

Exploring cooperative education partnerships: A case study in sport tertiary education

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Cooperative education can be expressed in terms of a partnership between students, university and industry. A stakeholder-integrated approach to cooperative education involves formalized sustainable relationships between stakeholders. This study investigated the motives and determinants for the formation of cooperative education partnerships. Through a qualitative case study, the perceptions of cooperative education stakeholders were explored in the context of sport tertiary education. The students, industry and academics views supported multiple determinants such as reciprocity, efficiency, legitimacy and synergy as important in the formation of cooperative education partnerships. Interpersonal connections and individual factors also played a key role. However, for long-term viability the university and industry also need to consider strategic alignment rather than partnerships based on individual interests alone. Understanding the perceptions of the stakeholders involved in the partnership will contribute to improving the management and sustainability of sport cooperative education experiences for students, the university and industry. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2013, 14(3), 209-221*)

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Cooperative education can be considered as a model under the umbrella term 'work-integrated learning' (WIL). Students undergo conventional academic learning within a tertiary institution and combine this learning with time spent in a relevant workplace or industry setting. Cooperative education involves collaboration between the student, university, and workplace not only to enhance the employability of graduates through the development of generic and specific skills, but also to enable students to succeed as learners and contributors to society.

It has been argued that successful cooperative education programs require a stakeholder-integrated approach (Cooper, Orell, & Bowden, 2010; Harvey, Moon, Geall, & Bower, 1997). This involves formalized sustainable relationships between stakeholders and a common understanding of the meaning, expectations, outcomes and associated responsibilities required by all those involved. When stakeholders actively and consciously participate, cooperate and collaborate the foundation is laid for a genuine partnership. The definition and characteristics of the partnership vary with the context in which the stakeholders are situated. 'Partnership' is often used interchangeably with other words that represent external linkages between organizations such as networks, alliances, collaborations, exchange relationships and coalitions.

In the sport industry *interorganizational relationships* (IORs) is the terminology frequently used to describe collaborative interactions between organizations. Babiak (2007) described an IOR as a "voluntary, close, long term, planned strategic action between two or more organizations with the objective of serving mutually beneficial purposes" (p.339). She acknowledges that IOR's are becoming increasingly important in the sport industry. Various types of IOR's exist on a continuum from a one-off exchange relationship, through to strategic alliances and, in a business environment, can lead to mergers and acquisitions.

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Oliver (1990) proposed a conceptual framework for the contingencies that determine the formation of IORs across a variety of settings. Oliver referred to contingencies as “the causes that prompt or motivate organizations to establish IORs” (p. 242). She presented six critical contingencies of relationship formation: necessity; asymmetry; reciprocity; efficiency; stability and legitimacy. However not all of these determinants are evident in the formation of any one relationship. While this framework has been applied to the formation of relationships between sport organizations (Alexander, Thibault, & Frisby, 2008; Babiak, 2007), little is known about the motivations for forming a relationship between a sport organization and an educational institution. A search of the literature failed to identify any research that explored the determinants influencing the formation of cooperative education or work-integrated learning partnerships within the sport industry. As many organizations in sport are in the not-for profit sector the motivations for becoming involved in a cooperative education partnership may be different to those in the public or commercial sectors or from other disciplines.

Several authors have identified key principles for forming cooperative education partnerships. Smith and Betts (2000) argue, in the context of work-based learning, for partnerships to be effective they must be based on the principles of collaborative self-interest. Through their case study, they illustrated that collaborative self-interest partnerships enabled a range of ‘value added’ outcomes to be achieved that were over and above the individual outcomes. In collaborative self-interest partnerships all parties must be clear from the outset what is required and then actively work towards a common goal. They suggest that the awareness of tangible returns not only allows the partnership to be more effective, but also may enable a change in the perspective from one of *cost* to one of an *investment* in the future. However, they also recognize that partnerships based on collaborative self-interest alone may not lead to effective learning experiences (and possibly the reverse) and that transparency and negotiation are equally important.

