EXPLORING STAKEHOLDERS’ PERSPECTIVES OF
COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN SPORT TERTIARY EDUCATION

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Deakin University

March, 2014
I am the author of the thesis entitled:

Exploring stakeholders' perspectives of cooperative education in sport tertiary education

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to advance understanding of cooperative education in the sport tertiary education context. As universities come under pressure in an increasingly competitive environment, there has been a greater emphasis to prepare students with a broad range of employment related skills and knowledge. Increasingly, the provision of work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities, using models such as cooperative education, is becoming an important dimension of a comprehensive undergraduate education. While cooperative education shares similar attributes to other approaches of WIL, it has its own unique characteristics as a model, along with discipline and context specific constraints in how it is practised.

An interpretive case study methodology was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of students, workplace supervisors and academic supervisors involved in cooperative education in an undergraduate sport and recreation degree. The research focused on three central topics: partnerships and relationships in cooperative education; the purpose and meaning of cooperative education; and the practices associated with student learning. The analysis and interpretation of questionnaires and interviews drew on organisational and learning theories.

Reciprocity, legitimacy, efficiency, synergy and personal connections were identified as key contingencies for the formation of effective cooperative education partnerships. A key issue that emerged was the need for the university to consider more strategic alignments at the sport organisation level, rather than the personal level to ensure quality placements and future sustainability.

Given that fundamental to cooperative education is the notion of the integration of the learning gained in the university and the workplace, this intention was not understood well. Yet, it was evident that the learning environments were considered synergistic, where knowledge gained in the workplace was seen to complement that gained in the university, and vice-versa, rather than one being privileged over the other. Stakeholders shared a view that the purpose of cooperative education was to gain experience and develop employability skills. While this focus aligns well with government agendas, it potentially challenges the wider mandate of university learning and constrains the expectations and outcomes to a more vocational focus. Cooperative education within a university degree needs to do more than foster work
readiness, but should provide opportunities for students to develop new ideas and have the skills to be critical of the status quo, which are key outcomes for a university education.

The quality of industry supervision, the nature of the activities and the motivation of the student were considered key influences on student learning. Greater consideration needs be given to ensuring that students are active in seeking meaningful discussions and interactions with workplace colleagues, to enable them to access knowledge across the workplace, and that these relationships are not simply left to chance. The university needs to continue to support the critical roles that academic supervisors play in facilitating the process of critical reflection and supporting the students to make meaning from their experiences.

This thesis, through exploring the perspectives of the stakeholders, affirms the value and success of the model as an educational strategy, and advances the theoretical base by providing discipline specific knowledge of WIL in the field of sport and recreation.
The following peer reviewed publications emanate directly from the research undertaken for this thesis.

Journal Article

Refereed papers in conference proceedings


Conference presentation with refereed and published abstract
Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces cooperative education as a model of work-integrated learning. My background and position as an insider researcher is acknowledged. The key issues that position this research are identified and discussed, and the specific research questions are stated. The context of the research is established through an overview of sport tertiary education in New Zealand. This is followed by a detailed description of the development and structure of the cooperative education programme within the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR) at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). The final section of this chapter is an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Cooperative education

The provision of work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities is increasingly being seen as an important dimension of a comprehensive undergraduate university education. Underpinning this is widespread sectorial recognition of the important role that universities play in preparing young people for active and sustained participation in the labour market. Whereas historically, a university education might have been understood to be more ‘liberal’ in its orientation, increasing levels of accountability to governmental agendas has amplified the vocational dimension of a university qualification. Through the inclusion of WIL as part of an undergraduate degree, university graduates are considered better positioned to move into the labour market (Peach & Matthews, 2011).

Cooperative education (also referred to colloquially as co-op) is one of a number of different models that exist under the umbrella term of WIL. Other examples of WIL include practicums, internships, service learning, fieldwork and clinical placements. Cooperative education programmes are currently offered in a diverse range of disciplines, ranging from its original base in engineering, to fields such as business, arts, hospitality, tourism, information technology and science (Coll & Zegwaard, 2011a). Cooperative education, like other models of WIL, involves students’ learning being enhanced through authentic experiences undertaken within a workplace setting. While it shares similar attributes to other approaches of WIL (Eames & Coll, 2010), it has its own unique characteristics that differentiate it as a model.

There is ongoing discussion in the literature about what constitutes and defines cooperative education and the current thinking and opinions will be reviewed in Chapter Two. While definitions vary, fundamental to cooperative education is a philosophical commitment to learning through the experience of work, rather than simply learning about work or learning at
work (L. Cooper, Orell, & Bowden, 2010). To this end, cooperative education programmes integrate classroom studies with time spent in the workplace. It is the integration of the learning environments of both the university and the workplace that is one of the defining features of cooperative education in comparison to other models or frameworks of workplace-based learning. In the context of higher education, it is also considered a critical component of cooperative education that clear learning goals are negotiated and the workplace experience is directly relevant or dovetailed to the student’s degree or programme of study. While the fundamental principles are common to all cooperative education programmes, there are variances in the structure, length of placement and modes of supervision that are often discipline, institute or country specific.

The focus of this thesis will consider cooperative education in the context of full-time university students undertaking WIL as part of the final year of an undergraduate degree in sport and recreation.

1.2 Background

As an academic within the School of Sport and Recreation at AUT, New Zealand, I have had the opportunity to lead the development and implementation of the cooperative education curriculum for the BSR since its inception in 1998. As a reflective practitioner, the development process has been and will be, continuous, as I strive to understand and improve the practice of cooperative education to benefit student learning and graduate employability in the discipline of sport and recreation.

Cooperative education and other similar forms of WIL are considered to be integral components of tertiary sport programmes (Cuneen, 2004; Parkhouse & Pitts, 2001; Southall, Nagel, LeGrande, & Han, 2003). For the purpose of this thesis, the words sport and sports studies are used as generic terms to encompass the wider related disciplines such as sport management, sport coaching, recreation, outdoor recreation, physical education and outdoor education. However, despite the acknowledged importance, at the time of commencing this thesis there had been very little research conducted on WIL in the sport context. For me, the curriculum design for cooperative education in the BSR had relied heavily on research and the body of knowledge in cooperative education in settings other than sport. While this provided an important knowledge base, sport organisation theory suggests there are also unique aspects to the sport setting that need to be identified (Amis & Slack, 1996). Several authors have identified the need for discipline specific research in cooperative education (Coll & Zegwaard, 2011b; Eames & Cates, 2011), as each discipline has its own models and
Chapter 1: Introduction

constraints in which they operate, and it is questioned as to how applicable research done in one context is to another context (Coll & Eames, 2004).

Due to the need for more sport specific research and to inform local practice before embarking on this thesis, I examined different aspects of the cooperative education model over several years. Initially as part of scoping the practice of cooperative education in sport, I, along with a colleague from another institution, undertook a survey of tertiary sport practicum, cooperative education or WIL programmes, from a selection of institutions around the globe (Fleming & Ferkins, 2005). The findings of this research are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. Further to this work, in order to help justify the cooperative education model that I chose to adopt in the BSR (especially to other academics within AUT), I undertook a study that explored student views in relation to the length and structure of the placement experience (Fleming & Eames, 2005). Building on this, I continued to examine practice by analysing the strategies that facilitate reflection within the cooperative education model (Fleming & Martin, 2007) and the use of action learning as a framework for project work (Ferkins & Fleming, 2007; Fleming & Ferkins, 2010). In an effort to better prepare students for the cooperative education experience, I conducted a study to identify capabilities required by the sport industry for students entering cooperative education as well as graduate capabilities desired by sport employers (Fleming, Zinn, & Ferkins, 2008).

The academic journey I have taken since 1998, including the findings from the research that I have completed to date, lead me to the research focus and questions for this thesis. I acknowledge from the outset that the position I hold as an insider researcher in this inquiry places certain privileges and responsibilities on me. My role as an insider researcher will be discussed in Chapter Four.

1.3 Warrant for this thesis

As well as my own experiences, the warrant for this study is built on some key research insights into the processes and practices of WIL in higher education. Cooperative education is commonly expressed in terms of partnerships between the key stakeholders of students, university and industry. It has been argued that successful partnerships require a stakeholder-integrated approach (Harvey, Moon, Geall, & Bower, 1997). This involves formalised sustainable relationships between stakeholders and a common understanding of the meaning, expectations, outcomes, associated responsibilities and levels of commitment required by all participants (Patrick et al., 2008). Given the complexity of the relationships involved, the success of cooperative education depends upon the level of understanding of the roles of all
three parties within the partnership. Despite the premise that partnerships are central to the cooperative education experience, research undertaken in a range of contexts has highlighted a number of challenges. Several authors in the wider context of WIL (rather than specifically cooperative education) acknowledge the challenges that emerge when there are different stakeholder expectations and motivations for participation across such programmes (Beggs, Ross, & Knapp, 2006; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002; A. J. Martin & Leberman, 2005).

Beggs, Ross and Knapp (2006) undertook an online survey involving 363 practitioners in leisure services and 194 recreation degree students recruited from 10 different universities in the USA. They examined the role of the internship, the skills that interns should have, and the perceptions of what internship agencies should provide. They found that students and practitioners differed significantly on 16 of the 26 items on the survey, and the differences were found across all three of the focus areas. The authors concluded that the differences created, “a dissatisfying internship experience for both the student and agency” (p. 17). The findings of this study were consistent with what Kneymer and Murphy (2002) found using a similar survey in a study of business interns. Both these studies acknowledged the importance of developing an understanding of the perceptions and expectations of those involved so that differences can be addressed in order that a more meaningful internship experience can be achieved.

Martin and Leberman (2005) analysed feedback from a questionnaire completed by 38 graduates and 17 sport organisations involved in a sport management practicum. While many of the findings of the study focused on the benefits of the practicum, the graduates and workplace supervisors, “concurred on the key needs of practicum students which were to be enthusiastic, organized, show initiative and make the most of the practicum opportunity” (p. 23). The authors of this research stressed the importance of managing student and organisational expectations at the outset and pointed out that in the context of sport management, further research is needed in this area.

In an investigation into the nature and scope of work placements in the Auckland region, Ferkins (2002) identified that a key concern raised by industry was that some students were unclear regarding their objectives for the placement and what was expected of the host organisation. Similarly, host organisations were unclear about what the educational institutions responsible for the student placements expected from them. The findings of this study highlight the important disparity of expectations that existed across different stakeholders involved in the placement experience. Coll and Eames (2000) shared similar concerns and
argued that managing these expectations was critical for optimising success of the cooperative education experience. Cuneen (2004) expressed similar comments about sport management internship experiences. She was concerned that faculty, students and industry were likely to have different expectations about the field experience. She also raised a concern that “institutions had differing philosophical, educational and administrative approaches to conducting field experience programmes” (p. 21). However, she did not provide research evidence to support these comments.

Stakeholder commitment, time, resources and personal energy are key issues that are identified as significant in the establishment of a WIL partnership (Reeve & Gallacher, 2005). Another factor identified as having an impact on the effectiveness of partnerships is the difference between organisational culture and academic culture, especially when there is a difference in priorities, values and professional language. Reeve and Gallacher (2005) argue that, “the difficulties that remain in operationalising ‘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). Patrick et al. (2008), in their National scoping study of WIL programmes in Australia, identified tensions that arose when stakeholders had different understanding of the intended purpose. They identified in their study that there was, “the sense of a potential mismatch of objectives and motivations between, academe and workplace, that is, learning versus working” (p. 17). To address these tensions, they suggested that an increased dialogue between stakeholders was needed in order to gain a better understanding of the different perspectives and obligations.

It is interesting that industry perspectives on the purpose of cooperative education are not well documented in the literature. One of the few studies that has investigated the industry mentors’ perspectives of WIL found that, “industry mentors struggled to articulate a vision of what constitutes a meaningful/satisfying placement” (Ross Smith, Mackay, Challis, & Holt, 2005, p. 9). Focusing on information technology, these researchers concluded that industry mentors, “struggled to understand the salient characteristics of experiential/integrated learning” (p. 9). The findings from this study bring attention to the fact that very little is known about industry supervisor perceptions or understandings of their role in facilitating student learning in the workplace. Most research has focused on the industry benefits of having a student, and an extensive body of literature exists in this area across a number of disciplines—this will be summarised in Chapter Two.
While the perceptions of academics on the benefits of WIL have been documented in a range of disciplines, there is little research from within the sport context. Research with a focus on academics’ perceptions of the student learning experience is also sparse. A small amount of research to date has focused on academic supervisor engagement, but not on their views of student learning. McCurdy and Zegwaard (2009), in their study on the faculty views of a WIL programme in science, found that while faculty staff were generally supportive of WIL they felt that their, “contributions were unrecognised and undervalued” (p. 41). They also raised a general concern that faculty staff needed to be more aware of the educational aspects of WIL.

The research highlighted in this section encouraged me to think about and reflect on what was happening in the BSR cooperative education programme at AUT. Through my own observations, I was aware of the rhetoric claims about the value of the programme, but less sure of how well the programme lived up to such claims. A central question for me was, what did the students, industry supervisors and academics interpret the purpose and meaning of cooperative education to be? I was also interested to know how the stakeholders understood the cooperative education relationship and their own and other’s roles in facilitating student learning. Although I was confident that the BSR cooperative education programme at AUT was working well, I felt I needed to gain deeper insights in order to continue to make improvements that were evidence-based. I expected that there was likely to be some points of ‘disconnection’ across the stakeholder groups, and that I should not take for granted that students, industry and academics had a shared understanding of what a successful cooperative education partnership entailed.

1.4 The purpose of this thesis

In order to advance the understanding of learning within the cooperative education context, and to enhance the learning experience and outcomes for the BSR students, this thesis sets out to examine how the interaction and collaboration between university and work is conceptualised, interpreted and experienced by the students, the academic supervisors, (from the university) and the industry supervisors, (from the host organisations).

The overall purpose of this thesis is to advance the understanding of cooperative education in the sport tertiary education context. The aim is to investigate the degree of alignment between student, industry and academics’ views on the purpose and practices associated with cooperative education in the sport and recreation context at AUT.
1.4.1 Research questions

1. What are the views of the three stakeholders (students, industry and academic supervisors) on the nature of the cooperative education relationship?

2. What are the views of the three stakeholders (students, industry and academic supervisors) on the purpose and meaning of the cooperative education experience?

3. What are the views of the three stakeholders (students, industry and academic supervisors) on the practices associated with student learning in a sport cooperative education context?

Most of the research that has been conducted and published on stakeholder perspectives has researched only one subset of stakeholders (e.g., student, academic supervisor or industry supervisor or a combination of two of these). To my knowledge, there has not been a study that has sought to explore the perceptions and practices of all three views in one specific context. To this end, this study seeks to examine the perspectives of all three stakeholders in the context of a particular cooperative education programme. As a point of entry, I acknowledge the complexity that exists within the cooperative education model, and that each stakeholder group cannot be considered as homogeneous.

Much of the research on the influences on learning in the workplace has been conducted in contexts wherein the learner was employed full-time (Billett, 2001; Eames & Bell, 2005; Eraut, 2007). While it was likely there would be many similarities, it is increasingly important to gain understandings of the stakeholder perspectives of learning in the context of university students undertaking part-time, unpaid cooperative education placements.

1.5 Context

In the following section, I discuss sport education at the tertiary level, briefly outline cooperative education in the sport context then describe the BSR programme and cooperative education papers at AUT University. I acknowledge that parts of this section have been drawn from previous publications (Fleming & Ferkins, 2005, 2011).

