

Stakeholders Perspectives on Work-Based Learning (WBL) Implementation in Malaysia: A Review

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Abstract

This review focuses on assessing the engagement of work-based learning (WBL) stakeholders in curriculum implementation in Malaysia. By reviewing the literature, this article seeks to expand existing knowledge on the role of stakeholders in WBL program implementation. It seeks to provide a review that expands the literature on WBL stakeholders and programs. This study was conducted to gain insight into the role of stakeholders in implementing a WBL program, especially in the hospitality sector. By understanding their roles, stakeholders can improve their engagement in WBL program implementation to meet the current need for competent and well-prepared graduates to work in the industry. This review made extensive use of secondary sources of data collected from recent studies conducted by other researchers from journals, articles and websites. Findings indicated that there are four (4) main themes derived from the literatures namely WBL definitions, purposes, significance and stakeholders categories.

Keywords:

Literatures, Stakeholders, Work-based learning

1 Introduction

Work-based learning (WBL) was first introduced to support the education and training system in Malaysian Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institution. The WBL program, part of TVET, has helped attract an increasingly skilled workforce to Malaysia with little government investment. Malaysia Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Education (MyCentHE) introduced WBL programme in hospitality education in 2011 & targets to expose students to the realistic industry while pursuing tertiary education and prepare them for the industry upon graduation by seizing the essence of working in real hospitality field prior to joining the workforce, as in line with Malaysia Education 2020-2025 Blueprint to develop industry-led curriculum to improve graduate employability and reduce the mismatch skills. "Work-based learning (WBL) is an educational strategy that provides students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and develop their employability" according to Jane (2021) and she also stated that WBL gives students the opportunity to take modules in an industrial setting rather than on-campus environment (conventional mode). A further definition of WBL is students are full-time employees whose programme of study is embedded in the workplace and is designed to meet the learning needs of the employees and the aims of the organization.' (Sodiechowska & Maisch, 2006). Since WBL was first introduced in Malaysia, a few IPTA and IPTS has applied WBL into their learning system. Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP), polytechnics, and others are among the IPTA that applied this learning method.

Work-Based Learning (WBL) can be classified as experiential learning where WBL students gain hands-on practical skills in a local context through exposure to real-life work experience provided by industry (Raelin, 2008). Carty (2021) defined WBL as "applying the knowledge, know-how, skills and competencies gained in a Higher Education (HE) setting, to enhance the workplace learning for the student, whilst also meeting the organisation performance objectives, resulting in reflective opportunities for all stakeholders". According to other scholars, WBL can be defined as "different approach than the traditional teaching and learning method in the classroom - the learning process involved direct to the workplace learning environment (Gray, 2001); "as a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organizations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces" (Boud and Solomon, 2001). Most public and private universities commonly apply two different types of learning which are conventional learning and experiential learning/work-based learning. According to Delialioğlu in 2012 and Bryan & Volchenkova in 2016, conventional learning deals with traditional face to face system meanwhile the theory of experiential learning based on several fundamental models of experiential learning, including Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget, the founder of Kolb Model in 1984 refers it as learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential learning is defined by Kolb (1984) as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from combination of grasping and transforming experience".

Stakeholders are important element that contributing to the success of WBL according to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It comprise of the industry, parents, employers and alumni's. Industry, on the other hand can be considered extremely vital in ensuring that the objectives of WBL are met. Because of this, IPTA or IPTS should have strong relationships with the industry so that it can assist in producing knowledgeable students who are able to fulfil the objectives of the WBL. The level of influence that the industry holds as the stakeholder is major since it affects decision-making, effectiveness, and success of WBL.

