

University-Industry Collaboration in Work-Based Learning (WBL): Towards Enhancing Graduates Employability (GE)

Dr. Rozita Ibrahim

Head of Programme

Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies

Centre for Liberal Studies

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

(eta@ukm.edu.my)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case study of an undergraduate programme that incorporates a one year or two years work-based learning (WBL) as a compulsory component in the curriculum structure. The programme is offered by UKM and named as *Sarjanamuda Sains Citra* in the Malay language or Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies in the English language. The programme was designed as a future-ready curriculum aiming at preparing students with the necessary knowledge and skill sets that are seek for by future employers. Besides that, students are also encouraged to become job creators and not only job seekers. Therefore, many collaborative efforts are initiated and strengthened at various levels with relevant industries - including government and private sectors as well as NGOs and communities. These efforts will be the focus of this paper. Besides that, feedback from the students and the industry players will also be discussed. The paper ends with suggestions towards better collaboration between the university and industry including efforts that could be taken in preparing the students prior to WBL as well as training for mentoring and supervision by the academics and industry supervisors.

Keywords: Future-ready Curriculum (FRC), work-based learning (WBL), liberal education, graduate employability, high impact educational practices

INTRODUCTION

- **Work-Based Learning (WBL)**

- Work-Based Learning (Lester and Costly, 2010)

- WBL refers to all and any learning that is **situated in the workplace** or arises directly out of **workplace concerns**.
 - Majority of this learning is **not accredited** or formally recognized; but has the potential to be **accredited**.
 - In higher education context, WBL arises from concerns towards accreditation of in-company courses and also **the use of workplace as vehicle for subject-specific learning**.
 - WBL is **transdisciplinary** in nature and needs to be accompanied by **specific methodologies and practices in organizing the learning**. It recognizes **previous learning**; and involves **valid forms of assessments** usually referenced to generic criteria representing the relevant academic level.

- Three critical elements in WBL process (Raelin, J.A., 2008):
 - It views learning as acquired in the midst of action and dedicated to the task at hand.
 - It sees knowledge creation and utilization as collective activities, wherein learning becomes everyone's job.
 - Its users demonstrate a learning-to-learn aptitude, which frees them to question underlying assumptions of practice.
- WBL:
 - Differs from conventional education in that it involves conscious reflection on actual experience.
 - Not only asking "What did we learn?", but also "What does it mean or how does it relate what we already know?"

- **Graduate Employability (GE)** (Clarke, M. 2017):
 - Three explanations of graduate employability:
 - Possessions (human capital) – skills, competencies, work experience
 - Position (social capital) – networks, social class, university ranking
 - Process (individual behaviours) – career self-management, career-building skills
 - At operational level, GE has often linked to **basic skills acquisition as demanded by employers**. GE has become closely equated with graduates' attributes or the qualities and skills students should acquire during their study period.
 - **Stakeholders involved in GE** – individuals, universities, employer, and government bodies.

SCOPE OF THIS PAPER


- Case study of an undergraduate programme in UKM i.e. Sarjana Muda Sains Citra or Bachelor of Science in Liberal Studies:
 - First introduced during 2018/2019 academic session; now in cohort 5; and cohort 1 just graduated in November 2022
 - First full-fledged undergraduate academic programme in liberal studies in UKM and in Malaysia
- Designed as a future ready curriculum

- SmSn Citra as a Future Ready Curriculum (FRC)

- Curriculum structure that is organic and flexible
 - Non-conventional - Students choose their own courses based on interests and career aspirations
 - Multidiscipline & Interdiscipline – fields of concentrations
 - Allows mobility to other universities
 - Industry involvement – 2u2i or 3u1i study mode
- Transformative delivery of teaching and learning
 - Experiential learning – during WBL and other extra curricular activities
- Alternative assessment
 - Capstone project – linking theories at university with actual problem solving at workplace - 360 degree assessment from all stakeholders
 - On-going assessments for most courses, not exam oriented

- 120 credits – 60 credits for generic knowledge and skills, 60 credits for 2 disciplines or concentrations chosen by the student him/herself.
 - 60 credits concentrations – 48 theory-based (at the university) and 12 workplace-based (at the industry)
 - At the university – in UKM or other Malaysian university or even abroad – involves other faculties or universities in offering concentration courses
 - Industry refers to relevant workplace related to students' concentrations; could be government or private sector, or even NGO or community; having one trainer for each student is a compulsory