1.5.1 Post secondary sport education

In New Zealand and Australia, the development of sport studies curricula and sport programmes at the tertiary level (outside of education) is relatively recent in comparison to what is claimed in the US and Europe. There appears to be little consensus as to when and who first developed such programmes. However, there is agreement that a focus on sport
studies curricula coincides with the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of sport management in Australasia in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Shilbury & Kellett, 2011).

Over the last 15 years, tertiary education institutions in New Zealand have responded to the impact of professionalism in sport nationally and globally (Pitts, 2000) and the growing number of employment opportunities in the sector. A number of sport and related programmes have been established which incorporate study in sport science, sport management and sport coaching, from certificate to degree level through to postgraduate qualifications. In comparison, to the early 1990s, when the only sport related courses were linked to teaching physical education, most universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics in New Zealand now carry one or more sport qualifications. Frequently linked to programmes in sport in many institutions are courses that also cover recreation, outdoor education and fitness. More recently with the increase in interest in healthy lifestyles in the community, sport degrees also cover aspects related to health promotion through physical activity.

Although the sport and recreation industry is in an early stage of evolution relative to other traditional disciplines (Hindson, 2006) there has been rapid growth during the last 15 years. The sport industry in New Zealand in the 21st century is a mix of commercial and government involvement, along with a considerable engagement of not-for-profit organisations. The growing business of sport within New Zealand now contributes significantly to the domestic economy (Leberman, Collins, & Trenberth, 2006).

### 1.5.2 Cooperative education in sports studies

In tertiary level sport and recreation programmes, most curriculum content and delivery have a practical or an applied learning focus (Parkhouse & Pitts, 2001). This is evident in examples such as the teaching of coaching pedagogy in the gymnasium, human movement studies in a laboratory or applying sports science through field testing. The inclusion of cooperative education within a sports studies programme, provides opportunities for students to extend their learning through applying the practical skills learnt in the institutional setting to a genuine workplace environment.

Research and anecdotal evidence highlights the considerable success and value of WIL experiences in sport (Cuneen, 2004; Ferkins, 2002; A. J. Martin & Leberman, 2005). In our survey of WIL programmes from a selection of tertiary institutions internationally (Fleming & Ferkins, 2005), the findings indicated that while there was consistency in course aims, there was a range of divergent structures, placement contexts and supervisory modes of delivery. However, this research also identified that some major issues and constraints exist in the
delivery of programmes. Prominent issues included: the effective matching of skills; needs and expectations; negotiating the placement of students; and the quality of supervision. An awareness and understanding of these issues is needed by those involved in the WIL experience to allow positive steps to be taken to maximise the student learning experience.

1.5.3 Cooperative education in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at AUT

The BSR is a three-year degree programme with majors in Sport and Exercise Science, Coaching, Physical Activity and Nutrition, Sport Management, Health and Physical Education and Outdoor Education. The first intake of students enrolled in the BSR was in 1997. At that time, I was given the leadership role to develop and implement the two cooperative education papers that were undertaken by all students as part of the final year of the degree. The BSR curriculum development committee decided to include a work-integrated learning component within the curriculum. At this time, the Bachelor of Business degree at AUT offered a one-semester full-time cooperative education paper. A full-time placement was not seen as suitable for the BSR degree, as there were concerns that many sport organisations were not in a position to offer or pay for full-time work. The BSR programme approval documents that I was given to work from listed two cooperative education papers. The descriptors stated that the placement experience needed to be undertaken ‘part-time’ (as the students were to take two other papers concurrently), that a project should be included and that the overall learning experience (over the two papers) had to be consistent with 60 credit points of a 360 point three-year programme. My background was originally in the area of physiology and exercise science, and the field of cooperative education was new, not only to me, but the entire academic staff of the School of Sport and Recreation.

The cooperative education papers (Sport and Recreation Cooperative 1 (Co-op 1) and Sport and Recreation Cooperative 2 (Co-op 2)) were then, and currently still are, structured so that the student spends the equivalent of two days a week during the two semesters of the academic year situated within one organisation. During Co-op 1 the students complete 200 hours of activities within the workplace setting. An additional 100 hours is allocated as academic time for the students to reflect on and critically analyse their experiences as well as to design a project that is beneficial to their organisations. During Co-op 2, the students are required to complete 150 hours in the workplace. A further 150 hours allows time for the students to complete, evaluate and present their industry related project, as well as to evaluate the overall learning experience and critically reflect on the achievement of their negotiated individual learning outcomes and graduate capabilities.
As mentioned previously, research has revealed that amongst cooperative education programmes in sport there is great diversity in placement length and structure, often governed as much by administration rather than learning opportunity (Fleming & Ferkins, 2005). In an attempt to justify the structure of the BSR cooperative education model, I explored BSR students’ perceptions of how the structure of the placement impacted upon their learning. The findings indicated that the 350 hours of placement was perceived as important for relationship building, developing trust and contributed to students defining their own meaning of practice in sport and recreation. The study concluded that learning may be enhanced with, “more time in the workplace, and through the use of tools such as projects that assist students understanding of their workplace community” (Fleming & Eames, 2005, p. 30).

In the current set-up of the programme, students negotiate their own industry placements. These can include a wide variety of environments such as national, regional or local sports organisations (e.g., New Zealand Football, Auckland Rugby Football Union), community recreation and fitness centres, outdoor tourism operators, schools (physical education departments or sports coordinators), regional sports trusts and sport performance centres. The process of finding a placement is facilitated through an industry forum, and advertisements from organisations that are seeking student placement opportunities. The industry forum enables host organisations to present or ‘market’ their placement opportunities directly to the students. The advantage of this process is that students are then able to meet the industry representatives and find out more about placements in organisations they may otherwise not be aware of. Workshops are also provided to assist students in preparation for their cooperative education experience. Topics covered in the workshops include: the purpose and structure of the workplace experience; roles and responsibilities of stakeholders; choosing a placement; and negotiating appropriate work activities. Accompanying programme documentation is provided to cooperative education stakeholders. This documentation foregrounds the value of gaining work related experience, and integrating theory and practice. Specifically, the cooperative education programme identifies attributes associated with teamwork, communication, technical skills, problem-solving and critical analysis and reflection as fundamental outcomes of a successful cooperative education experience.

Over 100 BSR students undertake the cooperative education papers (Co-op 1 and Co-op 2) each year, and the workplace activities that they are involved in vary greatly. Some examples include: coaching, fitness training or fitness testing teams and individual athletes; organising sport and recreation events; assisting with marketing and promotion of sport and recreation products and services; assisting physical education teachers and sports coordinators in
schools; administration activities for national or regional sports organisations; facilitating outdoor education activities for school camps or adventure tourism attractions; and assisting with physical activity programmes in community leisure and recreation facilities. This diversity has implications for the cooperative education curriculum. Flexibility in structure, as well as the ability to negotiate individual learning objectives, is crucial to meet the needs of both the industry and the student.

The project topics negotiated, designed and undertaken by students also have a wide variability. Students may develop and implement physical activity or training programmes within a school, the community or a sports academy. Projects may include market research, customer satisfaction surveys or programme and event evaluations. Other projects include reliability and validity studies for equipment or fitness testing protocols with athletes or members of the community. Due to the wide range of topics and scope of activities undertaken within the projects, assessment is not related to the specific outcomes of the project. Rather, the project assessment tasks are linked to reviewing the theory that supports the project, reflection and evaluation of the process, and an analysis of the learning that is gained from the experience of undertaking a workplace-based project.

Assessment occurs during different phases of the experience. The learning contract forms the basis of the first assessment in both semesters (Co-op 1 and Co-op 2). A reflective essay is submitted approximately halfway through the first semester, where students analyse the organisation in which they are undertaking their experience and reflect on the progress towards meeting their learning outcomes. At the end of Co-op 1, students submit a detailed project proposal. During Co-op 2, students complete both oral and written assessments that relate to their projects and also an overall written critical reflection and analysis of their overall experience.

Students are supported in their learning experience by a workplace supervisor (referred to in this thesis as an industry supervisor) and an academic supervisor from the university. The industry supervisor is expected to negotiate appropriate work activities for the students and to provide guidance, support and feedback in the workplace. Complementing this, students are expected to meet their academic supervisor on a regular basis (ideally every two weeks) for one-to-one mentoring. Regular communication between the student and their academic supervisor is supposed to be student initiated at mutually convenient times. This usually takes place when they are both on the university campus. However, for students located on placement at a distance from the university, email and web-based communication are used as
alternative modes of communication. Among the key roles of the academic supervisors is to encourage the students to share and critically analyse their reflections in order for them to make meaning from their experiences. Academic supervisors also provide comments on the student’s online journal and feedback on assessment tasks.

1.6 Structure of this thesis

Following on from this chapter, the thesis is organised into a further eight chapters.

Chapter Two: Conceptualising cooperative education as a model of work-integrated learning

The focus of this chapter is a selected review of literature. Initially the review considers the historical development of cooperative education. The current opinions of what defines and constitutes cooperative education are then discussed. The development of cooperative education from a global historical perspective is summarised, and the major influences that impact on where cooperative education is today are highlighted. Models of cooperative education are outlined and issues and challenges within the practice of cooperative education are identified. The significance of partnerships are argued, stakeholder benefits are discussed, and stakeholder theory is related to the cooperative education context.

Chapter Three: Conceptualising learning through cooperative education

This chapter reviews the literature on learning through cooperative education. The review begins with a focus on the notion of learning and is followed by an overview of the domains of knowledge. A number of theories that contribute to understanding learning in cooperative education are then outlined. These include Dewey’s views on experience and learning; Kolb’s experiential learning model; Piaget’s theory of cognitive development; and the sociocultural views of learning in particular the work of Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger, and Rogoff.

Chapter Four: Methods

The first section of this chapter draws on the methodological literature to discuss the approach undertaken for this study. In doing so, it introduces the epistemology of insider research and justifies the use of an intrinsic case study to address the research questions. The data collection strategies, being document analysis, questionnaires, and interviews are described in detail and their respective limitations are acknowledged. Attention is given to the ethical principles involved in this study in particular those that relate to my role as an insider researcher. Credibility, trustworthiness and transferability are considered. The methods of analysis, including organisation of data, coding and thematic analysis are described. The final section includes a detailed description of the case, including the demographics of the
participants in each of the three groups (namely students, industry and academic supervisors) within the case.

Chapter Five: Findings—Stakeholder relationships

The findings of this research are separated into three data chapters. The focus of this first chapter is on the nature of the stakeholder relationships. Representations of how the students, industry and academic supervisors perceived the relationships between the stakeholders are presented through a network analysis. The notion of stakeholders in cooperative education in relation to selected concepts from stakeholder theory is then explored. The contingencies that determine partnership formation and the nature of the partnership relationships are examined. The final section of this chapter presents the views of each of the stakeholder groups on what they consider as their own responsibilities, as well as their expectations of the roles of each of the other partners in the relationship.

Chapter Six: Findings—The intentions of cooperative education

The first section of this chapter focuses on what stakeholders understand the purpose and meaning of cooperative education to be. The alignments and disconnects between and across the stakeholder groups are analysed. Following this, the focus is directed to a more operational level to explore the expectations for each of the stakeholders. The final section presents the perceived benefits of the cooperative education experience for the students, industry and the university.

Chapter Seven: Findings—Student learning in cooperative education

The focus of this chapter is on the stakeholder perspectives of the student learning experience. The first section presents the perceptions of what students were able to learn through their cooperative education experience. Drawing on sociocultural theories of learning, the stakeholder views on how learning occurred is examined. The perceived influences on the student learning experience are presented in the final section of this chapter.

Chapter Eight: Discussion

The discussion addresses the three research questions that underpin this thesis. The first section discusses the nature of the stakeholder relationships and the concept of cooperative education partnerships. Following this, the alignment of stakeholders’ views on the intentions of cooperative education is examined and related to current thinking in this area. In the third section, student learning in cooperative education is discussed from a sociocultural perspective with a focus on what students learnt, how they learnt and the influences on their learning.
Chapter Nine: Implications and reflections

This chapter presents emergent issues and implications of this research for the practice of cooperative education. Considerations for further inquiry resulting from this research are posed. I then reflect on the challenges and dilemmas I have faced as an insider researcher throughout the stages of the research process and conclude the thesis with my final comments.
Chapter Two: Conceptualising cooperative education as a model of work-integrated learning

Through a review of literature, this chapter provides a foundation for understanding the practice of cooperative education and gives support and justification for the focus of this thesis. The first section considers what defines the term cooperative education. Following this, the development of cooperative education from a global historical perspective is summarised, and the major influences that impact on where cooperative education is today are highlighted. Models of cooperative education are outlined and issues and challenges within the practice of cooperative education identified. The significance of partnerships is argued, stakeholder benefits discussed, and the fundamentals of stakeholder theory are related to the cooperative education context.

2.1 Defining cooperative education

To understand the practice of cooperative education, it is important to ask, what is cooperative education? However, defining the term 'cooperative education' is not straightforward, and there have been numerous attempts to gain consensus for the terminology that is used to describe the integration of work experience and study (Connor & MacFarlane, 2007; L. Cooper et al., 2010; Groenewald, 2004; Rowe, Winchester-Seeto, & Mackaway, 2012, November; P. Smith & Preece, 2009). Through reviewing the literature, it appears the use of different terminology for describing similar educational experiences is influenced by the country where the higher education institution or programme is situated or where the journal and/or author is based. Therefore, this review of terminology initially will be taken from a global perspective, followed by definitions that relate more specifically to the discipline area of sport.

Cooperative education is claimed to have originated in the US (Sovilla & Varty, 2011) and a historical overview will be covered later in this chapter. The National Commission for Cooperative Education (NCCE), a significant organisation for the promotion of cooperative education, based in the US, describes the following characteristics as essential in order for a programme to be defined as cooperative education:

- Formal recognition by the school as an educational strategy integrating classroom learning and progressive work experiences, with a constructive academic relationship between teaching faculty (i.e., discipline academic staff) and co-op faculty or administrators.
Chapter 2: Conceptualising cooperative education

- Structure for multiple work experiences in formalized sequence with study leading to degree completion of an academic program.
- Work experiences, which include both an appropriate learning environment and productive work. Work experiences related to career or academic goals.
- Formal recognition of the co-op experience on student records (e.g., grade, credit hours, part of degree requirement, notation on transcript, etc.) Pre-employment preparation for students, as well as ongoing advising.


Fundamental to cooperative education is the integration of learning in the classroom and the workplace. However, a key limitation of this definition is that it does not expand on what integration means, and only refers to integrating classroom learning with work experiences. There is no indication that the learning gained in the workplace should be integrated back to the on-campus learning environment. A positive that is evident in this definition is that it clearly has a focus on students learning through the experience. Yet, it is unclear what is meant by ‘productive work’, and perhaps the authors are trying to convey that the work should be ‘authentic’.

A similar focus is seen in the definition used by the New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education (NZACE). In a resource published by NZACE, cooperative education is defined as, “… any structured educational programme, which combines classroom learning with productive relevant work experience. Cooperative education is learning integrated with work” (Hodges & Coolbear, 1998, p. 5). The traditional model of cooperative education described by Hodges and Coolbear is full time educational programmes interspersed with work placements. However, the authors also point out that a more vocational-based model where full-time employees undertake education ‘off the job’, and where the learning experiences are structured in an integrated way still complies with the broad definition.