Another perspective is that through investing in a true WIL partnership it is possible that as all parties become immersed and share a stake in the learning process new insights emerge from both the academic and industry perspective and that there is no longer a single ‘student’ learner in the traditional sense (MacLaren & Marshall, 1998). It can be conceived that all three stakeholders are partners in learning and should be considered part of one learning organization (Brodie, Reeve, & Whittaker, 1995; Orell, 2004; Varty, 1996). However, Smith, Mackay, Challis & Holt, (2005) suggested that in a work integrated learning experience there are two self-reinforcing learning organizations, one the university and the other the workplace and that an effective partnership involves the integration of these two organizations in order for learning to be maximized. Cooperation between partners is necessary if transformation of experiences into learning is to be possible. However, partners must recognize that for cooperation to occur, “knowledge from one side (the academic) is not privileged over that from the other (the workplace); practice and theory should merge and support each other” (MacLaren & Marshall, 1998, p. 329).

Boundary spanning is a concept from organizational theory that has recently been applied to partnerships in work-integrated learning. Boundary spanning links organizations to one another in order to create mutually beneficial relationships. Peach, Cates, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Jones, and Lechleiter (2011) argue that each organization operates under its own autonomous authority and that it is through boundary spanning that mutually

beneficial relationships can be developed. They suggest that triad partnerships in WIL are based upon;

Creating an environment of joint enterprise and an expectation, a collective mindset and an atmosphere in which all stakeholders believe the rewards for participation exceeds the conflicts and costs of operating outside their own organizational domain. (p. 100)

Despite the premise that partnerships are central to the cooperative education experience, research has highlighted significant challenges. Stakeholder commitment, time, resources and personal energy are key issues that are identified as significant in the establishment of a partnership (Reeve & Gallacher, 2005). Several authors acknowledge that there is a lack of a shared understanding of the meaning and purpose along with different stakeholder expectations and motivations for participating in cooperative education (Beggs, Ross, & Knapp, 2006; Martin & Leberman, 2005; Patrick et al., 2008). Other factors identified that may impact on the effectiveness of partnerships include differences between organizational culture and academic culture, especially where there are differences in priorities, values and professional language. Reeve and Gallacher (2005) suggest that, “the difficulties that remain in operationalizing ‘partnerships’ may arise not so much from a lack of goodwill, but from real and sometimes unacknowledged differences in the ways that ‘knowledge’ and ‘learning’ are understood by the partners” (p. 229).

There has been a call for further research to examine cooperative education partnerships and the nature of stakeholder relationships (Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). Most of the research that has been conducted and published on stakeholder perspectives has researched only a subset of stakeholders (e.g. student, academic supervisor or industry supervisor), but not a comparison of all three views in one context. Research has often used quantitative surveys and there has been limited use of the student voice (Harris, Jones, & Coutts, 2010). Coll and Eames, (2004) also support the need for discipline specific research in cooperative education on the grounds that each discipline has its own models and constraints in which they need to operate which problematizes how transferable research done in one context is, to another.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the determinants for the formation of cooperative education partnerships. The perceptions of the cooperative education stakeholders (students, industry supervisors and academic supervisors) were explored in the context of sport tertiary education in New Zealand. It was felt that a better understanding of the views of the stakeholders involved in the partnership would contribute to improving the management and sustainability of sport cooperative education experiences for students, the university and the industry.

METHODS

An interpretive case study approach was used to provide a rich description of the experiences and perceptions of the three stakeholder groups to enhance understanding and form a unique interpretation of events (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are a very common approach used in WIL research because of the highly contextualized nature of such programs (Coll & Chapman, 2000; Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004). A case can be defined as a phenomenon occurring in a bounded context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). An intrinsic case design draws the researcher to what is important about that case within its own world and aims to develop what are perceived as issues, contexts and interpretations of that specific case (Merriam, 1998). However, in intrinsic case studies Stake (1995) argues that the

researchers cannot avoid generalizations. He comments that researchers can generalize the happenings of their case into the future and across other settings. It is also expected that the readers are able to comprehend the researchers' interpretation, but to arrive as well at their own conclusions. In intrinsic designs although there is one case of research interest and learning, comparisons can be made with other cases. The intrinsic case in this study was the cooperative education program within the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR) at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand.

