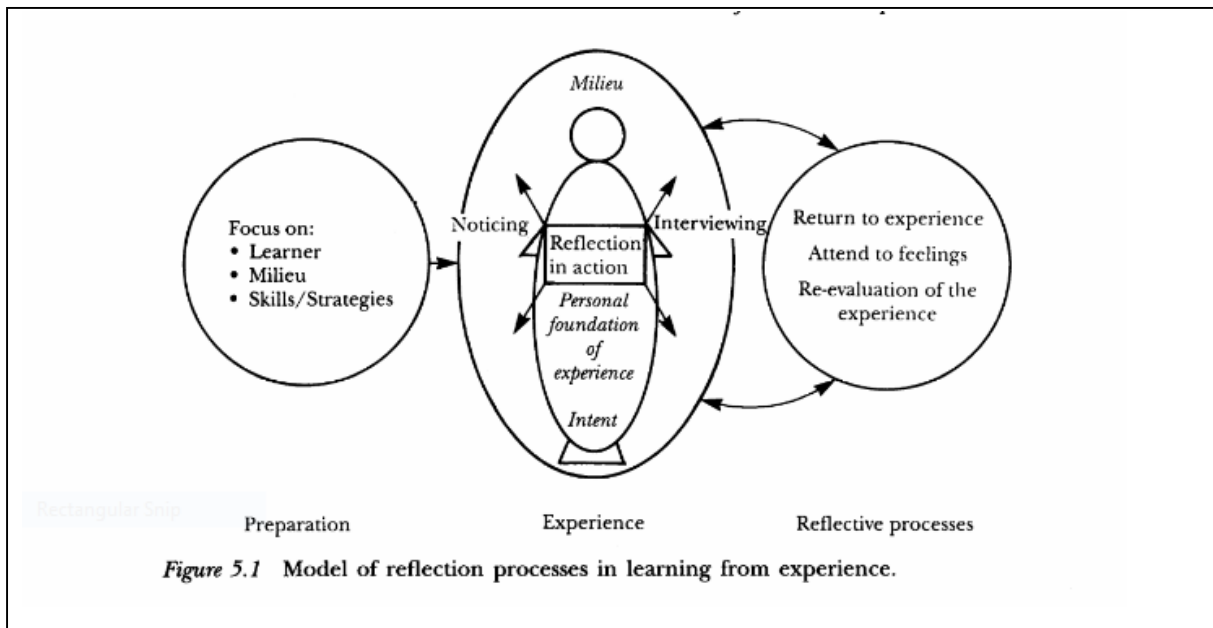
2.2.4 The Importance of the WIL programme

A WIL student learns by observing and participating, then reflects and some skills may be learned in the industry only as they are perceived or are hands-on. To benefit from those skills, students have to complete the work placement assigned period, projects and tasks. An example of those benefits as stated by Wilton (2012:605) are the development of students' generic skills, personal attributes, the provision of opportunities for employment and career development.

WIL students accomplish what the other two parties, namely HEIs and the industry have agreed on prior and during work placement, then graduate with the desirable skills for the workplace. Therefore, for WIL students to succeed, the onus is on both the WIL Coordinator and the WIL Supervisor to ensure that WIL students are adequately prepared before work placement and the students have the responsibility of ensuring the completion of the work placement programme.

According to Du Plessis (2015:22), the important and exciting phase of the WIL programme is when the integration process takes place. This is apparent in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2. 1: Model of reflection process in learning from experience



Source: Boud and Walker (1993: 77)

Figure 2.1 clearly reveals how integration takes place during WIL. The central part of the model acts as the mirror where both parties, the learner and the workplace, measure and critique themselves to realize their understanding of the WIL programme and the need to monitor their progress. However, integration can only take place when all stakeholders relate loyally and dutifully to ensure the success of the WIL programme.

Before integration, WIL stakeholders as partners each have intentions and an active role in this correlation and during WIL, there is a continuous interaction and co-dependency amongst the key stakeholders. Jackson (2013:100) states that the intention of WIL is to develop graduates' work readiness skills to industry standards and to enhance their employability.

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the university, during teaching and learning, to introduce students to a structured WIL programme that will meet the needs of both the student and the industry as the participating stakeholders.

2.3 AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as highlighted in the earlier discussion, has been recognized as an important component in post-school education all over the world. The format used to provide WIL programmes to students varies widely, not only across national boundaries, but on the international front as well. WIL has become fundamental in curricula because it provides an opportunity for academic learning and procedural knowledge, and this happens within a context that necessitates other forms of learning that are not available in an academic environment (Pitout 2009: 176,184).

2.3.1 Programmes in New Zealand

In New Zealand, the WIL programme includes collaboration amongst the three crucial stakeholders:

- The *WIL employer*, amongst other things, helps to introduce soft skills like time management, communication and team work, which are important in developing interpersonal skills (Coll and Zegwaard 2006:31). These skills are sometimes not part of the university curriculum, yet the workforce expects graduates to have acquired these at university.
- The *WIL Academic/ Coordinator* focusses on developing WIL students' skills by integrating on-placement learning into what they learned when they returned to continue with their university studies (Coll and Zegwaard 2006:22). Some students have never been exposed to the work environment and the WIL Coordinator sheds light as to what is work placement and what is expected of the WIL student in the workplace.
- *WIL students* are part of the stakeholder as they actively apply and merge the theory learned from school. Learning depends on the type of industry and the learning itself as specifics cannot be the same. The information about student learning and how the learning occurs, is facilitated and supported is limited

because it is not monitored (Coll, Eames, Paku, Lay, Hodges, Bhat, Ram, Ayling, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma and Martin 2009:15).

WIL in New Zealand shows this collaboration between the three main stakeholders. When the student enters the WIL programme, the WIL programme/curriculum is designed with the specific industry in mind, which seems to limit WIL students in the choice of projects, tasks and the career prospects.

WIL in New Zealand is purely related to the preparation of work-ready graduates and the country's higher education institutions recognise a need to invest in the country's future labour force.

2.3.2 Programmes in Australia

Australia and New Zealand are in the same region, but their WIL programmes are slightly different. In the Australian industry, students and government are the main drivers for the increased demand for WIL to address the national skills shortages (Universities Australia 2008).

Sky News (2017:6) reports that Australia is one of the economically developed countries and it recently broke world economic growth rates and regards itself, Australia, as a world leader in WIL programmes because their academic programmes incorporate WIL. The WIL programme is a national imperative and is ranked highly (Australian Universities 2015: 23), hence it is obligatory for industries and HEIs to partner. HEIs are able to improve the curriculum as they know the expectations of the industries, thereby producing well prepared students for work placements.

The industry placement can be for two weeks or up to one year and most WIL programs are structured in a variety of ways and can be taken towards the completion of an undergraduate degree or postgraduate level (Australian Universities 2015:10-13).

Australian Higher Education provides WIL academic coordinators and the supervisors with a tool that serves as a guide to the student and the supervisor to assist them to understand and implement WIL, as well as to emphasize the importance of student preparation for WIL activities (Martin, Rees and Edwards' Template for Good Practice (2011:6).

Since students obtain work experience associated with their teaching, the Australian universities' curriculum does not consider students as mere students but as employees that contribute to the Australian workforce while they are still studying.

2.3.3 Programmes in Ireland

Recession challenges have forced the Ireland higher educational providers and curricular developers to bridge the gap between academia and industry, which has often proven difficult, particularly in view of the rapid changes due to the arrival of new technologies and economic cycles which continue to challenge some industries (Keller et al. 2011:222).

According to Murphy (2008:1), the Ireland Higher Education sector has a partnership between vocational education and training/further education. The Higher Education sector in Ireland has linked with statutory bodies and companies which has resulted in standardized practices with academic quality assurance protocols.

Therefore, arrangements between Ireland Higher Education and companies ensure the integrity of the standard of learning amongst stakeholders in WIL.

2.3.4 Programmes in Germany

In Germany, the WIL programme differs from that of Australia, New Zealand and Ireland and is perceived as successfully benefiting the economy of the country and adds to the workforce (Reinhardt 2006:16).

There are a few types of WIL programmes accessible in Germany. However, literature is focussing on two types of WIL programmes: WIL programme offered at

the state-run universities called Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW universities) and also in a Germany Berufsakademie.

According to Reinhardt (2006:16), in Germany, the Germany Berufsakademie is unique as compared to that of most German institutions of higher education offering WIL programmes. WIL is only offered to university graduates with a junior degree and also contracted with a company or a governmental institution for the duration of three years.

Kelleher, Patil and Harreveld (2011:241-256) note a few important points about the DHBW universities' WIL programme:

- DHBW universities were accredited in 2006 and the programme undergoes several annual reviews.
- Organisations that partner with DHBW universities have to be accredited as a training organisation and meet certain criteria, such as size of the organization and number of qualified personnel.
- WIL lecturers are expected to present previous industrial experience on top of the required academic qualification.
- The programme is designed to allow students to alternate every 3 months between industry and university and several times before graduation and even after.
- WIL programmes have a policy that allows both national and international guest lecturers with expert knowledge of the WIL programme to conduct both theoretical and practical aspects of the subject classes.
- Students select programmes according to whether the programmes are being internationalized.

- DHBW universities' WIL programme is aimed at matching their curriculum to the skills required by industry and to not complicate the students' work placement. The period between attending university and industry is narrowed and allows students to practice theory learned in the classroom immediately.

The Germany Berufsakademie WIL is successfully benefiting the economy of the country and it adds to the workforce (Reinhardt 2006:16), whereby over 80% students became prospective employees prior or upon graduation (Ministry of Science Research and Arts 2004), which is a novel way of practicing WIL.

Kelleher et al. (2011: 249) concur that in the DHBW universities' programme, almost 90% of the students are employed before they leave the university, which shows that early exposure to industries assist students to adapt earlier to the needs of the industry and increase their chances of employability.

2.3.5 Programmes in Thailand

Thailand is in the heart of Southeast Asia and it is one of the countries that is classified as a developing country. According to Khampirat, Pop & Bandaranaike (2019:127) studies undertaken in different academic programmes at universities in Thailand, indicate that the WIL experience enables students to develop both generic and work skills as well as helps students to identify their future academic and career directions. However, even in Thailand, to survive in a highly competitive environment, job markets require new graduates with high-level work skills.

The above discussion reveals that even developing countries note that there is a role that WIL plays in education, hence the incorporation of WIL into post school programmes. The international assessment paints a very encouraging perspective for South African Universities and the WIL system. It is hoped that someday South Africa will be able to follow other international Models.

CHAPTER THREE

PERSPECTIVES OF WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

3.1 A NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF WIL

When there is a reform of the HEI system, the change emerges in particular within the economic, political and institutional contexts. The new South Africa emanated from the apartheid government where there was inequality in the education system (Barbarin and Richter 2013:25-26). Some of the inequalities included equity, redress, democracy, autonomy and efficiency, which were later the objectives of the Education White Paper 3 on Higher education 1997 (Elliot,2005). The objectives on the Education White Paper 3 on Higher Education (HE) 1997 were to address those challenges and disadvantages.

Similarly, as in Australia, changes in government warranted changes in policies which led to the transformation in the education system. The Department of Education (DOE) (2007:9) states that a policy is an evaluative tool. Policies act as a mechanism for reporting and conversations around quality and policy development and as a catalyst for wider educational reform, which is needed as the compass and a beacon to lead the higher education sector.

The Department of Education (DoE), Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) together with the CHE was concerned about the high statistics of unskilled and unemployable graduates in the country. CHE then recognized that a specific kind of learning was required to be incorporated (CHE 2009). The DoE reported that South Africa is serious about the challenge to build human capital (South Africa 2012) and employability is also important in determining whether a programme is relevant and of good quality (CHE 2011:6).

The DHET comprises, with its mission of developing capable, well-educated and skilled citizens who are able to compete in a sustainable, diversified and knowledge-intensive international economy which meets the development goals of a country,

necessitated the implementation of its policies (DHET website).The DHET had a task to implement what is documented in the gazette as the challenge of a high number of unskilled graduates that needed urgent consideration, necessitated the modification of the Higher Education and Qualifications Framework so that WIL had to be perceived as a priority in certain higher education institutions (DoE 2005, South Africa 2012).

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) further streamlines policies that distinguish Universities of Technology from other universities (DoE 2007). The WIL programme was introduced for such a purpose.

Although the WIL programme in UoTs is perceived as the solution, a programme had to be managed from the initiation to the implementation phase through interactions amongst the key stakeholders. To maintain the progress, each university required a WIL policy that would assist them in their daily practice because a policy enables the achievement of consistency (DUT Policy on WIL 2013:1).

3.2. GOVERNMENT IMPERATIVES AND LEGISLATION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET 2013), transformation that led to the restructuring in the Department of Education and the drafting of both the mission and purpose of the Department of Higher Education (DHET) was responsible for the birth of WIL.

CHE, together with the HE Quality Committee (HEQC), are the legitimate bodies in steering learning in HE. These bodies had a role and responsibilities with regard to policy to give direction for the programme before it is accepted. HEQC was also mandated to oversee and monitor the framework (CHE 2004:144). This led to the inscription of a White Paper for Post-School education.

3.3. POST- SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS IN SA

Universities, according to Ntshoe (2012:200), in general form one aspect of the process of specialization, with their focus being on the production and transmission of higher level knowledge. Under the umbrella of DHET in South Africa, there are 16 traditional universities and seven Universities of Technology (UoTs) (Unpublished document; CHE 2010).

In South Africa, Universities of Technology (UOTs) came into being as part of the re-configuration of the HE landscape, which started in 2004 (CHE 2010; South Africa 2008).

There are seven UoTs in South Africa and their main practice is vocationally-orientated education (DHE 2001). Higher Education (HE) is perceived as significant in providing the labour market with knowledge-driven, high-level competencies and the expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy (DoE, 1997).

3.4. LEGISLATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SA

Higher Education in the gazetted (White Paper3:1997) document stipulated that the duty of training people for the professional world of work and vocations had to be implemented. However, SA was subjected to the challenge of high statistics of unemployable graduates that were also unproductive to the economy of the country, as stated above.

There were number of challenges relating to the offering of WIL, including the lack of a government subsidy; a lack of sufficient placements for students; a lack of sufficient manpower in UoTs to deal with the placement of students; a lack of sufficient training opportunities in KZN; and the lack of efficient communication between various stakeholders involved in the WIL programme. Government cannot propose the placement of student and leave the UoTs with a challenge of unplaced

students. While creating jobs is government's most important task, however, with the increasing number of unskilled unemployable graduates government cannot achieve the goal unaided. Government need private sectors to come on board. However, private sectors as their goal is profit, they can only do that much. Government has a responsibility to support private sectors especially if they absorb some of the WIL students. Tax reduction could be one of the strategies of encouraging private sectors to be involved. Government may also privatise some the government owned corporations and parastatals.

The policy and legislation commitment of the SA Government as evidenced by the Education White Paper 3 of 1997, the National plan for HE 2001 and the establishment of HE Quality Committee (HEQC) have also articulated the purpose of HE to meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes.

The WIL programme in HE was derived in partnership with different stakeholders including the Department of Higher Education, Council on Higher education (CHE), Higher Education Quality Council, Higher Education Qualifications Sub Framework (HEQSF) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

3.5. WHITE PAPER 3 FOR POST SCHOOL EDUCATION

The Education White Paper 3 of 1997, the National Plan for HE 2001 and the establishment of the HEQC had policies and legislation commitments to meet the learning needs of students. Those needs could only be met when HEIs designed an applicable programme that would realize the varying needs of their stakeholders.

“The White Paper is an important document in the development of our higher education and training system. It is a definitive statement of the government's vision for the post-school system, outlining our main priorities and our strategies for

achieving them” (Nzimande 2012).

The White Paper for Post-School education expects HEIs to provide training skills, innovations and knowledge so that the SA economy can integrate and interact with the dominant global economy on a competitive footing (HE White Paper 3 1997:4-5).

A single qualification framework was needed for an incorporation of a specific kind of learning (CHE 2006; HEQSF 2014). The onus was on the HEIs to design programmes with that kind of learning and submit the curriculum to the HEQSF for approval before implementation. WIL was perceived as the solution and a priority in certain higher education institutions (South Africa 2012) and employability is also important in determining whether a programme is relevant and of good quality (CHE 2011:6).

The proposed programmes needed to be legislated and monitored for the benefit of both the students and the institution. Hence CHE together with HEQC control the execution of the programmes offered by HEIs and gazette all training (CHE 2004). Such improvement was anticipated to increase employment opportunities.

