Technical Solutions to Work-based Learning in Peace, Conflict & Security Studies

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INCOPS Report #3

Technical Solutions to Work-based Learning in Peace, Conflict & Security Studies
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**Integration of Work-based Learning
in Conflict, Peace and Security Studies (INCOPS)**
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The integration of practical experiences into university curricula has become a standard across various disciplines and study programmes. However, there is often still a gap between theory and the training of analytical skills on the one hand and practical experiences, which students gain at workplaces and during internships, on the other hand. Peace, Conflict and Security Studies are no exception in this regard, even though scholars and employers have stressed the necessity for a closer integration of theory and practice. This is of particular importance for programmes that aim to qualify for a career in the field of peacebuilding, foreign and security policy, or conflict resolution. INCOPS proposes a more comprehensive and systematic approach to overcome existing limitations. INCOPS develops and apply a tailored concept of the Work-based Learning approach to systematically integrate theory and practice in university teaching and curriculum development with a particular focus on the role of internships and voluntary work.

Project Partners:
University of Marburg (DE), Center for Conflict Studies [coordinating institution]
Babeș-Bolyai University (RO), Centre for International Cooperation
University of Coimbra (PT), Faculty of Economics
University of Coventry (GB), Centre for Trust, Peace, and Social Relations
University of Kent (GB), School of Politics and International Relations
Utrecht University (NL), Centre for Conflict Studies

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Executive Summary

These guidelines focus on the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) approach as a technical solution to Work-based Learning (WBL) in the field of Peace, Conflict, and Security Studies (PCS). We propose that internship and volunteer modules at Higher Education Institutes can benefit from being placed into a COIL framework, which brings together educators and learners from different institutions and countries to an online space where they engage in collaborative learning processes.

We identified two areas that are the best fit for COIL learning: skills development and self-reflection, and understanding how theory and practice intersect in WBL processes. By focusing on these two areas, we hope that COIL will benefit student experience, build cross-cultural understanding of the challenges, opportunities, requirements, and skill development of the WBL journey.

In the guidelines, we emphasize that COIL encourages collaboration among students and is flexible enough to use the wide range of tools that exist on the internet. We also highlight that the guidelines will not propose new tools but instead focuses on how best to use existing tools that are increasingly being adopted by educators. We provide examples of successful COIL courses at Coventry University and put together a course outline for one that would focus on the two aspects outlined above.

In the text, however, we acknowledge that digital tools, solutions, and possibilities still face a number of challenges in terms of management, engagement, and application. However, it is confident that if managed in a positive collaborative way, student learning in the WBL process can be deepened.

Overall, the guidelines highlight the potential of the COIL approach to improve WBL. We underline the importance of collaboration among students and the flexibility of the COIL framework to use a wide range of tools. We provide examples of successful COIL courses and a course outline focused on skills development and self-reflection and understanding how theory and practice

intersect in WBL processes. We acknowledge in the report the challenges that digital tools and solutions face but is confident that positive collaboration can deepen student learning in the WBL process.

Introduction

In recent years, the incorporation of practical experiences into university curricula increasingly became a standard across various disciplines and study programs. Likewise, in the field of peace, conflict and security studies both scholars and employers have stressed the necessity for a closer integration of academic skills with practical experience.

The project "Integration of Work-Based Learning in Conflict, Peace and Security Studies" (INCOPS) aims to improve our knowledge of the various types of Work-based Learning (WBL) practices in Peace, Conflict & Security Studies (PCS) programmes across Europe. INCOPS also aims to strengthen the integration of practical skills development in undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes in Europe. INCOPS aims to develop a conceptual approach, practical tools and evidence-based recommendations that allow us to make better use of the potential of experiential learning in PCS programmes and the classroom. The project aims at creating communication channels and synergies between institutions and internship providers. Furthermore, INCOPS aims to establish a network of partnering institutions in the field of peace, conflict and security studies including universities and organisations outside academia. Finally, INCOPS will investigate ethical and security issues around WBL activities in the conflict, peace and security field and will make findings accessible to our target groups to reflect upon new strategies of integrating applied experiences.

This Intellectual Output (O3) report outlines the technical solutions that will benefit online and distance learning and teaching, based on the experience of the project partners, and proposes a platform that already exists to address the challenges of integrating WBL and combining tech-

nical solutions. The report proposes that internship and volunteer modules at higher education institutes can benefit from being placed into a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Framework. The COIL framework is a format which brings together educators and learners from different institutions and countries to an online space whereby they engage in collaborative learning processes.