The data collection involved semi-structured interviews with students, academic supervisors and industry supervisors (see case description for details of the participants). An academic from another university conducted interviews with students and academic supervisors. This was necessary to address the ethical concerns in relation to potential coercion (due to the position the researcher held within the university), confidentiality and privacy. The researcher conducted the industry supervisor interviews at the site of the organization. Interview guides were developed that were similar for each stakeholder group. The interviews focused on the cooperative education partnerships and the stakeholder relationships, wherein stakeholder perceptions of the purpose, outcomes and benefits of cooperative education were explored. The industry supervisors were asked specifically about their motivations for hosting a cooperative education student. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were analyzed using content and thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). NViVO software was used for coding with a-priori codes (for themes which had been identified from the literature) and codes generated inductively.

The project followed the human research ethics guidelines and ethical approval was gained from the university ethics committees at AUT (AUTEC reference: 11/ 80) and Deakin University (project ID: 2011-130).

CASE DESCRIPTION

A full description of the case is important in case study research in order for the reader to gain a clear understanding of the context. As this was an intrinsic case study the case had been predetermined and the boundaries specified. The case was the cooperative education program within the BSR at AUT. The cooperative education program involved students undertaking 350 hours of placement within one sport and recreation organization over two semesters, each of fifteen weeks. The cooperative education experience was undertaken generally two days per week during the final year of the degree. The students were responsible for negotiating their own cooperative education placement; however the process was facilitated through an industry forum and advertisements from organizations. An industry supervisor, from the host organization provided support for the student while on placement. Workshops were provided for students to assist in preparation for their cooperative education experience and during the semester to provide guidance for the assessment tasks that accompanied their industry placement. Students were also expected to meet with their academic supervisor every two weeks during the course of their placement.

All students who had completed their sport and recreation cooperative education experience in 2011 were invited during their final session of the year to participate in the study. Invitations to participate were placed in the mailboxes of all academic staff that had supervised sport and recreation cooperative education students in 2011. Industry supervisors that had hosted a sport and recreation student for at least one full academic year were invited to participate either at the time of an industry visit by an academic supervisor

or by post. The interview participants (six students, five academic supervisors and five industry supervisors) were recruited by an administrator, from the volunteers using convenience sampling based on their availability for interviews.

The six students that were interviewed had undertaken their placements at a range of sport and recreation related organizations. The organizations included a national sports organization (assisting the coach development manager); a regional sports organization (in competition and event management); a professional sports club (assisting with high performance training and conditioning) and an outdoor recreation company (as an outdoor instructor). Two students had completed their placements at different schools, one in the physical education and sport department (as an assistant sports coordinator and rugby coach) and the other in the outdoor education department (as an assistant outdoor education teacher). None of the students interviewed had worked full time in the sport and recreation industry prior to their cooperative education experience. However, several had undertaken volunteer roles such as coaching or assisting with event management activities. All students had completed at least 350 hours with the organization and none of the students interviewed were paid by the organization during their placements.

All of the five industry supervisors interviewed had supervised a student for at least one academic year. The range was between one and nine years of supervision practice. Three of the five industry participants had over ten years of experience and all but one of the participants had worked for other sports organizations prior to their current roles. All participants were employed in senior or management roles within their respective organizations. The organizations and roles included: A regional sports trust (Fundamental Skills Advisor); School (Sports Director); a not-for-profit recreation organization (Operations Manager) and two different regional sports organizations (Competitions Manager, High Performance Manager). Two of the industry supervisors had undertaken a placement or practicum as part of their own tertiary education qualifications.