Work Based Learning 2u2i / 3u1i Delivery Method


Year 1
First Year
Seminars (FYS)
Service /
Community
Based Learning
(SBL)


Year 2
Interdisciplinary
Approach to
Assessment
Diversity /
Global Learning


Year 3
Service /
Industry /
Community
Based Learning
Intensive
Academic
Writing


Year 4
Empirical
research /
Capstone
Courses and
Projects
Collaborative
Assignments
and Projects
Internship

Campus Based

Concentration
based

Industry /
Community Based

Career Based



AT THE UNIVERSITY

- **Concentration in two fields** → Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary experiences at different faculties and universities
- **Focus on soft skills** → Students actively involved in co-curriculum activities based on their interests:
 - PESISTRA & residential college activities – organisational and leadership skills
 - CESMED – entrepreneurial skills
 - UKM Global – cross-cultural and inter-cultural skills



To complement the academic → Among students' activities... to prepare them for the **reality** at the workplace...

Organising **sharing sessions** - Sharing of students' experiences and listening to industry perspectives

  |  #CitraLuarBiasa

IndustryTalk@Citra

Kemahiran Menempuh Cabaran Era 5IR



Panel Jemputan
ROSMAWATI HARON
Pengurus Sumber Manusia
Mesiniaga Sdn Bhd

17 SEPTEMBER 2021
KHAMIS | 8.30 PM



Imbas QR code untuk mendaftar ----->>>



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Perspektif@Citra

Pelajar 2u2i [WBL]