The two areas which this report identifies as being the best fit for COIL learning are:

1. Skills development and self-reflection
2. Understanding how theory and practice intersect in WBL processes.

Through focussing on these two areas, we hope that COIL will benefit student experience, build cross-cultural understanding of the challenges, opportunities, requirements, and skill development of the WBL journey.

The report will not propose new tools, instead focussing on how best to use existing tools that are increasingly being adopted by educators. There is little space in a crowded market for a new tool to aid distance learning. Since the onset of the COVID epidemic of 2019 the online provision of learning and teaching has undergone a dramatic growth.

As Rubin outlines in his book on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), "COIL is now an acknowledged and maturing player at many institutions, with a growing body of research supporting its value" (Rubin, 2022, p. 4). The COIL course envisaged by this paper will be focussed on a joint course which prepares and accompanies students through a WBL programme. It brings together the trends in WBL-related provision outlined in O1 (Runge & Vértes, 2021), the needs of students identified in O2 (Grundig et al., 2023) and the emerging body of work that has been undertaken also on Service Learning during this project.

INCOPS' definition of WBL is built upon a strong literature around WBL processes which link appropriate methodologies for learning, the requirement for planning, and the development of capacities and skills of critical reflection:

"An approach in higher education which aims to merge theory and practice. It entails students working in or with organisations in the field, gaining practical experience, while utilising and reflecting on their academic skills. Secondly, it yields an increase in educational resources, new impressions, networks, innovative ideas and critical reflection on the applicability of learnt theories. In addition, WBL brings together different stakeholders such as teachers, students and professional organisations." (Runge & Vértes, 2021, p. 14)

The proposals in this paper speak to using technological solutions (COIL and associated technologies) to enhance the experience for students in encouraging the "new impressions, networks, innovative ideas and critical reflection on the applicability of learnt theories" outlined above. Included here is the requirement to share information, learn more about skills development, how the WBL experience relates to the theories learned in the lecture theatre, and log points of critical reflection throughout the experience. It is envisaged that students will do this with not only peers from their institution, but also with fellow students from partner universities who run WBL-related courses themselves.

This paper will proceed as follows. The next section will examine the role of Service Learning as an underlying ethos of WBL in PCS. After this, it will then outline where previous Intellectual outputs have identified the requirement for reflection on skills development and reflective activities. Following this, COIL will be introduced. Firstly, the broader principles of COIL, then examples of successful programmes will be outlined, before a discussion on the "tools" of COIL. Considerations of COIL learning will then be discussed before a proposed course outline is offered.

Service Learning

The INCOPS project understands that "WBL activities like internships only succeed when the module offers a didactic concept that allows the structural integration of the WBL experience in the content of the study programme".

We are engaging in what has been termed "Service Learning" as a way in which to understand the integration of practical experience into schools and teaching. At its core, Service Learning is an approach where "a student learns theories in the classroom and at the same time volunteers with an agency (usually a non-profit or social service group) and engages in reflection activities to deepen their understanding of what is being taught" (Elmhurst University (ed.), 2019). Service learning is distinguished by four fundamental characteristics.

1. The commitment from the student that their WBL experience serves a real (social) need thus allowing the students to make a relevant contribution to the society.
2. Service Learning is linked to teaching, i.e. topics from the WBL experience are related to topics from the study programme.
3. There is continuous monitoring of the process by the educators, so that the social contribution and the learning process can be reflected and also evaluated at the end.
4. Service Learning always takes place outside the university.

Turning this into practical advice, the INCOPS consortium has adopted a four-stage process to facilitate the WBL journey. This is outlined in Figure 1 and explained below.

At the preparation stage, a learning agreement is made between the three core actors (students, educational institutions, and WBL provider), which clarifies learning goals, as well as the role the student will play in the organisation. This agreement will also act as a tool to set expectations for all concerned in the WBL process and to map out the WBL experience.