The five academic supervisors interviewed had a range of experiences in supervision. One academic had just completed her first year as a lecturer and supervisor while two others had supervised for over ten years. Three academics had worked in the industry prior to their current positions in the university and had been in sport related roles such as coaching, sports medicine and physical education. Only one academic supervisor had completed a placement or practicum as part of his/her own degree.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Drawing upon Oliver's (1990) framework, the determinants reciprocity, legitimacy and efficiency were identified as consistent themes that emerged across the data. These themes will be discussed in relation to the formation of cooperative education partnerships in a sport tertiary education context.

Reciprocity is based on a perspective that partnerships are formed for the purpose of pursuing mutually beneficial goals or interests. This contingency is consistent with the basis of a stakeholder-integrated approach to cooperative education and was evident in the academic and industry supervisor views:

It's a partnership where everyone works together for a common goal, although we all gain different things from it. (Academic I1)

So it isn't just one person's goal, its achieving goals for all three people and then working collectively to achieve those goals, supporting each other and working along the way. (Industry I4)

The industry views also support the notion that cooperative education partnerships require not only common goals but that there is mutual support to achieve the goals. Motives of reciprocity require cooperation and collaboration rather than being based on domination, power and control (Babiak, 2007; Oliver, 1990). Reciprocity allows for organisations to focus on what they do best and to "pool their competencies with those of their partner" (Babiak, 2007, p. 341).

A shared understanding of the common goal or purpose is important for reciprocity to be established. The findings of this study identified that the student, industry supervisors and academic supervisors had similar views that the purpose of cooperative education is to prepare graduates to be 'work-ready', which involves developing the knowledge, skills and attributes that enhance employability (Yorke, 2006). Specific themes that were identified across the three groups included: gain experience in industry; gain an understanding of the industry; career clarification; develop skills (especially interpersonal skills) and enhance employability (e.g., through networking).

Although mentioned in the interviews by most academic supervisors and students, the industry responses failed to express any consistent view that the purpose of cooperative education was to apply knowledge learnt at university in industry or more specifically to integrate theory and practice. This is of concern as fostering the transfer of learning through the integration of academic knowledge with workplace practice is fundamental to cooperative education in order for it to be considered an integrated curriculum model and not just 'add-on' or isolated node of work experience.

Reciprocity motives are evident when partners perceive that the benefits of forming an IOR outweigh the disadvantages and costs (Oliver, 1990). In a cooperative education partnership each partner can offer the other mutual benefits through their contribution, yet the outcomes they receive are likely to be different in return. Although this difference can create challenges it must be acknowledged as a positive benefit of the partnership. The benefits for the university, student and industry are summarized below.

The key benefits for the university include closer ties with industry and increased profile. This view was confirmed by an industry supervisor comment:

I think the university benefits in a huge way in the fact that they have representatives from AUT in the industry without any cost to AUT and so it's good marketing for AUT in one respect. (Industry I2)

Sports and recreation degrees are relatively new in comparison to other professional disciplines and have 'come of age' in New Zealand in the last 15-20 years (Fleming & Ferkins, 2011). As a consequence, there are a number of people within the sport and recreation industry who are experienced but do not have a formal sport related qualification. Through the relationships that the university had developed through cooperative education students being placed in industry, there have been opportunities for the university to profile what they offer to the target market of experienced personnel. Reinforcing the reciprocal nature of this relationship, one student acknowledged the importance of promoting the image of the university:

I think when students go out into the industry and they work well and they represent themselves well I think it's a good image for AUT, I know in my placement they had had students from other universities or polytechnics I think, and they didn't have good experiences with them. Whereas the AUT students, they were really happy with and so obviously they are going to do it again, just gives AUT a good name as well. (Student I2)

