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Can Sri Lanka adapt ‘Work-Based Learning’? Insights from UK Work-Based Learning cases

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Acknowledgement

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3. Ms Biddy Casselden – Senior Lecturer
   all from School of Computing, Engineering & Information Sciences, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
4. Dr Mahesha Kapurubandara – Dean (International) – Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology

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Agenda

1. Introduction (What is Work Based Learning?)
2. Approach/Methodology of Research
3. Case study of Northumbria University
4. Case study of Sri Lankan online learning context
5. Research Findings as a Comparison
6. Original contribution
7. Recommendations for Sri Lanka
Work Based Learning (WBL) is the term being used to describe the class of university programme that brings together universities and work organisations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces (Boud and Solomon 2001, 4).

WBL is seen as a means by which to support the personal and professional development of students who are already in work, and the focus of the learning and development tends to be on the student’s workplace activities (Brennan and Little 2006, 5).
Work Based Learning Specifics

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)
  - Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL)
  - Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)
- Tailoring concept
- Learning contracts between Employer/Employee and University
- Prior Accreditation from Professional Body
- ‘Learning while Earning’
- Employer sponsorships
Aim & Objective of Current Research

Aim –
• to develop recommendations/ a tool kit as a suggested way forward for work-based learning which takes account of needs of all stakeholders

Objectives –
• To identify factors affecting effectiveness of online learning for WBL programmes
• To find out existing challenges and constraints of implementing Online Learning for WBL programmes
Method/Approach

**Sri Lankan Study**

- **Method**: Case Study of 17 NODES online programmes
- **Data**: Online Questionnaire Interviews
- **Who?**: Students, Academic staff, Consultants/Experts, Admin/Support staff

**UK Study**

- **Method**: Case Study of Northumbria University, UK 4 x MSc & 1 x BSc
- **Data**: Online Questionnaire Interviews
- **Who?**: Students, Academic staff, Admin/Support, Employers, Professional Bodies
WBL at Northumbria University

- One of the leading universities in the UK for WBL delivery
- WBL Framework
- Work Related Learning Services
- LTech – Central Multi-media support unit for online content
Online learning in Sri Lanka

- Distance Education (OUSL, External degrees)
- Web content offerings by some universities
- NODES programmes
Research Findings

1. Employment status of students
2. Use of ICT
3. Online discussion & collaboration
4. Design of assessment
5. Supporting WBL
1. Employment Status of UK students

Students' weekly working hours

- 0 - 10 hrs: 3%
- 10 - 20 hrs: 8%
- 21 - 30 hrs: 12%
- 31 - 40 hrs: 17%
- 41 - 50 hrs: 13%
- Above 50: 47%
1. Employment status of NODES students

Employment status of NODES students, %

- Unemployed: 44.0
- Full-time employed: 40.3
- Part-time employed: 10.6
- Self-employed: 5.1

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## 2. Use of ICT

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**World Literacy Rates 2011**

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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
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“The learning materials could have been more interactive.” - Student

“University provides loads of training on Multi-media but I don’t have time.” - Tutor

“Technology should not drive pedagogy but pedagogy should drive technology” - Tutor
2. Use of ICT – Sri Lanka

“Quality of online content depends on strengths of inclusion of multimedia and interactivity. Most content on NODES are flat.” - Tutor

“Most materials violate online instructional principles and underutilize ICT facilities. Much for improvement.” - Reviewer
3. Online Collaboration – UK

“Although discussion boards are helpful they cannot replace the classroom atmosphere.” - **Student**

“I feel isolated due to lack of online interactivity by other students” - **Student**

“I have only discussion boards because chats cannot be synchronised with everybody” - **Tutor**
“Equitability is one of the key attractions of online learning where all students have the same opportunity to participate and earn marks regardless of whether they are shy or outspoken; have good or poor language skills; are male or female” – Tutor
4. Design of Assessment – UK

“Design of assessments is based on work-based so there is no room for plagiarism.” - Tutor

“Online students could send work done by someone else so we use Turnitin/VC/Skype/telephone to clarify.” - Tutor

“University used video conferencing in assessing my project so I had to demonstrate the project kind of a viva” - Student
4. Design of Assessment–Sri Lanka

“I do not use any online facilities for assessments, ... I mark in the train, at home, etc so I mark on the paper by pen!” - Tutor

“Major exams & final thesis assessments should be F2F supervised.” - Tutor

“Online activities should be given a reasonable weightage to encourage student interactions.” - Consultant
6. Supporting WBL – UK

“We recommend WBL programmes for employers as a way of staff training and CPD activities.” - Professional Body

“The institutions no longer distinguish between F2F or WBL which has same degree of acceptance.” – Support Services

“Employees value investment company is making in them, which has been proven with our low staff turnover and high level of qualified individuals in the company” - Employer
“Online learning is new to Sri Lanka, yet there is a lot of interest and potential. It is important that university system provides leadership, which is visible sparingly in Sri Lanka.” - Foreign consultant

“Online degrees offered by dual mode universities should have same level of acceptance provided their quality is accredited” – Tutor

“It is not only institution’s commitment, but also the Country’s and the Ministry’s.” – Programme Head
Original Contribution
The current online course design, development and delivery model

Academic Environment including University

Central Management Team (Programme Leader as Project Manager)

Subject Expert → Instructional Designer → Technical Development Team → Academic Review Team → Learner Support Team (Tutor, Administrator)

Review

Feedback

ICT Network support, tutoring, mentoring

Learners
Suggested Framework

Learner

Academic Environment

Work-based Learning

Workplace

External Context
Recommended online course design, development and delivery model for WBL
Conclusions so far ...

**Quality**
- Quality of online material is good but not yet as interactive as it could be
- Quality of tutoring should be assured through QA measures

**Access**
- Learning portal is not user-friendly for tutors, yet students like it
- Technology should enable access to learning resources & communication across all stakeholders

**Support**
- Support for all stakeholders including employers and professional bodies
- Government support to make policies & procedures for WBL
Recommendations for Sri Lanka

For All stakeholders
- Authorities, Professional bodies & employers should be made aware of the importance of WBL.
- Formulate new policies and / or strengthen existing policies

Institutions
- Institutions to provide technical support to academic staff to develop multimedia-rich content
- Use of VLEs to compensate for its distant disadvantage
- Quality assurance systems in place
Recommendations for Sri Lanka

**Government**
- Recognise the WBL model nationally such that all stakeholders could collaborate in initiating industry-oriented WBL programmes in Sri Lanka
- A strong commitment by the Government to recognize both F2F & WBL credentials being equivalent
- Develop Elementary IT literacy across the country with good bandwidth
- Rigorous marketing by all stakeholders to send the concept across
Thanks
for listening
Any Questions?
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