Therefore, it is evident that the HEIs were then pressurized to recognize WIL as an important aspect in aligning institutions with the world of work and incorporating WIL into their programmes.

Therefore, WIL programmes in HEIs do not only contribute to curriculum development, but also to the assessment of students in their respective fields (Patrick, Peach and Pocknee 2009:37). The type of assessment procedure contributes in separating WIL programmes from other forms of work-based learning.

The White Paper is a policy welcomed for its greater inclusion and recognition of all post-school education and training as part of one unified system, and marks the end of many years of contestation (DHET 2014). In 2013, the South African Cabinet

approved the Department of Higher Education and Training's White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school system (DHET 2014). White Paper 3 assisted in the introduction of mechanisms and policies that were intended to shape and guide the HEIs.

3.6 WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING AT A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

CHE (2011:6) iterates that employability is important in determining whether a programme is relevant and of good quality. According to Nzimande (2009), "South Africa is currently producing unskilled and unemployable graduates. Therefore, students have to be trained to be economically productive so as to reduce the high number of unskilled graduates".

For HEIs to implement a notable WIL programme, policies on WIL had to be drafted. The HEQC, as mandated to oversee and monitor the framework, has to ensure that HEIs are responsible as expected in satisfying both the employer and the students (White Paper 3 1997; White Paper3 2013). Policies on WIL vary between institutions, depending on their different needs and requirements. Each HEI's WIL policy has to be documented, detailed and has to include a vision, mission and goals of WIL in HEIs. Policies regarding student eligibility and company participation must be implemented by the institution. The policy and strategy should be aligned with the requirements for WIL as set out in the Higher Education Quality Framework (HEQF) of South Africa (HEQF 2007) (DUT WIL policy attached).

The WIL policy at institutional level expects all academic staff members involved in WIL not to limit themselves in the classroom learning environment, but to be exposed to industry and contribute to partnerships and always be well-informed about the needs and opportunities in the industries (Engelbrecht 2003:289). This will also contribute to the curriculum development and assessment of students (Patrick, Peach and Pocknee 2009:37).

Stakeholders like the Department of Education (DoE), Department of Higher

Education and Training (DHET), together with the CHE were concerned about the high statistics of unskilled and unemployable graduates in the country. CHE then recognized that specific kinds of learning were required to be incorporated (CHE 2009). The DoE reported that South Africa treats seriously the challenge to build human capital (South Africa 2012), and employability is also important in determining whether a programme is relevant and of good quality (CHE 2011:6).

The DoE (2013) states that the mission of DHET was drafted to develop capable, well-educated and skilled citizens who are able to compete in a sustainable, diversified and knowledge-intensive international economy, which meets the development goals of a country. Therefore, the DHET has a responsibility of ensuring that HEIs provide knowledge that is economical-driven.

HEIs are liberated to design their programmes but limited by the boundaries of DHET according to The Act 101 (1997) (CHE n.d.). Those boundaries include the adjustment of qualifications that have to comply with the unit standard approach according to National Qualifications Frameworks (Steenkamp 2006:16).

The following discussion outlines the role-players in WIL and their roles in combating the high statistics of unskilled graduates through experiential learning.

3.7. INTERACTION OF ROLE-PLAYERS IN WIL

According to Martin and Hughes (2009:23), the university plays a central role in facilitating and enhancing students' WIL experiences through the WIL Coordinator.

As the connector and a facilitator for both the WIL employer and the WIL student, the WIL Coordinator has a task of maintaining collaboration amongst the partners and instilling a sense of confidence and cooperating as equals during the process.

According to Jackson (2014:351), WIL fosters a partnership between HE and industry that is essential for designing a curriculum that integrates work with learning. To evaluate whether the partnership is a success or not can be imminent after work

placement presentations.

University WIL Coordinators who lecture during execution of WIL programme, promote and raises awareness of the Cooperative Education Department to WIL students, its role and the benefits to the WIL student as documented in the White Paper for Post-School Education and prepares students on what is expected of them in industry (Republic of South Africa 2012; Du Plessis 2015:75-76).

During placement, employers become exposed to the WIL procedures, university and departmental processes. After placement, companies may want to retain WIL students because the skills of the learner are already known to the employer, which will be a positive outcome and success of a WIL placement (Steenkamp 2006:17). Retention of WIL students by employers is a positive outcome for both the WIL student and the University WIL Coordinator for a well-executed WIL programme and placement. The relations between HEIs and the industry will be maintained and secured for future WIL students.

3.8. WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING IN THE WORKPLACE

A transition from HEIs to work placement can be a challenge to a student that has never been exposed to the work environment. However, WIL in industry prepares students to establish what is expected of them in the workplace. Therefore, the handing over of the WIL student to the WIL supervisor in industry is important to all stakeholders, including the WIL supervisor.

3.8.1 The Industry Supervisor and the expected qualities

The WIL supervisor has an important role in relation to the WIL student during work placement and after graduation as the supervisor provides lifelong learning skills when they enter the marketplace. Jackson (2013:350) states that WIL is widely considered instrumental in equipping new graduates with the required employability

skills to function effectively in the work environment.

According to Wisker (2012:40), supervision is a professional relationship and it relies on more than goodwill and spare time. WIL supervisors in industry provide enormous experience that contributes to the success of the WIL programme. However, research done in Australia indicates that little research exists which explores the characteristics of employers who participate in WIL placement (AWPA 2014:22).

The expectations of the WIL students might be hampered if an industry does not have a professional supervisor. Wisker (2012:40) iterates that to be an Industry WIL supervisor relies on more than goodwill and spare time because a WIL student will require an appropriate guidance programme. Therefore, the WIL Industry supervisor needs to have the necessary knowledge and devoted time to execute the assigned duties.

McNamara (2013:189) suggests that one experienced staff member should be designated as the WIL supervisor since supervision is a professional relationship. The WIL student benefits from a prepared and experienced WIL supervisor. WIL students during work placement period are looking up to the WIL supervisor with expectation, needing guidance and mentoring. Therefore, a professional supervisor is expected to be better prepared for students and have clear guidelines on what is expected of them (Jackson (2017:11).

3.8.2 Expected roles of the Industry Supervisor

According to Coll and Zegwaard (2006:31) and CHE (2011:6), the WIL supervisor assists with imparting skills that cannot be learnt at school, but are also seen as important components of WIL. Some of those skills are analytical; teamwork skills and the ability to organise; ethics and confidentiality; conflict management, stress management, time management, and alleviate and anticipate mistakes through

discussions.

However, the employer benefits through effective short-term employees at low costs; completion of specific tasks; trial of employees without obligations; feedback from student-employees about work to refine their recruitment criteria; a pool of potential recruits; establishing links with HEIs; and workplace diversity (Abeysekera 2006:23).

Therefore, WIL supervisors have to be equipped to help students reflect upon and evaluate their own learning to acquire optimum exposure from the company. That can be an opportunity for WIL students to further develop particular skills and apply those skills in a work context. This can be done through workshops for the supervisor organised by the Cooperative Education Department and at discussions held at Advisory Board meetings.

Du Plessis (2015:75) concurs that supervisors play a crucial role in the learning experiences of students and especially in the integration of university and workplace experiences while on the job. Without a supervisor, WIL is just work experience as it does not have the element of learning in it. Without a WIL supervisor, the WIL programme in the industry cannot be a success and will be like acquiring work experience without an education element. Therefore, a WIL supervisor in industry is in an important position that requires professionalism and the quality of supervision directly affects the quality of WIL programmes.

3.9. STUDENTS IN THE WIL PROCESS

The transition from University to the workplace impacts both positively and negatively on students' lives. Such transition plays a significant role towards their overall experience as a student. Everyone's experience of life change is unique and the transitional experience can be easy and positive for some, while others will have stressful and negative experiences. For a student to be progressive in this regard, the student must be able to manage his/her emotional intelligence with respect to

his/her personality and behaviour. The level of emotional intelligence will impact on how students deal with the challenges of life, i.e. self-awareness, self-management, awareness of others and relationship management (Rampersad 2018:91 in Dorasamy and Rampersad 2018).

A WIL student is a distinct partner as compared to the WIL coordinator and the WIL supervisor, yet the implementation of the WIL programme depends on the WIL student. The WIL programme starts and ends with the WIL student. After placement, some companies may want to retain WIL students because the skills of the learner are already known to the employer (Steenkamp 2006:17). Hence it is important to complete the allocated work placement training.

- **Placements, skills and attributes**

According to Wilton (2012:605), there are two broad categories of benefits associated with the completion of a work placement: the development of students' generic skills and personal attributes; and the provision of opportunities for employment and career development.

When WIL students on work placement develop generic skills, this assists them to complete a diploma on time and gain experience that can be included on their curriculum vitae which can improve chances of employability. Tymon (2011:844) concurs that WIL placement makes an invaluable contribution to the personal and professional development of WIL students and the soft skills (interpersonal, personal and professional skills) are important across the board to the WIL student.

- **Benefits of placement.**

During placement, a partnership is developed between the stakeholders as they share the same understanding of what is expected during the training. The placement benefits the WIL student as an opportunity to apply theory learned at HEIs

to practice at work placement and develop real-life knowledge of the industry.

WIL students can willingly volunteer their service to benefit further because they are exposed to other areas that cannot be covered by the WIL supervisor during mentoring. According to Du Plessis (2015:76), volunteering offers them the opportunity to work with various staff members and in various areas of the profession to provide them access to a breadth and depth of experiences.

According to Martin and Hughes (2009:8), those benefits are provided through WIL experiences, which provide a bridge for the student between the academic present and their professional future - an opportunity to apply and merge theoretical knowledge gained in academic studies to “real world” workplace practical experiences, and to prepare the student for a career by providing an opportunity to develop relevant professional skills.

3.10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WIL CO-ORDINATOR

The institution together with Cooperative Education and the department concerned have to assess and accredit before placing students in industry (DUT WIL policy 2006).

However, the effectiveness of the training depends on the role and responsibilities of the WIL Academic Coordinator and WIL Employer Mentor from industry whose guidance to the students has to be regular and constant. Through both the WIL Academic Coordinator and the WIL employer mentor, students make logic of the WIL programme in terms of what information will be most useful for their future career path. Mastered generic attributes and skills will also help the WIL students to ease their anxiety of what is expected of a WIL student in work placement.

WIL students must be willing to devote their given time in implementing the assigned task according to the study guide, logbook and maintain a good partnership with

other stakeholders in the WIL programme.

3.11. WIL AT POST-SCHOOL INSTITUTIONS

3.11.1 WIL at TVET institutions

TVET institutions, previously known as Technical colleges, are post-school institutions that provide occupational education (Oketch 2007:222) and substantial power and partnerships between the government, organised business, labour and communities (World TVET Database South Africa 2014:9). There are two types of TVET in South Africa, namely: Private TVETs (some still known as Colleges for Further Education and Training, Vocational Colleges or Private Colleges) and Public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), although only public TVET falls under the governance of DHET (DHET2015) and they integrate education and training into their programmes.

The South African TVET system is used to promote the integration of education and training, as well as the enhancement of learner mobility and progression, to ultimately meet human resource needs. TVET systems are built to address these needs and to further promote personal, social, civic and economic development in their country (World TVET Database South Africa 2014:10).

One of the primary mandates of TVETs is to provide an environment where vocational skills can be developed through Learnerships, which seek to connect the education and training systems to allow for optimal mobility at a programme level (Fester 2006:i). Learners in Learnership programmes are assessed against occupational standards, which have been registered on the National Qualifications Framework (HEQF 2004). A learner on learnerships can also accumulate credits awarded upon successful completion of standards and achieve a nationally recognised qualification.

According to Coastal College TVET (unpublished), TVET learners spend eighteen months learning theory at the college before they go for experiential learning. The

theory training provider/ lecturer furnishes a learner with a clear guide regarding the practical competencies to be achieved to attain the qualification. The learner's duration of the training is six months to ensure that the learner performs their tasks safely, competently and confidently.

The experiential learning guide provides skills to the learner to work effectively with others as a member of a team. Experiential learning guides also help the workplace mentor to identify the practical skills to be achieved by the learner. The learner's responsibility is to complete the specified competencies within the period as indicated for each competency.

In some cases, the plant where the learner is placed may not cover the complete scope of the required skills. Therefore, it is important that the learner has to be rotated to different jobs, tasks, sections or department to successfully complete the requirements as spelt out in the guide. Final judgement by the mentor is either competent or non-competent. The guide is signed by the mentor and it has to be submitted to the lecturer. The learner then qualifies to graduate.

Learnerships are based on an advanced agreement between the learner, the employer and the training industry. For that reason, before the implementation of those occupational standards, there must be an agreement with the industry in advance.

Therefore, the above literature establishes that the TVET system is part of the solution to the necessity of the skilled labour workforce as it includes an element of WIL in their teaching programmes.

3.11.2 WIL at traditional universities

Matiki (2014:2126) defines traditional universities as science and theoretical institutions of higher education that also offers primarily knowledge on disciplines

that are sources of knowledge and are research-based qualifications (DoE 2007). Therefore, training at the traditional universities produces professional problem-solvers.

Although universities are perceived as traditional, some professionals have to submit project work that shows that integration of theory and in-service/ experiential learning did take place. Professionals like doctors' and Social workers' learning includes partnering with local communities (NMU handbook 2018; UP unpublished pamphlet) and lecturers in Agriculture have to familiarize themselves with farming then teach students in an environment fitting for the lesson (UKZN website).

Some traditional universities' work integrated learning does not only focus on training the students, the training also incorporates programs for training the trainers (Timmel and Hope 2009:183). For example, for students doing a Bachelor of Social Work degree, training focusses mostly on community development and education, therefore transforming the community.

An in-service training programme is a form of assessment that includes a maximum of 140 hours work in a practical setting or an approved organisation under the supervision of a registered social worker (UNISA website). The in-service training is a credit-bearing module. Therefore if the student did not find placement after completing all modules, the student cannot graduate. The student will have to re-register the module.

3.11.3 WIL at Universities of Technology (UoTs)

According to Du Pre (2013:94), WIL at UoTs is not a new phenomenon as WIL has been the trendsetter in the introduction of innovative programmes and approaches to the preparation of students for the workplace and the national economy while they were still called Technikons. Therefore, the practice was not anticipated to be difficult but guidance was needed from CHE and HEQC to define WIL to the level where all stakeholders involved in WIL programme will understand.

Hence UoTs focus on the application of knowledge for specific careers and professions (Du Pre 2013:94), WIL helps to identify the needs of the workplace as it incorporates academic activities and enhance the world of work, and UoTs bridge the gap between the theory provided by HEIs and the world of work.

UoTs are perceived as beneficial as they are seen as better aligned in meeting the needs of the industry and they make students more skilled, competent and employable (Bohloko (2012:268). Ntshoe (2012:199) concurs and adds that UoTs are perceived as the solution to combat a high statistical rate of unskilled graduates.

According to Matiki (2014:2126), the mere existence of the UoTs has to be justified by the quality of technological innovation they will foster in the socio-economic development of the country. They are the new-generation knowledge institutions.

Ntshoe (2012: 200) states that UoTs are practically focused and therefore, in their programmes, a work integrated learning programme that will satisfy both the employer and the student as expected by the HEIs has to be included.

These definitions make WIL a unique feature of SA UoTs that distinguishes them from other universities and is perceived as capable of addressing issues like skills shortages.

3.12. SIGNIFICANT STAKEHOLDERS IN UoTs' WIL PROGRAMMES

UoTs offer a WIL programme that is executed by three key stakeholders whose partnership have to be based on mutual cooperation (Samadi 2013:33). These stakeholders, through their diverse circumstances and perspectives, create dynamics through which key issues emerge. They are:

- WIL Student
- WIL Employer
- University WIL Coordinator

A successful Work Integrated Programme is effective through the partnership and

cooperation of diverse groups of WIL stakeholders. Figure 2.2 below provides evidence based on a three-way partnership between the student, the employer and the university. Each stakeholder has an important role in a WIL project partnership.