In this case study students were largely responsible for finding their own placement within the sport and recreation industry (with some help from the university to facilitate this process). This enabled students to find placements with organizations or staff that the university had not had a prior relationship with, resulting in new relationships being formed. Not only does this raise the profile of the university and the sports and recreation degree, but also has benefits of connecting people in the industry back to the university. According to one academic supervisor:

I think it keeps us in the face of the industry, continuously which has to be good, ... we are talked about at the water cooler a lot because of the fact that we have students all over the place and then obviously those students are doing reasonably good things, that helps. (Academic I5)

Another academic supervisor commented:

Well with sport and recreation it's a huge industry so having those links and understanding what the industry requires or what happens out there, the changes. We can be a little bit isolated so I think that's probably the key thing, the university informed with changes that are happening at the grass roots, maybe not necessarily at a political level. (Academic I1)

As the academic supervisors visit the students in industry, the interaction with industry supervisors and other sport and recreation staff may help the lecturers stay current and abreast of industry shifts and trends. This is especially important in sport and recreation, which is a relatively dynamic industry.

From the student perspective, when asked about the benefits of cooperative education one student responded:

I think being able to apply that theory into practice was really important. Because you learn about it and then you are not quite sure how it is going to apply to what you're doing. So just being able to go out there and actually do it was a great benefit. [I learnt] personally, effective team work and communication. Also organizational skills, just those skills that will help you I guess in every day and after. Crucial skills... Professionally, I also learnt how to act professionally in an organization and also communication with speaking and also with things like email writing. (Student I2)

Some students also highlighted the importance of the networking opportunities:

I've met so many people that I could now get in contact with if I wanted to approach them about anything, and just that real life experience. (Student I3)

For me... the key benefit for me was definitely getting my foot in the door somewhere, going somewhere I wanted to be...I already knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't

really know how I was going to get there. And this kind of opened this door. (Student I1)

The outcomes identified by the students in this study included both personal and professional benefits and these were consistent with those reported in other studies of sport students (Fleming & Ferkins, 2011; Martin & Leberman, 2005). However, the students acknowledged that, although there was a range of benefits, there was a cost involved and that they had “invested a lot of time and money”, (Student I1). None of the students were paid for their cooperative education placements and students pay university fees to enroll and gain university credit for the experience. However, consistent with the concept of reciprocity the overall perceptions were that the personal and professional benefits they had gained outweighed the cost.

In this study it was evident that industry motivations for forming a relationship were often driven by the need for extra labor as a resource to improve *efficiency*. The industry supervisors interviewed were all from the ‘not-for-profit’ sector of the industry. These organizations commonly have a small number of full-time staff and are familiar with using volunteer support for roles within their organization. The ‘value added’ short-term tangible returns were important for some:

It helps us with our workload; I have to be frank about that. Being a sports organization we run pretty lean and so that helps from that side of things... It’s a way of also getting some talent that we can get into the organization. (Industry I3)

The views in this study were consistent with previous research undertaken in the sport industry. They identified that industry valued sport and recreation degree students who could bring qualities such as technical skills (in areas like fitness training, coaching or event planning) and problem solving skills that are not necessarily found in all volunteers (Ferkins, 2002; Fleming & Ferkins, 2011). In this case study organizations were not required to pay students during their placement which may have had an influence on the industry motivations for taking on a student. Kessels and Kwakman (2007) suggest that most organizations that are willing to participate in cooperative education are not primarily searching for cheap labor but that their interest lies with attracting and retaining highly motivated and bright knowledgeable workers within industry and establishing relationships with the university. This appears to be consistent with the views expressed by this industry supervisor when asked about the benefits of being involved in cooperative education:

Extra resource where you don’t pay for it. So that’s definitely one. Also a fresh idea, fresh eyes, things that they have probably learnt. I mean I haven’t got a tertiary education background so hopefully they can add to what we do. (Industry I5)