In a large multi-centre study conducted in Australia in 2008, researchers reported that a wide range of terms were commonly used to describe activities that related to, “integrating theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum” (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 9). The most common terms used (in rank order) were: practicum; professional practice; internship; workplace learning; work-integrated learning; industry-based learning; project-based learning; cooperative education and fieldwork education. The study found that even
within one institution, the terms were not necessarily used consistently and the same term was interpreted differently. Rowe, Mackay and Winchester-Seeto (2012, November) in their review of terminology, contend that it is the fact that WIL does not fit within neat compartments that contributes to the difficulty in establishing a consistent typology. Usher (2012), argues against trying to define WIL and comments that, “to define WIL is to attempt to account for the infinite number of learning forms and contexts, which ultimately only renders the definition itself meaningless for practical purposes” (p. 11).

Connor and MacFarlane (2007) in their scoping study undertaken in the UK, made a similar observation to that found in the Australian study, and reported a lack of consistency or consensus regarding the type of activities and words used to describe work-related learning. They found that work-based learning (WBL) or workplace learning were terms that were most frequently used to describe a variety of models and activities that share similar features to WIL. It was also acknowledged that like WIL, there is no one simple or single definition other than WBL being about the learning that occurs in the workplace. Interestingly, cooperative education did not feature within the terms commonly used in the UK. If WBL is to be considered in a similar context as cooperative education, then the focus of any definition must be on learning through the experience of work, rather than solely learning at work.

The definition of WBL which most closely aligns with the earlier definitions of cooperative education, and which is frequently cited in the academic literature defines WBL as, “a class of university programmes that bring together universities and work organisations to create new learning opportunities in workplaces” (Boud, Solomon, & Symes, 2001, p. 4). This definition considers WBL as a planned programme of accredited learning in a higher education context, and can include undergraduate placements, distance learning programmes and sandwich courses. In sandwich courses, students normally intercalate work placement between the second and third years of an undergraduate degree programme (P. Smith & Preece, 2009). A student placed in the workplace either in full-time employment or for temporary placement only, matches the definition of work-based learning when the placement is directly relevant or dovetailed to the student’s degree or programme of study and clear learning goals are identified.

The terminology for work-integrated learning activities in a sport context has also been found to vary globally and with little consistency. Titles used by sport programmes in universities include: cooperative education; professional practicum; industry experience; sport practicum; work-based cooperative practicum; internship; field experiences; work-based learning and
work-integrated learning (Fleming & Ferkins, 2005; A. J. Martin & Leberman, 2005). These terms are also consistent with the findings from the multidisciplinary scoping studies discussed earlier (Connor & MacFarlane, 2007; Patrick et al., 2008). Cuneen and Sidwell (1994), in a sport management context, use a structural difference to justify their definition. They have defined field experiences as credit bearing and distinguish between, “practica which constitutes a part-time placement at an external agency and internship, which are a full-time job commitment” (p. 5). Many other authors in the sport context do not necessarily follow the distinctions made by Cuneen and Sidwell and as such, much of the terminology is used interchangeably. Confusion is easily created for stakeholders (in particular the industry), by the lack of consistency and consensus. Some sport organisations in New Zealand may have a student from one university as part of a cooperative education programme at the same time they have a student from another institution (and possibly from overseas) carrying out a sport practicum and another on a work placement. The issue identified here supports the need to determine what the stakeholders in the BSR context understand as to the meaning and purpose of cooperative education.

Defining terminology has consequences broader than a lack of consistency causing some confusion for practitioners. In the Australian study mentioned previously, Patrick et al. (2008), identified the issue that in 2005 the Federal government made policy changes to the Commonwealth Grants Scheme. As such, under the new policies, funding is provided to programmes where universities guide the learning experience in the workplace, whereas there is no funding support for programmes that are based solely as work experience. This creates dilemmas, “when the same WIL experiences are called by different names and when different experiences are called by the same name” (p. 10). This impacts on areas of quality assurance and reporting of activities institutionally and nationally, and this has prompted calls for a clearer, shared terminology (Peach & Gamble, 2011).

As Patrick et al. (2008) discussed, different terminology can also affect how university senior management and other academic staff, “engage with WIL as a concept and a process” (p. 10). Terminology that includes learning or education may have an advantage in increasing engagement and legitimising the activities within an academic programme. A number of studies report that the success of workplace-based programmes is dependent on good ‘buy in’ from management and academic staff, and this comes from their acknowledgement that the experience is for learning—not just working (E. Martin, 1998; Matson & Matson, 1995; McCurdy & Zegwaard, 2009).
2.2 Historical perspective of cooperative education

It is reported that over 100 years ago, the Dean of Engineering at the University of Cincinnati, Professor Herman Schneider, “became convinced that many professional concepts and skills could not be learned effectively in the classroom, but required practical experience for their understanding and mastery” (Sovilla & Varty, 2011, p. 3). He proposed a plan where students could learn through integrating theory and practice using a coordinated approach of alternating on-campus study and off-campus, real world experiences. In 1906, Schneider first referred to this model as ‘Cooperative Education’ to indicate the cooperation required between industry and university, the formal integration of learning between the classroom and the workplace and the expectation that learning would occur in both contexts (Cates & Jones, 1999; Sovilla & Varty, 2011).

Sovilla and Varty (2011) point out that Professor Schneider did not claim to be the originator of the concept of enhancing education by combining theory with practice. He did acknowledge that apprenticeships for technical training as well as hospital-based training for nurses and doctors had indeed been offered since the early 1800s. However, although work orientated programmes did exist before the 1900s, none of the earlier models had such a clear focus of formal integration of university and workplace learning.

Writing about the history of cooperative education, Sovilla and Varty (2004, 2011) report that during 1906–07, 27 electrical and chemical engineering students were enrolled in the first cooperative education programme run by Professor Schneider, despite the reported scepticism of many of his academic colleagues. According to Cates and Jones (1999), originally Schneider’s students would spend alternating weeks in school and on the job and, “every Saturday morning all the students would meet with Schneider to discuss their experiences and tie those experiences to their classroom instruction” (p. 13). Schneider’s model was clearly not designed as an add-on but, “an integral part of the educational process” (Cates & Jones, 1999, p. 13).

Sovilla and Varty (2004, 2011) also report that after the first year, there was substantial growth in enrolments into Schneider’s programme, and word rapidly spread to other institutions and engineering schools. By 1919, also at the University of Cincinnati, cooperative education was established in business as the first programme offered outside of engineering. At Antioch College in 1921, the cooperative education model was adapted for students in programmes that were not primarily career specific. Hence, the first cooperative education programme in the liberal arts was established. By the fiftieth anniversary, in 1956, approximately 60 colleges
and universities in the US had established cooperative education programmes across the
disciplines of engineering, technology, physical sciences, business administration and liberal
arts. Cooperative education was by then seen as a viable education pedagogy, appropriate for
post secondary education (Sovilla, 1988).

However, the most significant period of growth in cooperative education in the USA came as a
result of changes to the Higher Education Act in 1965 (Howard, 2004). Federal funding
became available for establishing new cooperative education programmes. Institutions
competed to set up programmes to take advantage of the funding available. Unfortunately,
some of these programmes were considered to be of dubious quality as they were driven by
financial incentives rather than educational outcomes.

James Wilson and Edward Lyons published a two year study that provided evidence for the
first time on the educational benefits and value of cooperative education (see Wilson & Lyons,
1961). In addition, the NCCE was incorporated in 1962 and supported colleges and
universities in the development of cooperative education programmes. The NCCE was
influential in informing legislators about the benefits of this educational strategy at House and
Senate meetings. Over the following 20 years, federal funding enabled 1,012 colleges and
universities in the US to offer cooperative education programmes at its peak (Howard, 2004).

However, a major issue encountered was in the definition of what constituted a cooperative
education programme. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the debate about definitions
still continues today.

Although the term ‘cooperative education’ is said to have originated in the US, concepts
related to integration of the academic curriculum with a work-based experiential component
may have originated within the UK earlier than 1906. Carlson (1999) mentions that in 1903,
Sunderland Technical College introduced a sandwich education programme. In the 1950s,
government intervention in Britain recognised that in order to keep up with the technical
advances of the Russian people, 10 ‘Colleges of Advanced Technology’ were given university
status and required to have cooperative education programmes within the disciplines of
engineering, applied science and business (Tucker, 1969). By 1996, the Association for
Sandwich Education and Training (ASET) listed 2,138 courses at 120 British universities that
included a component of work-integrated learning or cooperative education (ASET, 1996).

This trend received further support with the release of the Dearing Report commissioned by
the British government in 1997, which recommended that all higher education institutions
should assist students to become familiar with the world of work and how it related to their
academic training. The report asserted that work experience opportunities within an educational programme would enhance the employability of graduates (Dearing, 1997). Despite this, by 2007 only 29% of UK students were undertaking a work placement in comparison with the average across Europe of 55%, with Germany having the highest rate of 80% (Little, 2007).

In Canada, it is reported that coop programmes began in 1957 in engineering, at an institution that was later to be named the University of Waterloo (Lebold, Pullin, & Wilson, 1990). Originally there was much criticism and concerns from nearby institutions that, “cooperative education would sully the academic programme” (McCallum & Wilson, 1988, p. 62). However, this view was gradually changed as the benefits of this type of educational strategy became evident. By the late 1960s, there had been steady growth with programmes in other universities and technical colleges (McCallum & Wilson, 1988), to the extent that by 1987 there were 63 institutions offering cooperative education programmes (Lebold et al., 1990). In 1988, the Canadian Association for Cooperative education (CAFCE) was successful in lobbying federal government for formal recognition of cooperative education and funding for institutions to start new programmes. During this same period, the first Canadian research in cooperative education was funded to investigate the benefits and effects of cooperative education.

Cooperative education in Australia is believed to have begun in the early 1960s in the field of engineering (Davie & Russell, 1990). The early programmes were identified and structured in a similar way to the British sandwich programmes. It was not until the mid-1970s that the term cooperative education was used in an effort to more clearly describe the relationship between the educational institution, student and employer. Up until 1988, most cooperative education programmes were based within the ‘advanced education’ rather than the university sector (Davie & Russell, 1990). Once the binary system of education was abolished, by the Federal government in 1988, (as a result of the White Paper, Higher Education a policy statement), several universities responded by incorporating cooperative education or similar models of WIL within degree programmes. Today WIL remains in a relatively strong position in Australian universities. A report on a proposed national internship scheme (Universities Australia, 2008) indicated that a number of universities had made substantial commitments to increase the availability of work-integrated learning, while many universities have included as a strategic priority that the majority of degree courses will include a workplace or community experience (McLennan & Keating, 2008).
In New Zealand, cooperative education programmes are relatively new in comparison to the British and North American examples, and a search of the literature failed to identify a published history. However, by 1998 in a database produced by the NZACE, over 300 programmes in tertiary institutes and universities were recorded as having some component of work-integrated learning (NZACE, 1998). The numbers are likely to have increased since this time, however, only anecdotal evidence is currently available to support this.

The development of cooperative education in US, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand has been outlined to convey an understanding of the major influences and timeline. However, these are not the only countries involved in cooperative education. At the centennial celebrations in the US in 2006, it was reported that various models of cooperative education were practiced in at least, “1500 universities in 43 countries around the world” (Houshmand & Papadakis, 2006, p. 15).

In summary, the development of cooperative education was initially driven by labour shortages, particularly in US and Canada, in areas such as engineering and information and communication technology (ICT). However, once the educational and career benefits were demonstrated, other disciplines became involved including the non-professional or vocational areas such as the liberal arts. Government or Federal funding has had a significant impact by providing funding in US and Canada for the development of new programmes. Significant government policy changes within education have supported the work-integrated learning initiatives in Australia and the UK to help address ‘skill shortages’. However, New Zealand is yet to catch up in the respect of government support and policy. Many so-called developing countries have adopted cooperative education or WIL programmes in a bid to enhance economic development and join the knowledge economy (Coll, Pinyonatthargarn, & Pramoolsook, 2004; Taylor, 2004).

### 2.3 Models of cooperative education

There is a vast amount of literature where authors have described a wide array of WIL programmes. *The International Handbook for Work-Integrated Education* (edited by Coll & Zegwaard, 2011a) describes WIL programmes across 18 different disciplines. The website for the Australian Collaborative Education Network (commonly referred to as ACEN) has posted a large number of case studies as vignettes. *The Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships* and the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* also frequently publish articles that include programme descriptions. It is clearly evident from these sources that there is wide interest in WIL, but there exists a wide variety of modes of practice. Based on the
available literature, it generally appears that the choice of model seems to be highly
dependent on the custom and practice of the discipline (such as in nursing or teacher
education) or the strategic direction of the university. For those programmes that share the
defining features of cooperative education (rather than the broader notion of WIL), most can
be categorised into one of three models. Drawing on the work of Ryan, Toohey and Hughes
(1996), distinctions between the three different models are now discussed.

**The academic model**

In an academic model, the university or higher education institution is responsible for the
curriculum and facilitating most of the learning. The purpose of the workplace experience is to
provide an, “induction of the student into the profession through acquisition and correct
application of professionally relevant knowledge” (Ryan et al., 1996, p. 361). The workplace
supervisor plays a secondary role, “providing a context for application, making links between
theory and practice and focusing on the student’s cognitive development” (p. 361).
Professions that use this model include medicine (De Beer, 2011) and nursing (Grealish &
Stunder, 2011), and it is common for joint appointments to be made between the workplace
(such as a hospital) and the university so that staff can be involved with teaching in both
learning environments.

**The articulated model**

In this model, a partnership or collaboration is formed between the student, the university and
the industry in order to achieve the aims of the placement experience. The purpose is
conceived as, “developing links between cognitive and experiential learning and between
theory and practice … and induction of the student into the profession through demonstration
of professional competencies (skills, knowledge and values)” (Ryan et al., 1996, p. 361). The
learning outcomes are negotiated through a learning contract or agreement that is agreed on
by all three parties. Learning is facilitated through encouraging and supporting students to
reflect on their experiences. This model can be considered more consistent with the ‘true
definition’ of cooperative education, and examples can be found in a range of different
disciplines such as: science (Zegwaard & Laslett, 2011); business (Hoskyn & Martin, 2011);
teacher education (B. Cooper & Taylor, 2011); and sport (Fleming & Ferkins, 2011). The BSR
cooperative education programme represents an example of an articulated model.

**The apprenticeship model**

In this model, the workplace supervisor has the primary role of modelling, observing and
guiding the student and the university plays a minimal role. “Learning is conceived as primarily
active, experiential and inductive ... and the purpose of the workplace experience is
conceived as student mastery of relevant practices and student induction into the occupational
group” (Ryan et al., 1996, p. 360). Minimal integration of theory and practice is explicit in the
design of the curriculum. This model is found in some university engineering programmes
(Todd & Lay, 2011), while more often in vocational orientated qualifications in the polytechnic
sector. There is some debate as to whether this meets the definition of cooperative education.

2.3.1 The structure of placement experiences

It is evident in the literature that the structure of the placement experience varies according to
the model and to the programme curriculum. The length of placement in a professional
degree, is often determined by a governing body or professional association, (e.g., the
Institute of Engineers or the Nursing Council). Interestingly, where there are no professional
requirements, there appears to be no published evidence that provides any educational
justification for the length of placement or the number of hours that are appropriate to meet
the learning outcomes of most cooperative education programmes. However, as Little and
Harvey (2006) point out, “the length of placement will determine, to some extent the range and
scope of activities that a student can undertake and the opportunities for the development of
knowledge, skills and attributes that might be afforded by the work placement” (p. 7).

Ryan, Toohey and Hughes (1996) argue the more the learning outcomes expected are clearly
defined within the academic curriculum, the more deliberate is the design, rationale and
structure of the placement. They describe three different structural formats that are commonly
used, being the extended single placement; multiple short block placements; and the
concurrent model.