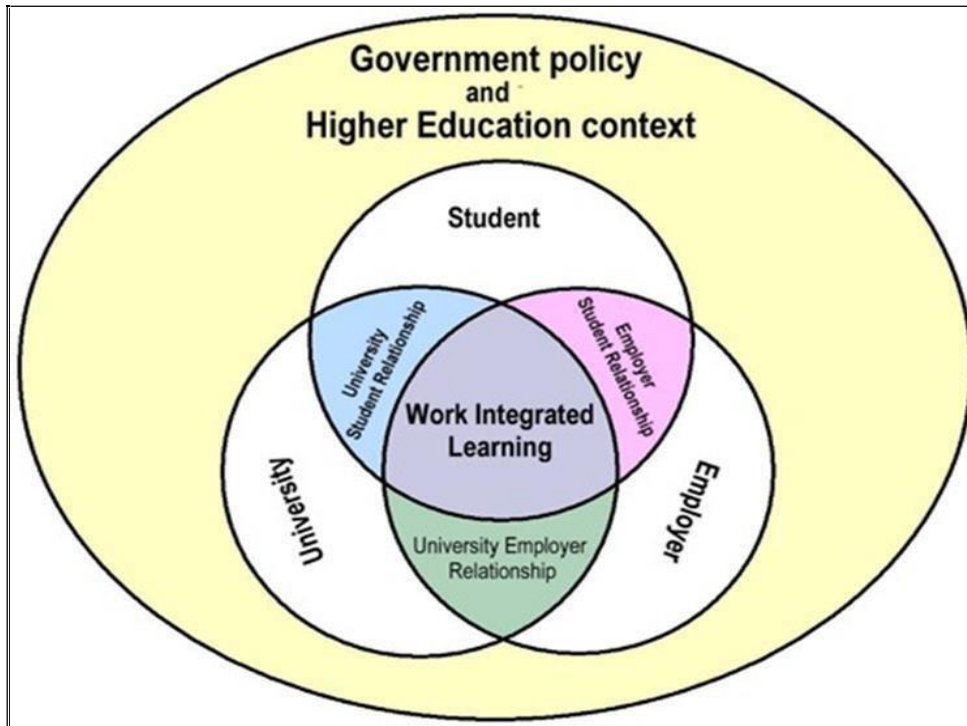


Figure 2.2 Stakeholders in a WIL project partnership

Source: Adopted from Patrick, Peach, Pockee, Webb, Fletcher and Pretto (2009:11)

According to Martin and Hughes (2009:8), this partnership requires that all parties accept definite responsibilities, perform specific functions and achieve benefits as a result of the involvement. Therefore, documented policy like an Experiential Learning policy and a Work Integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide are imperative direct and instruct on how to implement the WIL programme as it incorporate both theoretical and applied activities and reaches the expected outcomes.

Although this partnership is between all the stakeholders, students are a discrete stakeholder group because their WIL experience revolves around the university domain as well as the employer domain. They gain support from both the WIL academic and WIL supervisors (Du Plessis 2015:75).

As illustrated in Figure 2.2, all stakeholder groups experience results in their intersections during the application/ process of implementing the programme.

The University WIL Coordinator acts as a link between the WIL students and the Cooperative Education Department. During lectures, the University WIL Coordinator, who also happens to be a lecturer, promotes and raises awareness of WIL as well as the Cooperative Education department. However, Cooperative Education departments, together with the concerned departmental University WIL Coordinators, place WIL students at the approved workplaces as recommended by the HEQC.

During this process, the issue of trust amongst the stakeholders is perceived as important for the success of the programme. According to Wessels and Jacobsz (2010:167), trust has to be an integral part amongst the partnering and collaborating of stakeholders as they are key elements. Although each stakeholder executes the WIL programme distinctively and is not in conflict with each other, interaction amongst the stakeholders prior, during and after placements is important. The stakeholders have to communicate, amongst other things, about the anticipated ideas and the ideas of implementing the WIL programme.

3.13. THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN UoTs' - WIL PROGRAMMES

Work placement plays an imperative role in designing WIL programmes as there are innovations and creatives in the industries. According to Harvey (2010:98), students learn about soft skills and technical skills only at the industries as they cannot be acquired anywhere else, other than at the WIL placement, as they are practical and can be observed.

The correlation between Cooperative Education and the industries through the WIL students assist the WIL Coordinators to learn about the current needs of the

industries. WIL students as employment prospects also benefit as they are exposed to both the present employer and future employers.

Cooperative Education departments within the HEIs is tasked with the placement of WIL students and to ensure the integration of work with learning in the workplaces. According to MUT; VUT; DUT & CPUT (unpublished pamphlets), Co-operative Education is a strategy that facilitate an effective and effective partnership between the HEIs and the employers where WIL work placements will take students. DoE (2007:7) states, "It is the responsibility of institutions, which offer programmes requiring WIL credits to place students into WIL programmes." However, collaboration between the departments offering WIL programmes and the Cooperative Education department at the UoTs have a crucial role for the successful implementation of WIL curricula.

3.14. THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (DUT) WIL POLICY

Ori, Groenewald and Blom (2014: VI) state, that it is always beneficial to augment theory with practice in actual workplaces and therefore more institutions should be offering qualifications which include WIL in the curriculum. However, many work-related learning professionals have begun to include work placements in their curriculum.

The DUT WIL policy stipulates that the university has a responsibility of placing students at a safe site approved by the university and an organisation that has to be legitimate, registered and operating legally (Experiential WIL Policy 2006:2-4). The DUT WIL policy shows that the element of learning is an integral part of the WIL. DUT ensures that they meet the regulations of the HEQF in terms of equip students to conduct research, analyse and implement systems and policies, and combine a wide range of technological knowledge, skills and experience within a specialised area of the technology (CHE2014:24).

3.15. WIL IN THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMME AT DUT

DUT is a merged institution located in the province of KwaZulu Natal. It currently consists of five campuses namely Steve Biko, M.L. Sultan, Brickfield, City, Indumiso and Riverside and these campuses are a combination of two former technikons and a college. This study took place at the ML Sultan Campus.

Wessels (2005:22) reveals that the mission of WIL in any programme is to match the educational needs of learners with the human resource needs of the private and public sectors, policies and regulations. It provides a guide for the learners, the employer and the institution to adhere to.

The National Diploma in Public Relations Management at DUT has been in existence for approximately thirty years. The Diploma initially excluded the WIL module, but introduced it approximately ten years later.

- **Mission and vision of PR programme and WIL PR programme**

On average of between 80 and 100 students register for the diploma annually. According to Wait and Govender (2016:279), the aims of WIL provide that a department that offers a WIL programme has to have a WIL Coordinator to ensure that a quality WIL programme is implemented according to the institutions' policy and that there is also accountability. The PR department has always had a WIL Coordinator/s. In the past, staff members coordinated WIL which formed part of their workload. Currently, due to the size of the programme, it is managed by a staff member with a reduced workload.

- **Mission of PR programme**

The mission of the PR Programme is to provide a quality service to learners at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels through formally accredited programmes in the field of Public Relations and Communications Management (PR Handbook

2018). The department is also committed to producing self-motivated, independent thinking and professional graduates in the field of Public Relations and Communication (PR Handbook 2018).

Therefore, WIL in the PR programme can match accessible knowledge and merge it with the knowledge gained by the WIL stakeholders during work placement to advance a WIL programme.

- **Mission of PR WIL programme**

DUT offers an undergraduate Public Relations programme in the Department of Public Relations and Communications Management. Students must be in possession of a Matriculation pass and must meet the minimum criteria before attempting to register for this qualification.

The programme is designed to produce competent graduates who are grounded in the fundamental theory and principles that underlie the practice and growth in this field. The programme is also designed to strengthen the link between the institution and the world of work (PR handbook 2015). The PR programme structure also includes experiential learning where final-year PR students sign an agreement between the work placement employer and the student.

According to a DUT PR Handbook (2016:5), a final-year PR student will only qualify if they have undertaken a period of six months of work integrated learning and have submitted a signed logbook by both the WIL student and the WIL supervisor to the WIL Coordinator for assessment, then presentations before the WIL Coordinator and the WIL peers takes place (Logbook 2016). Study guides and a logbook are tangible tools that are used by DUT PR lecturers to specify learning outcomes and a logbook is also used for assessment (Logbook 2016).

WIL students at the outset of the training sign a binding experiential learning agreement with the WIL employer. The worksite must be accredited by the DUT and

the student then becomes an employee trainee of that organisation (HEQC2004; 33; DUT WIL manual 2013; PR Handbook 2016).

- **Work placement and the role of PR students**

During placement, the WIL student's relationship with the University WIL coordinator is of importance as they can report any issues or concerns to the coordinator during this time.

During work placement, a placed WIL student is both a student and an employee confined by both the University and the industry. In the industry, the WIL student is expected to adhere to the rules and regulations of that specific organisation, complete the prescribed time in industry, hand in all relevant projects, logbooks, evaluation forms and the typed activities sheets (DUT WIL manual 2013; PR Handbook 2016).

Patrick, Peach and Pocknee (2009:37) state that WIL also contributes to curriculum development and the assessment of students in their respective fields. According to DUT's PR WIL manual (2013:1-2), during placement, work integrated learning is registered as a formal subject, Public Relations III. Students are monitored by the WIL Coordinator by means of visits and evaluation forms at the student's workstation. Students are mandated to complete a minimum of six months of training in order to graduate.

Students are provided with a manual which serves as a guideline and as a formal assessment tool to monitor practical performance in the workplace. The manual outlines the various aspects of work integrated learning, must be completed by both the student and the Industry supervisor and should be returned to the Department on completion of WIL.

After placement, WIL students return to the university in order for the WIL

Coordinator to evaluate the students' performance based on the evaluation criteria laid out in the manual. The final mark for the WIL section is an average of the assessments listed in Public Relations III and on the marks given by the supervisor in the student's manual (WIL Manual 2016).

Effective WIL plays a significant role in the readiness of graduates to contribute to the world of work. Therefore, it is important for WIL students to maintain partnerships with the WIL Coordinator during work placement to ensure that students are provided with the activities as stipulated in the WIL manual.

3.16. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Both chapters 2 and 3 provided a review of literature by authors conceptualising and contextualising WIL in the context of an international as well as South African situation, and more specifically in the Public Relations Diploma as part of this framework.

The literature review was conducted with the aim of constructing an overview of how WIL programmes impact stakeholders in their execution.

The next chapter will focus on the Research design and methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter outlines the research methods and techniques used in this study. The objectives of the study were to assess the perceived effectiveness of the WIL programme in relation to industry needs; to assess the perceptions of the PR WIL student, WIL Coordinator and WIL industry mentor of the current WIL Programme; and to evaluate the level of understanding of both theory and practice to the expectations of the Department of Higher Education and Council on Higher Education's Good Practice Guide for WIL. The chapter will examine and describe the research design, data collection methods, study population, sample frame, research instrument and validity and reliability.

4.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative research method was selected because the nature of this research is such that more comprehensive source data is required for analysis and it will enable the researcher to investigate the responses to the questions from the perspectives of both the students and the supervisors. Delpont and Fouche (2005:74) describe the qualitative approach as an approach that seeks to gain a first-hand, holistic understanding of the phenomena of interest.

The researcher chose qualitative research methods to assess the WIL students' and the WIL coordinators' experience and opinions at DUT, as well as WIL industry supervisor experiences. The participants included 69 WIL students, 1 DUT WIL coordinator and 45 industry WIL mentors. This chapter also justifies the selection of

a qualitative research method for the study and provides an account of the research design and methods of data collection and analysis that were used.

In addition, in-depth interviews were held to learn more about the problem at hand (Maree 2007:15). The qualitative method therefore enabled a deeper understanding of the issues.

4.3. THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, a qualitative research approach was used. Reid 1999 (as cited in Delpont and Fouche 2005:75) describe the qualitative approach as an approach that seeks to gain a first-hand holistic understanding of the phenomena of interest. The nature of this research is such that more comprehensive source data is required for analysis and it enables the researcher to investigate the responses to the questions from the perspectives of both the students and the supervisors. In-depth interviews were done to learn more about the phenomenon (Maree 2007:15). The qualitative method therefore enabled a deeper understanding of the issue.

According to Creswell (2012:20), research designs are the specific procedures involved in the research process: data collection, data analysis and report writing. During the research process, the researcher is able to discover the shared experiences of the targeted audiences in order to develop a theory. Du Plessis (2015:87) states that selecting an appropriate research design is a critical component of any research process. Hence the study used descriptive survey research because the researcher was trying to account for what had already occurred and wished to analyse the information and draw conclusions. The researcher opted for a case study method since the study was only focussing on registered DUT PR WIL students on placement, PR WIL employers and the WIL Coordinator responsible for PR students.

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2014:44), descriptive research aims to describe a phenomenon. Therefore, the research design for this study followed a Qualitative research method, hence it articulates the knowledge from a subjective point of view.

The researcher places the study within a case study as it focuses on one case (or a number of cases), while employing several data-gathering strategies (Yin 2009). Therefore, using a case study as a research design will allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Thomas (2011:8) defines a case study method as a kind of research that concentrates on one thing, looking at it in detail, not seeking to generalise from it. Yin and Davis 2007 cited in Yin (2009:18) summarize a case study as a method that a researcher would use because he wanted to understand a real-life phenomenon in-depth. Such understanding encompassed important contextual conditions because they are highly pertinent to the phenomenon of the study. In essence, case study research comprises an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis.

The researcher employed three data collection methods, namely observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups interviews that are discussed later in this chapter. The goal was to explore the perceptions and the expectations of the PR WIL stakeholder group regarding the WIL programme offered by the PR department at DUT. The qualitative method therefore enabled a deeper understanding of the issues.

4.3.1 POPULATION

According to Gerard (2013:76), the term population in social science refers to the units of interest to the research. In this study, the population consisted of 115.

The population therefore was N=115.

4.3.1.1 SAMPLE POPULATION

A sample population is a sub-group of the population the researcher is interested in (Kumar 2011:193). A sample population is used to save time as well as financial and human resources. The sample population is N=69 students registered for Public Relations Practice III, N=1 WIL Coordinator and N=45 employers. The employers were currently industry supervisors where WIL students were employed.

Initially, the researcher wanted to include all 69 students that were studying Public Relations Practice in 2016. The researcher chose the 2016 cohort since she felt that this group had obtained their training and were currently employed and would be better suited to engage in this study from a more objective point of view. However, due to the qualitative nature of the study, only 30 students were selected from this cohort, as it was deemed a manageable number.

Table 3.1 sample of the targeted population

Sample	Sample size	Target Population	Data collection tool
Students registered for Public relations Practice 3	69	30	There were thirty students and they were divided into 5 groups with 6 students each.
WIL employers	45	15	In-depth interview Recorded
PR WIL Co-ordinator	1	1	In-depth interview Recorded

4.3.1.2 SAMPLING METHOD

The sampling method that the researcher used in this research was convenience sampling, which is a non-probability approach and involves collecting units that are the easiest to access (Greenstein and Davis2013:88).

The researcher found it convenient to use this method because of the easy access to the PR WIL students who had completed their placements. The industry mentors where the students were employed and the DUT WIL Coordinator were also interviewed.

4.4 . DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

4.4.1 CASE STUDY

Thomas (2011:8) defines a case study method as a kind of research that concentrates on one thing, looking at it in detail, not seeking to generalise from it. Yin and Davis 2007 cited in Yin (2009:18) summarize a case study as a method a researcher would use because he wanted to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth. Such understanding encompassed important contextual conditions because they are highly pertinent to the phenomenon under study. In essence, a case study research comprises an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis. That implies that a case study is not limited to being a data collection tactic alone or even a design feature alone (Stocker 1991 cited on Yin 2009:18).

This study therefore only focussed on registered DUT PR students on placement, including the employers and the WIL Coordinator for PR students.

For the purpose of this study, in trying to reach the target, the researcher applied three methods of data collection. The first method was observation; the second method was semi-structured interviews and one-on-one interviews with the WIL employers and the WIL coordinator; and the third method was focus groups interviews with the students.

4.4.2 OBSERVATION OF WIL-RELATED MATERIAL

Wallace and van Fleet (2012:25-26) states that qualitative methods focus on an in-depth examination of the nature of the entities being studied; emphasize depth and complexity; observations are unpredictable and open-ended.

In order for the study to provide a more profound understanding of the Work Integrated Learning Programme in the Public Relations Department at DUT, the researcher observed documents that supported the WIL Programme in the Department of Public Relations and at the University.

4.4.2.1 THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY WIL POLICY

The researcher has noted that DUT WIL policy stipulates that the university has a responsibility of placing students at a safe site approved by the university and an organisation that has to be legitimate, registered and operating legally (Experiential WIL Policy 2006:2-4). DUT WIL policy shows that the element of learning is an integral part of WIL. Moreover, DUT ensures that they meet the regulations of the HEQF in terms of equipping students to conduct research; analyse and implement systems and policies; and combine a wide range of technological knowledge, skills and experience within a specialised area of the technology (CHE 2014:24).