The outcomes for the industry are often focused on legitimacy motivations. *Legitimacy* is concerned with improving an organization’s image and reputation and can be enhanced by affiliations or relationships with well-known organizations (Babiak, 2007). Individuals also tend to have a preference for forming partnerships with organizations that have a good reputation based on previous dealings with them. An industry supervisor in a secondary school highlighted how the image of the university and the BSR degree is enhanced through having a cooperative education relationship with a school:

I want to take on co-op students for benefiting the school as well as the students and maintaining that relationship with AUT... The outcomes are to obviously have the

student working within the sports department in a positive way and giving positive feedback to our students...we've actually got quite a few students who are going straight from here in year 13 into BSR the following year as soon as they have graduated, so I think it is a selling point from that respect [and] maintains that relationship. (Industry I2)

Increasing the awareness of the organization to potential graduates can also be seen as a legitimacy motivation for smaller and less well-known organizations particularly in the minority sports. This was often combined with the desire of an organization to increase its reputation by having knowledgeable staff that can bring new ideas as "often they bring a different aspect to trainings and coaching" (Industry I2).

Oliver's (1990) framework provided a basis for understanding some of the determinants of partnership formation, however, other motives and factors were evident in the findings. Synergy was identified as an important concept in the formation of cooperative education partnerships. In synergistic partnerships, partners are able to achieve more by working together than they could by doing the same thing on their own (Breen, 2001). Several stakeholders expressed similar ideas, as represented in the following comments:

It's two or more groups, in this case three groups all gaining something that they cannot access themselves but by working together as the partnership can achieve outcomes that are positive. (Industry I2)

I don't think the experience would be what it is if you didn't have the other. I don't think the university could replicate it without them, I don't think the organization could replicate such an experience without being pushed from the university behind them. (Student I6)

The multiple stakeholder relationships involved in cooperative education calls for different levels of involvement from the stakeholders, at different times throughout the experience. A stakeholder-integrated approach implies that to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes the level of control should be distributed equally and total dominance by one stakeholder in the partnership may lead to ineffective relationships. However, a critical view in relation to power dynamics suggests that there is no such thing as a neutral relationship because someone always has power or control (Strier, 2011). It can be argued that when universities partner with community based organizations the university tends to have the greater level of responsibility and therefore this can be seen as control. Two academic supervisors endorsed this view:

Yes I think it is a partnership, whether they're all equal partners I'm not quite sure...possibly we are slightly more dominant partner because we set the rules. Because there are certain requirements that we stipulate... but yes to call it partnership is appropriate. (Academic I5)

It's a three-way partnership and we can benefit as much as the student and the industry. I think it's quite an equal partnership I'm always conscience that I have a responsibility, possibly more than the industry supervisor because I am paid to support my student and because of that I also need to maintain a relationship with the placement where they are placed. So I feel I have an obligation to make it work really, and make that partnership work. (Academic I3)

Although most stakeholders interviewed shared similar views of the overall concept of partnership, one industry supervisor had a contrasting view:

I don't know if actually partnership is too strong a word, I think because there's no outside indication of that so if for example we were a big organization the rest of the organization may not even know that we have got someone from AUT, and therefore it's hardly a partnership. It's not that we put it in our newsletter and tell the world. There is not a logo exchange, which you would expect with partnerships. So I think that is formalizing it too strongly. (Industry I1)

Academics, students and industry supervisors each approach the cooperative experience from a different orientation. As expressed by an academic supervisor, clear communication particularly of roles and responsibilities is important in order to form and sustain effective cooperative education relationships:

Every semester I might have six relationships with individual industry supervisors and I think I generally think they go pretty well, as long as, as I say, as long as communication is maintained and we have expectations that are on the same page and that the placement is set up in a way that everyone understands what's going on. (Academic I5)

Students and industry supervisors frequently expressed the importance of good communication between all three stakeholders. When trying to establish effective communication between partners one issue that needs to be considered is language. The language used by an academic may be quite different to that of an industry supervisor. Both may have their own jargon and understandings of what words mean, which can inhibit communication.