Despite the strengths of work-based learning, surveys conducted by the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) found that the industry requires graduates to have soft skills such as problem solving, communication skills and work ethics. Idris (2008) claims that industry must play a key role in planning and implementing new curricula that meet industry needs. As a result, a link between industry and educational institutions was established in 2007 and referred as the WBL programme. This study thus aims to explore stakeholders' perspective on Work-Based Learning (WBL) and their role in its implementation and investigate the acceptance of collaborative participation in Work-Based Learning (WBL) among the stakeholders. Thus, this study is crucial to understand their perspective on WBL and the roles that they pose in implementing WBL. Through this study, a better understanding of WBL stakeholders is obtained and can be a future reference for stakeholders and researchers.

2 Methodology

This review focuses on the participation of WBL stakeholders namely industry, employees, employers, parents, government agencies and etc. in the implementation of the WBL program in Malaysia, specifically exploring their views on WBL, their understanding of their role in the program WBL program and their acceptance of collaborative engagement in work-based learning. To achieve the research objective, several secondary data sources were collected from online search engines and academic databases. The search included prominent open access journals and platforms, such as Research Gate, Emerald, Google Scholar, and Elsevier, as well as other relevant online articles retrieved via Google search. To identify relevant articles, specific keywords were used, including "work-based learning," "WBL program implementation," "WBL stakeholders", and "WBL Stakeholder engagement in WBL". Out of a total of 90 articles retrieved by using these keywords, 45 of them were retrieved for data. All data were analyzed to transcribe, interpret and synthesize the from the collected articles, thereby facilitating the drawing of in-depth insights.

3 Findings and Discussions

Four (4) themes were derived from the literatures mainly definitions, purposes, significance and stakeholders categories of WBL.

3.1 Work-based Learning (WBL) Definitions

Work-based learning (WBL) can be defined as a learning method commonly applied in higher education (HE) level that expose students to workplace and work experience before choosing their career path after graduating. Watisin (2017) defines that WBL is a learning method that emphasizes learning through working experience and collaborates between educational and industrial institutions. Similarly, WBL is also known as the 2u2i programme and the programme takes place both on and off campus and is guided by close supervision from academics and practitioners (Mohd Yusoff et al, 2020). WBL programme under the Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET) contributed to developing countries gaining increasingly competent labour force with little or no major investment on the part of the government (Haruna, Kamin & Buntat, 2019). A WBL Infographic by San Diego & Imperial Counties shows that work-based learning (WBL) is an essential strategy to support learning and prepare students for the job market that makes learning relevant and leads to strong labor market outcomes. Employers also benefit from preparing a strong general workforce to screen specific potential employees. From the infographic, it can be understand that WBL allow students to apply classroom content in professional settings while gaining real-world experience and demonstrating competencies to employers. (WBL Infographic, 2023). Haruna et al. (2019) also believes that WBL gives students the opportunity to explore the lessons learned in the classroom within a real-world context. This is extremely beneficial for practical learners and gives students the necessary direction and helps them to figure out what they want to do after graduation.

President Donald Trump signed Perkins V, a renewal of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, into law in 2018 that places greater emphasis on WBL than Perkins IV that aims for improved data on racial and ethnic inequities, increased access to work-based learning opportunities, stronger relationships between education and business, and improved gender equity. The phrase "work-based learning" has a new definition thanks to this statute, which is:

"sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that fosters in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curricula and instruction." (Zatynski, 2024).