4.4.2.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTAL HANDBOOK

The Department of Education (2007:9) states that it is the responsibility of institutions that offer programmes requiring WIL credits to place students into WIL programmes. Such programmes must be structured, properly supervised and assessed. The Public Relations handbook (2019:3) states that the Diploma in PR seeks to further strengthen the link between the institution and the world of work in keeping with the institution's aims of creating, maintaining and developing its relationships with commerce, government and industry.

According to DUT's General Handbook for Students (2019:48), all students who are required to undergo work-integrated learning as part of their instructional programme, amongst others things, must obtain suitable employment, register with the Institution for such training, pass all prescribed compulsory and elective subjects and the prescribed work integrated learning components in order to obtain sufficient credits to qualify for the qualification. The university played a crucial role in placing students. The majority was assisted by either the Cooperative Education or the PR departments as they were either recommending or advising students to submit their curriculum vitae to the relevant industries. Therefore, the PR department has to ensure that students are placed with the approved industry that will meet the needs of the PR students (Experiential Learning Policy 2006:2).

4.4.2.3 THE PUBLIC RELATIONS WIL MANUAL

According to the Work Integrated Learning Manual (2016:1), the manual provides an outline of the various aspects of work integrated learning. The Industry supervisor manual signed by the supervisor, serves as evidence that the student has completed all the assigned tasks for the WIL Programme. Hence it is the role of PR WIL students to ensure that their work is tracked through the logbook as this needs to be

presented at the end of the programme through a report. It is also the student's responsibility to ensure that the manual is fully completed and handed in to the WIL Co-ordinator (Work Integrated Learning Manual 2016:2). The logbook has to be validated by a portfolio of evidence to be submitted by students so this can be tracked and evidenced. Building on the above tracking and Portfolio, comes the triangulation process which ensures validation of how the students' training and studies have now prepared them for industry. The handbook guides the students in the WIL programme in terms of the duties they have to cover during placement.

4.5. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Wallace and van Fleet (2012:180) define an in-person interview as a question–and answer exploration in which the investigator and a respondent or multiple respondents are in the same place. The face-to-face semi-structured interview method was adopted as the data collection instrument. Face-to-face interviews were arranged with one WIL coordinator, fifteen WIL industry supervisors and their expectations and perceptions of WIL in the PR programme at the DUT ascertained.

An interview guide was prepared and, within the guidelines, more probing took place. A copy of the interview guide is contained in Appendix C. In-depth interviews were intended to be conducted in English only because English is the medium of expression at DUT. However, that was not possible due to reasons that will be detailed in the next chapter.

Interview questions were asked and all interviews were tape-recorded, while detailed documentation of the comments was made and kept, without indicating the names of individuals. The purpose of the interview was to obtain a deeper understanding of the situation and to acquire information regarding the expectations and perceptions of PR WIL at DUT, as well as to identify gaps should any arise.

A one-on-one interview between the stakeholders and the researcher took place at an agreed venue. Acceptance replies from the WIL Coordinator and the WIL supervisors assisted the researcher in determining the meeting venue, as well as time. Meetings were scheduled by either telephone call or sending out an email. With others, the researcher had to use both as the response was delayed.

The venue for meeting the WIL Coordinator and WIL mentors was determined when receiving a reply to the invitation letter to participate (attached), then a meeting was scheduled by telephone call and emails.

According to Hennik (2011:118) and Creswell (2011:160), open-ended questions enable the interviewee to expand with prompting and follow up with questions which refine an area if there are misunderstandings. Therefore, the researcher asked open ended questions.

4.5.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:361) citing Morgan (1997:6) describe focus groups as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. The reasons for choosing this method was, as per Morgan (1997:2) cited in De Vos et al. (2011:373-374), that it serves as the principal source of data, and are useful and reliable when multiple viewpoints or responses are needed on a specific topic.

De Vos et al. (2011:361-362) mentioned that a focus group has its own group dynamics that brings out aspects which would not have been anticipated by the researcher and would not have emerged with the individuals. Therefore, focus groups shorten the period of time spent on individual interviews, since diverse viewpoints and responses were obtained at the same time.

Thirty registered WIL students were included in the focus group discussion. The researcher created a permissive and nurturing environment that encouraged different perceptions and points of view, without pressurizing participants to reach consensus.

4.6. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The purpose of the data analysis, as described by De Vos et al. (2005:333) is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data.

In this study, data interpretation was based on the information gained from the literature, together with the qualitative data collected from the interviews. The researcher opted for recorded interviews as reliable for this study. The data was analysed with the help of the NVIVO package and a specialist for transcription and editing.

4.7. PRE-TESTING

The purpose of pre-testing was to try and limit the problems that might have arisen during the actual data collection process. Some of those problems may have been ambiguous questions (The Age Encyclopaedia of Social Science 2004:1).

Pre-testing was done using participants outside of the target population. Hence, participants were not part of the sample size. Corrections were thereafter made to the interview schedule.

4.8. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality of research. They indicate how well a method, technique or test measures something. Validity is about the accuracy of a measure however, it is also conventional to distinguish between construct and conclusion validity and between internal and external validity (Bellamy 2012:21).

However, reliability is about the consistency of a measure. The internal consistency can also be used to test consistency of information or data received (Bellamy 2012:21).

Face-to-face interviews was used in this study. The questions in the interview schedule and questions for the focus group interviews were compared with the objectives of the study to ensure validity.

The questions were validated through pre-testing as a means to remove ambiguities. Past students and past WILmentors were randomly selected for the pre-testing.

4.9. LIMITATIONS /SCOPE

As students were scattered in the Durban CBD and around KwaZulu Natal, the study was conducted in the Province of KwaZulu Natal, Durban and the surrounding areas. Participants' responses were the reflection of and were confined to the PR Practice 3 students and other WIL stakeholders.

4.10 . TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher used a qualitative method to collect data and trustworthiness between the researcher and the stakeholders was paramount. However, to develop trust, the researcher did preliminary visits to the organisations where PR WIL students were placed and consulted the Secretary of the company and logbooks to gain an adequate understanding of the organisation and its expectations from both WIL students and the WIL programme. The researcher also had a debriefing session with the PRWIL students and the WIL Coordinator to ensure familiarity with the researcher.

4.11 . ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In conducting research, ethical considerations require that it is the right of the respondents to be aware of their rights. Ethical issues that were observed in this

research included: informed consent, right to anonymity and confidentiality, right to privacy, justice, beneficence and respect for persons (Lutabingwa and Nethonzhe 2006:697-699).

The researcher submitted a request form, research questionnaires and a consent letter samples to DUT Institutional Research Ethics committee to obtain an ethical clearance. Gatekeeper letter was sent to PR WIL students and to protect all participants in the study, both parties involved had to sign consent form. Participants were also verbally informed about data collection method and the anonymity of the information and their names. Participants were recruited without any form of coercion.

4.12 . ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The concepts of anonymity and confidentiality are closely linked in case study research. Anonymity is the protection of a research participant's or site's identity. Confidentiality is the safeguarding of information obtained in confidence during the course of the research study (Encyclopaedia of Case Study research 2010:1).

Anonymity and Confidentiality were exercised in order to get full cooperation from the participants and to protect the rights of the individuals, as well as to ensure that participation in the study was voluntary. The participants were assured prior to the interview of anonymity as no names were mentioned in the final presentation of the dissertation. Instead, fictitious names were assigned to each participant. Assurance was mentioned in the interview that information would be treated with the strictest confidence and only the researcher and her supervisor had access to the information used for this research purpose.

4.13 . CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter four presented theoretical perspectives on the research design and

methods used to conduct the study. Details about the data collection method and the participants were also provided. Data was gathered using face-to-face in-depth interviews with a total of thirty 2016 final year Public Relations Practice III students on placements, fifteen WIL Industry employers and one WIL Co-ordinator.

The chapter provided information on the procedures for the interview study that has been conducted. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the validity and reliability, limitations and delimitations, pre-test, anonymity and confidentiality, trustworthiness and ethical issues applicable to this study. The following chapter presents a discussion of the data analysis and results.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the methodology employed in this study. This chapter presents the findings gathered from the fieldwork conducted with the key respondents in the KwaZulu Natal region, Durban and the surrounding areas. The key objectives of the study assessed the effectiveness of the WIL programme by judging the perceptions and the expectations of the WIL stakeholder group in relation to the current industry needs. To maintain coherence throughout the chapter, themes have been set out from both the interviews and focus group to analyse the findings.

It was established earlier in the study that the issue about the high statistics of unskilled and unemployable graduates in the country was a concern for the Department of Higher Education and Training. The DUT Public Relations WIL students, WIL industry supervisor and the DUT WIL Coordinator as the stakeholder group have the responsibility to demonstrate the effectiveness of the WIL programme as a means of reducing the number of unskilled graduates.

There are two chapters for Research findings and Analysis however, this chapter commences with highlighting the research questions and themes; the observations by the researcher; the overview on DUT WIL policy; PR Departmental Handbook, as well as the PR WIL manual. The WIL Coordinator and the WIL Industry Supervisors themes to be discussed as well. The next chapter is dedicated to the Students themes. All major themes discovered in the content will be analysed. These themes are identified into autonomous sections in order to assess the data and present the discussions. A summary of the analysis is provided thereafter.

5.2 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic Analysis provides an accessible and theoretically flexible methodology for analysing qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic Analysis is a method that pays attention to describing both the implicit and explicit data through a thorough process of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Guest et al. (2011), this method moves beyond merely recounting the data but recognizes both the unspoken and obvious ideas within data.

Gamede (2018:63) cites Hardy and Bryman (2004:93) that this method of analysing data involves two processes, the mechanical and the interpretive component, both inextricably linked. The mechanical process refers to “the physical activity of reading and re-reading the data in search of key words, trends and themes that will help shape the analysis before any analysis takes place. The interpretive process of the analysis occurs when researchers immerse themselves in the data, looking for the unarticulated meaning to it, based on the broader picture presented by the findings (O'Connor, 2015).

The following themes emanated from the objectives:

5.2.1 THEMES

The following themes were derived from the objectives:

Theme 1. The Coordinator and the WIL Programme

Theme 2. External engagement of the PR WIL Programme

Theme 3. Placements and monitoring of students.

Theme 4. Workplace and the role of the industry.

Theme 5. Public Relations WIL Programme

Theme 6. Theme four Placement and the opportunities

Theme 7. Sufficiency of the PR WIL Programme

Theme 8. Preparation of students for WIL

Theme 9. Company responsibility WIL development?

Theme 10. Workplace survival

5.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from one WIL Co-ordinator, 15 Industry Supervisors and 30 PR WIL students. This Chapter will discuss the research findings and analysis.

5.3.1 SECTION A: INTERVIEW WITH WIL CO-ORDINATOR

This component of the analysis focuses on the WIL Coordinator from the PR Department (note there was only one coordinator surveyed). The WIL Programme emerged as a major theme in the data narratives as WIL is an important component that can have positive implications on education, employment, the labour force and ultimately the socio-economic development of the country. The data did reveal some interesting findings.

5.3.1.1 THEME ONE: THE COORDINATOR AND THE WIL PROGRAMME

The data gathered in the context of the WIL Programme is analysed and discussed in this section and the responses are presented below.

The questions posed were:

5.3.1.1.1 How long have you coordinated WIL in the Public Relations Department?

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

“I have involved with WIL since 2016, and maintains the WIL Programme in the PR Department a population of 68 students.”

And

5.3.1.1.2 Approximately how many students have you worked with during this timeframe?

Excerpt 4.1: In-depth interview sample of the WIL Co-ordinator with PR WIL programme experience.

5.3.1.1.3 What do you think are the main factors that support a successful WIL programme?

Excerpt 4.2: In-depth interview sample on the factors that support the WIL programme.

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

“what assists them, is basically the support that they get from our colleagues and the mentorship that they receiving from us which will make them successful PR Practitioners in a sense, so I would say the main factor would be the mentorship.”

5.3.1.1.4 Which skill (soft /hard) do you believe to be necessary for the survival of students in workplace and please substantiate your reason?

Excerpt 4.3: In-depth interview sample on the necessary skills to survive in the workplace.

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

"I would say they need Personal and professional qualities as well as the Work environment related skills. To mention few, they need to be discipline, be motivated and take initiative, be respectful and apply work environment related skills. Remember some of this students have never been exposed to the work environment, therefore, they need to demonstrate the need to learn and focus on work."

5.3.1.1.5 What measures do you have in place to ensure that these skills are transferred to the students?

Excerpt 4.4: In-depth interview sample on measures in place to ensure skills are transferred to the students.

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

"With the workshops we try to make it interesting. We even try to take them to [name of the hotel] you know." With the workshops we try to make it interesting. We even try to take them to [name of the hotel] . You give them an experience and find that many don't attend. so some will attend, you find that the lot will be about 10% yet you can't stop them from going on to work integrated learning the following year."

The findings reveal that mentorship is important for a student's success. Furthermore, being respectful, motivated and disciplined are important skills that a student must possess. Such skills are transferred to students while they are still on campus.

Coll, Paku, Hodges, Bhat, Ram, Ayling, Fleming, Ferkins and Wiersma and Martin (2011: 2) cited that a key purpose of WIL is the notion of providing graduates with a comprehensive skills set desired by potential employers.

It is therefore evident that the Public Relations programme makes continuous efforts to ensure that students are empowered with the necessary skills.

5.3.1.2 THEME TWO: EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT IN THE PR WIL PROGRAMME

The data gathered in the context of the external engagement in the WIL Programme is analysed and discussed in this section and the responses are presented.

The questions posed were:

5.3.1.2.1 Does the department have an advisory board? If yes, how often do you meet? If not, why not?

Excerpt 4.5: **In-depth interview sample on the advisory board.**

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

“Yes we do, but not as often as we should”

5.3.1.2.2 Does the advisory board have input into the department’s WIL Programme?

Excerpt 4. 6: **In-depth interview sample on the advisory board’s input into the department’s WIL Programme.**

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

“The inputs from the advisory board are critical when it comes to the issues revolve around primarily student preparedness for work. The advisory board brings key individuals responsible of contributing towards the WIL workshop. The inputs are gathered from the advisory board in terms of what is lacking from the programme and proposed improvements and these serve to realign the curriculum accordingly.”

Observation:

During the interview with the WIL Coordinator, the researcher was able to peruse

the minutes of the Advisory Board meetings. Minutes clearly indicated that selected industry representatives were members of the Advisory Board and regularly discussed the WIL programme. They gave sufficient guidance in terms of what they would like to see included in the programme. Relevant guidance from the Industry is key to a successful curriculum.

5.3.1.3 THEME THREE: PLACEMENTS AND MONITORING OF STUDENTS participant

The data gathered in the context of the placements and monitoring of the students is analysed and discussed in this section and the responses are presented.

The questions posed were:

5.3.1.3.1 Placement of students in industry requires considerable thought and effort on the part of the coordinator. What process do you have in place to ensure that the student receives adequate/relevant WIL training within the specific discipline?

Excerpt 4.7: In-depth interview sample on the process in place for placement.

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

“Yes the department does that because firstly the fact that the department gives a logbook to students, a logbook serves as a guideline it says this is what you as a supervisor expect from me. And another thing that the department does is that each student is given a letter that they produce to their employer to say this is a signed letter from my HOD stipulating what is expected of the company, this is the type of training that this particular student requires. So there is a letter that comes from the department besides a logbook that is given to each and every student, so there is a letter stipulating everything when it comes to WIL issues and all that.”

5.3.1.3.2 Once the student is placed, how often do you communicate with both the WIL supervisor and the student to establish progress? Please explain.

Excerpt 4.8: In-depth interview sample on communication between the WIL supervisor and the student.

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

“... it's not practical to communicate and visit all the students but we trying to achieve a rate of at least 70% visits so at least 70% of all the students that are placed. Because it gets a bit much if you are handling a full teaching load and you also now have to deal with the issue of making will visits you know if you trying to visit 68 students in different locations and it can take a while it can be quite time consuming.”

Quality management of work-based learning is essential to ensure compliance with requirements as determined by the CHE (CHE, 2004:11). This theme reveals that placement is very important to the student and that it is important that the student receives relevant training. This is why a logbook is handed to the employer to track the students' training. The WIL Coordinator indicated that due to a shortage of staff, one could not afford to visit all placed students.

5.3.1.4 THEME FOUR: WORKPLACE AND THE ROLE OF THE INDUSTRY

The data gathered in the context of the workplace and the role of the industry is analysed and discussed in this section and the responses are presented.

The questions posed were:

5.3.1.4.1 “Are the opinions of the industry taken into consideration?”

Excerpt 4.9: In-depth interview sample on the opinions of the industry.

