

Implementing cooperative and work-integrated education in a medium-sized workplace: Policies, operational plans, and procedures

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Abstract

To eliminate the gap between education and employment, integrating education with work through cooperative and work-integrated education (CWIE) has become essential. The purpose of the short paper is to design a comprehensive plan that can be applicable to a workplace that is of medium size and is in the process of adopting the provision of CWIE. The plan includes the development of essential policies, strategies, and procedures that can be applicable to the provision of CWIE. The purpose is to enable students to participate in significant learning experiences that enhance their skills and knowledge, and, in the workplace, to gain new insights and develop talents.

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1. Introduction

Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education (CWIE) is a form of experiential learning in which students gain work experience that supports their academic learning. CWIE has proven successful in building students' professional competencies while also providing value to the organization by developing future employees who are not only qualified but also aligned with industry requirements (Em & Khampirat, 2025a, 2025b; Johnston, 2021).

Upon the invitation to develop CWIE in the workplace, the medium-sized organization has clearly defined the policies related to CWIE as part of the organizational or industry policies (Em & Khampirat, 2026). This manuscript will outline the development and implementation of CWIE policies and operational plans in the workplace to ensure the organization is aligned with the national and international CWIE standards (Em & Khampirat, 2025a, 2025b).

2. CWIE policies for the workplace

In order to successfully implement CWIE, an organization must develop policies that promote the integration of theoretical learning with work experience (Em & Phann, 2024). One such policy is the integration of learning and work, whereby CWIE will ensure that the tasks allocated to the student are closely related to their areas of study, enabling them to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical setting. This is because this integration is likely to achieve

the required learning outcomes by connecting theoretical knowledge with real-world issues (Johnston, 2021).

The other policy is the development of partnerships with educational institutions, whereby the organization will develop partnerships with learning institutions (Amey & Eddy, 2023), enabling them to develop mutual goals, such as learning outcomes and assessment criteria, to ensure the integration of the academic and practical aspects of the student's work experience, in line with organizational objectives and academic development (O'Dwyer et al., 2023).

Finally, the organization will develop a mentorship policy whereby each CWIE student will be linked with a mentor who will be in charge of guiding them throughout their work experience period. This is because mentorship is crucial in ensuring that each student reaches their learning objectives, in line with their professional and academic development, as noted by Johnston (2021) and Suthamanon (2023).

In line with Billett (2020), the organization will develop a learning plan for each student, whereby the plan will include details regarding the tasks, objectives, and outcomes, in order to ensure that each student's academic objectives are met in their work experience setting. Furthermore, feedback mechanisms will be developed in order to monitor each student's progress throughout their work experience period, whereby formal feedback will be provided to each student at the midpoint and conclusion of their work experience period.

3. Operational plans for CWIE provision

In order to operationalize the CWIE policies, the organizations/industries will develop a comprehensive plan outlining the design, implementation, and evaluation of the CWIE placements (Lee, 2018). First and foremost, the organizations/industries will develop formal agreements with the educational institutions in order to ensure alignment between the students' work placements and the curriculum (Dean & Sykes, 2021).

Secondly, the organizations/industries will develop a special training and orientation program for the CWIE students (Jiranantanagorn, 2023). The students will be introduced to the organizational policies and culture in order to ensure a smooth transition and adaptation into the workplace. This will also help the students understand the relationship between the work placements and the curriculum (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the mentorship program will be a vital part of the operational plan. A mentor will be assigned to each CWIE student to provide guidance and support in the workplace (Johnston, 2021). The mentor will assist the students in understanding the roles and applying the theoretical knowledge in the real world (Jaroensombut et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the students will be provided with individualized workplace learning plans in order to ensure the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge (Baerheim & Raaheim, 2020; Fake & Dabbagh, 2020). The plans will be developed in collaboration with the academic supervisors and the workplace mentors.

Finally, in order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the operational plan, the organizations/industries will develop a continuous evaluation and feedback mechanism in line with Seijts et al. (2020). Formal evaluations will be conducted at the midpoint and the end of the placements in order to assess the students' progress and determine whether they have attained the required learning outcomes. The evaluations will be based on the students' self-

assessment and the mentor's feedback to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the students' experience.

4. Procedures for implementing CWIE policies and plans

It is vital for the effective implementation of the policies and operational plans set in the CWIE program to develop a set of procedures that will govern the transition (Khampirat & McRae, 2016; Lee, 2018). First and foremost, the Human Resources (HR) department will develop the policies for the CWIE program and ensure they are in line with both national and international standards. The policies will be disseminated throughout all relevant departments in the company. Furthermore, the personnel involved in the CWIE program will undergo training on the roles and responsibilities (Ferns & Arsenault, 2023).

