Building capacity in a transnational WIL environment: A qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam

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This paper explores the role of intern work supervisors in Vietnam. Bates (2005) stated that effective internship placements are contingent upon collaborations between the student, academic supervisor and work supervisor. In offshore education, in order for the university to establish this collaboration, it must understand the work supervisor’s perception of their role, as internships may differ between the university’s home setting and the offshore environment. In Vietnam, although many local universities incorporate internships as a degree component, usually the contact between the university academic and the intern’s workplace is minimal or non-existent. Therefore, the authors, from a foreign university in Vietnam that delivers a 12-week internship elective for business undergraduates, conducted 21 interviews with intern work supervisors in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Two themes of inquiry developed from the interview results indicated that work supervisors valued the contact with the university, were supportive of the interns’ goals, and comfortable in their role as intern assessors. Supervisors also wanted information about the intern before the intern started, and suggested that the university prepare the intern to set goals at the start of the internship.

Keywords: Work integrated learning(WIL); transnational education, cross-cultural collaboration, intern work supervisors, industry collaboration, industry partnerships