Once the student's WBL experience is underway, Service Learning approaches suggest accompaniment. This comes in two forms:

- Service component: meetings between the student and their supervisor in the workplace
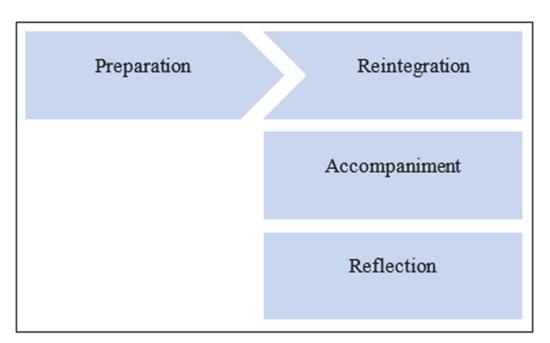
Figure 1: The four-step process of Service Learning

- Learning component: meetings between the students and the supervisor at the academic institution

Meetings in both components can engage with different types of learning and understanding:

- Deepening understanding of procedures in the workplace (i.e. how to undertake tasks which are required for the workplace to function)
- Reflection on one's existing skillset and capacity (i.e. what does one require to contribute to the achievement of these tasks)
- Reflection on how one feels about working in the workplace, their relations with colleagues, and their relationship with the work (i.e. an understanding of the pastoral aspects, and how the student feels valued in the workplace).

Once the WBL experience comes to an end, our Service Learning model points to a period of reflection. This third stage incorporates a degree of evaluation as to the overall experience of the WBL experience, how it impacted the student on a more holistic level, and what lessons can be identified for all the key actors in the WBL experience. Moreover, it is at this stage where the learning agreement is considered, and reflection on expectations is undertaken. It is also at this stage where re-integration occurs, both with regards to the experiences of work into the student's own learning journey, and the student integration back into the study programme itself.

Towards Skill Development and Theory/Practice Nexus

Important throughout the Service Learning process is the development of the student. This comes in formalised processes, such as assessment, internship reports and student progression, as well as less formalised processes, which includes conversations with supervisors/internship providers, self-reflection, engagement with peers.

We propose that digital tools can be used to enhance the reflective element of this Service Learning approach, especially in the non-formal environment. In particular, the type of digital solution which this report proposes – COIL – can offer students a peer-supported network in which to aid reflection on their learning journey.
The next section will explore this further, whilst introducing the two elements that we feel as being ripe for such a digital solution: skills development and the theory/practice nexus.

Using Technical Solutions to Aid Reflection: Skills Development and the Theory/Practice Nexus

Forming the basis of the INCOPS Consortium's approach is the fact that the consortium is a collective of international universities with the same drive and commitment to integrating WBL into curricula in the best possible way for the students. Although there is deviation amongst the individual courses taught at different institutions, there are two elements which all the INCOPS consortium agree as being essential to the student experience of WBL:

- Understanding skills development
- Charting the theory / practice nexus

Our argument concerning the importance of these two areas as a complementary addition to existing learning outcomes and assessment is evidenced in the student experiences gathered in Intellectual Output 2 (hereafter O2; cf. Grundig et al., 2023) which gathered the opinion of students through focus groups. O2 outlined that students feel the need to capture skills development and the theory/praxis nexus to enhance their overall appreciation of the internship/volunteer experience, although they are reflective aspects of the WBL journey which do not fit into standardised forms of assessment.

Skills Development

Regarding skills, O2 identified that it was necessary that students reflect on their own skills development at all stages of the WBL journey. At the outset of the WBL journey O2 recommended that "[p]re-departure briefings and skill self-assessment activities might at least make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses and allow students to come up with a list of skills they would like to train during an internship" (Grundig et al., 2023). The report identified that students would benefit from this 'self-audit' skillset which they possess, and how such skills may fit into the work environment. Examples were identified such as "capacity to adapt, competence in critical analysis, theoretical subject knowledge, capacity to learn... [ability] to manage social networks" (Grundig et al., 2023). Such an audit would also indicate where gaps may exist. O2 notes how there are more practical skills gaps, such as software-related skills (Excel and SPSS, database management), as well as knowledge of textual analysis and relevant domestic legislation (cf. Grundig et al., 2023). Later in O2, students who were interviewed outlined how to develop inter-personal skills in terms of how they relate to their internship provider. Two examples of where this was felt necessary: how to pitch additional tasks or projects to an internship provider, and how best to offer constructive criticism of an internship provider. Both of these examples point to skills related to communication, confidence, and how ideas are presented (cf. Grundig et al., 2023).

Moreover, an opportunity to audit may capture lessons from previous WBL participants who have identified skills gaps emerging once they have begun working. For instance, O2 notes that there are signs that students do not consider skills development as a priority when considering the tasks, they take on during WBL experiences. In the case of internships, O2 highlights the experience of one respondent who prioritised the tasks she undertook or proposed "in line with what she thought would be good for the internship provider" (Grundig et al., 2023). In this case,

O2 notes that "[s]kills development was not the primary motivation" (Grundig et al., 2023, p. 22).