3.2 Work-based Learning (WBL) Purposes

WBL was introduced into the undergraduate program at the University of Chester 35 years ago as a four-week internship program with a pass or fail rating, but was implemented Malaysian Community College in 2007 (Watisin et al., 2018). The then Ministry of Education stated in 2018 that the WBL was implemented because the level of knowledge, skills and attitudes of graduates required by employers were unsatisfactory and that the WBL was considered as a method to improve students' learning and work experience in the industry (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2015). Moreover, the purpose of WBL is to train and enhance skills directly in the workplace and is an important part of vocational education program while also developing career and good job prospects (Realin, 2022). A student participating in WBL learns in the work environment and participates in work culture habits, which affect work efficiency and productivity (Gault et al, 2010) and Pilz et al (2014). The implementation of WBL benefits students, the industry in which it operates, and higher education institutions where students have applied academic and technical skills, develop professional skills, build education and work relationships, explore career paths, receive guidance in job selection after graduation, and easily adapt to proper attitudes and work relationships, create professional networks for future work, and gain recognition as industry certifications concluded by Sutiman et al in 2022 based on statements by Nurtanto (2020), Gault (2010), Posey et al (1988), and Ismail et al (2015). Several models of WBL implementation include apprenticeship programs, cooperative work experiences, internship programs (IP), mentorship programs (MP), Industrial practices (IPs), volunteer service (VS), and worksite field trips (WFT). The similarity of the WBL model is the place of implementation, namely the industry. In contrast, the difference from the existing model is the purpose, method, time, and target of the activity (Sofyan et al 2022).

3.3 Work-based Learning (WBL) Significance

Malaysia is trying to improve on the quality of the labour force by increasing educated and skilled human capital while the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) emphasizing on mismatch between supply and demand for graduates, with employers reporting that graduates lack required knowledge, skills and attitudes. Several programmes has been introduced such as a number of training and retraining programs to reduce the skill disparity among graduates. The importance of these training and retraining programs has been emphasized by Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) where the Executive Director of MEF, Bardan (2008) pointed out that "Education institutions should prepare students who meet job market requirements in terms of hands-on knowledge and relevant skills as companies are not keen to train new employees. The graduates need to be able to start to contribute immediately as at present it takes two years before fresh graduates can start to contribute to the organization. The Ministry of Higher Education and Ministry of Education can work together with the industry on career guidance and training to prepare students for the job market". Interestingly, Malaysia always embraced the stance of having skilled workforce as a key factor in becoming an economically strong

country. The quality of a country's workforce, including their knowledge, skills, and entrepreneurial abilities, is a crucial determinant of its economic advancement. The development of high-quality human capital is crucial for our transition. The new economic model is based on cultivating a workforce that possesses skills, creativity, and efficiency. Our most precious asset is our highly skilled workforce, and we will strengthen our local talent pool by evaluating and improving our education system, placing greater focus on technical and vocational colleges, and enhancing English language skills. We will incorporate talents from throughout the world into our resource pool, while also eliminating market distortions that limit wage growth.

The Work-Based Learning (WBL) is now also recognize as 2u2i (two years university and two years industry) program, a new approach to learning that facilitates opportunities for industry to partner with universities in designing curriculum and providing more extensive work experience for students introduced by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. This new learning approach was introduced to enhance graduates' marketability as the Ministry of Education aspires to increase the current 75% graduate employability rate to more than 80% by 2025 (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education)). From year to year, WBL has been widely applied in to the learning curriculum of many learning institutions including IPTA, IPTS, community colleges, and also vocational colleges. The WBL program as part of Technical Vocational Training (TVET) has contributed to developing countries' increasingly skilled workforces with little or no major government investment (Haruna , Kamin & Buntat, 2019). The learning experience of the 2u2i program takes place both on and off campus and is guided by close supervision from academics and practitioners (Mohd Yusoff et al., 2020).

3.4 Work-based Learning (WBL) Stakeholders

Stakeholders are commonly defined as individuals or a group with an interest or concern in a particular matter, especially a business and a few examples of stakeholders are employees, consumers, investors, owners, shareholders, and local community. Abratt (2016) gathered various definitions of stakeholders that are evident, including Freeman and Reed (1983) "an individual or group who can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives"; Alkhafaji (1989) "groups to whom the corporation is responsible"; Thomson, Wartic and Smith (1991) defining stakeholders as groups "in relationship with an organization.". Clarkson (1995) identifies stakeholders as "persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future". From these various definitions, it can be simplified that the term "stakeholder" is a party or individual that has an interest in a company and can either affect or be affected by the business. This individual or group can either be internal or external stakeholders based on their relationship with the company or organization. According to Harrison and Enz (2007), internal stakeholders are employees, owners and managers, while external are customers, competitors, suppliers, activist groups, unions, financial intermediaries, the