The WIL coordinator had this to say:

“ during those visits we interview the supervisor we ask them to answer some questions about the students behaviour, the areas that the student may be lacking in and other things that maybe the department can focus on so that the students are better prepared for the world of work. So we do take on board supervisor views and opinions, not only the students themselves in terms of their personal commitment to work but also their preparedness and the level of skill and understanding and as far as an industrial field is concerned so that we can then try to implement that in our programme.”

5.3.1.4.2 “Is the internship time-frame adequate for students to complete the aims and objectives of the curriculum?”

Excerpt 4.10: **In-depth interview sample on internship time-frame.**

The WIL Coordinator had this to say:

“the university sees it enough but the companies’ ideas always differ.”

The findings reveal that the opinions of Industry Supervisors as well as the Advisory Board are taken seriously. The suggestions and recommendations are tabled at the Advisory Board meeting, which constitutes DUT PR Management and the representatives from different Industries. Such recommendations are then used to modify the curriculum should a need arise.

This is supported by the WIL Coordinator, who conveyed the same notion in paragraph 4.3.1.2(b).

5.4 SECTION B: INTERVIEWS WITH EMPLOYERS

DUT places WIL students in the industry once a relationship with the company has been developed and the company’s expertise is trusted.

The researcher saw it fit to investigate whether the expertise of the industry meets the criteria of the DUT WIL Policy; whether the supervisor is familiar with the PR WIL programme; and reviews whether the opportunities they afford to the Public Relations students are approved. The semi-structured interview samples provided in the tables below speak to the perceptions and the expectations of the employer.

The following themes were generated and the questions were posed:

5.4.1 THEME ONE: PUBLIC RELATIONS WIL PROGRAMME

The data gathered in the context of the PR WIL Programme is analysed and discussed in this section and the responses are presented.

The question posed was:

- a) “How long have you been associated with and involved in the Public Relations WIL programme?”

Excerpt 4.11: **Semi – structured interview on the experience of the Supervisor.**

The supervisors had this to say:

“1 year”	2 Respondents
“2 -3 years”	2 Respondents
“4 - 5 Years”	3 Respondents
“7- 8 years”	4 Respondents
“11 years”	4 Respondents

The Industry Supervisors were familiar with PR WIL programme, as they had been involved with the programme for between one year and eleven years.

- b) What are your main expectations of the WIL students you host?

Excerpt 4.12: **Semi – structured interview on Supervisor’s expectations from the WIL students.**

The supervisors had this to say:

<i>“Students are expected to learn and become self-sustainable whereby they can host their own events and become leaders in their field.”</i>	Respondent 1& Respondent 9
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<i>“The ability for student to utilise their skills e.g. marketing skills within the environment.”</i>	Respondent 2
<i>“Students needed to be diligent and follow the rules of work. This also entailed on how to conduct duties that they studied towards e.g. – media reading. Hence keeping key items such a notebooks ensured that they remembered all that was needed to perform diligently.”</i>	Respondent 3
<i>“Students are expected to support the department they are working in using their skills of PR, Marketing and advertising among others.”</i>	Respondent 5
<i>“Students are expected to think and act as employees and attain an employee type status in the workplace.”</i>	Respondent 4
<i>“..... and needed to become a functioning member of the departmental team. They needed to be responsible and not spoon-fed.”</i>	Respondent 6
<i>“ ...conduct themselves as employees”</i>	Respondent 7
<i>“..... they are expected to become functioning members of our team and we don’t want to have to babysit them and we feel that, that is a real expectation because these are PR Students, students who have been studying PR for a long time so we put quit a lot of responsibility to them and we don’t want to get disappointed.”</i>	Respondent 8
<i>“....are expected to support the department they are working in using their skills of PR, Marketing and advertising among others.”</i>	Respondent 9
<i>“....to take on publicist roles and also network with key people.”</i>	Respondent 10

<p><i>.“Well as a PR student your main expectation for that student is to take that event and run with that event from A to Z. So my expectation of a PR student would be to take that event and run with that event.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 11</p>
<p><i>“When they come out of NGO they will be able to do what they need to do, they will be able to host their own events they will be able to do public speaking, since we in the public field they will be able to do what they studied.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 12</p>
<p><i>“And another thing to be able to inter act with our donors and know the donor potential, how to handle them how to keep them, because we need to keep the donors because we need the money, this is the fundraising department.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 13</p>
<p><i>“To provide support to the department especially because it focuses 100% on PR, Marketing and advertising, and to also give them the knowledge that they need to go out there into the field.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 14</p>
<p><i>“I know they going to be difficult to teach them a lot of things and what we find is that a lot of your students dress appropriately, they dress smartly they dress professionally, you don’t want people who wear miniskirts with long nails and zebra leggings and they won’t be taken seriously,”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 15</p>
<p><i>“Well as a PR student your main expectation for that student is to take that event and run with that event from A to Z. So my expectation of a PR student would be to take that event and run with that event.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 12</p>
<p><i>“You have to organize accordingly if you have a commitment somewhere you need to go through your supervisor so we groom them holistically, from speaking, the dress code the hours of work,”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 4</p>

<i>“Students are still expected to dress professionally at work as so they can be seen a professional light and taken seriously.”</i>	Respondent 10
<i>“Students needed a mind-set change whereby they needed to know that they were coming to a working environment.”</i>	Respondent 9
<i>“They should be able to fit in with existing staff and value the work that they do instead of feeling that the work is just for the sake of their qualification.”</i>	Respondent 10

The findings reveal that supervisor’s expected students to have the necessary skills for the placement. The skills differed as per the industry as they were not all providing the same facilities.

Allais (2012:632) iterates that numerous policy interventions and the creation of new institutions and systems for skills development in South Africa are widely seen as having failed to lead to an increase in the numbers of skilled workers. There were considerable skills that students lacked, according to the supervisors.

Therefore, students were expected to learn and be self –sustainable, have marketing skills, taking publicist roles, having a good overview of the world of the NGO, dress professionally and have a mind-set change to survive during placement.

c) What are the main factors that successfully support WIL activities?

Excerpt 4.13: **Semi–structured interview on the main factors that support WIL activities.**

The Supervisors had this to say:

<i>“The log book as it serves as a check point and tracking tool as to reflect what has been done/accomplished.”</i>	Respondent 1
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<p><i>“The WIL programme presents an ideal work experience and student acquire skills even beyond the classroom, whilst also applying their knowledge learnt in class.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 2</p>
<p><i>“The institution needs to foster more relationships with companies as so this will ensure that more students are placed every year. This will motivate students knowing that they will be placed.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 5</p>
<p><i>“The WIL programme assists in transitioning student into becoming employees. Hence the ‘transitional’ component is a big support for the programme and the students thereof. Perhaps more emphasis on ‘transition’ can be recommended for future WIL programmes.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 13</p>
<p><i>“when you get into your WIL placement it shows you how the working environment is and you start to adjust to that and know what it will be like, so it makes you gain experience of how it is to work, leave the classroom and be in a work environment and you just gain the experience of being in the working level with colleagues , you learn how to carry yourself in a work environment and it actually helps you to go into the workplace after you get your Diploma , because you have that experience whereas students who just finish college and just go into the workplace and don’t really know what’s going on, so WIL actually helps us in that way it assists us to know what we getting into.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent14</p>

d) What are the perceived benefits (if any) of WIL for the public relations industry or profession as a whole?

The following were benefits noted for the PR industry:

Excerpt 4.14: **Semi-structured interview on the benefit for the PR industry.**

The supervisors had this to say:

<i>“The WIL programme allowed students to gain confidence to aspire for senior and management roles due to experience gained.”</i>	Respondent 1
<i>“ WIL taught students how to conduct themselves at work, in front of colleagues and clients.”</i>	Respondent 3
<i>“student bring new ideas of doing things, they are innovation “</i>	Respondent 4
<i>“ students assist in reducing the workload”</i>	Respondent 11
<i>“PR is required by most entities”</i>	Respondent 14
<i>“The presence of the students assists the company with the PR duties”</i>	Respondent 15

The findings reveal that it was apparent from this theme that the ‘transitional’ component was necessary for the students to be comfortable in industry.

Thompson, Bates and Bates (2016:10) suggest that students who complete WIL placements experience significant improvements in work self-efficacy and their confidence in their ability to manage workplace experiences increases. Thompson et al. (2016) further explained that this is important because higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with more successful transitions from study to work and better workplace performance and success.

The findings also reveal that employers felt that more emphasis on ‘transition’ should be recommended for future WIL programmes. As far as the perceived benefits of the programme were concerned, confidence, trust and innovation were highlighted as important in the workplace.

5.4.2 THEME TWO: PLACEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- a) What opportunities do you afford to Public Relations students in your company?

Excerpt 4.15: **Semi – structured interview on opportunities afforded to PR students.**

The supervisors had this to say:

<p><i>“When it comes to events and functions, students are given publicist roles such as marketing, promotions, radio station work and other publicist roles. Unfortunately la esbhedlela (here in hospital)we are restricted by the department of health because all they can say or any opportunities go via then so as a hospital we not in a position to offer any opportunities like that but I think the opportunity we do offer is the training , our doors are open, our HR development department is open to many students and I think it offers them a stepping stone and the experience they need to prepare for when they enter the formal work place.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 1</p>
<p><i>“Students get opportunities to showcase their creative side. This entailed design of posters, booklets, invitation cards and pamphlets.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 2</p>
<p><i>“Student get exposed to large scale events such has ‘Word of Work where different companies come together. These conference are held at sophisticated venues such [name] Hotel and students are involved in planning and coordination of the event.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 3</p>

<i>“Students get the opportunity to network when they are taken to events. They are given their own business cards as so it promotes more networking and making contact in the right places that can bring about future opportunities.”</i>	Respondent 4
<i>“Students are offered experience on the rules and regulations of media.”</i>	Respondent 7
<i>“Apart from PR work, there is lots of administration work involved such as front desk operation, faxing, telephonic duties and other admin-related tasks.”</i>	Respondent 8
<i>“Fund raising opportunities are given as this entails the key component of how to raise funds and bring in an income stream.”</i>	Respondent 10
<i>“Students are expected to be involved in ‘activations’ at the shopping malls where students do fundraising (which is a skill on its own) as the organisations rely on donations.”</i>	Respondent 11
<i>“Students realized that the WIL brought different exposure especially when placed in certain organisations that were not too PR orientated. In addition, other requirements of student such as finance, human resources and budget. This goes beyond the scope of what student learnt since they were unprepared.”</i>	Respondent 12
<i>“Students are given exposure to high level event as well as to different roles and this further enhances skills development.”</i>	Respondent 13
<i>“...., students may stand a chance to be hired maybe after their graduations... we can’t let them go”</i>	Respondent 15

The findings reveal that employers indicated that students were exposed to large scale events *such as marketing, promotions, publicist roles, radio station work and exposure to rules and regulations of the media.*

- b) According to your observation, what strategies would you recommend, if any, to overcome barriers and challenges to improve the WIL experience for students?

Excerpt 4.16: Semi-structured interview on recommended strategies to overcome barriers and challenges to improve the WIL experience for students.

The supervisors had this to say:

<i>“Weekly meeting between supervisor and student with their logbooks have to be encouraged. This ensure that work done is not forgotten or left out. Portfolio of evidence supporting the work done must also be provided accordingly. “</i>	Respondent 1
<i>“Students need to change their mind-sets and must be able to carry themselves out as employees and do their work accordingly instead of still thinking they are students.”</i>	Respondent 7
<i>“More office etiquette training as student lack this and after the 6 months is complete, they etiquette takes a further drop in standard.”</i>	Respondent 10
<i>“.... they should also not feel as if they are in the WIL for the ‘sake’ of it. Hence more mind-set change must be encouraged for students.”</i>	Respondent 14
<i>“the scary part I’ve realized about our students, they forget their first year’s work So when you come</i>	Respondent 15

<p><i>the next time and ask them how many types of media released we have today, it's like different. So I then take them back to where they started I always tell them you know, the first notebook that you had when you start this [course] you do need it to refer to if you go to a company.....”</i></p>	
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The findings reveal that Industry Supervisors felt that students required a mind-set change to overcome the barriers and improve their training in the organisation.

Sethusa (2014:413) reveals that supervisors experience challenges which impede their supervisory practices and that they use meaningful strategies to overcome these challenges, thus supporting students to the best of their abilities. Therefore, they end up attending to the holistic challenges of the students.

c) How did you socialize students into the workplace from day one?

Excerpt 4.17: Semi-structured interview on how students are socialized into the workplace.

The Industry supervisors that were able to orientate students had this to say:

<p><i>“On the first day orientation is done where you give them an overview of the company, introduce them to the staff, tell them about the time they are going to start”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 2</p>
<p><i>“... I personally take them around give them an idea what the department is firstly, who and what is our responsibility and from there we take them to the colleagues and who is responsible for what in the department because we cannot take the students and</i></p>	<p>Respondent 4</p>

<p><i>put them in the front desk position when they are not aware of what the departments sole purpose is. My sole purpose in the orientation is who are we and what are we here for. Number two is who are the colleagues that are in this department and number three what is the students purpose in this department.”</i></p>	
<p><i>“with us [organisation] has different building they went out on the field and visited the different buildings, each department, they went to our cooking facilities and our in house catering company.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 6</p>
<p><i>“How we socialize them Is that when they are here they are then allocate to our fundraisers,... we took out 6 and give two to each person, orientate them on our organization what it is all about and because we a cancer organization we also orientate them on cancer the disease, because when they out there doing an event somebody will ask them a question, ...orientate them to know and answer the publics question, so that’s how we let them be in the social media.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 7</p>

The findings reveal that orientation was perceived as the primary method of socialising students into the organisation and into their roles within. This entailed physically being taken across the building/premises, introduced to departments, staff, rules and procedures. Therefore, the aim of the organisation is seen as serving its purpose of conveying the message on what the stakeholders need to know about how WIL works.

Sethusa (2014:409) asserts that the support offered by supervisors plays a key role in students’ professional growth. Although companies ensured that students were

oriented properly, some supervisors said that they were not given an opportunity to orient students as they were allocated by their seniors to mentor the students. Therefore, they missed this opportunity to support them.

d) How did you ensure that sufficient activities and responsibilities were given to students as stipulated in the WIL manual?

And

e) How did you ensure that the time allocated is spent according to the tasks and projects listed in the logbook?

Excerpt 4.18: **Semi-structured interview on activities and responsibilities given to students as per the WIL manual, as well as the time allocated for the projects on the logbook.**

The Industry Supervisors had this to say:

<i>“they should also not feel as if they are in the WIL for the ‘sake’ of it. Hence more mind-set change must be encouraged for students.”</i>	Respondent 1
<i>“More engagement between industry and the institutions as well as students. This can be in the form of ‘breakfast session’. “Breakfast sessions has been shown to work for some organisations”</i>	Respondent 5
<i>“Organisation must provide serious work for students. Students cannot just remain at the organisation for 6 months doing menial work or doing nothing. This must be clarified at the onset.”</i>	Respondent 7
<i>“The organisation can create opportunities but students need to come to work with the right attitude.</i>	Respondent 9

<i>The institution needs to encourage good attitude in students for WIL”</i>	
<i>“Students cannot be spoon fed. They are not attaining employee status and need to think on their feet and be able to adapt and work almost immediately. “</i>	Respondent 11
<i>They should not be followed all the time but instead use and apply their knowledge and skill.”</i>	Respondent 14

Fern et al. (2012:208) revealed that overall, the clear assumption is that WIL provides students with opportunities to experience professional life, with the notion that such experience will promote knowledge development. The authors further stated that during WIL education, students are expected to experience as well as understand the discipline-specific contextually-related ideas.

Therefore, those ideas will have to be tested after a certain specified period and using a specific assessment method.

The period of 6 months was perceived by the university as enough time for students' placement and the logbook was perceived as the right tool for assessment.

However, the findings reveal that some Industry Supervisors felt that 6 months was insufficient for allocating all work as per the logbook. This is because it takes approximately three months to get to know the organisation. Thereafter work began and this was never enough. Findings further reveal that a lot of the real experience comes towards the end of the year, when the main events take place.

