

Exploring the Implementation of Work Integrated Learning Models on the Effectiveness of Student Professionalism in Hospitality Education: A Case Study of Dusit Thani College

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Abstract

In the dynamic landscape of hospitality education, institutions like Dusit Thani College have embraced innovative approaches such as Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills demanded by the industry. This study evaluates the effectiveness of Dusit Thani College's WIL model, comparing it with renowned institutions like École hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), aiming to identify best practices and challenges. Using qualitative research methods, this study collected data through interviews with 15 participants, including instructors and students from both Thai and international programs at Dusit Thani College, as well as industry partners. The sample was selected based on their involvement and experience with WIL programs. Findings underscore the transformative potential of WIL in preparing students for the hospitality workplace, emphasizing the significance of collaborative partnerships, authentic experiences, and aligned assessments. The "Triciprocity" agenda, fostering collaboration among universities, industry partners, and students, emerges as a pivotal strategy for optimizing WIL outcomes. However, challenges such as language barriers and strategic placement issues necessitate multifaceted solutions. The study concludes by outlining limitations and suggesting avenues for future research, aiming to enrich our understanding of professionalism in hospitality education and beyond.

Keywords: Work-Integrated Learning, Hospitality, Student Professionalism

Introduction

In the realm of hospitality education, Dusit Thani College has embraced an innovative approach called Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). This model goes beyond traditional classroom instruction by immersing students in real workplace settings, such as hotel internships, to provide a comprehensive learning experience. Additionally, within the context of Thailand, initiatives such as Thailand Skill Mapping have emerged, leveraging platforms like the one developed by King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL).

These efforts aim to bridge the gap between the skills demanded by the industry and those imparted through educational programs, thereby efforts that are being made to reduce or eliminate the disparity between the skills that industries require from their workforce and the skills that educational programs provide to students. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that graduates are better prepared to meet the demands of the workforce and that employers can find suitable candidates with the necessary skills and knowledge.

The primary objective is to enhance the effectiveness of students' professionalism in the field of hospitality. By equipping students with a well-rounded skill set that combines theoretical knowledge with practical expertise, the aim is to prepare them to navigate and excel in the dynamic landscape of the hospitality industry. This study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of Dusit Thani College's WIL model in achieving this objective, examining best practices, challenges, and outcomes through a detailed case study.

In order to provide a broader perspective, we will also explore the renowned École hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL), a leading hospitality management school globally. By comparing the approaches of Dusit Thani College and EHL, this research aims to identify effective strategies that contribute to increased professionalism in hospitality education.

In the contemporary global economy, where the hospitality sector plays a part in understanding the best ways to prepare students for success is paramount. This study is a guide for educators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, offering valuable and optimal educational methods for producing graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also exhibit a high level of professionalism in the fast-paced world of hospitality.

Research Objectives

1. Evaluate the Effectiveness of Dusit Thani College's WIL Model: The evaluation aims to comprehensively assess the impact of Dusit Thani College's Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) model. This involves a thorough examination of how effectively the WIL model bridges

the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills within the context of hospitality education. Through meticulous analysis and data collection, we seek to understand the extent to which students are able to apply theoretical concepts learned in the classroom to real-world scenarios encountered during their work experiences. Additionally, we aim to gauge the overall satisfaction and perceived value of the WIL program among students, faculty, and industry partners. By exploring various metrics such as student performance, employability rates, and industry feedback, we endeavor to provide a nuanced understanding of the WIL model's effectiveness in preparing students for successful careers in the hospitality industry.

2. Identify Best Practices in Implementing WIL: This phase of the study entails a comprehensive exploration and documentation of the best practices employed by Dusit Thani College in implementing the Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) model. Through interviews, observations, and analysis of institutional documents, we aim to identify the key strategies and practices that have contributed to the success of WIL integration into the curriculum. This includes examining how Dusit Thani College facilitates meaningful work experiences for students, fosters strong partnerships with industry stakeholders, and aligns WIL activities with learning objectives to enhance student learning outcomes. By uncovering these successful strategies, we seek to provide insights that can inform and inspire other institutions seeking to adopt or improve their own WIL initiatives.