The views expressed in this case study highlighted that personal connections and prior experiences were often the motivating factors for industry supervisors to become involved in cooperative education. Several of the supervisors had undertaken placement themselves as part of their own education:

I guess I was really lucky I had some really great supervisors as a student and I just think it's important for students to have the opportunity so I just wanted to create that opportunity. (Industry I4)

It was also recognized that it was common for the placements to be negotiated directly between the student and individual supervisor rather than through a whole organization partnership agreement. As Babiak and Thibault (2008) point out collaborative relationships in the sport sector are often formed among people who know one another or are friends. Individual interactions are important in the initial formation of a relationship yet may be limiting factors in providing an enduring partnership. For a long-term investment organizations (both industry and the university) need to consider ways to enhance their strategic alignment rather than make judgments based on their individual/respective interests.

CONCLUSION

Strong relationships between educational institutions and industry are fundamental to the tripartite nature of cooperative education. The relationships exist at the individual supervisor level or at times at whole organization or institutional level. The perceptions of

most stakeholders in this case study confirmed that they considered cooperative education to be a partnership. Hitherto, little was known about the motives that influenced sport organisations to form cooperative education partnerships. Through this research the formation of relationships between a university (in the public sector), the student and a range of different sport and recreation organisations from the 'not for profit' sector have been explored.

Applying Oliver's (1990) conceptual framework for IOR formation as a starting point, a better understanding of partnerships in the sport cooperative education context has been gained. Students, industry and academic views tended to support multiple contingencies such as reciprocity, efficiency, legitimacy and synergy as important in the formation of effective cooperative education partnerships. The investment in a cooperative education partnership was seen to have both mutual as well as individual benefits for the stakeholders. The benefits to stakeholders in the sport and recreation context were consistent with what has been reported in other disciplines (Braunstein & Loken, 2004; Braunstein, Takei, & Wang, 2011; Crump & Johnsson, 2011; Dressler & Keeling, 2011).

The conceptual framework originally proposed by Oliver (1990) focused on mainly organisational level determinants, whereas this study has also identified interpersonal connections and individual factors as playing a key role in the formation of cooperative education partnerships. For long-term viability, organizations (both industry and the university) need to consider strategic alignments rather than cooperative education partnerships based on relationships that rely heavily on individual or personal associations. Once formed, if sustainable cooperative education partnerships are to be achieved, the relationships need to be managed well and supported by all stakeholders. An important conception of cooperative education is that the formal learning (gained through university experiences) and authentic and productive work experiences are integrated and transformed to make new meanings (Cooper, Orell, J., & Bowden, 2010). It is the integration and transformation aspects of cooperative education that distinguishes it from 'work experience'. The difference between cooperative education and work experience needs to be clearly communicated so that all stakeholders have a shared understanding of the purpose for forming the partnership.

This paper has focused on the motives and determinants for the formation of cooperative education partnerships. Further understanding needs to be gained on the factors that influence the management and long-term sustainability of cooperative education partnerships in the dynamic environments of both the university and the sport and recreation industry.

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The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education publishes peer-reviewed original research, topical issues, and best practice articles from throughout the world dealing with Cooperative Education (Co-op) and Work Integrated Learning/Education (WIL).

In this Journal, Co-op/WIL is defined as an educational approach that uses relevant work-based projects that form an integrated and assessed part of an academic program of study (e.g., work placements, internships, practicum). These programs should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program. These programs can be described by a variety of names, such as work-based learning, workplace learning, professional training, industry-based learning, engaged industry learning, career and technical education, internships, experiential education, experiential learning, vocational education and training, fieldwork education, and service learning.

The Journal's main aim is to allow specialists working in these areas to disseminate their findings and share their knowledge for the benefit of institutions, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that will lead to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of co-op/WIL, and promote further research.

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