The extended single placement

This type of placement is usually situated toward the end of a degree programme. This is
commonly called an internship in the USA and the thick sandwich model in the UK (Little &
Harvey, 2006). In the UK it is common for students to undertake a one-year long placement
between years three and four of a degree. Arguments have been made for the extended
single placement in situations where students need the time to see a project through to
completion (e.g., engineering) or to participate in a full range of organisational experiences.
Often a reason given for an extended single placement is to allow for a ‘consolidated’
experience, however, it is unclear whether this is driven by administrative demands or
educational reasons. One rationale for the length of the extended placement is whether it is
paid or unpaid. For example, where the placement is unpaid, it is common practice that the students are required to undertake the placement during term time only and often only four days per week (Little & Harvey, 2006) to allow time for paid employment. Paid placements may not have the same restrictions placed on them, meaning that students are able to gain a longer placement experience.

**Multiple short block placements**

Placement experiences are usually distributed throughout the programme. This structure is sometimes referred to in the UK as a ‘thin sandwich’ (Little & Harvey, 2006). Multiple shorter block placements are common within teacher education (B. Cooper & Taylor, 2011), nursing (Grealish & Stunder, 2011) and many other disciplines where students alternate blocks on placement with time on-campus. Many cooperative education programmes in Canada and the USA have alternating semesters on-campus and in industry over a 4–6 year timeframe (Fenster & Parks, 2008). The rationale for multiple shorter blocks appears to be linked with the need for progression and integration of on-campus learning. Initial placements early in a degree programme often limit the student experience to observation and a lower level of contribution within an organisation. However, after a first placement there is evidence that students are more motivated to learn in the classroom (Burchell, Hodges, & Rainsbury, 2000; Weisz, 2000) but also students may decide that this is not the career direction for them (Van Gyn, 1996). Students are able to set new learning goals for each placement and improve practice through reflection on previous experiences. Little and Harvey (2006) suggest that placements undertaken in more than one organisation may provide students with an advantage in the graduate labour market, although there is no evidence provided to support this claim.

**Concurrent model**

This model consists of part-time placements, usually of one to three days per week, extending over a semester or a year. This structure is used within many sport programmes including the BSR (Fleming & Ferkins, 2005) and is also common in teacher education programmes, especially early childhood (Ryan et al., 1996). The amount of hours/days is variable depending on the requirements of the curriculum, yet there appears to be no clear justification evident in the literature to indicate how these hours are determined. The concurrent model is considered to provide an ideal opportunity for integrating what is being learnt in the workplace with the theory being learnt at university, as the students immediate experiences can be used within class and vice versa (Ryan et al., 1996). As students are in regular contact with
academic staff, there are more opportunities for discussion and reflection. However, the disadvantages of this format are often related to a conflict between student learning and the needs of the organisation to have the student ‘around all the time’. In contrast, in some smaller organisations there is an advantage of only having a student two days per week, and in that time appropriate learning activities can be made available and the student is not just ‘filling in time’. Students may also be able to see the range of activities within the organisation occurring across a longer timeframe (e.g., through a whole season of competition) that they may not be exposed to if the required hours were more consolidated.

Fenster and Parks (2008), in one of the few studies that compares the structure of work placements, determined that alternating placements with university study each semester offered similar benefits as models, whereby students undertook study and work placements concurrently. In both the alternating and concurrent structures, students rated their learning outcomes equally in the areas of career development, academic development, professional skills and personal development. However, the authors of this quantitative self-reported study acknowledge the limitations inherent in the instrument used. Further, they acknowledge that further research is needed to gain a more in-depth student perspective.

There is some concern raised as to how many hours of placement are in fact necessary to be considered consistent with a cooperative education model (Coll & Eames, 2004). Is a short block 40-hour placement as part of a one-year diploma or certificate legitimately a cooperative education experience? The answer may not be in the length of time (number of hours) but more specifically the learning outcomes achieved through the experience and the relationship of these with the curriculum. Regardless of the nature of the cooperative education programme, Coll and Eames (2004) argue that crucial to successful outcomes are that, “the work component is authentic and integrated and that coop needs to be a curriculum model not added on” (p. 273). Ryan et al. (1996) highlight that poorly structured placement experiences may result in, “experiences that actually undermine learning” (p. 370). It has also been raised as a concern that there is very little research that examines the effect of the length and structure of the placement, and there is a lack of understanding and evidence concerning how the different models support and impact on student learning (Fenster & Parks, 2008).

In light of the comments above, as part of the development of the cooperative education programme for the BSR, I conducted my own research to determine whether the length and structure of the placement was appropriate for the context of the programme (Fleming & Eames, 2005). The findings indicated that the 350 hours of placement in the BSR model was...
perceived as important for relationship building, developing trust and contributed to students defining their own meaning of practice in sport and recreation. However, it was evident that learning may be enhanced with, “more time in the workplace, and the use of tools such as projects that assist students understanding of their workplace community” (Fleming & Eames, 2005, p. 30).

2.4 The practice of cooperative education

Cooperative education is a learning strategy that involves students integrating academic learning in the university with learning through authentic work experiences in a field related to a student’s academic or career goals (Groenewald, Drysdale, Chiupka, & Johnston, 2011; Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). Generally, cooperative education programmes are initiated by and based in a tertiary level education institution and incorporate time in the workplace. As mentioned previously, when defining cooperative education, the learning gained through the experience contributes to a formal academic qualification. Yet, it is important there is an accepted understanding that cooperative education is, “more than just workplace learning” (Groenewald et al., 2011, p. 17). Central to the practice of cooperative education is the provision of opportunities for students to see the connections between theory and practice. However, this is not without some challenges, and further discussion on this issue will take place later in this section. A key outcome of cooperative education is to prepare students for their future careers through developing both generic and specific competencies that can enhance employability (Coll & Zegwaard, 2006; Fleming, Martin, Hughes, & Zinn, 2009; A. J. Martin, Rees, Edwards, & Paku, 2012).

Cooperative education is founded upon the development of a collaborative partnership through which mutually beneficial outcomes can be achieved for the student, host organisation and the university (Fleming & Hickey, 2013). There is a considerable body of literature that highlights the benefits of cooperative education to student learning across a range of disciplines (for a comprehensive review see Dressler & Keeling, 2011). Research has highlighted academic benefits such as applying theory into practice (Coll et al., 2009) and improving motivation to learn (Burchell et al., 2000; Weisz, 2000). Students also gain personal benefits such as enhanced self-confidence and increased initiative (Weisz, 2000). When students are placed into real world contexts they have opportunities to take on responsibilities, and develop relationships with colleagues and supervisors and to work as a member of a team (Fleming & Eames, 2005; Howard & England-Kennedy, 2001). Through the contextual nature of work-integrated learning, cooperative education provides students with the
opportunity to test their aptitudes in a specific context for a given profession while they are still in a position to make a change to their career direction (Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). Cooperative education provides opportunities for students to develop those skills that the industry has determined are necessary for graduate employability and success (Burchell et al., 2000; Coll & Zegwaard, 2006; Fleming et al., 2009). It also provides the opportunity to develop maturity and responsibility in the transition from being a student to a professional (Cates & Jones, 1999).

Not only have the benefits of cooperative education to student learning been well documented, the benefits to industry and employers has been extensively researched in a range of disciplines (for a comprehensive review see Braunstein, Takei, & Wang, 2011). Industry reports the benefits as: gaining additional resources to help with projects and other activities, the screening of potential new employees, and positive interactions with universities. In the sport context, a study conducted in New Zealand by Martin and Leberman (2005) found that industry considered that placement students could bring qualities such as objectivity, technical skills (such as coaching or planning techniques), and problem-solving skills. Ferkins (2002), in another study undertaken in New Zealand identified that, “… the most significant benefit was the ‘injection’ of fresh ideas and enthusiasm into the organisation from the students” (p. 34). It was clear from this research that industry seeks students that can not only perform the necessary tasks, but can also offer the capability to help improve current practice which creates added value.

### 2.4.1 The cooperative education curriculum

Cooperative education is positioned as an educational strategy with the potential to provide a rich and contextual learning experience. Cooperative education experiences need to be structured around sound principles of teaching and learning. The challenge then is to provide a, “pedagogical approach that integrates theoretical, professional and experiential models of learning” (McLennan & Keating, 2008, p. 11). Ultimately, cooperative education students must take responsibility for their own learning. While learning takes place within the individual, it is the role of the university to provide a curriculum and the academic and industry supervision to facilitate this learning within the cooperative education context. The cooperative education curriculum must be built around principles of learning from the perspective of the three stakeholder groups, and acknowledge the learning environments of both the workplace and the university. Cates and Jones (1999), in their chapter on ‘Building co-op programs around principles of effective student learning’, have identified key behaviours that can that maximise
learning in cooperative education: clarity, variety task orientation, engagement, and student success. Others acknowledge there are other behaviours and factors such as critical thinking and lifelong learning that are important in maximising the student learning experience (Peach & Matthews, 2011). However, it is outside the scope of this review to expand on these topics in more detail.

In addition to the key areas suggested above, the ‘application of theory to practice’ and ‘integration of knowledge’ are fundamental to the definition of cooperative education and to curriculum design (Coll et al., 2009). Cooperative education is conceived as more than just learning in the workplace (which then would be considered work experience). Integration involves the student taking theories learnt in the classroom and applying these into practice during the student’s workplace experience. In addition, the student needs to take what they have learnt in the workplace, and relate it to, or incorporate it into, the next phase of academic learning when they return to the university (Coll et al., 2009; Van Gyn, Cutt, Loken, & Ricks, 1997).

There is little reported research about how knowledge learnt during the classroom experience is integrated into the workplace during cooperative education experiences. Even less known is known about the transfer of knowledge and experiences from the workplace back into the classroom. A few authors have researched the links between on-campus and off-campus learning, and they suggest that there is a significant theory—practice gap, for many cooperative education programmes (Allen & Peach, 2007; Coll et al., 2009). Coll et al. (2009) in their study across three different disciplines (science and engineering, business and sport) in four different universities concluded that integration is not being made explicit in the curriculum, and that teachers are not incorporating opportunities for students to use their experiences to enhance their learning within the university setting.

Within the cooperative education curriculum, it is not only providing opportunities for the development of technical skills and knowledge that is important. Many studies have highlighted the importance of the development of the behavioural or soft skills (Bell, Crebert, Patrick, Bates, & Cragnolini, 2003; Coll & Zegwaard, 2006; Fleming et al., 2009; Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Across different disciplines soft skills are seen as equally or more important in enhancing employability as technical skills. Cooperative education (and other similar forms of work-integrated learning) have been shown to provide the ideal learning environment for the development of communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork, use of initiative, organisation and planning skills, problem-solving skills, self-management and reasoning skills
(Bell et al., 2003; Fleming & Eames, 2005; Fleming et al., 2009; Sleap & Reed, 2006). The academic curriculum and assessments can be linked with workplace activities to assist with the development of communication skills through oral presentations and written reports. Through students undertaking specific project work within an organisation, this has been shown to provide an opportunity to develop problem-solving skills, creativity and the use of initiative (Fleming & Eames, 2005). In addition, it is important, but not that well documented in the literature, that the cooperative education curriculum needs to enable students to gain an understanding of the social, cultural and political climate that relates to an individual organisation and the discipline as a whole.

An academic approach is considered to be essential to the curriculum of cooperative education (Patrick et al., 2008) for it to be perceived as legitimate within a university education. As part of this approach, Hodges (2011) acknowledges that if workplace learning is not assessed, it may be seen as less important, and he argues that, “assessment is intrinsically linked to student learning and performance” (p. 52). He advocates for a, “sustainable, authentic assessment approach” (p. 60) in cooperative education that encourages and maximises the learning that can be derived from the experience. This requires students to be active participants in the assessment process. Boud (2000) argues that good assessment contributes to improvement of the learner. Assessment in cooperative education needs to reflect the two different but complementary learning environments (Eames & Bell, 2005). Strategies need to be designed to encourage reflective practice and support the integration of the knowledge gained at university with what has been learnt in the workplace. McDowell and Sambell (1999) comment that, “students appreciate assessment tasks which help them to develop knowledge, skills and abilities which they can take with them and use in other contexts such as their subsequent careers” (p. 81).

There are a wide range of assessment practices commonly used in cooperative education that are designed to specifically support the student learning experience. These include the use of performance-based assessments and portfolio models (for a review see Hodges, Smith and Jones, 2004). Typically, both formative and summative assessment strategies are supported as being appropriate in cooperative education, while the formative is often more dominant (A. J. Martin et al., 2012). Frequently, assessments include a reflective component alongside other more conventional approaches such as reports and presentations. Somewhat different to other university courses, assessment in cooperative education often includes feedback from the workplace supervisor that contributes to the overall authenticity of the assessment.
and the learning that is then gained from the process (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Hodges, 2011). This can be problematic where it forms part of the summative assessment and is graded, but it is more common for this to be a formative or a pass/fail requirement.

The development and implementation of effective assessment methods for cooperative education is a key issue for practitioners. Concerns raised by many authors include the maintenance of academic standards, relevance and consistency of assessment processes and responsibility for assessment and the academic support for assessment (Hodges et al., 2004). While it is outside the scope of this review to give a fuller discussion on assessment of student learning or to address the issues raised above, the importance of assessment as a critical academic component of cooperative education needs to be acknowledged.

### 2.4.2 Strategies to support student learning

It is commonly acknowledged that the way learning occurs in the university is very different to the way learning occurs in a workplace context (Billett, 2001; Peach & Matthews, 2011). Hughes and Moore (1999) describe a number of different strategies for learning in the workplace. These are summarised as:

- **Front-loaded instruction**: Involves an experienced worker providing the newcomer with ‘extensive off-task exposure to work-related knowledge’ before engaging in work.
- **On-the-job training**: While the student starts performing workplace tasks they are coached by a co-worker or trainer.
- **Just-in-time instruction**: The newcomer starts participating in workplace activities and instruction or training is given as the need arises.
- **Back-loaded instruction**: The newcomer starts participating in workplace activities ‘usually in peripheral roles, for a while, and then are given more explicit instruction and feedback’.
- **Mutual self-instruction**: Newcomers work in groups and are assigned tasks which they must work out for themselves without the direct supervision of a supervisor or trainer.
- **Laissez-faire: (also called sink or swim)**: The newcomer is assigned a task without instruction. The success of the strategy is dependent on the newcomer’s ability as a learner and problem solver, and how complex the task is.
- **Observation**: The newcomer participates in peripheral tasks but is provided with opportunities to observe and ask questions.
- **Mentoring**: Refers to relationship rather than specific strategies. The mentor’s role tends to support the students’ learning and development.
It is common that a number of the strategies listed above are used concurrently at any one time during the student's experience. Students also have their own personal learning style that differs from student to student. It is also acknowledged that the way students learn changes over the course of the experience as they become more competent and the tasks become more challenging. However, there is very little evidence to support one particular strategy over another. Nonetheless, appropriate supervision has been argued as critical to the learning process of cooperative education (A. J. Martin et al., 2012) and has been shown to result in greater educational and career success for cooperative education students (Ricks & Van Gyn, 1997). The workplace or host supervisor is generally considered as having a major influence on the learning that occurs in the workplace (Billett, 2001; L. Cooper et al., 2010). The roles and responsibilities of the workplace supervisor have been described as, “multifaceted and complex” (Rowe, Mackaway, & Winchester-Seeto, 2012, p. 122) and vary with the placement structure and discipline context. Workplace supervisors can be considered as making a contribution to the learning process through negotiating and managing the allocation of appropriate tasks and responsibilities that facilitate learning, role modelling, and providing direct guidance, support and feedback to the student.