Furthermore, regular sign-off of the logbook serves as good verification that work is being done and progress made. Supervisors hence need to ensure that progress is made before signing off on the logbook

Excerpt 4.19: **Semi – structured interview on the time-frame.**

Most of the Supervisors raised their concerns about time-frames and had this to say:

<p><i>“No six months is not enough I will think maybe a year or two, remember in that six months you need to give them time to adjust and there is so much to learn.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 4</p>
<p><i>“We have another event [name of the event] and that takes a year to put together, so if I have them started they not even going to see the end. Lots of your students come requesting placement, but I said to them I will not be taking in any DUT students....”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 6</p>
<p><i>“A lot of events also are done towards the end of the year, August, September, November, so not much at the beginning of the year, so if we take a student at the beginning of the year, they won’t get much exposure that we can afford that student, but remember PR is not only about events management but it’s a bit more broadened and can be behind the desk and behind the PC and still be a PR coordinator”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 7</p>
<p><i>“I don’t think it’s sufficient, because there is not a lot you can do in six months, compared to working a year, in a year you get a lot more experience.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 8</p>
<p><i>“the time of 6 months was sufficient. This is because students already had academic knowledge and would be able to learn quickly and think and act on their feet.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 9</p>
<p><i>“they have a logbook to which we fill in on a regular basis, so whatever they do we fill it out then at the end of the year they have a portfolio that they put</i></p>	<p>Respondent 10</p>

<p><i>together and then I sign off their books, its usually the PR community mobiliser sign off and 90% of the time I sign off, our community mobilisers are here there everywhere so at that particular time when they need someone to sign off I sign off.”</i></p>	
<p><i>“Sometimes it is difficult to adhere to only what is in the log book due to different specialisation of organisations’.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 11</p>
<p><i>“We keep in mind the prescriptions of the logbook however each workplace is different so they need to adapt to how things are done at that particular office. E.g. the student I had she basically had to adapt to how things are done at the office, because in this PR office specifically confidentiality is a big thing, we deal with peoples’ medical records and peoples identities and stuff like that, so they did need to align with how the office works as well, as much as we did keep in mind what the logbook requires as well.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 13</p>
<p><i>“With six months you have to accommodate all the work and squeeze in all the work that they need to do in that six months like if they need to be in five departments in six months you’ll have to allocate one department per month....”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 14</p>
<p><i>“ we try and build them into the inter lecturer property programand have one big project that will tick as many of those various activities and include as many of those activities as possible and we genuinely find that with intellectual property there isn’t much on that list that they don’t have to do.....we not giving them a</i></p>	<p>Respondent 15</p>

<i>little job to do in the corner it means that they are part of a very important function that's the centre of what we do and how we promote ourselves as well."</i>	
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The findings reveal that Industry Supervisors are committed to the success of the WIL programme, hence they raise concerns about time-frames. They also ensure that over and above, they are closely monitoring the PR students. Moreover, they ensure that the requirements of the logbook are fulfilled.

5.4.3 THEME THREE: SUFFICIENCY OF THE PR WIL PROGRAMME

- a) What recommendations can you make that would encourage your organisation to participate more in the DUT WIL Programme?

Excerpt 4.20: **Semi-structured interview on recommendations that will encourage organisations to participate more in the DUT WIL Programme.**

The supervisors had this to say:

<i>"there must be strong communication between departments and industries itself,"</i>	Respondent 1
<i>"Feedback surveys should be done with the supervisors after WIL, and this can serve as recommendations for improvement."</i>	Respondent 5

Support and flexibility from the PR Department was seen as a mandatory factor to support WIL. An overall feeling was that the WIL programme was a two-way process and that the work environment needs to be supportive in whatever way it can towards students. In return, the PR Department must guide employers through regular communication and sufficient feedback.

Thompson, Bates and Bates (2016:10-17) support the above findings and state that the workplace learning experience that occurs through WIL placements is supported through a range of people and resources. These support structures must be appealing to the student. Students will feel encouraged to perform well should there be more feedback from the PR Programme to support the workplace. Hence, support should be a two-way process, both from the university as well as the industry.

- b) According to your own observation based on the students 'performance, are there any skills that the students lack which require improvement?

Excerpt 4.21: Semi – structured interview on the skills that students lack and have to be improved.

The Industry Supervisors had this to say:

<p><i>“In the PR field I think skills that some may lack I think it’s the public speaking, maybe in the theory I know because I went to DUT myself , in the theory they may not be exposed to public speaking part of course that they do, so it would help them to engage more often in public speaking, because public Relations is a lot about speaking and being assertive, you need to know how to speak audibly and not to quickly or you cant speak and be shy in PR, you need to speak with confidents, you need to stand out and you need to be sure of yourself...”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 1</p>
<p><i>“Students seem to lack self-confidence. The PR field is a field that requires one to be out there and in the spotlight most of the times and dealing with media. Confidence is there a critical aspect of the filed. However, students seem</i></p>	<p>Respondent 2</p>

<p><i>to have lacked this. Some students were shy and introverted, were afraid to do presentation and ask questions, and find solution to problems.”</i></p>	
<p><i>“Definitely more office etiquette skills and more in-depth computer knowledge because I think it’s just basic that they know especially with office software.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 4</p>
<p><i>“We expect them to be employees, we expect them to conduct themselves as employees, we expect them to dress and represent themselves as employees, because they are no longer students ecampusini dressed anyhow, torn jeans, because you are in a professional environment and that’s how you expected to behave, as supervisors we often emphasize that this is how they need to conduct themselves. You have to organize accordingly if you have a commitment somewhere you need to go through your supervisor so we groom them holistically, from speaking, the dress code, the hours of work, sometimes we are a little bit more lenient because we understand that they are students so holiday time is given to them as per their normal school days, otherwise once they are in the workplace they are integrated fully as would other proper employees.”</i></p>	<p>Respondent 5</p>
<p><i>“...what we found is that a lot of your students’ dress appropriately, they dress smartly, they dress professionally. So what we do is, for us our expectation, is that they can become a functioning member of our team and we don’t want to have to babysit them and we feel that, that is a real expectation because these are PR Students, students who have been studying PR for a long time, so we put quiet a lot</i></p>	<p>Respondent 7</p>

<i>of responsibility to them and we don't want to get disappointed."</i>	
<i>"they lacked the key component of 'public speaking. This needed to be addressed."</i>	Respondent 9
<i>"students were aware of the theory behind public speaking but lacked the practicality of it."</i>	Respondent 10
<i>"I think as I said if the university can make sure that it makes them do more practical things than Theory. It will help them when they come to the industry and they will know what to expect because I always tell them okay, if there's an event happening outside please support because we need to have a network. We learn every day as a PR practitioner you learn every day."</i>	Respondent 15

It was earlier highlighted that skills shortages are the leading causes of unemployment for graduates in South Africa and various supervisors asserted that students really lacked skills pertaining to the work environment.

Consistent with this, respondents 1, 9 and 10 correspondently remarked that public speaking was most lacking and should be addressed. Respondent 2 asserted that self-confidence was another important area that deserved enhancement. Other respondents believed that skills, such as computer skills and office etiquette especially punctuality and good dress sense, were required to be developed by the PR Department in the training of their students.

Jackson (2017:836) concurs that WIL is an ideal space to develop professional identity and professionalism as it occupies both learning and work. Therefore, the

industry environment is an ideal place to continue with training and the introduction of skills during placement.

c) Did the department provide you with sufficient guidance in the WIL process?

Excerpt 4.22: Semi-structured interview on whether the department provided sufficient guidance on the WIL process.

The supervisors had this to say:

<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 1
<i>“Nothing”</i>	Respondent 2
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 3
<i>“never”</i>	Respondent 4
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 5
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 6
<i>“Never”</i>	Respondent 7
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 8
<i>“nope”</i>	Respondent 9
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 10
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 11
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 12
<i>“never”</i>	Respondent 13
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 14
<i>“no”</i>	Respondent 15

Findings reveal that all fifteen Industry supervisors felt that they did not receive sufficient guidance from the PR Department. When the researcher probed as to how they were able to assist students without guidelines, the supervisors responded that they used the logbook as a guide.

d) Were you given the opportunity to engage with the Department WIL Coordinator at any point?

Excerpt 4.23: **Semi – structured interview on whether opportunities were granted to engage with the Department WIL Co-ordinator.**

The supervisors had this to say:

<i>“we had a meeting in the department and that is when we got a chance to communicate.”</i>	Respondent 7
<i>“the Coordinator was called to the company because there was a problem between the CEO and the student.”</i>	Respondent 11

Findings reveal that only two Industry Supervisors met with the WIL Coordinator and in one case, it was the supervisor who had to call the WIL coordinator to a meeting due to problems experienced.

e) What recommendations for improvement can you make for the current WIL Programme?

Excerpt 4.24: **Semi – structured interview on recommendations to improve the current WIL Programme.**

The supervisors had this to say:

<i>“so its basic rules and regulations, time in time out, we understand that they are students but they need to understand that this is a working environment it needs to be enforced a bit more.”</i>	Respondent 2
<i>“... get them to do a course on basic work ethic, take them through what is simple telephonic skill simple time management, even a deadline you expected to</i>	Respondent 3

<p><i>meet on time , so its basic work ethic I know the faculty as well as the co-op education department does a presentation to students a WIL presentation for PR students, that's a good initiative they are doing which will help the students as well."</i></p>	
<p><i>".... to strengthen on the public speaking role of the students and the personal interaction with the organization where the students have been placed."</i></p>	<p>Respondent 6</p>
<p><i>" ... the communication skills and the computer skills are lacking, I did have an issue with time management as well when it comes to students... "</i></p>	<p>Respondent 7</p>
<p><i>"Firstly I think the period of the internship should be lengthened and secondly I think PR students I don't know how many we take at a time its flooded, the market is flooded, because I've known PR students for three years now that are still without a job and they have become our very good volunteers."</i></p>	<p>Respondent 8</p>
<p><i>"um I think that there needs to be a module to prepare the students before they come to work integrated learning just a brief short little module."</i></p>	<p>Respondent 9</p>
<p><i>"I think the relationship that [the organisation] and DUT has grown so far that I cannot even have an influence and to say what they are doing is good because we have so many graduates that are sitting at home and because they don't have experience. They don't get the job opportunity but giving these kids this opportunity so they can see how it is in the in the workplace is good. It also makes them realize and also</i></p>	<p>Respondent 12</p>

<i>respect their lecturers that if he says I must do an assignment. It is important because it's preparing me for an outside work....”</i>	
<i>“ I should think if there is a student that has been taken by our organization at least once a month they should be meeting with someone from DUT, the lecturer, the learner and the supervisor once a month until at least the six months is over. That will improve this Programme.”</i>	Respondent 13
<i>“The WIL programme presents an ideal work experience and student acquire skills even beyond the classroom, whilst also applying their knowledge learnt in class. “</i>	Respondent 15

The findings reveal that communication was lacking between the stakeholder groups.

King (2018: 57) reveals that in Social Exchange Theory, ‘give and take’ forms the basis of almost all relationships, although their proportions might vary as per the intensity of the relationship. In a WIL relationship, every individual has expectations from his/her Supervisor and Coordinator.

Respondents 2, 3 and 7 correspondingly remarked that the period of internship, communication skills and the lack of technology skills were lacking in the work preparation programme or the department and required enhancing. They also recommended that regular meetings (at least once a month) with the PR Department were necessary in order to maintain a good relationship.

CHAPTER SIX
RESEARCH FINDING AND ANALYSIS (CONT..)

6.1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH WIL STUDENTS

During the focus group sessions, the final-year Public Relations WIL students were interviewed in groups ranging from three to six.

Students were briefed on what the research entailed. Questions ranged from their expectation to the standards of the industry.

6.1.1 THEME ONE: PREPARATION OF STUDENTS FOR WIL

The question posed was:

- a) What expectations did you have about WIL?

Excerpt 4.25: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on the students’ expectations about WIL

Students had this to say:

<i>“What I had in mind was obviously we going to the office, we were going to get educated more about the office environment, especially in PR people are very versatile so what I expected is we will always be on our toes always outside the office, not inside the office obviously, looking for sponsors for whatever we working on, but it wasn’t that case.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“I expected that I was going to work at an office, gain experience, do events, out-source sponsors coordinate, that’s what I expected that it won’t be like theory like we do in school, but be more practical.”</i>	Focus group 2

<i>"I expected to get the experience I needed the experience in my field, whatever guidelines I could get from my employer and my supervisor. Basically the same thing, I expected to get the good experience that we need to prepare us for the corporate world."</i>	Focus group 3
<i>".... expectations were to implement what I have learnt in class and the WIL program is practical and you have to implement what you have learnt in class."</i>	Focus group 4
<i>" ...expected to learn lots about the working place in terms of experience and learning how it relates to what I'm studying..... nanokuthi ke (and) eh ngingathini (what can I say)? What to expect If ever I get into the workplace."</i>	Focus group 4
<i>"... expected that I was going to work at an office, gain experience, do events, source sponsors, coordinate, that's what I expected that it won't be like theory like we do in school, but be more practical."</i>	Focus group 5
<i>" expected to get the experience I needed the experience in my field, whatever guidelines I could get from my employer and my supervisor."</i>	Focus group 6

The findings reveal that all respondents consistently concurred that their expectation of WIL was to implement and practice what they had learnt in class in a practical working environment. Practical experience was seen as the core of WIL. Moreover, the practical experience was seen to provide hands-on good experience that was needed for the corporate world. Building on practical experience became the more streamlined expectation of gaining experience in the specific field that the student studied for.

Excerpt 4.26: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on meeting expectations.**

Students had this to say:

<i>“yes it did meet their expectation, as they were taught by older and more experience personnel.”</i>	Focus group 2
<i>“For me it did a bit but there were certain things we weren’t ready for, things that we had less idea not that we didn’t know certain things, like for everything you do you need a check list so where I was I walked around with my checklist like my theories from PR but there are certain things that you don’t know how to deal with and you are thrown into the deep end to do it yourself.”</i>	Focus group 4

The findings reveal that it was important to establish if WIL met the students’ expectation from their perspective. It was found that WIL did not meet their expectation entirely as it was met with reservations.

From the responses above, it is evident that fewer students felt that their expectations were not met. Some of the reasons were that the WIL experience was dependant on the type of organisation they were placed in. Some organisations like NGOs and NPOs were not very PR-orientated.

Excerpt 4.27: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on meeting expectations as per the industry.

Students had this to say:

<i>“I expected more specialised and intense work, but did not achieve such.”</i>	Focus group 3
<i>“The type of work would be more outside the office, but instead it was more office bound.”</i>	Focus group 4
<i>“The work was very different from studies”.</i>	Focus group 2
<i>“I did not expect it to be so different.”</i>	Focus group 5

The above responses from the students suggest that WIL is a known term, but what is missing is the application part.

In the next question, students were asked about the adequacy of the transition to the workplace.

The question posed was:

- b) Do you believe that you were adequately prepared for the transition into the workplace?

Excerpt 4.28: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on whether students were adequately prepared for transition.**

Students had this to say:

<i>What I learnt in class really prepared me for real what we did was more in depth in the terms of the field of study.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“in the PR department yes, because we have assignments where we get to do community work and that helps us to be familiar with the work environment.”</i>	Focus group 4

Focus groups 1 and 4 indicated that they were adequately prepared.

Excerpt 4.29: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on different responses on adequate preparedness for transition.**

However, the following student groups had different opinions.

<i>” I think the problem comes in where if you are adequately prepared they require other things from us like office admin, finance and HR and budget, those sort of things...the NGO ... cause they do not have funds ,</i>	Focus group 2
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<p><i>so they try to get the one person who can do as much as possible, when you think you going in for one specific thing you end up doing a lot other things, a little bit more than your actual scope of what you learnt, but I think in terms of the PR side if we were actually just doing PR the answer would be a full on yes.”</i></p>	
<p><i>“No, not fully prepared, I think I was half prepared if that makes sense because there was stuff, when I did get into the workplace, there were things that I didn’t know how to do and had to learn from my supervisor, like sending professional email. We weren’t taught that from our first to third year, they didn’t teach us how to send professional email and stuff like that, things that you would think are not important for a student to know.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 3</p>

The above responses indicate that students felt that they were not fully prepared and that the industry expected more than what they had learned.

The responses reveal that the majority of students agreed that they were not fully prepared for the transition. The Experiential Learning policy (2006:4) indicates that the orientation of students for WIL or graduate placement must be achieved through a work-preparedness program. The PR Department has a work preparedness programme in place which they believe covers work preparation within the stipulated time.

C) Do you believe that you were adequately prepared for oral and written communication, teamwork and collaboration and problem-solving skills?

Excerpt 4.30: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on communication, teamwork and collaboration, as well as problem-solving skills preparedness.

Students had this to say about communication:

<i>" ... , well I wasn't a shy person in class, but when you go into the work environment you need to prepare yourself to fit in that environment because you so used of being with your classmates, so you need to be able to come forward and speak and be able to share your ideas and stuff like that."</i>	Focus group 3
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Focus group 3 believed that over and above the training received, one needed to be prepared for Industry and 'hit the ground running'. The onus is on students to catch up fast and be prepared for Industry.