Theory/Practice Nexus

O2 also identifies a need for students to deepen their engagement regarding how they reflect on the theory/practice nexus in terms of their WBL journey. This relates to the application of knowledge gained during studies into the work environment, and "is a key element of work-based learning and a key justification for including internships in PCS curricula" (Grundig et al., 2023). Students interviewed in O2 reflected a range of experiences in this regard. At the University of Canterbury, Kent, one student whose work covered the Myanmar Coup for a small NGO noted how her theoretical grounding in PACS gave her the tools to critically analyse the coup as it was developing. Another student from the same university noted that work on refugee conventions helped to a degree when interning with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, cf. Grundig et al., 2023).

However, O2 identifies that making the link between theory and practice during the internship (as well as on reflection afterwards) can also be a significant challenge for students' who engage in WBL. Student focus groups outlined the challenges in this regard, with some students finding that as a result of the challenges to link the theory and practice (particularly when making this link formed part of assessment), they would make a conscious decision to uncouple their internship from their broader studies. At times, tasks offered to students by internship providers did not align fully to the theoretical knowledge that the students gained. This could be because the tasks given to students were 'too basic' to fully engage the students in this regard, or that the overall experience of interning as a training activity was too far removed from the academic training that a university degree offers.

It is important that these experiences are shared, and that challenges in making the link between theory and practice are explored in a safe and supportive space. O2 clearly identifies this. Student focus groups which focused on volunteering identified a need for students to en-

gage in discussion of topics 'relevant to civil society' as a useful way to integrate voluntary work experiences into their study. Moreover, the students proposed to link volunteering experiences with theoretical research seminars, potentially with participation of volunteering organisations who host students (cf. Grundig et al., 2023).

A Digital Space to Explore Issues

With this in mind, this report advocates that a digital solution is the creation of a virtual space whereby students can engage with one another on issues related to skills development and the theory/praxis nexus. It is important that this is not a formalised setting. O2 found that students considered that formalised assessment (in the form of an internship report) encourages them to "let their learning experience appear in a more positive light in order to pass the assignment" (Grundig et al., 2023). Though this appeared in the focus group as a relatively minor problem, it has the potential to disincentivise a holistic learning process which encourages reflection which is reflexive, self-critical, and which offers a full understanding of the WBL experience.

When looking at non-formal, or semi-formal environments (i.e. learning environments which are not tied to assessment and progression), O2 notes that there is value in these spaces in providing room for students to explore issues related to skills development and the theory/praxis nexus. O2 highlights a discussion with students who underwent volunteering at Marburg University, whereby the students identified the tutorial setting as a place to discuss broader WBL issues. It found that:

"While students were critical of the introduction of an explicit reflection seminar, the focus group discussion at Marburg eventually arrived at a conclusion that this is essentially a functional equivalent. Students suggested that it would be desirable to engage in an exchange about their voluntary work within the context of their studies. This should include talking about skills, learning, the organisations students volunteer at, and the social and political issues these organisations and

the volunteers deal with." (Grundig et al., 2023)

The next section will examine what this space may look like and introduces COIL as a potential structure in which to engage with digital solutions.

Virtual Engagement, COIL and the Variety of Tools to Enhance Service Learning.

As an international consortium, whose members have benefited from international engagement, we share a commitment to offering students the opportunity to engage with fellow students from other countries. We feel that Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Courses offer this.

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

COIL is a "bilateral exchange and corresponding pedagogy, embedded into existing courses across two, or sometime more, institutions" (Rubin, 2022, p. 6). It is inextricably linked to broader projects concerned with internationalisation, such as study abroad programmes and student exchanges. COIL as a particular named activity emerged in the early 2000s as a strategy to complement these existing approaches of student mobility through embracing the opportunities of building online communities for learners.

As the description below shows, the premise of COIL is simple.

"COIL creates equitable team-taught learning environments where faculty from two cultures work together to develop a shared syllabus, emphasizing experiential and collaborative student learning." (Coil Consulting (ed.))

In designing and establishing a COIL course, an educator at one institution (for instance, Coventry University), would coordinate with an educa-

tor at a second University (e.g. Marburg) to develop a joint course, which they will co-teach. The course would have a central framework (classes and seminars) and would have a group-work element designed to foster collaboration and cooperation amongst students. By doing so, a COIL course utilises online communication tools to bring students into a virtual "third space". Here, students also have a degree of agency whereby to foster group work collaborations, they take it upon themselves to identify the most appropriate communication tools to suit their collective needs. To ensure the value and depth of the course, COIL courses are advised to last between five and eight weeks, so that the 'structured student interactions' are valuable for students who will be "living very different lives to each other" (Rubin, 2022, p. 10). Therefore, a transformative form of learning is fostered, whereby the partnered groups "are often able not merely to converse with each other but to become part of one another's worlds" (Rubin, 2022, p. 454).