Hijazida



Azirul Hanif



Alaudin Rafiq



Ammar Syarifuddin

Pelajar Outbound Mobility



Aishah Mutmainnah



Ain Athirah



Rima



Nor Kaisah

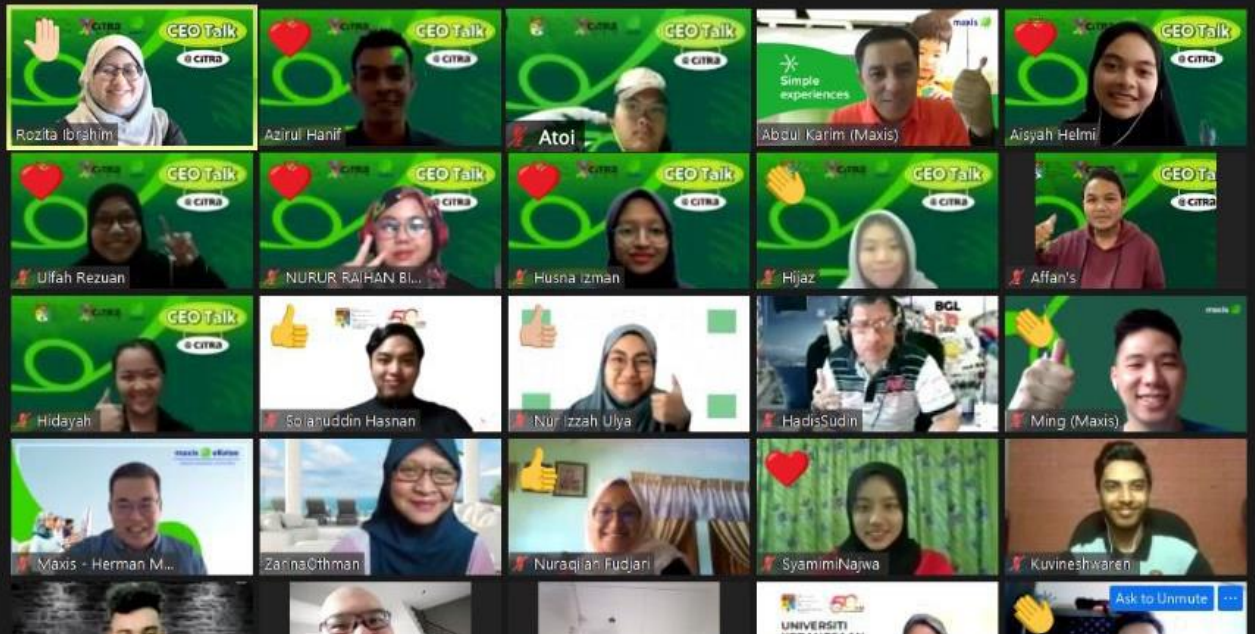


Hidayah Koh
MODERATOR

PLATFORM ZOOM

20 MAC 2021
8.15 PM - 10.30 PM
SABTU

Recording



A grid of 20 video thumbnails from a Zoom meeting. Each thumbnail shows a participant's video feed with a 'GEO Talk' logo in the top right corner. The participants are arranged in a 4x5 grid. The names of the participants are visible at the bottom of each thumbnail. The thumbnails show various participants, some with their hands raised, and some with their mutes on. The background of the thumbnails is a green and white pattern.

1/3

MAJLIS MENANDATANGANI MEMORANDUM PERJANJIAN (MoA)

antara



PUSAT CITRA UKM & RAKAN INDUSTRI



5 OGOS 2020 (Rabu) | 10.00 pagi - 11.30 pagi

BILIK SENAT, ARAS 5, BANGUNAN CANSELORI UKM

- Trans Eco Development
- ARBA Travel
- Maybank
- iPay 88
- Brahim's SATS
- Wasiyyah Shoppe
- NLPM Center
- Hadis Solution
- Training Cube Int.
- Mesiniaga Berhad
- 1337 Ventures
- Digital Durian Animation
- DFZ Talent Ignite
- MyHarapan Foundation
- ARBA Int. Waqf Foundation
- Atfal Jannah Sdn Bhd



Observations and Feedbacks

- **Personal observations & feedbacks from colleagues:**

- (Mis)-understanding the workings of SmSn Citra's WBL
 - Citra's WBL (12 months) vs other faculties Industrial Training (3 to 6 months)
 - Capstone Project (balance of theory and practical; work-place problem solving), vs Final Year Project / Thesis (generally heavy emphasis on theories and academic research)
 - Generalists vs Specialists – not having depth of knowledge in specific field
- Acceptance from the industries
 - Government vs Private
 - Small Organisations vs Big Organisations
- Students' choice of WBL placement
 - Amount of allowance offered by the organization
 - Location of the office
- Transformation of our students
 - Character building – more confident, improvement in communication skills, understanding of the reality of workplaces i.e. importance of having the right attitude, office politics, restructuring of the organization and impacts on employees, differences of work culture and salary, etc.