According to Dean and Clements (2010:286), learning soft skills is important for professional and organisational success. Soft skills are often interchanged with the term 'generic skills', or contrasted with hard, technical skills and discipline-specific skills. The definition of 'soft skills' includes communication skills (Stovall and Stovall 2009), interpersonal skills and elements of personal characteristics such as emotions and values (Kohler 2004). Soft skills have been linked to employability (Stovall and Stovall 2004), expectations of industry and professional bodies (Jackson 2009b, Murphy and Callaway 2008) and according to Goleman (1995), soft skills can attribute to an individual's success or failure more so than technical skills or intelligence. The development of these skills can therefore be critical in the preparation of students for the workforce.

Therefore, workshops are critical platforms for the development and empowerment of students.

d) What other areas would you have liked to be trained in?

Excerpt 4.31: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on other areas that students would like to be trained in.**

Students had this to say about communication:

<i>“Digital Marketing”</i>	Focus Group 1
<i>“Marketing”</i>	Focus Group 2
<i>“Writing Press Release”</i>	Focus Group 3
<i>“Radio work”</i>	Focus Group 4
<i>“Digital technologies”</i>	Focus Group 5

When it came to other areas of training that students felt that they needed in the PR field, the findings reveal the following which students felt were not adequately covered in the syllabus:

- *Digital marketing.* This includes digital technologies such as Photoshop. This was not taught in class and this seems to be a requirement for jobs. Students felt that more training on social media marketing was required.
- *Marketing.* Marketing is a fundamental of PR and yet it seemed that students were not taught much in class when it came to practice. They advised that more practical marketing training is required.
- More training on writing press releases was highlighted. They felt that this was an important component of PR, which was required in the workplace.
- One respondent felt that radio work was their passion, and they wished to have more training and exposure on that aspect.

The responses highlighted some of the areas that the students indicated they would like additional training in, which correlate with the requirements for the PR profession skills, but are not included in the curriculum.

6.1.2 THEME TWO: COMPANY RESPONSIBILITY IN WIL DEVELOPMENT

The data gathered in the context of the company responsibility in developing students is analysed and discussed in this section and the responses are presented.

The question posed was:

- a) “How easy was it to fit in the company’s culture and to build relationships?”

Excerpt 4.32: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on fitting in the company’s culture and building relationships.**

Students had varied experiences:

<i>“it was not easy because I was working with people (teachers) that presented difficulties as their thoughts and ideas were different.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“ my inputs were not recognised due to the others being ‘more experienced’ and hence they considered inputs more that the students.”</i>	Focus group 3
<i>“For me there were many barriers but if I could interpret barriers in another way I could say that my input was sometimes not regarded and recognized because there were more experienced people than meso it was more of just finish what you came here for and go.”</i>	Focus group 3
<i>“So that does happen, they make you sort of a team player, because you do all your work efficiently and when you become too good sometimes it becomes a</i>	Focus group 4

<i>problem and they pull you back. So adapting was a bit of a conflict.”</i>	
<i>“It was hard since it was multi-cultural and it was not easy as I ended up working ten months we would clash in religion so sometimes it was hard having to defend my religion as I was the only black amongst [name of the religion] and they would want to force me to part take on their religion.”</i>	Focus group 5

All respondents felt this was a difficult task and even though the WIL programmes tried to prepare them for this, they still experienced problems with adapting and applying learning in the workplace. Different aspects such as mentors’ thoughts and ideas were different; their inputs were not sufficient; they felt intimidated by experienced people; and even at multicultural environments became a barrier.

- b) Were there any barriers that hampered your progress in the industry and how did you overcome those barriers?

Excerpt 4.33: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on the barriers that hampered progress and how these were overcome.

The students had this to say:

<i>“For me there were no barriers but if I could interpret barriers in another way I could say that my input was sometimes not regarded and recognized because there were more experienced people than meso it was more of just finish what you came here for and go.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“I felt that the work was too administrative as opposed to real PR work.”</i>	Focus group 1

<i>“a supervisor that have a tendency to to say anything without thinking about others and the student had to developed high tolerance levels.”</i>	Focus group 2
<i>“sometimes just take what they say and not say anything about it, because you need that experience, so avoid confrontation, there will always be drama that on its own prepares you”</i>	Focus group 3
<i>“It was hard since it was multi-cultural and it was not easy as I ended up working ten months, we would clash in religion so sometimes it was hard having to defend my religion as I was the only black amongst {religion name] and they would want to force me to part take on their religion.”</i>	Focus group 4
<i>“...., our personalities, for a quiet reserved person I’m sure they wouldn’t be able to survive or connect to people in the work place, but for us we don’t take things to heart.”</i>	Focus group 5
<i>“you watch what you say and sometimes just take what they say and not say anything about it, because you need that experience, so avoid confrontation, there will always be drama, that on its own prepares you.”</i>	Focus group 5
<i>“One had to be pre-emptive when speaking and think carefully before speaking.”</i>	Focus group 5

Focus groups 3, 4 and 5 consistently agreed that barriers such as confrontation, multi culturalism and different personalities prevailed.

It was evident that besides attending lectures, students felt that it was important to attend workshops to guide them with barriers in the workplace and to understand their rights as gazetted in the SA Constitution.

Chapter 2 of the Constitution of SA, containing the Bill of Rights, states that everyone has the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion. Section 9, the equality clause, prohibits unfair discrimination on various grounds including religion (Mogoeng 2015).

Therefore, students have to be encouraged to attend workshops and to familiarize themselves with knowledge about diversity since South Africa is a democratic country with diverse cultures, religions, etc.

6.1.3 THEME THREE: WORKPLACE SURVIVAL

- a) Did you receive assistance from the PR department for placement?

Excerpt 4.34: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on whether assistance was received from the PR department.**

Students had this say:

<p><i>“Placement it wasn’t that difficult because I just put my application everywhere so it came back.”</i></p> <p><i>“ I went there because we did assignments during our first year so after trying several places I remembered that oh I could try and get a place there and I did get a job or internship or whatever it is yes.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 2</p>
<p><i>“The department was assisting certain students that did go forward but I didn’t get assistance from them I knew of the department cooperative education and I sent my CV there by myself and they normally place students into WIL, so they interviewed me and I did my WIL at cooperative education.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 4</p>
<p><i>“Well not me which is why I ended up in high school.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 4</p>

<i>"I actually placed myself"</i>	Focus group 5
<i>"The department was assisting certain students that did go forward but I didn't get assistance from them I knew of the department (name of the department) and I sent my CV there by myself and they normally place students into WIL, so they interviewed me and I did my WIL with them."</i>	Focus group 5
<i>"Well I did not get my WIL on the PR department, you know how in South Africa we are, we struggle a lot in terms of getting jobs out there. I ended up getting Secretary's placement at a high school and that was a completely different experience. So, it was okay since I studied communications because I communicated with people a lot...."</i>	Focus group 2
<i>"we placed ourselves"</i>	Focus group 3

All respondents indicated that they did not receive assistance from the Department with respect to their placement.

The DUT WIL Policy (2011) states that the University will make every effort to facilitate relevant Experiential Learning placement for students. However, the University cannot guarantee Experiential Learning placement. Where placements are unavailable or limited, the University may develop options for students so that they may complete the programme.

The above results reveal that the Department has a challenge with placing students. Respondents affirmed that they were not assisted and in turn had to place themselves. This was through their own applications and approaching departments.

b) Did actual WIL experience meet your expectations?

Excerpt 4.35: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on whether WIL experience met expectations.**

Students had this to say:

<i>“Yes they were enough because I was running events, doing photography and liaising with international students which is what we learnt in class.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“For me it was adequate because it was everything that I had learnt in class apart from out sourced studies like law but the rest that was media related, public relations and communications was there.”</i>	Focus group 3
<i>“in my terms I’d say yes because I learnt that what I’ve seen in my department has some correlation”</i>	Focus group 3

Focus groups 1 and 3 consistently indicated that the WIL experience met their expectations and they benefitted tremendously.

However, there were a considerable number of students that were not prepared for the world of work and they blame it on the Programme and WIL Coordinator:

<i>“Not all aspects of the working world were covered in the studies aspect.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“This made some students feel as if they lacked knowledge in certain areas. This included practical duties such as sending a professional email amongst other things.”</i>	Focus group 2
<i>“No, not fully prepared, I think I was half prepared..... there were things that I didn’t know and had to learn from my supervisor, like sending professional email. We</i>	Focus group 3

<i>weren't taught that from our first to third year, they didn't think they are important for a student to know</i>	
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Correspondingly, a student felt that the PR Department should focus on finding companies that were more intense and specialised in PR.

<i>"Some companies such as NPOs were not very strong on PR and student felt that there were times that they were not doing PR work but other areas of work that were not related."</i>	Focus Group 4
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According to Rebetak and Bartosova (2019:257), NPOs are important because they are part of the third sector of the economy, also known as the voluntary, civic, community or non-profit sector. The sector consists of organizations whose motive is social, religious or ethical mission. Therefore, NPOs survive on donations and fundraisings.

The findings reveal that students placed with the relevant companies had an opportunity to gain enough and relevant WIL exposure and experience. However, students that were placed on this sector had challenges as many of the NPOs do not have a designated PR department. Therefore, chances of gaining WIL experience are minimal as they focus mainly on fundraising.

- c) "Was the internship time-frame adequate to complete the aims and objectives of the WIL programme?"

Excerpt 4.36: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on the adequacy of the internship time-frame to complete the aims and the objectives of the WIL programme.

The students had this to say:

<i>"It was too long because I wasn't getting paid and also I learnt so much in one week and it was easy because I was doing something I love."</i>	Focus group 1
<i>"Six months is quite a long time to get trained.....because we got about two weeks training and then we were on our own, so it's more than enough."</i>	Focus group 2
<i>" I think a year will be sufficient ,"</i>	Focus group 2 and 4
<i>" I think the whole WIL programme needs to be reviewed because sometimes they say you need to do certain work for three months and if you don't what happens to you because they don't elaborated which task you should do, the need to choose on the tasks or the period."</i>	Focus group 2
<i>"it was okay.."</i>	Focus Group 3 and 5

The findings reveal that Focus Groups 1 and 2 had mixed feelings and different opinions regarding the internship period. Amongst Groups 1 and 2, some have an opinion that the timeframe was too long. However, some members had an opinion that it was more than enough. Both Focus Groups could not reach a consensus on the issue of time-frame. However, Focus Group 4 felt that a year would be sufficient and would allow students to finalise all the projects that they worked on.

The findings reveal that Groups 3 and 5 were comfortable with the time-frame.

However, the onus rests on both the WIL Coordinator and the WIL industry Supervisor as they have to agree on time-frames as per the module.

- d) Which skills (soft/hard) do you believe are necessary for the survival of students in workplace?

Excerpt 4.37: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on necessary skills for survival in the workplace.

The majority of the students were responding in one word and had this to say:

<i>“Office etiquette”</i>	Focus Group 4
<i>“Personality”</i>	Focus Group 4
<i>“Public speaking”</i>	Focus group 3
<i>“Discipline”</i>	Focus group 2
<i>“To work under pressure”</i>	Focus group 4
<i>“Self-motivated”</i>	Focus group 5
<i>“Communication”</i>	Focus Group 3
<i>“Patience”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“Respect”</i>	Focus group 1

When the researcher probed further, a student had this to say:

<i>” People can get on your nerves, but if you are patient person you can take it in and do what you are expected to do.”</i>	Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 3
<i>“...and its females who do it to females and its unnecessary because this lady has a doctorate viewed anybody who didn’t have equivalent or more as not worth it.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“Self-discipline, self-motivation,.... also our lectures will tell us that what we are learning in class is what we will use in the work place, it helped me a lot to apply all the knowledge that I learnt in class.”</i>	Focus group 2

<p><i>“what I can say is that one should teach themselves to work under pressure before even going to the workplace. When you get there you have to work under pressure and also teach yourself to work alone, never depend on other people hey. Because you can depend on another person and when it’s time for submission you’re going to be the only one that’s going to be late be independent. Yes work cohesively in groups but teaches yourself to be independent and meet deadlines at times.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 4</p>
<p><i>“Yes I would like to agree with what he just said and another thing is to be disciplined in terms of being punctual like going to work and stuff that is very important because they don't make for good recommendation and taking initiative as a PR student or PR graduate or practitioner you must take Initiative in everything you do like for instance if there's a campaign you need to take initiative don't wait for like the CEO to tell you what to do you want to research to take pics for all that stuff you need to take initiative and know what's going on even before they know it so that's what I would advise another person .”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 4</p>
<p><i>“PR works in the public sector are unlike in the private sector. As a PR personal you can come with the ideas and then you can make them come to life. In the [name of the Ministry] field there are rules and regulations, if you want to talk to the media.... you want to have a media briefing.....you have to have a media plan and release has to go to the minister.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 4</p>
<p><i>“Some industries are very stringent on this. One cannot just write and release any media or make media statement</i></p>	<p>Focus group 5</p>

<i>without approval. Hence rules and protocols must be followed. Students are shown how to write and media releases for sensitive industries. Students are taught about channels to go through for the approval process before media is released.”</i>	
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The findings reveal that communication amongst the stakeholders during placements is important as that encourages a good relationship, yet is still teaching discipline. When students are on placement, they develop essential skills such as communication and problem-solving, while applying classroom-learnt knowledge (Dean and Clements 2010:289)

Therefore, communication is an integral skill and it has to be encouraged for everybody that is involved in the WIL programme.

e) Do you believe that visits from the WIL Coordinator were sufficient during your placement?

Excerpt 4.38: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on the sufficiency of visit by the WIL Coordinator during placement.

Students had this to say about visits during their placement:

<i>“No I was not visited, I did everything myself no one bothered to ask that [name of the student] where are you doing you’re in service training, I just collected my log book and submitted it with on one’s support.”</i>	Focus group 1
<i>“Yes, apparently it’s compulsory for them to try and visit at least once to get in contact with your mentor or whoever you are working for, they have to have an open</i>	Focus group 4

<i>line of communication, and when you have a logbook that is also how they communicate.”</i>	
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One student lamented that visiting should not be only when there is a complaint.

<i>“yes oh she did but it wasn’t on a nice note because she came there as a result of a complaint.....”</i>	Focus Group 3
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The student who had a different experience had this to say:

<i>” I can’t say that I wasn’t totally checked on, but they did come to the office once for the meeting that did happen. I think it’s easier because they travel within campus, but I think people out of campus are more important cause those are corporate relations that need to be kept.”</i>	Focus Group 1
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Findings reveal that many students said the WIL Coordinator never visited them. According to the students, visits are important as they reinforce support for the student and also as courtesy and interest shown to the organisation.

One student sympathised with the WIL Coordinator that it will be too much to visit all the WIL students on placements.

<i>“I think maybe WIL visits to the corporate , and you know to be honest there is like 80 of us in one year 3rd year class for one WIL coordinator it’s a lot of paper work it’s a lot of calls ,it’s a lot of emails, it’s a lot of visits and not all our students are placed in Durban so for one person to be going up and down its quite a bit, so I think they should have a WIL coordinator and someone to assist them or two WIL coordinators</i>	Focus Group 4
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<p><i>maybe , because remember will coordinators are also staff members, they are lecturers, supervisors and they have meetings they are busy it's not like they can just go anywhere, they also have to schedule meetings and sometimes corporate won't pay attention to those meetings. If it's a large number over 30 or 40 then it should be split up to two people at least so that more attention is given to those out on internships, internally they could go wherever cause there is only just 10 of us so if you looking at 75 - 10 its equal to 65 other students that are out on internships."</i></p>	
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Another student perceived using technology like electronic mail as the means of contacting WIL Coordinator as an alternative.

<p><i>"We do communicate through emails and I also have to take into consideration the fact that there are some students that she also needs to attend to however she has not visited me yet."</i></p>	<p>Focus Group 5</p>
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e) Did you receive any support from DUT? Please explain what and how?

Excerpt 4.39: **Focus Group Semi – structured interview on whether students received support from DUT.**

Three groups of students gave a straight answer that they did not receive support.

<p><i>"no"</i></p>	<p>Focus Groups 1,3,4</p>
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However, two Focus groups did receive support and they responded in one word:

"yes"	Focus Groups 2 and 5
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Findings reveal that students did not find support from DUT.