However, workplace supervisors (or in many cases the employer) are not primarily in the business of education, yet they take on this role when they accept a student. In the university setting, students are exposed to a broad foundation of knowledge that may be relevant to one specific organisation but not as relevant to another. Ideally the role of the industry supervisor is to start with the broad education that university provides, and customise this to an appropriate learning experience for the student. Thereby, the industry has the opportunity to determine the technical knowledge and skills that are important for graduate employability. Recently, several studies have highlighted a lack of clarity and understanding of the roles and expectations of workplace supervisors (Patrick et al., 2008; Rowe et al., 2012), and this has the potential to impact on the quality of the learning that can be gained through a cooperative education experience.

In many, but certainly not all programmes, an academic from within the university supports students while they are on placement. Generally, the roles of the academic supervisors are to provide support and guidance for the student. In some programmes the academic supervisor is situated within a discipline specific department and supervision is additional to their teaching load. At times it is not uncommon for academics to have some reluctance to
engaging in a substantive way in the supervision process. In other programmes academic supervisors are part of a cooperative education unit or group and are typically powerful advocates of the importance of supporting the student learning experience. It is clearly acknowledged that academic supervisors can play a key role in developing reflection skills and facilitating the integration of the learning from the workplace back into the learning environment of the university (Fleming & Martin, 2007). The literature indicates that the most successful cooperative education programmes are those where academic supervisors are involved (E. Martin, 1998; Matson & Matson, 1995; McCurdy & Zegwaard, 2009). Yet, the contribution that academics make to student learning through cooperative education is identified as 'under researched', and the research in this thesis goes some way to making a contribution in this area.

There is wide support for the notion that student learning is enhanced in cooperative education by the development of reflective practice (Coll et al., 2009; Roberts, 2002; Robin Smith & Betts, 2000; Van Gyn, 1996). Reflection can be described as a response in which, “people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it” (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985, p. 19). Reflective practice can become educative through transforming experience and theory into knowledge (Roberts, 2002), resulting in transfer of learning (Macaulay, 2000). As reflection is important to the pedagogy of cooperative education, incorporating structured strategies within the design of cooperative education curriculum facilitates student reflection individually, and within others (Richert, 1990). The strategies utilised should relate to the needs of the learner, the learning environment and assist students to develop critical reflection skills. Importantly, good critical reflection requires approaches that go beyond the simple ‘journal’ that is frequently used in many programmes. Van Gyn (1996) suggests that developing reflective practice involves organised collaboration and interactions between the students, academic supervisors, and employers to enhance the learning outcomes. She cautions that leaving the process of reflection for students to do themselves may result in reflection not taking place.

Smith and Betts (2000) argue that ‘doing’ only becomes learning in the formal sense through a process of systematic, supported and structured reflection. They contend that, “the quality of the learning is not dependent on the quality of the experience, but on the quality of the process of reflection in relation to the agreed learning outcomes” (p. 597). Boud and Walker (1998) caution that reflection can occur without any real learning. They argue that without direction, “reflection can become diffuse and disparate so that conclusions and outcomes may
not emerge … and can become self-referential, inward looking and uncritical” (p. 93). They acknowledge that inevitably there is a tension between too much guidance that, “results in recipe following” and too little structure that, “results in a loss of focus” (p. 93).

It is acknowledged that not all workplaces (nor all universities) create an ideal learning environment. Learning can be compromised when students are not able to engage in authentic activities or when they are left to struggle without expert guidance. Cooperative education coordinators must, therefore, ensure there is an appropriate level of engagement, as well as appropriate workplace supervision to ensure that a suitable learning environment is created (A. J. Martin et al., 2012).

In a large Australian study mentioned previously in this review, Patrick et al. (2008) examined issues relating to the challenge of implementing worthwhile placement experiences. A lack of shared understanding; difficulties in identifying placements; quality of placement supervision and tasks and student preparedness for placement were identified as key issues. Smith et al. (2005) also identified that a lack of shared understanding was seen as a significant issue. Both studies concluded that a shared understanding of what constitutes a meaningful and satisfying placement should not be taken for granted. When designing a curriculum, there is a fundamental assumption that there is a shared understanding and commitment to the cooperative education learning process by all stakeholders. Students, university staff and workplace supervisors need to understand and be aware of their different roles and the impact they have on the quality of the educational experience. This indicates, and as others have suggested (Patrick et al., 2008; Ross Smith et al., 2005) that further research is needed (and more specifically in this case within the BSR programme) to determine the alignment of views on the objectives and practices between stakeholders to then be able to work towards developing a meaningful, worthwhile and positive experience for all parties.

In the design of a curriculum using the approaches outlined above, student learning can be optimised through conceiving the work placement as a learning experience that is pedagogically planned, where clear learning goals linked to the curriculum are defined, communicated and assessed (Eames & Cates, 2011). These components should be based on a theoretical framework of learning. Some genuine attempts have been made to theorise learning in cooperative education. Chapter Three will discuss these ideas and how they may contribute to a theoretical basis for cooperative education.
2.5 Cooperative education partnerships

Pivotal to the practice of cooperative education are the three stakeholders; the student (or learner); the industry organisation (which may be the employer and also include subsets of colleagues that may interact with the student) and the higher education institution (in this case the university, but more directly the academic supervisors and coordinators). In some situations, a fourth stakeholder in the form of a professional body may have a role that is external to the direct learning relationship, but who may contribute to the overall curriculum and practices associated with the cooperative education experience. It is important to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of each stakeholder group and that each group is not homogeneous.

When stakeholders actively and consciously participate, cooperate and collaborate, “albeit at different levels and possibly at different times” (Robin Smith & Betts, 2000, p. 594), this can then be termed a partnership as opposed to a more loosely defined relationship. However, the nature and the quality of the partnership depend on how involved and committed each partner is and how much interaction occurs between the partners (Brodie, Reeve, & Whittaker, 1995; MacLaren & Marshall, 1998; Robin Smith & Betts, 2000). If the outcomes of cooperative education are to be achieved, then the development of effective partnerships is important. Quality learning partnerships, in a cooperative education or work-based learning context require five key educational criteria: explicit learning outcomes; formal assessment processes; identification and delivery of standards; quality assurance and enhancement processes; and recognition (Robin Smith & Betts, 2000; Varty, 1996).

MacLaren and Marshall (1998) reflected on and examined their own work-based learning programme and concluded that it is cooperation between the partners that enables the transformation of experiences into learning possible. Their view was that the partners must recognise that for cooperation to occur, “knowledge from one side (the academic) is not privileged over that from the workplace and that practice and theory should merge and support each other” (p. 329). They suggested a work-based learning approach took what the student was doing in the workplace and then worked towards the intellectual frameworks which explain reality using the academic knowledge as the basis of these inputs.

In a true cooperative education partnership, as all parties become immersed they share a stake in the learning process. As new insights emerge, from both the academic and industry perspective, there is no longer a single ‘student’ learner in the traditional sense. Ideally, all three stakeholders are partners in learning and should be considered part of one learning
organisation (Brodie et al., 1995; Orell, 2004; Varty, 1996). However, another viewpoint is that in a work-integrated learning experience there are two self-reinforcing learning organisations—one the university and the other the workplace, and that an effective partnership involves the integration of the two in order for learning to be maximised (Ross Smith et al., 2005).

Smith and Betts (2000) provided a slightly different focus, and argued that for WIL partnerships to be effective they must be based on the principles of collaborative self-interest. Through their case study, Smith and Betts illustrated that collaborative self-interest partnerships enable a range of ‘value added’ outcomes to be achieved that are over and above the individual outcomes. They identified that in collaborative self-interest partnerships all parties must be clear from the outset what is required and then actively pursue the goal. The awareness of these tangible returns not only allows the partnership to be more effective, but may also enable a change in the perspective from one of cost to one of an investment in the future. However, Smith and Betts (2000) also recognised that partnerships based on collaborative self-interest alone may not lead to an effective learning experience (and possibly the reverse) and that transparency and negotiation are equally important. Varty (1996) cautions that it is the ability to negotiate learning outcomes that will meet the objectives of all three parties and the clear communication of these in a learning agreement or common vision statement that is needed to ensure positive outcomes for cooperative education partnerships.

Orell (2004) supports the ‘stakeholder ethos’ concept, in pursuit of quality outcomes for work-based learning. Based on research by Harvey et al. (1997), Orell comments, “a stakeholder ethos epitomises learning organisations and leads to authentic, ongoing transformative partnerships integrating work, curriculum and research” (p. 2). Harvey et al. (1997) describe a stakeholder ethos as emphasising learning and adopting a long-term view which seeks benefits for all parties. In this ethos, learning is seen as holistic, rather than task focused, and students are encouraged to develop new ideas through the exploration of subject matter and the actual workplace. This is in direct contrast to the ‘value added ethos’ (a similar concept to that described by Smith & Betts, 2000) where the emphasis is upon tangible, short-term returns for the organisation in which students are expected to be adaptive and are assigned specific tasks to complete (Harvey et al., 1997).

Despite the premise that partnerships are central to the cooperative education experience, research (predominantly based on work-based learning models in the UK) has highlighted significant challenges. Stakeholder commitment, time, resources and personal energy are key
issues that have been identified as significant in the establishment of work-based learning partnerships (Reeve & Gallacher, 2005). Other factors that may impact on the effectiveness of partnerships include differences between organisational 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 operationalising ‘partnership’ 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). However, despite these difficulties, most authors agree that if an effective cooperative education partnership can be established there is immense value and positive outcomes possible for the student, industry organisation and the university.

2.6 A stakeholder approach

The previous sections of this review have highlighted that there are different stakeholder expectations and motivations for participating in WIL, and this can create an ‘expectation gap’ (Patrick et al., 2008; Ross Smith et al., 2005). There is also a need for improving the engagement between stakeholders. Patrick et al. (2008) suggest a, “stakeholder-integrated approach” (p. vi) to the planning and implementation of work-integrated learning. This approach is based on, “formalised sustainable relationships and a common understanding of the associated responsibilities and level of commitment required by all those involved” (p. vi). The authors argue that productive dialogue, genuine understanding and commitment are more likely to occur in environments that foster collaboration rather than competition. Increased dialogue may improve the understanding of different perspectives of stakeholders, however, it is clearly evident from this research that there is a need in the first instance to identify and understand what these perspectives are.

A stakeholder approach is consistent with the partnership philosophy as discussed previously, in that it requires clear agreements and recognition of needs as well as mutual benefits and costs. Patrick et al. (2008) found in their study of stakeholders views that issues of mutual benefit and responsibility were significant, especially from the perspective of senior management who saw WIL as an, “activity of multiple enrichment” (p. 38). If the benefits fail for the stakeholders, then the partnership seeks to be ineffective.

2.6.1 Stakeholder theory

In 1984, Freeman’s ‘Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach’ brought stakeholder theory into the mainstream of management literature. It is suggested that this theory was
developed to explain and guide the structure and operation of the established corporation (Lewis, 2006). After over 25 years, stakeholder theory is still dominant in the strategic management of businesses today, such that Freeman’s original book was re-issued in 2010. Freeman (1984, 2010) presents the stakeholder model as a map in which the firm is the hub of a wheel and stakeholders are at the ends of spokes around the wheel. Stakeholder theory views the firm as an organisational entity through which numerous and diverse participants accomplish multiple, and not always entirely congruent, purposes. As society and the external environment of the business world have become more complex, organisations have been forced to broaden their focus to include a wide array of stakeholders. Freeman (1984, 2010), suggests that only through deepened relationships with, and between stakeholders, will companies anticipate, innovate and be able to adapt fast enough to changes in the external environment. With this increasing emphasis on stakeholder involvement, companies need to identify and communicate with relevant stakeholder groups, decide the nature of responsibilities of each, and be willing to be judged by a wider range of performance indicators that relate to stakeholder concerns.

Freeman defined a stakeholder as, “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives” (2010, p. 25). In the context of cooperative education, this would comprise any individual or organisation that participates or impacts on the cooperative education experience. A stakeholder who has a legitimate interest in aspects of the organisation’s activities according to Freeman, has either the power to affect the firm’s performance and/or has a stake in the firm’s performance. Lewis (2006), drawing on the work of Freeman (1984), argues that this definition implies two types of stakeholders—strategic and moral. As Lewis suggests:

… the strategic stakeholders – the ones who can affect a firm – and their interests must be ‘dealt with’ so that the firm may still achieve its objectives. For the moral stakeholder – the one who is affected by the firm – stakeholder theorists seek some accommodation or alignment of interests (p. 15).

The multiple stakeholder relationships involved in cooperative education programme call for different levels of involvement from the stakeholders, at different times throughout the experience. Total dominance by one stakeholder in the partnership may lead to ineffective relationships. A stakeholder approach recognises different perspectives and stresses the importance of collaborative approaches that build capacity and add value. Stakeholder theory implies that the interests of the stakeholders are joint, and that to create value there must be a focus on, “how value gets created for each and every stakeholder” (Freeman, Harrison,
Wicks, Parmar, & de Colle, 2010, p. 9). Better understanding of the stakeholder issues creates more meaningful linkages between stakeholders, which when applied to cooperative education helps produce better outcomes for all parties. Although stakeholder theory and the importance of communication and definition of responsibilities may have some relevance, a ‘traditional’ application of stakeholder theory, with the organisation at the centre, as applied in the business world, may not fully align to the tripartite partnerships of cooperative education. Yet, through undertaking research that identifies stakeholder’s influences and impact on the partnership, it may provide important strategic insights that may lead to more long-term sustainability for university–industry relationships. If mutually beneficial sustainable relationships are to be achieved, mature relationships need to be fostered and supported by all parties concerned so that the university learning environment and workplace can be successfully integrated.

2.7 Chapter summary

The identity of cooperative education is challenged by inconsistencies in terminology. Despite this, the historical perspective highlights that cooperative education has grown to be an internationally recognisable practice and brand. Here, a clear set of principles and practices have emerged in the literature that regard cooperative education and other forms of WIL as distinct and valuable activities to be undertaken within a university education. Several models of practice exist that have been developed to meet the needs of a diverse range of disciplines. The integration of theory and practice is a key component of all curricula. Given the global contexts and curricula that cooperative education is part of, it is recognised that each cooperative education programme has its own set of issues. However, common issues include engagement in authentic experiences, effective supervision, appropriate assessment and the lack of a shared understanding of meaning and expectation.

Ultimately cooperative education needs to be a quality process. Quality is linked to the purpose, structure and organisation. Cooperative education, by its very nature involves multiple stakeholder relationships. Effective partnerships and a stakeholder ethos, will contribute to quality outcomes for the student, industry and the university. Critical to the success of the cooperative education experience is that the stakeholders need a shared understanding of what constitutes a meaningful and satisfying learning experience. Although cooperative education has been around for over a century, there is still a need for research to inform the diversity and situated nature of the practice that exists.
Chapter 3: Conceptualising learning through cooperative education

This chapter reviews the literature on learning through cooperative education. The review begins with a focus on the notion of learning. The next section draws on the work of Stephen Billett and provides an overview of the domains of knowledge in relation to the context of work-integrated learning. In the third section, a number of theories that contribute to understanding learning in cooperative education are outlined. These include Dewey’s views on experience and learning; Kolb’s experiential learning model; Piaget’s theory of cognitive development; and the sociocultural views of learning—in particular the work of Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger, and Rogoff.

3.1 Learning

“Learning is a normal process that occurs throughout life prompted by the events and challenges of everyday existence” (Billett, 2001, p.1)

Learning is a complex matter and can be interpreted in numerous different ways. Learning can be considered as, “a continuous process that occurs across all kinds of activities and the range of settings where humans think and act” (Billett, 2009, p. 835). Learning is not just reserved for classrooms, but occurs in formal and informal settings both intentionally and unintentionally. Although there is no one accepted definition of learning, a wide variety of learning theories have been proposed and critiqued within the literature. Each theory is built upon different assumptions about knowledge and understanding.