A community of over 250 universities worldwide undertake COIL activities, and are linked together through an online portal, COIL Connect for Virtual Exchange. The portal was established in 2020 as a resource to support higher education institutions which are developing COIL initiatives, as well as offering more personalised support to COIL administrators and educators. Between 2006 – 2019, the field expanded with a steady rise in institutions. However, since the COVID pandemic, the number of institutions which organise COIL courses has risen dramatically. This has been reflected on in publications on COIL learning, which have highlighted the adaptability and positive potential of the model:

> "COIL projects not only sustain a global space of learning, enabling us to mitigate the pandemic's physical restrictions; they also provide a particular active and affective learning in an intercultural virtual environment that substantiates classroom experiences" (Cotoman et al., 2022, p. 189).

A benefit of COIL Courses is that they are adaptable to different institutions. A noted difficulty of online collaboration between universities has been that it is difficult to find a common platform because the countries and also Higher Education Institutions have very different rules or interpretations of data protection or also because different institutions prefer different tools. COIL courses circumvent this challenge through not demanding that institutions all sign up to the same learning platforms, but pick and choose between the most appropriate online tools to support learning.

Coventry University has been running COIL courses since 2014 (cf. COIL Connect for Virtual Exchange (ed.) (a)), and has gained a significant track record in the field. Since 2014, the university has made COIL a pre-requisite of new course design, thereby developing a culture amongst its teaching staff of integrating COIL into its provision. As a result, the university has developed COIL courses in several areas, as outlined in the table below.

Art and Design
Business, Management and Leadership
Early Childhood
Engineering and Technology
Finance and Accounting
Health and Nursing
Humanities
Marketing
Media and Performing Arts
Supply Chain Management & Logistics

Table 1: Topic areas where COIL partnerships have been developed

Two examples of Coventry-led COIL Courses are presented below. They demonstrate the breadth of opportunity that COIL can offer. Whereas the first course (run in conjunction with a university in Japan) encouraged students to undertake groupwork centred around several key research questions, the second course (run with a university in the United States) led to students sharing their work through 'visits' to each other's virtual design studios. These courses have opened up a number of avenues to collaborate for students at Coventry University, and have led to academic

publication. The project leads and several students of the Global Political Responses to Covid-19 course outlined above published a peer-reviewed paper in a high-ranking journal about the use of COIL projects for studying international relations (cf. Cotoman et al., 2022).

Example #1

Global Political Responses to Covid-19[1]
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
School of Humanities

Academic Year: 2020-21
Project Leader: Felix Roesch
Partner University(s)/Organisation(s): Hosei University (Japan)

Project Overview: Since the end of 2019, the world as we know it came to a halt. Many things that we took for granted like travelling or simply going to classes were no longer possible or at least entailed significant health risks. This is supposed to be the new normal, but the world will eventually come back to the old normal and hopefully will have taken the right clues on how to minimize the risks of such pandemics to happen again.
To understand what was happening around us and to learn how countries responded to Covid-19 and developed strategies to deal with it, students from Coventry and Tokyo virtually joined forces.
The aim of this project was to gain a comprehensive overview of political responses to the Covid-19 pandemic around the globe. To do so we investigated the following:

- What strategies are pursued and how affective are they?
- Who are the key actors in producing responses?

- Which ethical positions are taken by political decision-makers in producing responses to the pandemic?
- Which people are affected by the pandemic most and what does this tell us about political systems and cultures?
- What could political communities around the world do better to improve the situation?

Students participating in our project were asked to form groups to investigate responses to Covid-19 in a country of their choice with the aim to produce an online presentation. These presentations served as the basis for discussions during our weekly joint live sessions. Each group consisted of students from both universities and presentations were delivered as powerpoint presentations via Zoom.