However, one student had this to say about support:

<i>"Support shouldn't just be the responsibility of the Coordinator, but also the student has to ask for it."</i>	Focus Group 2
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Another student had this to say about support:

<i>"Yes me as well I did get support from DUT as we would communicate with my lectures through emails and I also think it's not only up to the lecture to do the check-up but us also as students we need to go a consult with our lectures and we had classes once so if you need more clarity you would need to go and see your lecture. I think you felt like you didn't get enough support from DUT you should go and ask for it since there were people who are our coordinators."</i>	Focus Group 5
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The findings above reveal that it is evident that communication, visits and support during placement are important. Students felt that they did not get enough of this support.

Therefore, the WIL Coordinator has to visit placed students at the site to ensure that they are placed at the right site and that the WIL supervisor is allocating appropriate tasks as mandated by the Experiential learning policy (2006: 4).

- f) What is your overall WIL experience? Please elaborate.

When students were asked about their overall WIL experience, the data revealed some interesting findings and experiences that were made up of positive outcomes.

Excerpt 4.40: Focus Group Semi – structured interview on the students’ overall experience.

Students had this to say:

<p><i>” I’ve gained a lot of experience I’ve gained a lot of things. Computer wise I was not very good, but now that I’m working at [name of an NPO] I’m very good now I could say. When it came to donations and everything I wasn’t good so now fundraising I’m very good at it.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 1</p>
<p><i>“WIL programme provided direction on where I wanted to be in their career.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 1</p>
<p><i>“Confident on attaining senior roles.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 2</p>
<p><i>” yeah I’ve gained a lot, we’d always joke and say the work we’ve done in this company I’m sure if we were to be taken to another company, we’d take on the management level because of the experience that we’ve got and this is the sixth month now so when we going to the Municipality I’m sure we’d work hand in hand with the Mayor. That’s the kind of experience we got from here. It was very helpful.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 2</p>
<p><i>” I enjoyed it, it did help me gain the experience that I need but there were certain things I wasn’t ready for, but it was good over all.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 2</p>
<p><i>“For me it was good I learnt a lot but it was a bit hectic with the NPO’s, they work you until you are tired from the morning 7: 30 when you get there until 16:30 there is like no break.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 2</p>

<i>"...that also prepared you because in the work place there are a lot of petty people. If you don't know anybody who is petty you will soon, people are petty petty petty."</i>	Focus group 3
<i>"It was ok because I got the experience."</i>	Focus group 3
<i>"It was great even now I still go and visit because of they treated me."</i>	Focus group 4
<i>"For me it was great, I did my WIL for ten months and ended up being hired for two years and even now I'm still working there."</i>	Focus group 4
<i>"To get an opportunity with an organization that is going to make you work is very good so it's easier to get permanent employment and in that permanent job you able to adjust easily and survive. But some other things are still ridiculous like filing."</i>	Focus group 4
<i>"Yes definitely, I have already recommended PR to people I just hope that maybe the syllabus can change in a way and be able to equip the students more for the work environment, incorporate more stuff that's required in the working environment."</i>	Focus group 4
<i>"enjoy the experience of being at an organisation and gaining the practical experience."</i>	Focus group 4
<i>"it's good though it's better, because there were some days where I went there and did nothing."</i>	Focus group 5
<i>"...and there were some aspects of the WIL that we were not prepared for."</i>	Focus group 5
<i>"The opportunity to work with/in an organization is the most rewarding experiences as this promotes the potential of employment. Like myself, I ended up being"</i>	Focus group 5

<i>employed for 2 years by the same organisation where I carried out my WIL for 10 months.”</i>	
<i>“.....I learnt a lot from my supervisor like how to do emails, how to conduct myself in front of colleagues as well as networking and helping to network with other people, we used to do international conferences so I got to meet people from like Germany and stuff like that, so it was good networking experience for me.”</i>	Focus group 5
<i>“For me it was easy as I was doing my WIL in a Non-Profit Organization and before I got there I was not. With a background in PR events planning so it was much easy for me because all those were my responsibilities and already I had learnt that in class.”</i>	Focus group 5
<i>“Yes as I have said that with studying communications in PR, I would communicate with the students, liaise with the stake holders for those students who couldn't afford school fees and look for bursaries for them.”</i>	Focus group 5

Despite the overall experience, findings reveal that the following challenges were experienced:

Students had this to say about their overall experience:

<i>“There was a time where you do nothing and sometimes I was given menial duties, like making tea and doing filing.”</i>	Focus group 3
<i>“Some people could be rude and petty.”</i>	Focus group 3

<p><i>“Some employees seem to be very authoritarian and title driven especially those with “Dr” title .He was very demanding and I felt very overworked and strained.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 4</p>
<p><i>“I ended up in a role (secretary) which was completely different from what the studied and only some of her experience could be applied.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 5</p>
<p><i>“I felt like the NPO’s don’t have funding so sometimes they don’t even have that department, so you sit there the whole day and you don’t do anything, I think the institution should have relationships with more PR companies, like real hard-core companies where we can get real experience..... a real PR firm like a consultancy”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 5</p>
<p><i>“.....that the choice of what tasks to do can be confusing as the organisation tells you what to do but does not elaborate on what is most important to do. This create confusion.”</i></p>	<p>Focus group 5</p>

The findings also reveal that businesses seek talented, work-ready graduates who have the right skills set for the right job and are potential future employees of choice. Governments seeks to grow the economy; offset the misalignment of skill supply-demand statistics to mitigate the scarce and critical skills shortage; and solve the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Educators, especially HEIs, aim to create future–fit graduates with relevant knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and workplace experience.

Students seek hands-on multiskilling experiences and knowledge in order to cope with and gain successful employment in a global, multilingual, multicultural, multigenerational workplace after graduation (Wait and Govender 2016:5).

The overall assumption is that WIL provides students with opportunities to experience professional life, with the notion that such experience will promote knowledge development.

Students have indicated that the time-frame is crucial as the period spent at the workplace allows the student to gain much exposure. Students also indicated that the correct placement has a huge impact on the outcome of WIL and the experiences gained.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

6.2.1 PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WIL PROGRAMME

The researcher believes that an initiative by the DUT of workshopping students is imperative as students learn about other soft skills that will be needed in the workplace. Therefore, students have to be continuously encouraged to attend.

Furthermore, regular input via advisory boards in terms of proposing improvements serve to re-align the curriculum and more emphasis on 'transition' should be recommended for future WIL programmes. As far as the perceived benefits of the programme were concerned, confidence, trust and innovation were highlighted as important. Time-frames should be considered as one of the important elements during WIL placement as it will assist the Industry Supervisor on how to allocate work to students. Supervisors were concerned that six months was not enough.

Consistent with this, respondents 1, 9 and 10 correspondently remarked that public speaking was most lacking and should be addressed. Respondent 2 asserted that self-confidence was another important area that deserved enhancement. Other respondents believed that skills, such as computer skills and office etiquette especially punctuality and good dress sense, were required to be developed by the PR Department in the training of their students.

6.2.2 PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRENT WIL PROGRAMME

Support and flexibility from the PR Department was seen as mandatory as a factor to support WIL. An overall feeling was that it was a two-way process and that the work environment needs to be supportive in whatever way it can towards students and in return, the PR Department must guide employers through regular communication and sufficient feedback. Students were adamant that over and above the training received, one needed to be prepared for Industry and should be prepared to 'hit the ground running'. They should be prepared over and above the curriculum. They agreed that barriers such as confrontation, multi culturalism and different personalities prevailed.

6.2.3 CONSIDERATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INDUSTRY

The Industry Supervisors experienced some challenges and barriers that related to transition, student calibre, logbook inconsistency and lacking etiquette. Some strategies to overcome challenges and barriers were recommended by the Industry Supervisors.

Industries are able to create opportunities, but students need to come to work with the right attitude. The institution has a responsibility to encourage good attitudes in students for WIL. Furthermore, they should also not feel as if they are in WIL just for the sake of it. Hence more mind-set change must be encouraged for students. WIL students are expected to think and act as employees and attain an employee type

status in the workplace by giving respective support to the department, conducting themselves as employees, becoming employable, attracting and retaining donors.

WIL students must be able to carry themselves out as employees and do their work accordingly, instead of still thinking they are students. WIL students need to be able to perform from the start to the end of the project and carry out duties successfully.

Professionalism is a key expectation of students, which is informed by trust, organised and dress code. WIL students need to be diligent and follow the rules of work and are expected to learn and become self-sustainable whereby they can host their own events and become leaders in their field.

Socializing students also needs to be considered during the initial meeting with the Industry Supervisor. The Industry Supervisor has to inform the WIL student of what is expected of him/her, as well as to set rules and regulations for the health and safety of students in placement.

Whilst it is the supervisors' responsibility to allocate work, the student also needs to be responsible to ensure that all the aspects and topics that are in the logbook are covered. Additionally, setting goals and targets were helpful to ensure that work and deadlines are met in accordance with the logbook. Weekly meetings between the Industry Supervisor and students with their logbooks are encouraged. This ensures that work done is not forgotten or left out and the portfolio of evidence supporting the work done must be provided accordingly.

Therefore, more engagement between industry and the institutions as well as students is encouraged. This engagement can be informal, like in the form of 'breakfast sessions'.

More office etiquette training is needed as students lacked this and after the period of 6 months is complete, this etiquette might take a further drop in standard. Nevertheless, WIL students cannot be spoon-fed as they have to attain employees' status and they need to think on their feet and be able to adapt and work almost immediately. WIL students should not be followed all the time, but instead use and apply their knowledge and skills. Industries must provide serious work for students.

WIL students cannot just remain in industry for six months doing menial work or doing nothing. General etiquette that included dressing professionally, more office etiquette skills and more interactions between students was another concern. Industry Supervisors recommended continuous interactions between the WIL Coordinator and the WIL Industry Supervisor regarding the WIL student's performance.

Improvement for WIL student abilities is also needed to be enhanced in relation to communication skills, computer skills and knowledge, flexibility in terms of having a good attitude/ being nice with/to others so they could receive help from others if needed, as is public speaking and time management.

Furthermore, students needed to be orientated to the demands and requirements of the WIL programme. Supervisors also noted that some students often arrive confused about what is expected of them. Therefore, it is recommended that the WIL student's roles and expectations must be clarified from the onset.

6.3 CONCLUSION

The results revealed that Work Integrated Learning is an important component of the curriculum. The different WIL stakeholder groups were able to affirm their perceptions and expectations with regard to WIL in the PR curriculum. The findings indicate that WIL should be nurtured and treated as a key commodity, which will have positive implications for education, employment, the labour force and ultimately the socio-economic environment of the country.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the analysis of data gathered from the interviews and focus groups were presented. In this chapter, conclusions are drawn from the findings from the PR WIL Coordinator, WIL Industry supervisors, as well as PR WIL students from DUT. The purpose of this study was to attempt to make recommendations for an approach that would improve the design and delivery of career-focussed WIL for the National Diploma: Public Relations Management students at DUT. An attempt was made to understand and interpret the bridge between education and the world of work.

7.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

The study contained five chapters which directed readers, from the identification of the research problem and aim of the research to the ultimate fulfilment of the research objectives.

Chapter One provided a framework of the study. It introduced the purpose of the study, a background to the study, the explanation of the research problem and the research aim and objectives.

Chapter Two and Three reviewed the literature that revealed that there are discrepancies and a correlation between a PR WIL student, WIL supervisor and the WIL coordinator with regard to the WIL programme.

Chapter Four outlined the research design and methodology that was used in this study. The research design, which was qualitative in nature, the target population,

sampling procedure, data collection instruments, as well as data analysis techniques were explained.

Chapter Five and Six presented an in-depth analysis of the research data. The chapters presented the analysis based on the themes that emerged in the literature. It further highlighted the findings of the research.

Chapter Seven

This chapter discusses the research conclusions. The findings are compared to the research question and each objective in order to determine the extent to which the objectives were realised. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations for future research.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

The study commenced with the following research question:

What are the expectations of the various stakeholders in the WIL process and how could one ensure the betterment of work placement for effective collaboration between Industry and the University?

The aim of this study was to investigate the stakeholder expectations and the perceptions of the WIL programme within the Public Relations Programme at DUT in KZN.

The objectives of the study was derived from the research problem.

Objective 1: To assess the perceived effectiveness of the WIL programme in relation to industry needs;

Objective 2: To assess the perceptions of the PR WIL students, WIL Co-ordinator and WIL Industry mentors of the current WIL Programme; and

Objective 3: • To assess whether there is a need for Industry to make recommendations on the curriculum for current and future effectiveness.

The next section will discuss the conclusion from the perspective of each research objective.

Objective 1: Effectiveness of the WIL programme in relation to industry needs.

The findings revealed that relevant placement had a huge impact on the outcome of the WIL programme. At the same time, the study found appropriate placements for students to be a major challenge for both the institution and the student. On the other Hand, the availability of qualified / skilled and committed Industry Supervisors to assist with the effectiveness of the WIL programme played an important role and assisted with the facilitation of the programme between the university and industry.

The study also revealed that the correct student-coordinator ratio was of utmost importance so that the coordinator will be able to visit all students in work placement, therefore meeting the requirements for a successful WIL programme. However, without the commitments and the willingness of the students to learn, meeting the needs and expectations of the WIL programme will not be a success.

Objective 2: The perceptions of the PR WIL students, WIL Co-ordinator and WIL Industry mentors of the current WIL Programme.

According to Wilson (2016), “For employers, it is a chance to engage and assess talented young people. For our students, it is the kind of real-world experience that makes their classroom work come alive”.

The study concluded that all students had a common objective of WIL, which was to put into practice what they had learnt in class in a practical working environment. However, for some students, the time-frame was too limited to conclude all the tasks in the logbook and they blamed the WIL Co-ordinator in that they felt they were not well prepared for the transition. In contrast, the institution perceived time as enough to complete all tasks without checking where the students were placed. The WIL Coordinator blamed the students that had challenges at the workplace since they did not attend the workshop.

According to the WIL Co-ordinator, workshops covered necessary skills that assisted students to survive in the workplace and to complete their tasks timeously. Furthermore, students also found the transition a challenge and felt that they were not prepared enough in terms of the skills and the expectations of the industry.

Objective 3: Are the recommendations from industry taken into consideration and what mechanisms are put in place to implement this into the curriculum?

This study revealed that the recommendations from the industry are taken into consideration. The study highlighted that the Advisory Board meetings were held on a regular basis. The advisory board minutes recorded that important stakeholders such as WIL employers were invited and made necessary suggestions for the betterment of the WIL programme. This therefore reveals that employers have been of assistance in the improvement of the curriculum.

7.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As in most studies, this particular research has its own limitations which are as follows:

7.4.1 The interviews were conducted in English as English was the second language of the majority of the respondents. Some students found it difficult to express their experiences and to describe their WIL experiences effectively because of the Language used. The study was conducted in both English and isiZulu to accommodate all students. This was however time consuming as sometimes another focus group or the Industry Supervisor had to be interviewed after that session.

7.4.2 Furthermore, the researcher is a DUT employee and some students were nervous to be honest during focus group discussions because they were doing their WIL at DUT. The researcher had to reassure them that their responses were anonymous and confidential.

7.4.3 Some organisation were not very PR-orientated. The gathering of information became limited and that had an impact on data analysis of the industry Supervisor's 'comments.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The entire scope of WIL could not be covered in this study. For that reason, the following recommendations are made:

7.5.1 This study only focused on the Public Relations Programme at one UOT, hence further research relating to Public Relations Programmes at other Universities could be considered.

7.5.2 WIL is not just an issue amongst the students, Industry Supervisor and the WIL coordinator. Therefore, broader studies should be conducted in the future to include other aspects relating to WIL, which can be well accepted by not only the tertiary institution, but the Industry as well.

7.5.3 Furthermore, research could look at the sufficiency of the workplace to offer training to Public Relations students.

7.6 CLOSING STATEMENT

The conclusions made here are based on an analysis of the data, as well as the research carried out during this study. This study established that although the PR WIL students highlighted challenges, they were enthusiastic about their work placement once completed.

The study also establish that students usually had the right attitude towards the WIL period. This indicated the appreciation of students for their work placement in the PR field and their interest in obtaining hands-on experience.

The PR WIL Supervisors indicated a need for placements as they also got an opportunity to learn from the students. Some supervisors, especially those with less experience, improved their supervisory skills and the company showcased that WIL is a possible and a positive initiative. Furthermore, the students' presence assisted in accomplishing many duties in a short space of time.

During the interview, the PR WIL Coordinator indicated that WIL is a very important part of the National Diploma and cannot be replaced with anything else. This indicates the crucial role that work placement plays in the Public Relations curriculum and its extreme importance in the Diploma in Public Relations.

CHAPTER EIG
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