In collaboration with the higher education sector, the HR department will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the company and the relevant educational institution. This MOU will outline the scope of the CWIE program (Smouse, 2018).

Furthermore, the mentor program will be implemented by recruiting mentors from the company's experienced workforce. The mentor program will be designed in such a manner that the mentor will be able to mentor the students in the CWIE program. The mentor will undergo relevant training to ensure they are effective in mentoring the students (Okolie et al., 2020).

According to Chillakuri (2020), once the students are selected for the CWIE program, they will undergo a thorough onboarding program. The students will be trained on the company/industry policies and the relevant company/industry culture. The HR department and the mentor program will then collaborate in the development of a personalized workplace learning plan for each student in the CWIE program.

Finally, the monitoring and evaluation aspects will be implemented throughout the CWIE program. Through this program, the students will be able to gain valuable insights through the feedback sessions. Furthermore, the mid-term and end-term evaluations will be conducted to ensure the students are able to achieve the set objectives in the program. The feedback will then be used to improve the CWIE program in the future.

Table 1. CWIE policies, operational plans, and implementation procedures

Section	Key component	Main focus	Core actions/strategies	Expected outcomes
CWIE Policies for the Workplace	Integration of Learning and Work	Align academic theory with workplace practice	Assign tasks related to students' study areas; link theoretical knowledge with real-world issues (Em & Phann, 2024; Johnston, 2021)	Achievement of intended learning outcomes through applied learning
	Partnerships with Educational Institutions	Strengthen collaboration between organizations and academia	Develop shared goals, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria (O'Dwyer et al., 2023)	Better alignment between academic and workplace learning

	Mentorship Policy	Provide structured student guidance.	Assign mentors; support professional and academic development (Johnston, 2021; Suthamanon, 2023)	Improved student learning and workplace adaptation
	Individual Learning Plans & Feedback Mechanisms	Monitor progress and ensure achievement of outcomes	Develop learning plans; provide midpoint and final feedback (Billett, 2020)	Continuous performance improvement and learning effectiveness
Operational Plans for CWIE Provision	Formal Institutional Agreements	Ensure alignment with the curriculum	Establish agreements between organizations and universities (Dean & Sykes, 2021)	Structured placement implementation
	Training & Orientation Programs	Facilitate workplace integration	Introduce organizational culture, policies, and expectations (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Jiranantanagorn, 2023)	Smooth transition and enhanced preparedness
	Mentorship Implementation	Provide ongoing workplace support.	Assign mentors; guide theory-to-practice application (Jaroensombut et al., 2023; Johnston, 2021)	Stronger professional competence
	Individualized Workplace Learning Plans	Enhance skills development	Develop plans jointly with mentors and supervisors (Baerheim & Raaheim, 2020; Fake & Dabbagh, 2020)	Acquisition of relevant competencies
	Evaluation & Feedback Systems	Ensure effectiveness and accountability.	Conduct midpoint and final evaluations; use self-assessment and mentor feedback (Seijts et al., 2020)	Continuous program improvement
Procedures for Implementing CWIE Policies and Plans	Policy Development & Dissemination	Ensure institutional alignment	HR develops policies aligned with standards; trains personnel (Ferns & Arsenault, 2023; Khampirat & McRae, 2016)	Consistent implementation across departments
	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	Formalize partnerships	HR collaborates with institutions to define scope (Smouse, 2018)	Clear roles and responsibilities
	Mentor Recruitment & Training	Strengthen mentoring effectiveness	Recruit experienced staff; provide mentoring training (Okolie et al., 2020)	High-quality supervision

Student Onboarding & Learning Plan Development	Support workplace readiness	Provide onboarding; develop personalized learning plans (Chillakuri, 2020)	Effective workplace engagement
Monitoring & Evaluation Procedures	Improve CWIE outcomes	Conduct regular feedback sessions, mid-term and final evaluations	Ongoing program enhancement

5. Conclusion

For the implementation of the Cooperative Work-Integrated Education (CWIE) in the medium-sized organization, it is imperative that there is a systematic approach that entails the integration of policies, operational plans, and standardized procedures. This can be achieved through the development of associations with educational institutions, the provision of mentorship, and the incorporation of assessment mechanisms that can provide the students with valuable work experiences that can be beneficial to the company and the industry as a whole. The integration of scholarly education and work can ensure that the students are prepared for the industry and the workforce, and the organization can reap the benefits of new talents and new ideas.

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