Online Tools Used: Email, Open Moodle, Zoom

Example #2

Joint Design Studio Session
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
School of Art and Design

Academic Year: 2020-21
Project Leaders: Hossein Sadri, Sebastian Hicks
Partner University(s)/Organisation(s): University of Pennsylvania (United States)

Project Overview: This collaborative project aimed to create a virtual medium of knowledge exchange between Master of Architecture Course at Coventry University (UK) and the University of Pennsylvania (USA). Our partner's cross-disciplinary Design Studio was attended by students from architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, historical preservation and also fine arts Post-Graduate courses. During

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[1] Cf. *https://wp.coventry.domains/coil/2021/11/08/global-political-responses-to-covid-19/*, checked on 21.11.2023

the COIL event our Design Studio and the partner's Design Studio shared their latest works with each other and the students had the opportunity to present their projects. We also had the opportunity to discuss further collaborations based on common interests in Social and Ecological role of Architecture and Design.

Online Tools Used: Miro, Microsoft Teams, Zoom

Individual Tools

It is underneath a COIL Programme that the use of specific 'tools' are embraced. There is no defined "fit" with regards to what tools are correct for the particular context. Apps are constantly developing, meeting specific needs, and responding to new realities in the virtual environment. The range of tools used by Coventry University's range of COIL courses are outlined below in Table 2 (cf. Coventry University (ed.)) As can be seen, they include a range of social media sites, messaging apps, and learning platforms.

Zoom	Aula
Email	Microsoft Teams
Microsoft PowerPoint	LinkedIn
Open Moodle	Statistical Software
Google Docs	YouTube
Padlet	WordPress
Artsteps	Instagram
Facebook	Skype
WhatsApp	Miro
Trello	

Table 2: Use of tools in COIL programmes at Coventry University (cf. Coventry University (ed.))

In addition, when considering COIL programmes run at other universities, further tools have been used:

Blackboard	Canvas
Bright space (D2L)	Google Classroom

Immerse U	E-portfolio (e.g. Mahara)
Flipgrid	Google Meet
Slack	Telegram
VoiceThread	WebEx

Table 3: Use of tools at other institutions who undertake COIL (cf. COIL Connect for Virtual Exchange (ed.) (b))

It is through using these tools that students communicate and collaborate across borders. By utilising such a range of visual, text based synchronous and asynchronous tools, the chances of greater cooperation exist. This will assist the journey that learners take to build empathy with classmates from different institutions:

"Cooperating with people whom one has only met virtually, with whom one must share a significant part of one's private life, and with whom one often must communicate in another language takes particular emotional involvement. These emotions may range from anticipation and excitement to worry and fear. However, working together toward a common goal enables students to create a shared space of togetherness that allows them to develop empathy for one another" (Cotoman et al., 2022, p. 189).

The next section will bring together our knowledge of COIL, alongside the understanding gained about student perspectives, and our existing knowledge of WBL within PCS. From this, a number of considerations will be offered, before the report outlines a potential COIL Course to support skills development and theory/praxis nexus.

Considerations

So far, the paper has identified that incorporating COIL into courses which use WBL (internship and volunteering) could be of benefit. A COIL course, supported by a selection of the associated online tools can potentially provide a flexible approach to aiding the learning journey of students. Nevertheless, there are considerations which need to be considered. This section will outline considerations which we feel are essential before engaging further in designing a COIL Course for PACS students.

Making COIL Courses Fit into Existing Workload

Studies of COIL outline that course development requires familiarity between instructors at different universities, as establishing a COIL course needs "significant preparation and commitment". This is important as courses should be synchronised and not "imposed" onto existing courses, thus ensuring that they complement existing degree courses. This will take additional time and resources from educators, and professional services staff to set up the course (regardless of how small it is). By taking this time and effort, the payoff is that students' engagement will be more seamless.

Technical Solutions Must Be Appropriate

Whilst technological evolution has brought state-of-the art tools to the user community, there are reasons why these may not be used. Firstly, students may undertake WBL placements in remote areas, or areas with unreliable internet access. Secondly, students' use of tools which rely on hardware (laptops, hand-held devices) may be influenced by the extent to which they feel comfortable using said devices in public environments where personal safety is a consideration. Thirdly, students may not possess the necessary hardware to support the tools which are deemed essential. This could be due to the hardware not having the requisite capacity, or the student not being able to afford hardware which supports such tools. Finally, students

should not be compelled to own the necessary technology. The extent to which students own personal devices, laptops and smartphones is their own choice (for instance, not all mobile phones are smartphones).

Sharing and Gathering Data Brings Ethical Complexities

Compelling students to interact with various tools and apps means that universities are asking students to upload data to third parties, who may be private companies whose business model is based on the number of users it generates. Social media companies (such as Facebook) for instance serve a useful purpose in terms of creating shared spaces for interest groups or communities. However, in establishing groups and shared spaces, users must register with social media companies, and be prepared to surrender a degree of personal data. This means that there is an ethical choice for students in terms of the balance between being compelled to use social media to enhance their WBL experience, and the extent to which they sign up to social media companies. This becomes even more acute when issues such as hate speech, online bullying, and other negative impacts of social media are considered.