- **Feedback from industries**

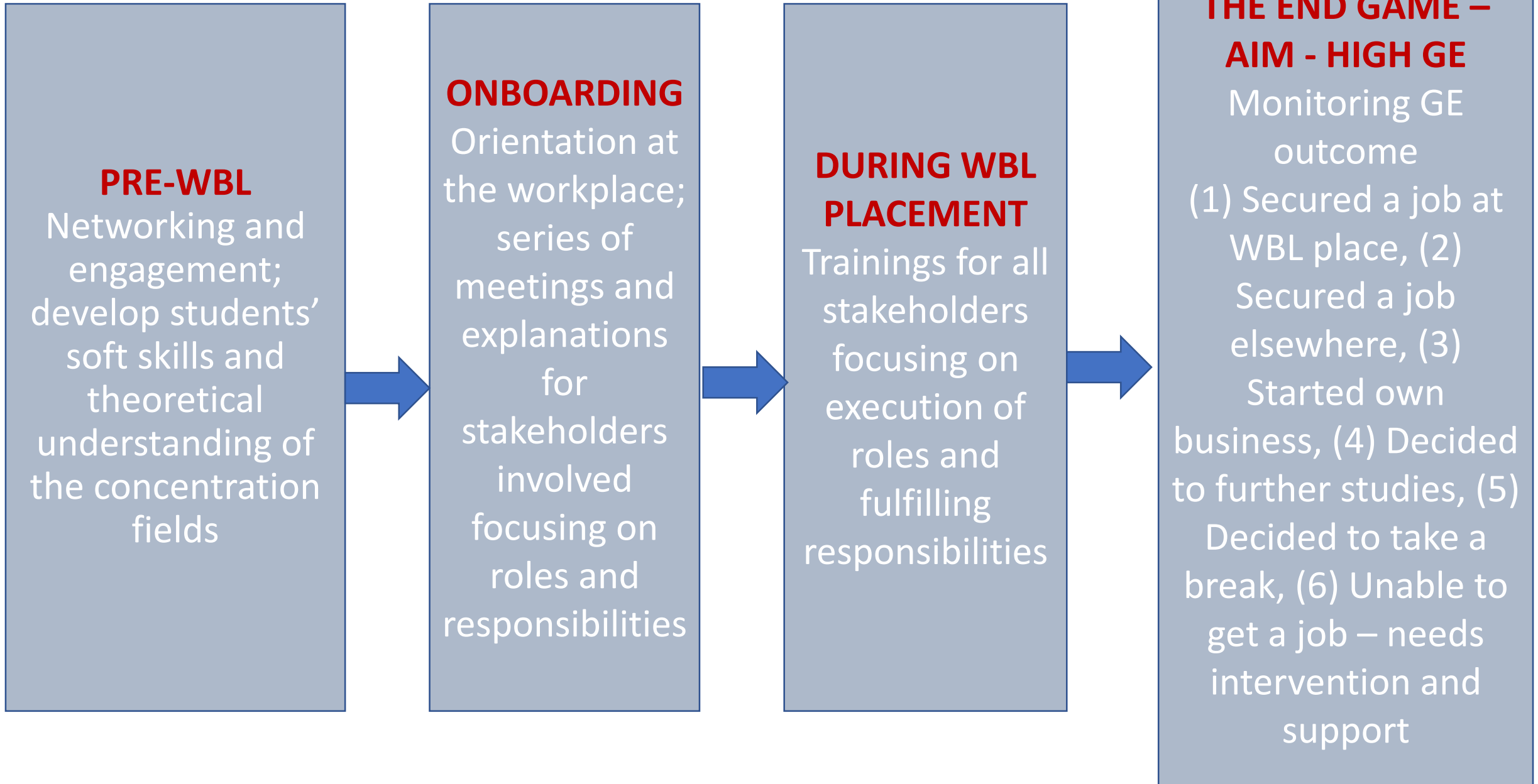
- 12 months WBL placement – allows industry supervisors to give substantial amount of work to the interns to work on, not merely helping around the office with photocopying or tea-making.
- Positive feedback on students' / interns' performance – practical solution to the issues / need – some examples from the students' capstone projects:
 - Developed training module for company's or client's future use,
 - Developed a system to records company's sales performance,
 - Studied the digital trail for online advocacy performance and suggest practical ways for improvement,
 - Works on the field to build 3D images.
- Offered their interns a job placement as protégé / trainee executive or officer

- **Feedback from students**

- Balancing between working and studying – time management issues, adapting to realities of working life
- Guidance from industry supervisors – busy – no time for proper guidance, lack of understanding of what a capstone project is, tasks given are not related to the objectives of the capstone project.
- Guidance from academic mentors – academic writing for capstone project report, depth of knowledge in the field.
- Importance of having sufficient allowance - Cost of living and other expenses – food, house rent, transport, etc.

CONCLUSION

- The verdict – **WBL enhance GE? – YES!**
- Way forward - **THREE** focus areas for improvement:
 - **DESIGN** of WBL programme – systemic and holistic view – beginning from pre-WBL to securing or creating job for the student plus intervention needed. Way forward - suggestions for improvement.
 - Strengthening **NETWORKING** with universities and industries in Malaysia and abroad – focusing on:
 - Promoting shared courses for students and exchange of academic expertise in various disciplines
 - Developing training modules related to WBL – for example on working in multinational or multicultural workplace, or promoting digital literacy and competencies, etc.,
 - Placement of students for WBL or credit-bearing mobility programmes.
 - Series of **TRAININGS** for all stakeholders involved – students, academic mentors / lecturers, industry trainers, administrative staffs; for example:
 - Pre-WBL trainings for students – soft skills and competencies for workplace – communication skills, digital skills in managing office, problem solving, academic writing skills, etc.
 - Mentoring trainings for lecturers and industry trainers.
 - Assessment trainings for the lecturers and industry trainers.



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