3. Provide Recommendations for Enhancement: Building upon the findings from the evaluation and identification phases, this stage focuses on offering practical recommendations for enhancing the implementation of the WIL model at Dusit Thani College. Drawing upon evidence-based practices and stakeholder input, we propose actionable strategies for optimizing various aspects of the WIL program, including curriculum design, industry partnerships, student support services, and program evaluation mechanisms. These recommendations are aimed at fostering continuous improvement and innovation in hospitality education practices at Dusit Thani College, ultimately enhancing the educational experience and outcomes for students. Furthermore, in the event of the WIL program proving successful, we envision the possibility of extending its reach to other colleges, thereby democratizing access to high-quality experiential learning opportunities for students across diverse educational institutions.

Literature Review

Definition of Dusit Thani College's Work-Integrated Learning Model

Work-integrated learning (WIL) blends classroom instruction with real-world experience, preparing students for careers by bridging theory and practice. Through

initiatives like cooperative education, WIL fosters essential skills like teamwork and interpersonal communication. Tailored placements in settings such as hotels and restaurants offer valuable industry experience, enhancing students' readiness for success in their chosen fields.

Definition of Student Professionalism

Student professionalism refers to how well students in hospitality education demonstrate behaviors and skills expected in a professional setting. This includes ethics, effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and a commitment to high standards. (O'Sullivan, H., Van Mook, W., Fewtrell, R., & Wass, V. (2012))

3.3. The effectiveness of work-integrated learning in developing student work skills: EHL Hospitality Business School

EHL Hospitality Business School's Bachelor program in International Hospitality Management starts with a Preparatory Year, providing a solid foundation for students. They learn about hotel and restaurant operations while gaining insight into the hospitality sector to prepare for advanced coursework. In the first six months, students rotate through various departments on campus, followed by a six-month internship in the real world. This hands-on experience helps them develop essential skills and professionalism in a hospitality setting.

Related literatures

1) The Function of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in the Development of Human Capital Human capital theory highlights education and training's role in enhancing skills and societal impact. It emphasizes education's value in improving employability and earnings. Work-integrated learning, such as WIL placements, provides hands-on experience, contributing to skill development. Higher Education Institutions play a vital role by offering practical training in real workplaces, enhancing students' abilities.

2) The benefits of embedding work integrated learning

Career & Personal Benefits: Work placements offer graduates a direct route into the job market, facilitating quick integration into the workforce. They allow for practical application of skills, fostering collaboration and networking. Graduates benefit from informed career decisions and often enjoy higher starting salaries. Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) enhances career readiness by improving communication and decision-making skills. Successful placements boost confidence and shape professional identity, instilling workplace values.

Employer Benefits: Employers gain from work placement students by completing tasks at low cost, recruiting potential graduates, and bringing fresh ideas.

They also build relationships with universities for their image and expertise access. Work placements can lead to higher-level careers and further studies, even postgraduate research with previous employers.

Benefits for educational institutions: It provides educational institutions with several advantages. It enhances students' practical skills and academic performance while increasing their engagement by showing the real-world relevance of classroom learning. Additionally, offering WIL opportunities boosts the institution's reputation and fosters partnerships with businesses, creating collaborative opportunities and potential job placements for students. Overall, the success of students in WIL enhances the institution's standing in the education sector.

WIL serves as a bridge between academia and industry, fostering meaningful engagement that benefits both students and industry stakeholders. Through WIL partnerships, educational institutions can ensure the relevance and currency of their programs, while industry partners can contribute to the development of a skilled workforce and access emerging talent. (Ferns, S., Campbell, M., & Zegwaard, K. E., 2014)

3) Embracing "Triciprocity" Agenda

Industry and community partners' involvement in supervising students and providing feedback on their learning and workplace performance is crucial (Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2014). Collaborative efforts between universities and industry/community partners in curriculum development, supervision, and assessment feedback enhance the relevance and effectiveness of WIL programs.