Sharing and Gathering Data Brings Legal Complexities

Linked to the above point, we must consider the legal complexities of sharing data with third parties for the purposes of educational development. This occurs with the data shared with a third-party app, plus the data shared between universities if those universities are in different countries. Here, advice may be sought from university staff who deal specifically with data protection, GDPR, and intellectual property.

University Licensing Helps

Universities possess licenses for products which can assist COIL across international boundaries, and interaction with third party apps (Coventry University for instance has licensing agreements

with Microsoft, Zoom, Aula and Padlet). Therefore, in considering the use of particular tools in relation to COIL, it is worth considering what synergies exist with regard to institutional licensing.
Language
When considering the most appropriate tools for communication, course instructors need to be aware of potential language gaps between students. The INCOPS Consortium has universities from Germany, Netherlands, UK, Romania, and Portugal. Although the working language of the consortium is English, this assumes that non-English speakers are proficient in this language. The assumption that all students possess a similar level of the same language cannot be made. Such a challenge can be accommodated by identifying from educators if a working language of the COIL Course can be established. Moreover, there exists a possibility that language barriers can be reduced through the creative use of the tools that students use. The list of tools outlined above includes video sharing platforms (YouTube, FlipGrid), and a range of tools in which Photo Sharing is encouraged (Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram). Moreover, the example above of visual presentations by students in the examples of COIL Courses offered by Coventry University may be one way in which sharing of experiences can be offered without having to rely on verbal articulation

Motivating Students Beyond the Immediate Internship

Students outlined in O2 the requirement for semi-formal spaces in which they can share experiences without the restrictions of assessment and formalised learning. COIL can offer this space. However, COIL is heavily reliant upon the students participating which can be a limitation. The lack of assessment or formal learning attached to a COIL course runs the risk of students having little formal incentive of engagement in such a course. Therefore, thought and consideration is required into how to incentivise and motivate students to engage. The course we outline below attempts to address this through being guided by the question "what do you wish you would have known when embarking on the internship/volunteer experience". We hope that

this self-motivation will be enough to consider engagement.

Volunteering and Internship

We currently feel that one COIL Course which examines skill development and theory/practice nexus is sufficient to cover the needs of students who intern and those who volunteer. However, we do this in the knowledge that the two activities are different in terms of ethos, work undertaken, and link to learning. By focusing on skills development and theory/practice nexus we feel that sufficient space will be created to allow reflection and learning across this divide. However, it should be noted that consideration is made towards developing volunteer and internship- specific courses.

Legacy Beyond INCOPS

It is important to bear in mind that one of the contributions that is aimed by the INCOPS project is that its outcomes and outputs can be used by students, lecturers and WBL providers beyond the project end date. COIL offers a solid potential here, as it will build on the foundations that have been established during the project itself, and the positive relations between educators across boundaries.
The report now moves towards proposing a potential COIL course, and suggests tools which can be utilised to assist it.

Proposed COIL Course: Service Learning for PCS

A COIL Course in WBL for PCS brings together the knowledge outlined above. it takes into consideration the challenges identified in the above section, and builds on the existing work documented into COIL learning globally.

Importantly, a COIL Course supports Service Learning. On page four for this report, we outline the Service Learning approach as a framework in which to understand the integration of practical experience into schools and teaching. We see

that a COIL course can be used at the four stages outlined there, namely:

- Preparation
- Accompaniment
- Reflection
- Reintegration

As the below outline demonstrates, we see COIL as "circular", whereby experiences gained by students can be fed back into future courses to the benefit of future students.

Course Outline

WBL in PCS is a critical part of the curricula and of a student's journey into the workplace at the end of their studies. As well as assessed forms of learning, there are points of reflection throughout the WBL journey which need to be captured, but maybe in a less formal manner. This course creates an online space to aid this reflection in two key areas:

a) how they develop new skills which are useful for the workplace, and
b) how they apply, question and consider the theory learned in the lecture theatre.

In terms of skills development, the course asks students to undertake a "self-audit" of skills with WBL in mind. The self-audit will ask students to reflect on the skills they have and wish to develop before the internship, and after the internship, the new skills which they have learned and any lessons identified.