media, government agencies and local communities. The stakeholders can be affected by any sorts of decision made by the company or organization and also can be affected by their performance and outcomes. In recent years, the model of relationships with stakeholders has evolved from a listening approach to a fully involved decision-making processes and company governance (Weber & Marley, 2010; Greenwood, 2007; Hinna, 2002). Instead of only hearing stakeholders' opinions, they are directly involved in any decision making to reach thorough and fair outcomes.

According to Namjoshi (2020), WBL ecosystem includes a real-life workplace, peers, appraisers, mentors and eLearning environment meanwhile based on the Guidelines to Good Practices: Work-Based Learning introduced by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, WBL key players or what we call stakeholders include WBL tutor, WBL coach, WBL coordinator, and WBL students. A tutor is an academic staff who is an expert in a specific field and teachers specific subject or skills to students, a coach is an appointed employee of the organization to guide, mentor, and assess students at the workplace, a coordinator will be incharge of managing the operations of WBL as appointed by the Higher Education Provider (HEP) and students are those who are registered and enrolled in the university and are pursuing any programme involving WBL approaches (Guidelines to Good Practices: Work-Based Learning by MQA, 2016).

Many scholars and practitioners have put forward different definitions of the term curriculum, but it can generally be understood as a complete plan for achieving specific goals in the educational process (Wiles, 2008; Kelly, 2009). Barnett and Coate, 2004 described the conceptualization of curriculum in higher education and defined the term curriculum as in significant part at least, as the set of organised processes and materials that, intentionally and unintentionally, are put before students by their educators. According to Pratt in 1980, curriculum development refers to course selection and all the other processes or activities implemented to accomplish curriculum goals, and includes four key elements: objectives, contents, learning activities, and evaluation. In previous studies, hospitality curriculum are suggested to use diversified teaching strategies and methods, such as lectures, games, role-playing, repeated practices, case studies, simulations, and teaching activities involving real situations (Arcodia & Dickson, 2009). Therefore, previous researchers implied that hospitality curriculum should shift from a traditional focus on hands-on skills to a holistic approach that balances practical skills with leadership skills, commercial skills, and transferable skills (Alexander et al., 2009). Content design for WBL programs is an ongoing problem in the hospitality and tourism industries, due to poor student recruitment and industry linkages (Airey, 2019). As Seraphin and Mansfield (2017) have pointed out, hospitality and tourism training often lacks uniformity and common orientation (Sidorov, 2018). Lewis-Cameron et al. (2020) pointed out that the hospitality and tourism academies need to improve their curricula in line with dynamic technological trends in the hospitality industry in order to produce hospitality graduates that are marketable.

4 Conclusion

In summary, this briefing document highlights stakeholders' understanding of their role in implementing the WBL program and their involvement in implementing WBL. By understanding their roles and involvement, the need for skilled and competent graduates can be met. Therefore, efforts should be made to increase their participation in the implementation of the WBL program, as they are the key factor for successful WBL implementation. To improve their participation in WBL program implementation, they must first understand their role in WBL. This is important because when they understand their role, they can contribute more to producing graduates who meet current industry needs. Without stakeholders, WBL cannot succeed. Through WBL, graduates with skills and competencies are trained so that they can easily adapt to work in the industry. This is where stakeholders are crucial to ensure the achievement of these goals. This article review provides valuable insights for scholars and scholars, serving as a basis for future research and hypothesis development. It suggests further research and initiatives regarding the role and participation of stakeholders in WBL program implementation. Overall, this perspective emphasizes the need for stakeholders to truly understand work-based learning and how they can play their role in implementing it to achieve WBL success. With the successful implementation of WBL, the number of graduates who meet current demand may increase.

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