Addressing language fluency challenges in WIL programs is vital. While language barriers are often perceived as hindrances to intercultural communication, under specific conditions, they can enhance visitors' enjoyment and contribute to cross-cultural interactions (Mancini-Cross, C., Backman, K. F., & Baldwin, E. D., 2009). Hence, structured collaboration among universities, industry/community partners, and students is essential for overcoming such challenges and fostering intercultural understanding.

In conclusion, embracing the "triciprocity" agenda, which emphasizes three-way collaboration among universities, industry/community partners, and students, is crucial for improving the quality and effectiveness of WIL programs. By integrating these insights into program design and implementation, institutions can enhance student learning outcomes and better prepare them for success in the hospitality industry.

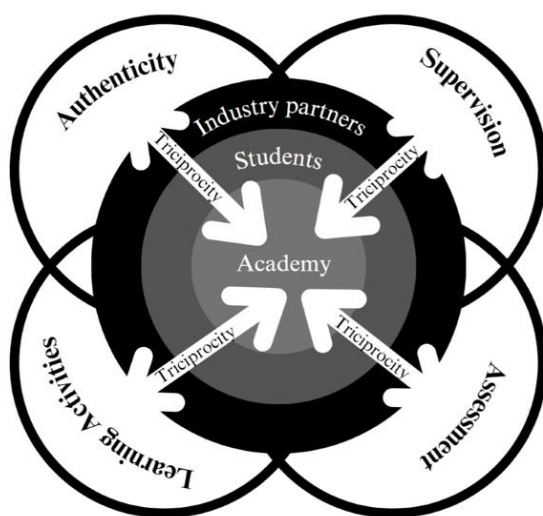


Figure 1 A representation of the "triprocity" agenda suggesting the three-way collaboration aimed at improving the quality of WIL (Smith, C. 2014)

5) Conceptual Framework

According to previous literature led to generate the proposition for conceptual framework:

Proposition 1: This proposition asserts that Dusit Thani College's WIL models should align with recognized industry standards for success (EHL Hospitality Business School).

Proposition 2: The SWOT analysis of Dusit Thani College's WIL models drives continuous program improvement by identifying internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats.

Proposition 3: SWOT findings inform the development of guidelines aimed at enhancing student professionalism within the hospitality education context.

Proposition 4: Industry standards serve as a foundation for creating guidelines that enhance student professionalism within Dusit Thani College's WIL models.

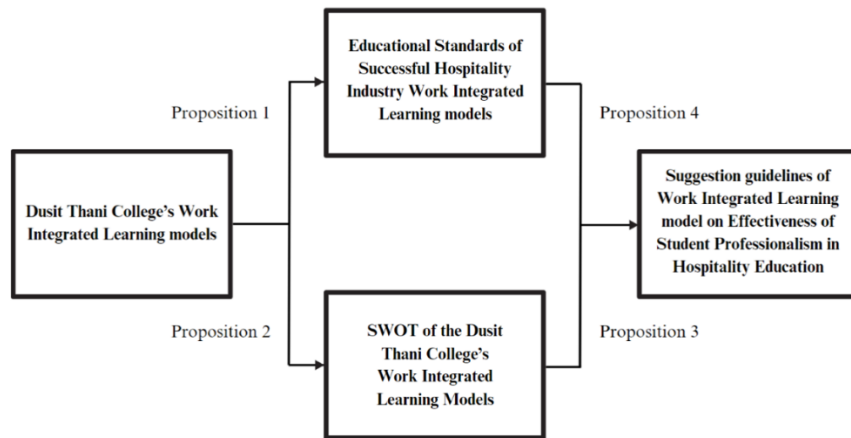


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework of Implementation of Dusit Thani College WIL models on the Effectiveness of student Professionalism in Hospitality Education

Research Methodology

Qualitative research, such as one-on-one interviews, delves deep into real-world problems, offering rich insights into individual experiences, perceptions, and behaviors. It uncovers nuances, motivations, and contextual factors often missed by quantitative methods, aiding theory development and practical problem-solving.