A traditional and somewhat simplistic perspective of learning centres on, “the acquisition of knowledge skills and values” (Van Gyn & Grove-White, 2004, p. 27). This view of learning as ‘acquisition’ is problematic, as it ignores the complexities of the learning process and conceives learning as being individual, abstract and context independent (Hager, 2004; Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). Hager proposes that, “an even better metaphor for capturing learning as a process is construction (or reconstruction).... a Deweyan idea” (2004, pp. 13–14). Yet, it should be noted that a view of learning as acquisition or as product is more consistent with learning in some traditional classroom environments. In contrast, learning in the workplace can be considered as social, contextual and situation specific (Billett, 2001; Illeris, 2009). While it is acknowledged that there are real differences between learning in educational institutions and in the workplace (Eraut, 2007), Billett (2001) argues against distinguishing one as formal learning and the other as informal learning. He contends that workplaces and
educational institutions just represent different instances of social practices in which learning occurs through participation.

Another view, argued by Schunk (2009) contends that, “learning is an enduring change in behaviour, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or experience” (p. 2). Learning can also be viewed as, “an active process of constructive sense-making, where learners construct a picture of the world and explanations of its different phenomena by correlating and merging newly acquired material into their ongoing activity and earlier constructions” (Grosjean, 2004, p. 34). Overall, what is common in many views of learning is that learning occurs through activity or ‘experience’, a principle that is fundamental to the philosophy that underpins cooperative education.

3.2 Domains of knowledge

There are different classifications of knowledge that one can learn through experience. Stephen Billett makes a significant contribution to understanding workplace learning (2001, 2009, 2011) in describing several types of knowledge that can be gained within different settings. He refers to conceptual knowledge as facts, propositions, assertions and concepts. Conceptual knowledge can also be termed declarative knowledge, as it can be spoken about and written down and is often related to propositional knowledge. Conceptual knowledge is represented in, “books, texts and other forms of media or artefacts” (2009, p. 832). Although this type of knowledge can be accessed in the workplace, it is more common within the university setting. Billett suggests that a learner begins with understanding the basic factual knowledge, and then gradually over time moves to deep conceptual knowledge associated with, “understanding the relations between sets of concepts and propositions” (2009, p. 832). He also argues that it is the deep conceptual knowledge that is required to successfully complete the non-routine tasks that arise in the workplace.

Procedural knowledge is comprised of the techniques and skills that we use in order to be able to act or do things. This type of knowledge, “cannot easily be declared” (Billett, 2009, p. 833), as much of it exists as tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is understood to be the knowledge that is stored in people’s heads but can be shared among immediate colleagues. This type of knowledge is perceived as harder to access, yet contains the valuable information that needs to be disseminated in order to develop procedural knowledge. In order to gain this type of knowledge, the learner needs to participate in the activities for which the procedural knowledge is being developed. Billett (2001) advises it is through direct guidance by supervisors or workplace colleagues that the learner can gain access to some of the tacit
knowledge that would otherwise remain hidden. He adds that it is through engaging in routine
tasks that leads to the compilation of procedures. The learner then rehearses specific
procedures so that they can eventually be undertaken without conscious thought. Then, as
they gain further experience in the workplace, the learner gains strategic knowledge where
they have the ability to, “predict and evaluate performance” (Billett, 2009, p. 833). In the
university setting, routine tasks are not as common and there is less opportunity for students
to practice and reinforce the knowledge that they have gained.

The third main classification Billett describes is dispositional knowledge, which is comprised of
values, attitudes and beliefs. He suggests that dispositions are, “developed through
individuals’ beliefs and are negotiated through their encounters with particular experiences”
(2009, p. 833). Billett also refers to robust knowledge that he considers as knowledge that can
be transferred across situations and circumstances. He believes it is important to be able to
transfer knowledge to, “new tasks and situations beyond the one where it has been learnt”
(2001, p. 6). He suggests that this type of knowledge arises out of both experiences in
practice and through formal education. Billett (2009) argues that the different forms of
knowledge are, “interconnected and interdependent” (p. 833). It is then through experience
and practice that certainty about performance is developed, procedures become automated
and dispositions are tested. Through experience, learners come to understand the purpose
and use of knowledge, and they learn the different conditions under which knowledge can be
applied (Billett, 2001).

Billett cautions that it is the kind of experiences students have, the quality of what is
experienced including the support and guidance they receive and how they engage with the
experience that influences the development of these domains of knowledge. He also
acknowledges that both the workplace and the university afford particular kinds of experiences
that have the potential to contribute to the development of different types of knowledge.

Eraut (2007) refers to several other types of knowledge that can be gained through learning in
the workplace. Cultural knowledge, he contends is, “acquired informally through participation
in social activities; and much is often so ‘taken for granted’ that people are unaware of its
influence on their behaviour” (p. 405). He also acknowledges the importance of personal
knowledge as, “what individual persons bring to situations that enables them to think, interact
and perform. This incorporates both people’s capabilities—what they can do—and the
understandings that inform them” (p. 406). Similar to the views of Billett, he argues that
workplace learning is not a ‘single unified phenomenon’ but depends on a range of contextual
factors that have a strong influence on the types of knowledge that can be gained in the workplace.

The discussion above attempts to clearly identify the different types of knowledge developed through a workplace experience. It is through a cooperative education experience that the knowledge gained in the workplace can be integrated with that gained in the university setting. However, it is important that one type of knowledge is not privileged over another, and it is through the inclusion of cooperative education in a degree curriculum that conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge can be developed through a university education.

3.3 Learning theories

The application of learning theories to education has a long history with the philosophical investigation into the nature of knowledge, and its association with learning as far back as the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Scientific psychological investigation of learning has a shorter history, with the first studies conducted in the late 19th century (Van Gyn & Grove-White, 2004). Theories of learning related specifically to cooperative education (as opposed to the more general strategy of experiential education) has a much more recent history, and the first research that attempts to apply theoretical models is thought to have been published in 1961 (Wilson & Lyons, 1961). A number of authors have made requests for more research in cooperative education that has a theoretical underpinning (Bartkus & Higgs, 2011; Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004; Van Gyn & Grove-White, 2004). For cooperative education to be credible as an educational practice, it needs to be related to a theoretical framework of education and grounded in learning theory (Eames & Cates, 2004; Ricks et al., 1990; Stull, Crow, & Braunstein, 1997; Wilson, 1988).

The developing scholarship within the distinct field of cooperative education does not seek to promote any one single theory, but makes use of a number of theories that have been applied in other contexts (Calway & Murphy, 2007). This chapter will briefly summarise a number of theories that make a contribution to developing an understanding of learning in cooperative education.

3.3.1 Learning through experience—The perspectives of John Dewey

The theoretical underpinnings of cooperative education can be traced back to John Dewey’s work and his views on the significance of experience in the learning process. It is Dewey that asserted, “education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and society must be based on experience” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 89). He commented, “there is an
intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 20). Hager (2004) like many others, regards Dewey as, “an early seminal figure in educational thought who saw learning as a process … or more accurately as a dialectal interplay of process and product” (p. 11). Dewey’s philosophy of ‘pragmatism’, asserts that individuals need to see the point of their education in order to learn effectively. Within this framework, knowledge is valued for what individuals can do with it, and not just as an end in itself. Dewey (1916, 1938/1997) argued that education must engage with and enhance experience, and suggested that learning occurs as a result of problem-solving in rich environments, wherein education is conceived as the changing of behaviours through experience.

Yet, Dewey cautioned that the quality of the experience was important and not all experiences lead to desirable learning.

The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experience in the future are restricted (Dewey, 1938/1997, pp. 25–26).

He maintained that it was important to observe, but observation alone is not enough and it is necessary to reflect in order to, “understand the significance” (1938/1997, p. 68) of what has been observed and to be able to take this learning into future action. He noted, “to reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences” (p. 87). Dewey also advocated a connection between theory and practice that created meaning for students in their learning that would also contribute to further experiences.

Dewey (1938/1997) also argued that, “education is essentially a social process” (p. 58) and that purposeful activity in social settings was the key to genuine learning. He supported the sentiment that experience needs to be situated in context, an idea that was progressed further by Vygotsky (1978) and Lave and Wenger (1991). He commented, “experience does not occur in a vacuum. There are sources outside an individual which gives rise to experience. It is constantly fed from these springs” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p. 40)
Leveraging Deweyan theory workplace-based learning models, such as cooperative education, look to enhance student learning through the provision of authentic and meaningful learning experiences. To this end, the cooperative education model seeks to nurture student learning through the provision of sustained periods of work-based placement. Facilitating reflection encourages meaningful learning wherein theory can be integrated with practice. It is noted by Branton et al. (1990) that the first published study to link the practice of cooperative education with the educational theories of John Dewey was conducted by Wilson and Lyons in 1961. Since then, many other authors have argued that cooperative education fits the pragmatist philosophy well (Cates & Jones, 1999; Heinemann & De Falco, 1990; Jabs, Jabs, & Jabs, 1978; Linn, 2004; Saltmarsh, 1992).

3.3.2 Experiential learning theory

Theories of the experiential learning model have been recruited to account for the integrated nature of learning that takes place in cooperative education (Cates & Jones, 1999). The most frequently cited in the literature is Kolb’s learning model (1984) wherein, “learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). Kolb considers that his views on learning are fundamentally different from:

The rationalist and other cognitive theories of learning that tend to give primary emphasis to acquisition, manipulation and recall of abstract symbols and from behavioural learning theories that deny any role for consciousness and subjective experience in the learning process (p. 20).

Kolb’s (1984) model draws upon Kurt Lewin’s ideas on experiential learning which had a key focus on the integration of theory and practice, Dewey’s ideas of learning transforming concrete experiences into purposeful action, and Piaget’s model of learning and cognitive development which describes how intelligence is shaped by experience. The common thread between these is the notion that learning is a process rather than being defined in terms of behavioural outcomes. In his model, Kolb characterises an effective learning experience as comprising four stages, namely: (i) concrete experience, (ii) reflective observation, (iii) abstract conceptualisation and (iv) active experimentation (p. 40). Kolb’s model points to the consideration that building knowledge requires students to not only reflect and conceptualise, but also to engage in their environment in a concrete and active way.

Kolb considers his approach as holistic and integrative through combining, “experience, perception, cognition and behavior” (p. 21). Critical to the effectiveness of the learning in this model is not only the experiential component, but also the inclusion of reflection on the
experience. These ideas are consistent with Dewey’s earlier views. Kolb argued that his model, “pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work, and personal development” (p. 4). The four stages connect well with the phases of learning espoused in the cooperative education model, where learners engage in an experience, reflect on that experience from different perspectives, develop a personal theory of (effective) action and develop a plan for future action. The implication here is that for the cooperative education model to be fully operational, students should move through the full learning cycle or multiple cycles. Models of cooperative education that include multiple placements or part-time modes reinforce the integration of theory and practice as students engage in more than one cycle. Assessment practices and tools designed to fit this cyclical process can lead to enhanced student engagement in the experiential learning process.

However, Kolb’s model of a learning cycle, while it has gained widespread acceptance, has also received extensive criticism in educational literature. It is outside the scope of this review to discuss these criticisms in detail. However, Greenaway (2013) provides a useful synopsis of these critiques. Criticisms include: that the four-stage cycle is too simplistic; the work is weak and underdeveloped; is arranged to support his preferred paradigm of scientific enquiry; empirical support for the model is weak; overlooks the social, historical and cultural aspects of learning; pays insufficient attention to the process of reflection; is private and not requiring dialogue with others; learning is abstract (after the event and in the head); and should be considered an ideology rather than a philosophy or a theory. Nonetheless, despite the limitations, the value of Kolb’s work has helped to harness support for the value of learning from experience.

### 3.3.3 Cognitive development

Jean Piaget developed a theory of cognitive development that should be considered in any discussion on learning in cooperative education. Piaget (1963, 1972, 1985), observed and recorded that humans are, “active processors of the information around them, creating meaning in qualitatively different ways as they mature” (Linn, 2004, p. 18). Cognitive development theory is based on the idea that human beings learn by building their own mental frameworks (schema) in order to understand and respond to new experiences. Piaget considered that individuals construct their own meaning from their experiences through carrying out three sequential processes in learning: assimilation, accommodation and equilibration.
Assimilation is the incorporation of new experiences into an existing mental framework or schema. A schema can be described as, “a set of acquired information which is created through the patterns of behaviour or thinking that people use in dealing with objects or situations in their environment” (Burke, Marks-Maran, Ooms, Webb, & Cooper, 2009, p. 18).

As children develop, they acquire more sophisticated schema and more complex abilities. As Cates and Jones (1999) explain, assimilation creates the ability of the individual to understand a new event in a way that is consistent with existing schema. Accommodation is the development of an altered mental framework to account for new experiences. The thinking or concepts already held by the individual are changed to fit new experiences or circumstances. This creates the ability to understand a new event either by modifying existing schema or by forming new schema. Equilibration is the process that occurs as the individual adapts to its new mental position, and is a balance between assimilation and accommodation.

Although Piaget’s original theory was based on children, it can be extended to considerations for adult intellectual development. From this consideration, as educators and workplace supervisors Linn (2004) suggests (based on the work of Perry (1970) who applied Piaget’s theory to his work with Harvard students) that we need to acknowledge students may construct their realities in different ways than we do, and resist different constructions unless we take care to lead them from their framework to ours. She suggests that we need to consider that, “our students do not know less than we do, rather they centre on different dimensions of the learning environment than we might think they do” (Linn, 2004, p. 19).

Drawing on Piaget’s concepts further, Linn believes that students, “take in information to fit into [their] existing mental frameworks (assimilation) until the framework no longer fits and then often reluctantly [they] change their framework (accommodation)” (p. 18). Linn (2004) also points out that we need to be aware that students change over time in predictable ways in their thinking about where knowledge comes from, how it is acquired and what role others play in their education.

Cates and Jones (1999) also looked to the cognitive development theory of Piaget for relevance to cooperative education. They noted that assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium (rather than equilibration as used by Piaget) are naturally occurring through cooperative education experiences. They saw that equilibrium is most significantly affected and the most powerful force for learning. Their focus was on tracing the development of logic and reasoning and comparing this between students who had undertaken cooperative education and those who had not. They proposed that as cooperative education students
develop more logical thinking skills they, “assimilate external conditions into their internal structures” (p. 18). Adjustments in internal structures then occur (accommodation) and, “throughout the process the students’ equilibrium will maintain organization during the learner’s changes in thinking” (p. 18). Cates and Jones argue that cooperative education students benefit greatly from developing logical reasoning strategies both in the classroom and in the workplace. Upon graduation and employment, cooperative education students’ equilibrium is less disturbed due to the opportunities they have had to assimilate and accommodate to that type of environment, and that the transition to the workplace is easier in contrast to those students who have not had work placement experiences.

Whilst the theories of Dewey, Kolb and Piaget have become well supported by academics in cooperative education, not all are in agreement that these are the only views. These approaches do not fully explain learning in a world influenced by sociocultural and contextual factors (Eames & Bell, 2005). More recently, there has been a focus on learning theories related to the social and cultural environment of the workplace in an attempt to explain the nature of learning within the cooperative education context.