Potential tools:

- Voicenotes: a voicenote to be left at the end of the course with the question "what skills have you developed, and what could benefit a student about to embark on their WBL Placement?" this voice note to be shared with future cohorts of students
- Visual mind map: through using a virtual whiteboard (Miro, Padlet) students can create a virtual mind map which outlines the skills they possess at the beginning

of the WBL Placement. This can be shared with others on the course.

In terms of theory/practice nexus, the course will ask students during and after the WBL placement to log their learning points in terms of how they interacted with the theories learned during their studies, and questions which arise from this.

Potential tools:

- Padlet: This is an online noticeboard whereby students can 'pin' questions and reflections onto a virtual noticeboard. These reflections can be pinned onto the board (at appropriate times) when the student wishes to reflect on learning points in the theory/practice nexus. For example, when a student has benefited from knowing theory, examples of application, questions back to the theory, and points where more theoretical knowledge would have helped.
- Taken together these points are there to assist the learners in their journey. However, they are intended to also help future learners. In particular here we ask learners to leave voice notes for the next cohort of scholars who undertake WBL. An early task for each cohort is to listen to the reflections of the previous cohort. This should aid their own preparation for the internship experience. It may also assist educators in preparing students for the WBL journey with regards to how the theoretical knowledge is applied in the workshop.

Asynchronous communication as the bedrock of the Course. Due to the nature of internship and volunteer programmes, and the possibility that different course timetables exist across different institutes, we are basing this course largely on asynchronous communication. This means students can still engage with each other, but not in the same space at the same time. This is a significant benefit of COIL learning and the tools that are used. Although the students will not be in the same classroom at the same time, they will

effectively be adding to a WBL 'library' concerning their reflection on skills and how theory/practice engage with each other in the workplace.

If educators and students wish to engage in synchronous communication in the COIL, potential groupwork can be incorporated through coordinated meetings on Zoom, MS Teams or Cisco Webex whereby students from different institutions present on one of the following aspects of their internship/volunteer experience

- Skills development
- The theory/practice divide
- Using their lived experiences, students present their ideas on how WBL impacts broader society

Acknowledgement of Attendance

The COIL course can be linked to digital accreditation. Coventry University COIL Courses are linked to Badgr, which provides "badges" which can be uploaded to LinkedIn.

Digital badges have been likened to diplomas, whereby they contain information about the issuing organisation, and the work that the student undertook. Moreover, they offer an easy-to-access way in which to view a student's accreditation which is compatible with the multiple ways in which students reflect themselves online (LinkedIn, Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram for instance). this can allow the students to build an evidence-based digital profile to complement the accreditation they receive through taught programmes (cf. Weiss, 2020). This digital form of accreditation could be offered for attendance and interaction on the course (as opposed to more formal learning requirements).

Course Structure

Pre-WBL

1. Introductions: Voice note
2. Understanding that this is about self-reflection – not reflection on assessment, internship provider etc.
3. Skills audit – what do you have and what would you like to develop? Mind map

4. Listening exercise: listen to the voice notes from the previous cohort
    a. What does it tell you about the WBL journey?

During WBL

5. Set up a theory/practice noticeboard on Padlet (up to the student the extent they wish to share with supervisor and peers)
    a. Populate this with your reflections on this aspect of the learning journey
6. Return to the skills audit – how do you feel about this now (voice note)

After WBL

7. Reflections about you and how you engaged in the internship: potential discussion with peers from your institution/supervisor/peers from other institutions
    a. Return to mind map at beginning of the course – how has this changed
    b. Reflect on the Padlet
    c. A safe space without judgement
8. Leave a voice note
    a. Remember the one you listened to at the beginning from the last cohort. It is now your turn to leave a voice note to the next one. With the above learning in mind, what do you want to say to the next students who engage with this?

Conclusions

The report starts from the acknowledgment that there exists a requirement to further incorporate digital solutions to aid students' journeys through WBL. This report has brought this requirement together with the Service Learning approach and evidence gained from O2 to identify that an online course to aid skills development and reflection on the theory/practice nexus is required. We find that a COIL framework could be a useful avenue for this. COIL encourages collaboration amongst students, and is flexible enough to use the wide range of tools that exist on the internet. Through using examples of successful COIL courses at Coventry University, this report has put together a course outline for one which would focus on the two aspects outlined above.

However, we also recognise that these digital tools, solutions and possibilities still face a number of challenges in terms of management, engagement, and application. These challenges are not insurmountable, but will shape what an eventual COIL Course will look like. We are confident that if managed in a positive collaborative way, student learning in the WBL process can be deepened.

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