Measurement

The scope of the research encompasses participants from Dusit Thani College's Hotel and Resort Management Program, including instructors and students from both Thai and international programs across all academic years. Additionally, involvement from instructors or personnel associated with the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program, particularly from the EHL (École hôtelière de Lausanne), is sought if feasible. The sample size is targeted at 10-15 individuals, representing various stakeholders. This includes the Executive Dean responsible for approving the WIL program, two instructors from each program (Thai and international), and five students from each program across different academic years.

The sampling method employed is nonprobability, specifically judgmental, where participants are selected based on their expertise and knowledge relevant to the study's objectives. Data validation will involve comparing the research findings with existing academic literature, papers, journals, or other reputable sources to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The independent variables under scrutiny are the components comprising Dusit Thani College's Work Integrated Learning Model, while the dependent variables include the SWOT analysis of the college's WIL model and the educational standards associated with successful WIL models within the hospitality industry. This research aims to provide valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Dusit Thani College's WIL approach, while also assessing its alignment with educational standards and industry requirements for effective integration of academic learning and workplace experiences.

In addition to the outlined methodology, the interview questions will be structured into two distinct parts to effectively capture insights from both instructors and students. Instructors will discuss roles, challenges, strategies, and student performance. Students will reflect on expectations, growth, interactions, and challenges. Insights from both groups will inform a SWOT analysis and ensure alignment with industry standards. Data will be validated through triangulation with existing literature, enhancing credibility. This research aims to optimize the WIL program for student learning and career readiness in hospitality.

Results

Instructor Results

They emphasize the importance of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) as a crucial component of students' education, particularly in hospitality and hotel management. They outline a structured program where students progress through different levels of WIL over the course of their education, including operational, supervisory, and real internship experiences. Both instructors stress the significance of practical experience alongside theoretical knowledge, indicating that WIL accelerates learning and provides real-world exposure. They highlight the role of instructors and supervisors as facilitators and mentors during WIL, providing guidance, feedback, and assessing student progress. Challenges such as language barriers, readiness of students, and physical limitations are acknowledged by both instructors, who also discuss the need for improved supervision and coaching skills among staff. They mention the use of various assessment tools such as task checklists, logbooks, supervisor assessments, and examinations to evaluate student performance during WIL, emphasizing the importance of aligning WIL experiences with curriculum objectives to ensure students gain necessary skills and knowledge. Opportunities for students to secure employment post-graduation through WIL experiences are discussed, alongside threats such as language barriers and physical challenges. Moreover, at present, the Dusit Corporate Office, especially the Learning &

Development department, is assisting staff at Dusit Princess Srinakarin Bangkok in developing their coaching techniques and English proficiency in order to make the Work Integrated Learning Model more effective. Add on, they suggest that Dusit Princess Srinakarin Bangkok implement Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for their staff to measure and monitor operational performance across the organization. Overall, both instructors stress the transformative potential of WIL in preparing students for careers in the hospitality industry, while also highlighting the need for continuous improvement and adaptation to address challenges and optimize outcomes.

Student Results

Upon analysis of the interview results, it becomes evident that Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) plays a pivotal role in shaping students' preparedness for internships within the hospitality industry. Participants express appreciation for the opportunity to acquire essential skills like communication and negotiation, which are crucial for their professional development. The exposure provided by WIL offers a glimpse into the realities of the workplace, fostering confidence and familiarity with industry dynamics among students (Govender, C. M., & Wait, M. (2017). However, challenges such as language barriers and discrepancies between classroom teachings and workplace practices are noted. Suggestions for improvement include additional training, language programs, and strategic scheduling of WIL placements during busier periods. The choice of venue emerges as a significant factor influencing the effectiveness of WIL, with newer establishments being favored for enhanced learning opportunities. Additionally, participants acknowledge the need for adaptation to external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, proposing alternative activities during low-guest periods. Despite these challenges, the diverse experiences offered by WIL placements contribute to a well-rounded education for students, preparing them for the multifaceted nature of the hospitality industry.