### 3.3.4 Socio-cultural perspectives on learning

A number of learning theories can be brought together to amplify sociocultural dimensions of learning. Foremost here are constructivist approaches to learning, and the influence of Vygotsky’s theories of how meaning is constructed by learners. Vygotsky (1978) contends that it is the interaction between the interpersonal (social), cultural, historical and individual factors that are the key to human development. He maintained that the social environment and the way that learners interacted with other people and objects within that environment were critical for learning. Vygotsky argued that all learning is mediated by tools, such as language, symbols and signs and it is through social interactions that these tools are acquired. He viewed language as being the supreme psychological tool that makes the acquisition of skills and many higher forms of learning such as problem solving to be possible. Interestingly, although Dewey clearly acknowledges the importance of communication, Piaget’s work fails to consider the influence of language on learning.

Advancing the ideas of Vygotsky are the theories of situated learning, where learning is viewed not merely as being situated in practice but as, “an integral part of generative social practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). Situated learning shifts focus away from the individual as the learner, and moves towards a focus on the importance of participation rather than
experience per se. Drawing on their research with a range of apprentices, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning is a social process and is framed as, “legitimate peripheral participation [occurring in], a community of practice” (p. 31). Legitimate peripheral participation refers to ways of belonging in the social world. In a community of practice, the participants or members may contribute to the activities of the community in a range of different ways, have different responsibilities and share different understandings of the practice of the community. Lave and Wenger describe a community of practice as:

A set of relations among persons, activity and world... an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning (1991, p. 98).

Lave and Wenger (1991) consider that learners enter the community as newcomers and are invited by old-timers to take on legitimate but peripheral roles. As the learners become more experienced, they move more towards the centre and become active, full participants in the community of practice. Yet in order to become a full member of the community of practice, the newcomer must have access to a range of activities, resources and opportunities from which they can learn. They also need access to other members so that they can learn from the talk of others, as well as to learn how to talk with others in the community. Lave and Wenger (1991) believe that legitimate peripheral participation allows students to do more than observe, it allows students to be absorbed into the culture. From this perspective it provides opportunities for students to be able to get a true idea of how things work and what they need to do in order to become full members of the community of practice.

Thus, Lave and Wenger (1991) contend that learning occurs through human social activity. Their emphasis is, “that learning, thinking and knowing are relations among people engaged in activity in, with and arising from the socially and culturally structured world” (p. 51). Being situated alongside workplace colleagues, students are able to encounter new knowledge and behaviours that make up the professional environment. As they gradually establish their own professional identity and move to becoming full participants, they can then begin to share a stake in the development of the community of practice.

Rogoff (1995) also supports a view that learning occurs through participation with others. He also contends that individuals change, “through their involvement in an activity and in the process become prepared for subsequent involvement in related activities” (p. 142). It is
through participation in authentic activities alongside more experienced others that enable students to develop an understanding of the workplace culture (Eames & Bell, 2005).

Another sociocultural perspective of learning that underpins cooperative education is the notion of ‘distributed cognition’, where workplace knowledge is distributed throughout an organisation (some explicit, some tacit) and is accessed by participants in different ways (Salomon & Perkins, 1998). It is the sharing of knowledge and artefacts amongst participants that affords the opportunities for students to learn the practice of the community, and gain access to knowledge that they may not otherwise be able to learn (Eames & Bell, 2005). These views are similar to Lave and Wenger’s recognition of the importance of social relations with other members in a community of practice.

Albert Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory can also be applied to learning in cooperative education. Bandura viewed learning as a continuous reciprocal interaction of cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors. Sometimes referred to as observational learning, social learning theory is largely focused on the modelling of behaviour. Bandura began by exploring imitative learning, supporting a view that a, “learner imitates a modelled behaviour and as that behaviour is reinforced repeats the behaviour” (Eames & Cates, 2011, p. 44). This suggests that cooperative education students may learn not only from their own actions, but also through the actions of others. Bandura’s theory is extended to include a critical approach, where the student not only observes the behaviour but also assesses and appraises it before modelling the behaviour. He also advocates that the consequences of one’s behaviour are important for learning. Applying this to cooperative education, students can learn through observing the various consequences, that is they, “will learn from their own successes and failures, they also learn from the successes or failures of others” (Eames & Cates, 2011, p. 44).

Applying these sociocultural views of learning to cooperative education, when students arrive at a workplace they enter a community of practice, which requires them to undergo a process of enculturation into the professional environment (Eames & Bell, 2005). Through interactions in the workplace and participation in the activities that make up a profession, students begin to adopt the characteristics of the community. Therefore, hopefully, cooperative education students learn not only knowledge and technical skills in the traditional sense, but the discipline specific norms, expectations and standards in a particular area. Drawing on this perspective, the pedagogy of cooperative education needs to include observation of workplace behaviour and reflection on the meaning and consequence. Thereby, students will
have the opportunity for social learning as they observe the behaviours and the consequences of those behaviours in their workplace colleagues. Through the cooperative education experience students move between:

... two distinct, but connected forms of social practice; that of the educational institution and that of the workplace. Each of these social practices is likely to represent different kinds of situated activity, have different kinds of social forms and artefacts and have different opportunities for mediation of individuals learning through engagement with these forms of artefacts (Eames & Coll, 2010, p. 188).

It is the integration of the experiences from these two communities that is considered fundamental to learning through cooperative education. While there is growing support for sociocultural views of learning in cooperative education, it must be acknowledged that the extent to which students might find participating in a community of practice problematic. Guile and Griffiths (2001) caution that not all host organisations provide opportunities for students to participate in appropriate activities, and interact with knowledgeable members of the community that they have temporarily joined. Billett (2001) and Lave and Wenger (1991) also acknowledge the contested nature of many workplaces, and the difficulty for some students in gaining access to distributed knowledge and learning opportunities.

3.4 Chapter summary

Learning in cooperative education occurs in both the university and the workplace. As many authors have alluded, this makes theorising difficult and research challenging. The frameworks of Dewey and Kolb (in particular) connect well with the integrated learning aspirations of the cooperative education model (Eames & Cates, 2011). Both of these frameworks recognise, albeit differently, the importance of experience and reflection in making sense of the physical and social settings where workplace-based learning takes place. However, despite the robustness of the frameworks of Dewey and Kolb, neither provides rich accounts of the social and cultural environment of the workplace the learner will encounter in the cooperative education model.

A sociocultural perspective of learning in the workplace positions meaning making as a situated, participatory and socially mediated activity (Eames & Bell, 2005). To this end, the workplace learner is understood to be situated in a social context, undertaking authentic activities alongside practicing professionals in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Knowledge is accessed through interaction with a variety of people within the workplace, wherein cultural knowledge (shared ways of knowing and being) is distributed
across the community of practice (Salomon & Perkins, 1998). Through mediated action, the socially and culturally derived artefacts, such as language, stories and other meaning making devices that constitute the everyday practice of the workplace are shared between workplace colleagues and the learners. The real strength of cooperative education is the fact that students learn in the workplace and combine this with the learning gained in the university which creates learning that is considered to be, “more than the sum of the two parts” (Eames & Coll, 2010, p. 192).
Chapter Four: Research Methods

This chapter will firstly locate and justify the research paradigm adopted for this study. Insider research as an epistemological standpoint for framing this research is then discussed, followed by a detailed description of case study research. The data collection strategies are detailed and the case study participants are identified. The concept of trustworthiness will be addressed and the ethical considerations related to this study will be considered.

4.1 Choosing a research paradigm

It is important to make explicit the paradigm a researcher is working within because of the potential impact on the way the research is conducted and the research outcomes (Gratton & Jones, 2010). However, there is considerable discussion in the literature regarding the categorisation of research paradigms and the associated terminology. The two clearest distinctions can be made between the positivistic and interpretive paradigms. Each has different epistemological (how knowledge is derived) and ontological (world view) assumptions along with contrasting data collection and interpretation methods.

Research is informed through basic beliefs or premises about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Schram, 2006). It is these views that contribute to the perspective frame of reference or paradigm. Prior to my current role in cooperative education, my background was in science in the area of exercise physiology. My education and research undertaken for my Master’s degree had been strongly situated in the positivistic domain. A body of research already exists that addresses questions concerning the outcomes and benefits of cooperative education from the positivistic viewpoint. However, my questions about cooperative education are much deeper than the ‘what’ and ‘how many’. With my focus clearly on understanding how and why I have become aware that there are alternative ways to view and make sense of research. For the types of questions I had about the BSR cooperative education programme, I believe that an interpretist perspective offers a more appropriate approach.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) identify four major interpretive paradigms: postpositivist; constructive-interpretive; critical; and feminist-post structural. The characteristics of the constructive-interpretive approach align closely with the nature of my views and the issues of concern in this research. My views are consistent with relativist ontology and a subjective epistemology. I consider that how things appear to be is a function of multiple realities (or perspectives) including those of the researcher, those of the participants that are being
researched and those of the reader who will interpret the completed study (Creswell, 2013). My orientation is also consistent with the view that truth and reality are constructed by individuals within various social contexts and that there is no single objective truth (Schram, 2006).

To this end, I determined that insider research using a qualitative case study methodology was an appropriate research design for interpretive enquiry focus for this study. Within this framework, I use insider research as an epistemological standpoint (Creswell, 2013) that recognises my own position and how I think about knowledge in this context. This approach enabled emphasis to be placed on the context in which participants' perspectives were shaped and shared, while also acknowledging my place within the research.

### 4.2 Insider research

Central to this thesis is that the research was undertaken within the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR) cooperative education programme situated within the organisation where I am actively involved and currently employed. As such, this research can be described as endogenous or insider research (Trowler, 2011). Endogenous research is said to exist on a continuum that is dependent on the closeness of the researcher to the aspect being researched (Mercer, 2007). A researcher may be investigating parts of the organisation that were previously unknown to them and collecting data from complete strangers. The other end of the continuum, which is where I am positioned, is where the researcher is collecting data from their close colleagues or examining their own practice. Insider research within a university context carries many benefits, yet confronts the researcher with multiple challenges. I will review a few of these in relation to the design and implementation of this study.

Researching from within can provide a unique perspective because of the researcher’s knowledge of the history, culture and development that are specific to the context. An insider often has a wealth of information that would take an ‘outsider’ a long time to acquire (Smyth & Holian, 2008). The insider can often approach the research with a rich understanding of the issues being investigated, providing information about what an organisation is really like and what is significant. Such insight may not be as easy to uncover by using an external researcher. Insider research is often done in an attempt to improve practice through understanding, influencing and changing the direction and position of others (Smyth & Holian, 2008). As an academic, the dual roles of lecturer and insider researcher opens up numerous opportunities that can have a significant impact on the individuals involved, whether that be...
students, other staff or the university, through contributions to knowledge, meaning and understanding that is directly related and relevant to practice.

In most instances, endogenous research in universities involves academics who are, “immersed, embedded and strongly connected with both the setting and those being ‘researched’ in a shared setting where they operate together in an ongoing basis” (Smyth & Holian, 2008, p. 34). However, these characteristics present a challenge to the concepts of rigour and credibility. There are divided opinions as to what extent an insider researcher impacts-on, or alters the research process. The question is, does an insider researcher as a participant-observer who continues to perform their role have as much impact as an external researcher, or are they able to blend into situations that would make them less likely to alter the research setting? (Hockey, 1993; Mercer, 2007). Some critics have a view that there is inherent subjectivity associated with the researchers being positioned within the organisation and having knowledge about the organisation that could be perceived to be ‘contaminating’ (Mercer, 2007). However, this view can be challenged by others who believe that there is no real pure objective observation of practice in the context of the university, regardless of whether the research is conducted by an ‘outsider’ or not. Mercer (2007) quoting the work of Merton (1972) justifies the position of insider research by arguing that the limitations inherent in external research are namely that an outsider,

Has a structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien groups, statuses, cultures and societies… [because he or she] has neither been socialized in the group nor has engaged in the run of experiences that makes up its life, and therefore cannot have the direct, intuitive sensitivity that alone makes empathetic understanding possible (Merton, 1972, p. 15 cited in Mercer, 2007, p. 5).

It is important that insider researchers acknowledge who they are and how they may have influenced the research process. Conversely, external researchers do not normally describe themselves or how they have interacted with members of the organisation being researched, and typically write their reports in the third person. However, this does not mean that the research conducted by external researchers is objective. Indeed, the very assumptions that accompany the position of an ‘external researcher’ make it difficult for personal bias and influence to be assessed by the reader.

Researching from within has some inherent risks wherein the researcher is in a role of either formal or informal power. Ethical and methodological issues arise particularly when interviewing those who lack power relative to you (e.g., a student), are more powerful than you (e.g., higher levels of management) or are your peers. The perception of implicit coercion
must be managed where power relationships exist. An insider researcher may not be able to gain access to important information due to their relationship with the participants (e.g., a lecturer may not be able to interview their own students), however the converse can also apply as the researcher may actually be able to ‘see more’ due to their personal relationships (e.g., observations within their own class setting in action research). It is important to recognise and manage the risks and tensions to ensure ethical and credible research. The details as to how I have approached this are presented later in this chapter.

Another challenge relates to privacy and confidentiality. Frequently there are issues related to maintaining institutional anonymity when citing information from an organisation’s reports or including the full reference for such documents (Trowler, 2011). Individuals also need to have their identity protected as they would in any research methodology. Pseudonyms can be used, however, in addition to these it is often necessary to change small details or characteristics to protect the identity of the participants or the organisation. Not all endogenous research studies require institutional anonymity, as disclosing the organisation may be relevant to the research approach and justified within the ethics approval process. In the context of this research, consent was gained from the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC) for the use of the university name within this thesis. Access to privileged information is another important consideration for insider researchers, and must be managed to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

When a researcher is an outsider they have a clearly defined role that is confined to the scope and life of the project. However, an insider researcher has dual roles (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Smyth & Holian, 2008). The past, present and future roles of an insider researcher, as well as their personal relationships and alliances within the organisation can shape their perceptions and behaviours. These need be considered and the impact that they have on the interpretation of the research needs to be acknowledged. At times there is a risk that a premature conclusion is reached if the preconceptions of the outcomes appear to be confirmed. Insider researchers need to ensure that the data is rigorously interpreted to ensure credibility. Mercer (2007) considers insider research as, “like wielding a double edge sword” (p. 7), as what can be gained in terms of extensive knowledge and familiarity with the context may be lost in terms of an insider’s inability to “make the familiar strange” (p. 7).

In Chapter Nine I reflect on my role as an insider researcher and the impact this had throughout the various stages of the research process.
4.3 Case study research

A case study can be considered both a process of inquiry as well as the product of that inquiry that exists along a continuum (Schram, 2006; Stake, 1995). In this thesis, case study research was used as the methodological choice (which lies at one end of the continuum) as opposed to a choice of what was to be studied.

Case study as a methodology is commonly used in educational research settings because it has the potential to capture and accommodate issues and problems as they occur in practice. Merriam (1998) describes a case study as an examination of a specific phenomenon that provides a rich thick description of a bounded case, that enhances understanding and leads to generalisations arising from the data. A case study allows an in-depth, holistic view of the person or group under study that enables a complexity of understanding. While Merriam cautions that there are a number of weaknesses inherent in case study research including being resource intensive and prone to oversimplification or exaggeration, these are not unique to case study.

In case study research, a rationale for selecting the case needs to be determined. Here, the researcher needs to have contextual material available to situate the case within the setting and the case needs to be bounded or constrained by time, place, events or processes. Stake (1995) describes two types of case studies: intrinsic and instrumental. An intrinsic case study is undertaken if one wants an in-depth understanding of this particular case and it is only this specific case that is of particular interest. The primary purpose is not linked to understanding generic phenomenon or theory building (although this may not necessarily be excluded). He uses the term instrumental case study when a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. The case is looked at in-depth, but the case itself is used to facilitate understanding of something else. In instrumental designs, multiple case studies, or what can be termed a collective case study may also be used to investigate a phenomenon or general condition.

