THE IMPACT OF WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING ON THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN THE 2ND DISTRICT OF ALBAY

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ABSTRACT

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is an important part of helping hospitality students connect what they learn in school with what they practice in the real world. This study investigated the influence of WIL on the professional advancement of hospitality management students in the 2nd District of Albay. The study employed a descriptive quantitative methodology to gather data from Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) graduates from four higher education institutions who completed their Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) during the 2022–2023 academic year. A survey questionnaire was employed to evaluate students' practical skills, professional competences, acquired knowledge, and preparation for employment. We looked at the data using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentage, weighted mean, and ranking. The results reveal that WIL had a major impact on students' practical hospitality abilities, communication and teamwork skills, and general confidence in getting a job. Graduates claimed they were more ready to fulfill the needs of the industry after they finished their WIL experiences. Students also claimed that the level of supervision, the relevancy of prescribed assignments, and the lack of opportunity to think about things were challenges, even though these were desirable aspects. In short, the data indicate how vital WIL is for helping hospitality students get employment and advance in their careers. The study indicates that WIL programs might be enhanced through increased engagement between industry and academia improved mentoring, and more organized reflection activities.

KEYWORDS: Work-Integrated Learning, Hospitality Management, Professional Development, Employability, Experiential Learning.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In response to the growing need to bridge the gap between academic learning and workforce demands, higher education institutions have made Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) a fundamental component of many programs. WIL encompasses structured activities such as internships, practicums, and on-the-job training, enabling students to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings. This is especially critical in hospitality education, where operational competence, service quality, and interpersonal skills are essential.

The 2nd District of Albay, with its robust tourism and hospitality sectors, presents unique opportunities and challenges for WIL implementation. Variations in institutional resources, industry support, and supervisory quality have led to diverse WIL experiences across colleges and universities. Observations in the district suggest that students' readiness, confidence, and skill development after WIL vary significantly.

Global research shows that WIL enhances employability, career preparedness, and professional identity formation (Caldicott et al., 2020; Jackson et al., 2022). In the Philippines, tracer studies and pandemic-era research highlight the pros and cons of traditional, virtual, and hybrid WIL modalities (Melchor, 2025; Apostol et al., 2023). Yet, regional studies focusing specifically on hospitality students in areas like Albay remain limited.

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the impact of WIL on the professional development of hospitality management students in Albay's 2nd District, aiming to offer evidence-based recommendations for program enhancement.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To determine the influence of Work-Integrated Learning on the professional development of Hospitality Management graduates.
- To profile student graduates in terms of practical skills and knowledge acquired through WIL.
- To evaluate the professional competencies gained, focusing on both technical and soft skills.
- To assess the perceived impact of WIL on graduates' preparedness for employment in the hospitality industry.
- To identify challenges and limitations encountered in WIL implementation, such as supervision quality, assignment relevance, and opportunities for reflection.
- To propose actionable recommendations for improving WIL programs in BSHM curricula.

3.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

3.1 Learning at Work and Professional Growth:

WIL bridges theoretical learning and practical experience, fostering the development of technical, social, and reflective skills essential for professional practice (Williamson et al., 2020). Studies in hospitality, tourism, and accounting education confirm that WIL enhances employability and job confidence, though outcomes are heavily influenced by supervision quality and alignment with curricular goals (Md Yusof et al., 2025; Phan et al., 2020).

3.2 WIL in Hospitality Education:

Research highlights WIL as a key method for cultivating service competence, communication skills, and professional attitudes (Aprile et al., 2020). However, challenges such as inconsistent mentorship, limited engagement in substantive tasks, and insufficient structured reflection persist (Seager, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023).

3.3 Philippine and Regional Studies:

Local research indicates that hospitality graduates generally find employment, but face issues such as contractual work, ICT and financial skills deficits, and limited promotion opportunities (Melchor, 2025). The pandemic-driven shift to virtual internships underscored the need for hybrid WIL models that balance safety with authentic workplace exposure (Apostol et al., 2023).

4.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on three theoretical frameworks:

- **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984):** Emphasizes learning through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation—a process mirrored in WIL.
- **Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964):** Suggests that education and training enhance individual productivity and employability.
- **Competency-Based Learning Theory (McClelland, 1973):** Focuses on acquiring and demonstrating competencies relevant to professional settings.

The research adopts Stufflebeam's CIPP Model (Context, Input, Process, Product) to evaluate WIL:

- **Context:** Assesses industry needs, student skills gaps, and institutional environment.
- **Input:** Considers industry partnerships, curriculum design, supervision, and resources.
- **Process:** Involves student engagement, monitoring, feedback, and reflection.
- **Product:** Examines outcomes such as skill acquisition, job readiness, and career advancement.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design:

A descriptive quantitative design was employed to assess the influence of WIL on student professional development.

5.2 Respondents and Setting:

Participants were BSHM graduates from MPCF Legazpi, Bicol College, STI Legazpi, and Tanchuling College in Albay's 2nd District who completed their WIL during the 2022–2023 academic year.

5.3 Research Instrument:

A validated survey questionnaire was used to gather data on practical skills, competencies, job readiness, and challenges in WIL.

5.4 Data Gathering and Analysis:
Survey data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics: frequency, mean, percentage, and ranking.

6.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Findings indicate that WIL significantly improved students' practical hospitality skills, communication, teamwork, and self-confidence regarding employment. Graduates reported being better prepared to meet industry demands post-WIL. However, concerns were raised about inconsistent supervision, relevance of assigned tasks, and limited opportunities for structured reflection.

Implications:
- **For Students:** Increased employability and self-confidence.
- **For Higher Education Institutions:** Insights to refine WIL program structure.
- **For Faculty and Program Heads:** Data for curriculum and assessment development.
- **For Industry Partners:** Guidance on effective mentorship and monitoring.
- **For Policymakers:** Evidence to support standardization and enhancement of WIL policies.
- **For Future Researchers:** Contributions to literature on WIL and hospitality education.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Work-Integrated Learning plays a crucial role in the professional development of Hospitality Management students. To maximize its benefits, it is recommended that institutions:
- Strengthen industry-academia collaboration.
- Ensure consistent and high-quality supervision.
- Integrate structured reflection activities.
- Implement hybrid WIL models where appropriate.
- Regularly evaluate WIL programs using the CIPP Model to maintain relevance, equity, and sustainability.

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