SWOT Analysis of Dusit Thani College's Work Integrated Learning Model

Strengths: Dusit Thani College's WIL program cultivates essential skills like effective communication and teamwork vital for success in hospitality. Rotations across hotel departments offer a comprehensive view of industry roles, aligning theory with practical experience. Rigorous attendance monitoring fosters accountability, while dedicated facilities like the Mahogany Dining room provide hands-on learning in real-world scenarios.

Weaknesses: Academic-Workplace Discrepancies hinder effective knowledge application in hospitality. Limited Exposure Opportunities due to time constraints restrict

skill development. Inconsistent Employer Engagement affects guidance quality. Logistic Challenges disrupt program execution, impacting learning. Limited Assessment Opportunities delay feedback, hindering skill improvement.

Opportunities: Strategic Partnerships with establishments like the "Dusit Princess Srinakarin" hotel can broaden WIL placements, providing diverse practical experiences. Enriched Support Services like counselling or mentorship programs can enhance students' WIL journey, aiding in overcoming challenges and boosting satisfaction. Integration of Technological Innovations such as virtual simulations enhance traditional WIL, offering immersive learning and keeping students updated on industry trends for improved adaptability.

Threats: Threats to the effectiveness of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) programs encompass various challenges arising from workplace or industry partners and broader industry dynamics. Workplace or industry partners may face limitations, such as venue constraints and staff members' language skill deficits, which can impede the availability and effectiveness of WIL initiatives. Economic downturns and shifts in the hospitality sector pose significant risks to WIL availability and program effectiveness, while technological advancements necessitate continuous curriculum updates to maintain relevance and equip students with essential digital skills. Moreover, competition among WIL programs may impact partner and student attraction, further complicating program sustainability. Regulatory challenges present compliance risks that require adept navigation to avoid disruptions to WIL activities. Additionally, shifts in consumer preferences highlight the necessity of aligning WIL programs with emerging industry demands to ensure students' career success in an evolving landscape. These threats necessitate proactive strategies and collaborative efforts to address potential barriers and optimize the impact of WIL initiatives in hospitality education.

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusion

The findings from our research shed light on the critical role of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in shaping student professionalism and readiness for the hospitality workplace, specifically within the context of Dusit Thani College. Through a structured examination of the WIL model, we have identified key components that significantly influence student preparedness and the challenges faced by the institution. Drawing from these insights, we offer practical recommendations for enhancing Dusit Thani College's WIL model to sustain effectiveness in preparing students for successful integration into the hospitality industry.

Firstly, our investigation underscores the substantial impact of WIL placements on employability outcomes. We recognize that the quality of placements, characterized by authenticity, integrative learning activities, aligned assessment methods, and effective supervision, preparation, and debriefing, significantly influences student readiness for the workplace. It's evident that structured and collaborative partnerships between stakeholders, including educational institutions, industry partners, and students, are imperative for fostering quality WIL outcomes.

Furthermore, our research emphasizes the importance of embedding and scaffolding WIL vertically and horizontally across the curriculum. This approach enhances the student experience and fosters a seamless integration of practical experiences with theoretical knowledge. While simulation activities complement WIL placements, our findings suggest that further research should focus on elucidating the characteristics of high-quality, high-impact simulations to augment student learning outcomes.

Triciprocity, the three-way expectations and contributions of students, university staff, and industry partners need to be negotiated and continuously appraised. The notion of triciprocity (three-way reciprocity) has been coined as a reminder of the three-way negotiations that should occur between stakeholders. With this framework in mind, each curriculum dimension can be implemented to enhance placements within the WIL model:

Authenticity: Ensure that placements provide authentic experiences reflective of real-world hospitality environments. This may involve partnering with industry organizations to offer placements in operational settings where students can engage in tasks and responsibilities relevant to their future careers.

