

Chapter 12

Global Calls to Action for Work–Integrated Education: The WACE CWIE Charter and Applications of WIL for Gen Y and Z Workers and Students

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a brief overview of generational attributes for Generations X and Y and how they impact workplaces. It introduces The Global Co-Operative and Work-Integrated Education Charter that calls for the scaling up of work integrated programs around the world in recognition of their unique potential for bridging gaps between academia and the world of work and positively impacting the multiple generations working therein. More specifically, the charter positions international work-integrated learning as a particularly effective educational approach for developing the critical understandings, insights, and attitudes needed to effectively navigate the multigenerational and multicultural workplaces that typify our increasingly borderless world of work.

INTRODUCTION

Current workplaces are comprised of workers from multiple generations, with each generation having been ascribed certain traits based upon the time period they were born into and the major events that have shaped their collective experiences. Researchers have studied each of the generations and identified traits that broadly define them as a cohort. A subset of this literature has focused on how these traits play out as each new generation joins and participates in the workforce. Studies typically focus on how generational traits may translate into strengths or challenges depending on the overall generational mix, culture, and leadership approach that guides the organization they have joined. Of particular interest is the Gen X, Y, and Z intergenerational mix given that Gen Y and Gen Z will soon surpass their Gen

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-6440-0.ch012

X colleagues and comprise well over half of those in the active workforce. How the generational traits of the two largest cohorts fit together has been studied over the past few decades as Generation X and Generation Y (Millennials) are now working together. These two generations are reported to share many similarities but also several differences, which require attention in order to ensure healthy and productive work environments through reduced intergenerational conflicts (Harber, 2011; Hillman, 2014).

As Gen Y, and more recently Gen Z, students transition to an increasingly changing world of work, certain educational experiences will prove to be very helpful in facilitating their transitions. In particular, students that have partaken in co-operative or work integrated education (CWIE) programs while completing their studies will have advantages that others may not. Specifically, the skills, knowledge, and self-awareness gained through their CWIE experiences will serve to facilitate their transitions to productive work that is more aligned with their interests and studies and better fits the workplaces into which they will enter (Cates & Jones, 1999). Early professional exposures to authentic communities of practice afford a unique opportunity for both “newcomers” and workplace “old timers” to learn from each other within the relative safety of an educational program (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Academic institutions that integrate authentic workplace learning opportunities within their academic programs acknowledge the value of learning *in situ* and the enhanced learning that can result when students, institutions, and workplace leaders work together. While CWIE programs typically focus on student learning outcomes, the feedback mechanisms embedded in most CWIE models also allow for workplaces to learn from students and institutions, and workplaces to learn from each other as students move between them. The opportunity for new generations of workers to gain early experiences and perspectives from the workplaces into which they will graduate (or create), is critical in supporting them and their work colleagues to navigate any inter-generational challenges they may experience.

This chapter provides a brief overview of generational perspectives within the workplace and the challenges these can present. Select management approaches are also outlined and work integrated learning is situated as a key strategy for addressing those challenges. The chapter then introduces the first ever World Association of Co-operative and Work Integrated Education (WACE) Global CWIE Charter that calls for the scaling up of work integrated programs around the world in recognition of their unique potential for bridging academia and the world of work. The Charter positions work integrated education programs as a specific educational approach that can help students learn in context through authentic work within the workplaces that await them. Work integrated education also assists employers in gaining early access to the next generation of qualified workers, determining what attracts them to their organizations, and to how best motivate, develop, and retain that talent once they are working. More specifically, the Charter proposes that *international* work integrated placements provide employers and students alike with particularly unique opportunities to experience and develop intercultural understandings and insights as they enter multigenerational and multicultural workplaces that typify the increasingly borderless world of work (McRae, 2013; Silken, 2018). Further, this chapter describes why and how the WACE CWIE Charter was developed and presents the four challenges and three calls to action that have been endorsed by the WACE international CWIE community. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on how the global scaling up of quality co-operative and work integrated education can serve as an effective strategy for proactively addressing many work-related challenges, including those that can arise when multiple generations work together in a shared environment (WACE, 2019). The dramatic changes affecting all workplaces that have been brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic add an additional layer of interest as these multicultural, multigenerational workforces must now also

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