Learning activities (aligned with integrative learning): Design learning activities within placements that align with the broader curriculum objectives and encourage integrative learning. This could involve structured tasks, projects, or assignments that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills, and integrate various aspects of their learning.

Assessment (aligned with integrative learning): Develop assessment methods that align with the integrative learning approach and accurately evaluate students' performance and growth during placements. This may include a combination of formative and summative assessments, such as reflective journals, presentations, or performance evaluations by supervisors, to assess students' competencies and achievements.

Supervision, preparation, and debrief: Provide adequate supervision and support to students throughout their placements, ensuring they receive guidance, feedback, and

mentorship from experienced professionals. Additionally, offer thorough preparation before placements, including orientation sessions and training, to familiarize students with workplace expectations and responsibilities. Following placements, conduct debriefing sessions to reflect on students' experiences, address any challenges encountered, and identify areas for improvement or further development.

Addressing the challenges faced by Dusit Thani College, including language barriers and strategic placement issues, requires a multifaceted approach. Increased language training and strategic placement initiatives can mitigate these challenges, ensuring students gain valuable skills and experiences necessary for success in the hospitality sector. Moreover, organizational support, exemplified by the involvement of the Dusit Corporate Office in enhancing coaching techniques and English proficiency, remains crucial in addressing these challenges effectively.

Regarding the key components influencing student professionalism, while workplace environments and guiding staff play crucial roles in shaping student readiness and professionalism, it's essential to acknowledge the interconnectedness of various components within the WIL model. The quality of placements, authenticity of experiences, integration of learning activities, aligned assessment methods, and effective supervision collectively contribute to enhancing student professionalism and readiness for the workplace. While workplaces and guiding staff are pivotal, they operate within a broader framework of structured partnerships and curriculum design, all of which influence student outcomes significantly. Therefore, while workplaces and guiding staff are indispensable, they are part of a larger ecosystem that collectively shapes student professionalism within the WIL model.

In conclusion, our study underscores the pivotal role of WIL in preparing students for hospitality careers. By implementing the recommended strategies and prioritizing collaboration among stakeholders, Dusit Thani College can enhance the effectiveness of its WIL model, thereby better equipping students for seamless integration into the workplace and fostering their professionalism within the industry 6.3. Limitations of this study and suggestions for future studies

Firstly, by focusing solely on hospitality students, the findings may lack broader applicability beyond the hospitality industry, limiting the generalizability of the results to other educational domains. Additionally, conducting the study within the Thai and broader Asian context introduces cultural biases and nuances specific to these regions, potentially limiting the transferability of findings to educational systems in different cultural contexts. Furthermore, the study's reliance on a limited sample size may compromise the statistical power and representativeness of the results, reducing the

confidence in the findings' validity and reliability. Future research should diversify the sample by including students from various educational disciplines and industries beyond hospitality, enhancing the external validity of the findings. Expanding the sample size will improve statistical power and robustness, enabling better capture of variability in students' experiences of professionalism. Additionally, researchers could explore cross-cultural comparisons to understand how cultural factors influence professionalism in education, facilitating the identification of universal principles and culturally specific considerations in work-integrated learning. These steps aim to enhance the breadth and depth of future research, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of professionalism in diverse educational contexts.

Discussion and implications

The research evaluates Dusit Thani College's Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) model, focusing on its effectiveness in bridging theoretical knowledge with practical skills in hospitality education. By identifying best practices in WIL implementation, the study offers recommendations to enhance its effectiveness within the college and potentially extend the program to benefit students across institutions.

As highlighted by Boffy-Ramirez (2012), having good work skills not only enhances occupational competence but also contributes to students' broader life skills. Mentorship emerges as a key strategy for developing students' work skills (Boffy-Ramirez, 2012), with on-the-job training and coaching being particularly beneficial (Jackson, D. (2015) Encouraging students to take on more responsibilities and tackle diverse challenges fosters skill acquisition and enhances their performance, benefiting both their professional and personal lives (Jackson, 2013).

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