An intrinsic design was chosen for this study as the intention of the research was to understand what was important within the specific context of the case itself, with the aim to amplify recurring issues and themes from within the case (Merriam, 1998). Using this approach, Stake (1995) argues that case study researchers can generalise the themes generated through their case to inform other and future settings. Further to this, readers are invited to arrive at their own conclusions and generalisations.
4.4 Research design

This section describes and justifies the strategies that were used to investigate the research questions. The case selection process is outlined followed by a detailed description of the data collection strategies for the three phases of the project. Concepts related to validity, reliability and trustworthiness are discussed. The key ethical considerations that underpinned this study are emphasised.

4.4.1 Case selection

In intrinsic designs the case is normally predetermined. As such, the case was identified as the Cooperative Education programme (structured as Co-op 1 and Co-op 2) within the BSR at AUT. This created the ‘boundaries’ for the study. Within the boundaries of the case, three groups were identified as being students, academic supervisors and industry supervisors. While each of these stakeholder groups was invested in the programme (during the academic year of 2011), their respective investments were situated within their own contexts. Further details of the participants are described later in this chapter.

4.4.2 Data collection strategies

The data were collected through document analysis, a qualitative questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The combination of strategies provided for ‘triangulation’ of data sources to increase validity. All three data collection strategies were combined in order to address the three research questions.

Document analysis

Written documents are a valuable source of information for interpretive inquiries and can be used to confirm and augment evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003). The types of documents reviewed and analysed in this study included: student handouts; workshop slides; promotional brochures for industry; written guidelines for students and academic staff and a template for a learning contract. Document analysis involved identifying and selecting appropriate text that related to the research questions.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are commonly used for data collection in both sport and educational research. A questionnaire is defined as, “a standardized set of questions to gain information from a subject” (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p. 126). A questionnaire can gain responses from a large number of participants in a relatively short time frame, and is advantageous when collecting data from a geographically dispersed sample or when the participants need to remain
anonymous. It was a combination of these features that were beneficial in this study. Questionnaires can be administered in a variety of ways such as face-to-face, postal, telephone or more recently, online. The questionnaires in this study were self-completion and administered to the participants in a number of different ways that are outlined later in this chapter.

Questionnaires can be designed to produce numerical data that can be statistically analysed. Questionnaires can also be structured to allow descriptive responses to open-ended questions when the researcher does not want to be constrained to specific response categories. The design is determined by the research questions that are to be addressed. In this study, while different questionnaires were designed for students (Appendix G), industry supervisors (Appendix H) and academic supervisors (Appendix I), the themes were similar for each group. The questionnaires were designed with mainly open-ended questions/prompts to allow the participants to respond in a way that reflected their perceptions and views in ‘their own words’ rather than being constrained by a narrow selection of response categories. In the design it was important that the questions were simple, the language used was neutral and that each question focused on a single issue. The questionnaires began with some straightforward ‘closed’ questions requiring factual answers that would encourage the participants to start completing the questionnaire. The demographic questions were placed at the end. Key themes were explored through asking multiple questions in slightly different ways to aid reliability.

Badly designed questionnaires can lead to bias in the data and potential problems can occur if the questions are not clearly worded as there is no opportunity for respondents to seek clarification. To address this, the questionnaires were reviewed by my supervisor as well as piloted on a student and an academic staff member prior to the data collection process. This provided an opportunity to check that the questions and instructions were clear and understandable; that the sequence was logical; and the questionnaire could be completed in the suggested timeframe. Only minor changes were required before the final version was administered.

**Interviews**

Interviews were used in this study to gain an in-depth view of the perceptions of the participants, to probe further into themes that had emerged through the questionnaire analysis, and to provide an opportunity for unexpected themes to emerge that may not have been revealed within the structured nature of the questionnaires. Qualitative interviews
assume, “that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). The key disadvantage of conducting interviews is the time required by both the researcher and the participant. Bias can also be an issue and can occur in the selection of participants, through interviewer bias (verbal and non-verbal reactions) or response bias (the participant responds with what they think you want to hear). How these issues were mitigated is discussed later in this chapter.

Interviews can be unstructured, semi-structured or structured and the choice of format depends on the methodological approach and the research questions that are being addressed. Semi-structured interviews are most common in interpretive research and were the format chosen as appropriate for this study. In semi-structured interviews a, pre-prepared interview guide provides an outline of topics to be covered that relate specifically to the research questions. The interview guides in this study provided some standard questions, yet enabled dialogue on issues that the participants wanted to share. The interview guides were tailored to the participants (students (Appendix J), industry supervisors (Appendix K) and academic supervisors (Appendix L)) so the questions were relevant to their own contexts. There was some flexibility, so the interviewer could determine from the flow of the conversation what and when the questions were asked. The semi-structured nature enabled a degree of systematic data collection, but still allowed the interviewer the freedom to clarify the meaning of the responses or to explore topics as they arose.

There are numerous challenges to conducting a good interview and it is important that these were considered and addressed in this study. At the outset, a professional attitude and confidence in the knowledge of the topic was critical and this was important in my selection of an external interviewer for two of the three groups of participants (see later for discussion on the reasons why this was required). The first step in the interview process was to establish a rapport with the participant, so I made sure that the interview was set-up to take place at a convenient time, in a space that was private, free from background noise and where I thought the participant would be comfortable. In the interview guide, the first few questions were designed to provide some context and encourage the participant to start talking. During the interview it was important to keep the discussion going, but to consider carefully how long to allow ‘silence’ before providing a further prompt. It was also essential to minimise the verbal and non-verbal reactions, but to still encourage the participant to share their views and enable them to see that their contribution was valued. At times it was difficult to keep the participant focused on the themes relevant to this research, as often they wanted to share other aspects that were outside the focus of this study. The interview guide helped to refocus the
discussions back on the pre-determined themes and the sequence of questions was structured to provide a logical progression from one topic to another.

A significant challenge when conducting interviews occurs where there is a perception of power or a level of authority that may have an influence on the responses given by the participants. This was a major concern in this study and I addressed this by using a facilitator that was not known to the students or academic supervisors to conduct the interviews (see further discussion on this issue later in this chapter and in Chapter Nine). The major disadvantage was that I had to rely on the facilitator’s understanding of the topics to ‘probe’ where necessary to gain a more detailed response. I briefed the facilitator on the research questions and discussed the interview guide with him prior to the start of the interviews. As the facilitator was in a similar role and context at another university, I felt that his understanding of the topic was not a major issue and the minor limitation was outweighed by the advantages.

4.5 Data collection phases

The data collection occurred in three phases. Phase One focused on document analysis in order to identify and summarise the specific information given to students, industry supervisors and academic supervisors. Phase Two consisted of the administration of a qualitative questionnaire to participants in each of the three stakeholder groups: students, academic supervisors and industry supervisors. The analysis of the questionnaires then determined the themes that were explored further in Phase Three using semi-structured interviews with a sample of the participants from Phase Two.

4.5.1 Phase One

Documents were analysed to identify and summarise the communication that the stakeholders had received in regards to the purpose and objectives of cooperative education and the specific roles of each of the parties. The documents included:

- Student preparation notes, workshop slides and handouts
- Student course booklets
- Promotional material given to industry for placement opportunities
- Industry supervisor handbook
- Academic supervisor guidelines
- Learning contract templates
Key statements and phrases that related to the following themes were identified and tabulated: the purpose of cooperative education; the meaning or definition of cooperative education; and roles and responsibilities of students, academic supervisors and industry supervisors. The relevant statements were copied from the documents and tabulated in a spreadsheet format.

4.5.2 Phase Two

Questionnaire design

Three qualitative questionnaires were designed (see Appendices G, H and I) to determine the views of each of the three groups of participants under the following themes:

- The purpose/meaning of cooperative education
- The ideal/most important features of the cooperative learning experience
- The student and supervisor roles in the learning experience
- The learning process

Open-ended, as well as ‘complete the sentence’ questions were used as this enabled the participants to use their own words to describe their experience. This was important to create the ‘voice’, as the purpose of the questionnaire was not to quantify their opinions but to gain their views and perspectives. The wording and sequence of the questions were similar across the three groups and the main differences related to the demographic or context related information. The questionnaires were piloted before being administered to the study participants.

Participant selection and questionnaire administration

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants from the three stakeholder groups for the questionnaire as this was deemed the most appropriate approach for this study. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to establish the criteria necessary for participants to be included in the study (Merriam, 1998). The criteria for each group are outlined in the following sections.

Students

Students enrolled in the BSR Sport and Recreation cooperative education papers in 2011 \( (n = 115) \) were invited by an administrator at the end of class to participate in the questionnaire. The class occurred at the end of the semester and by this time all students had completed
their cooperative education experience. Students that volunteered were given a copy of the information sheet (plain language statement, PLS, see Appendix C) and questionnaire (Appendix G). The questionnaires were completed at that time and returned to the administrator. Response rates will be presented in section 4.6.1.

**Academic supervisors**

A PLS (Appendix C) and questionnaire (Appendix H) were distributed to the mailbox of each of the 26 staff members from the School of Sport and Recreation that were in the role of academic supervisors for the cooperative education students (in 2011) and had completed at least one academic year in this role. A return addressed envelope was included.

**Industry supervisors**

Industry supervisors who had supervised BSR cooperative education students during 2011 and who had supervised a student for at least one academic year \( n = 63 \) were invited to complete the questionnaire. The invitation occurred either during the standard site visit by an academic supervisor or via mail (for those organisations not able to be visited). In the site visit, the academic supervisor (who was not the researcher) gave a copy of the PLS (Appendix C), the questionnaire (Appendix H) and a return addressed envelope to the industry supervisor if they volunteered to participate. A questionnaire, PLS and return stamped envelope were posted to supervisors that were eligible to participate if a site visit was not carried out.

### 4.5.3 Phase Three

**Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selection of participants from each of three stakeholder groups (students, academic supervisors and industry supervisors). The interviews were generally between 45 minutes and one hour in duration. The interview guides for each stakeholder group were formulated after preliminary analysis of the questionnaires. The interview guides (Appendices J, K and L) centred on predetermined themes, yet allowed flexibility for additional exploratory questions to be included if new themes emerged during the course of the interview. The guides were similar across the three groups. The format of the interview questions encouraged participants to share their understanding of the purpose of cooperative education and what it meant to them and to describe their own experiences (as well as the ‘ideal’ experience) in detail. Participants were also asked to draw a representation of the cooperative education relationships. The themes that were explored in-depth were:

- The purpose/meaning of cooperative education
• The concepts of a stakeholder
• Partnerships
• The nature of the relationships
• The ideal/most important features of the cooperative learning experience
• The student and supervisor roles in the learning experience
• The learning process

**Interview participant recruitment and selection**

Interview participants from all three groups were recruited through an ‘invitation to participate’ which was included with the questionnaire on a detached page (Appendix E). Those interested in taking part in the interviews returned this page in a separate envelope to an administrator. The administrator arranged the times for the interviews and the participants were selected based on their availability. In total, six students, five academic supervisors and five industry supervisors were interviewed. The original intention was to start with a sample size of five in each group. However, one additional student was recruited as a back-up in case any of the students became unavailable at the last minute or failed to turn up on the scheduled day for the interviews. However, as there were no cancellations all six students were interviewed. Small sample sizes are appropriate in qualitative research as the purpose of the interview is to generate ‘rich’ data. The number of interviews undertaken was deemed adequate to provide ‘saturation’, which is the situation where it was unlikely that anything new would emerge from undertaking additional interviews (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

**Interview process**

The interviews for students and academic supervisors were conducted on the university campus, in a quiet room, free from noise and distractions. The industry interviews were conducted within the participants’ workplaces. Due to the position that I hold in the University as a senior academic staff member and lecturer for the students, an independent facilitator was used to conduct the interviews for the students and academic supervisors. This strategy was employed to reduce ethical issues of privacy, perceived coercion and conflict of interest. The facilitator was from another university, but had a similar background and knowledge of the cooperative education context. Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim by a transcriber from outside the university who did not know any of the participants. This ensured I could not use my insider knowledge and experience for voice
recognition and the identities of students and academic staff were protected. The facilitator and the transcriber signed confidentiality agreements (Appendix F).

4.6 The 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 specific case had been predetermined and the boundaries specified. The case was the cooperative education programme within the BSR at AUT. The cooperative education programme was described in detail in Chapter One, but is briefly summarised here to provide the context. BSR students undertook 350 hours of placement in the final year of their degree, within one sport and recreation organisation. An industry supervisor from the host organisation provided support for the student while on placement. Complementing this, students were expected to meet their academic supervisor on a regular basis (ideally every two weeks) for one-to-one mentoring. Workshops were provided to assist students in their preparation for their cooperative education experience and also during the semester to provide guidance for assessment tasks.

There were three groups of stakeholders situated within the case:

- Students that completed their cooperative education experience during 2011
- Academic supervisors that had supervised a BSR student(s) for at least one academic year
- Industry supervisors who had hosted BSR cooperative education students during 2011 and had supervised the student(s) for at least one academic year

4.6.1 Questionnaire participants

Students

Questionnaire responses were gained from 91 BSR students (response rate, 79%). The gender balance was 51 males and 40 females. Most of the students (68%) were in the 19–22 age-range, 27% of the students were in the 23–30 age-range and only four students were over 30 years old. The students undertook their placement in a range of organisations within the sport and recreation industry, as summarised in Table 4.1. The most common placement was in a school in either the physical education or sport department. Activities undertaken by the students within the school included assisting with physical education classes; assisting the sports coordinators with the organisation of school sport; and coaching, fitness training or managing school sports teams. A number of students completed their placements in national
or regional sports organisations, with sports such as rugby, football, netball or cricket. Students indicated that they had contributed to the organisation in roles such as coaching, fitness training, strength and conditioning, sports administration or event management. Some students completed their placements in a recreation facility or fitness centre. A few students undertook their placements in public or not-for-profit health related organisations. Forty students indicated that they had worked full time for six months or more, and of these, 19 had been or were currently employed within the sport and recreation industry.

Table 4.1. Students and Industry supervisors placement organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Placement organisation</th>
<th>Students (n=91)</th>
<th>Industry supervisors (n=28)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School (Physical education or sport)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National/Regional sports organisation</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation/Fitness facilities</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor recreation/Tourism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports club /Franchise</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional sports trust</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Industry supervisors**

Industry supervisors that had hosted a BSR student for at least one full academic year were given a questionnaire either at the time of an industry visit by an academic supervisor or by post. A reply-paid envelope was included with the anonymous questionnaire. Twenty-eight industry supervisors responded to the questionnaire (response rate, 44%). The average length of supervision was 3.2 years ($SD = 1.8$; range 1 to 8 years). The length of employment in the sport and recreation industry was an average of 16.5 years ($SD = 9.4$ years, range 5 to 35 years). The organisations included: physical education or sports departments in schools; regional or national sports organisations; recreation or fitness facilities; outdoor recreation companies and a range of other sport or recreation organisations in both the non-profit and commercial sectors (see Table 4.1). Twelve industry supervisors (42%) had previously completed a cooperative education placement or practicum experience as a student.

**Academic supervisors**

A questionnaire was placed in the mailboxes of 26 academic staff that had supervised BSR cooperative education students in 2011. Eighteen academic supervisors returned the anonymous questionnaire (response rate, 69%). The average number of years of supervision was 5.3 ($SD = 3.6$; range 1 to 11 years).
4.6.2 Interview participants

**Students**

Table 4.2. Placement organisations for student interview participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code and pseudonym</th>
<th>Placement organisation</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student I1 (Sean)</td>
<td>Professional sports club</td>
<td>Assisting with high performance training and conditioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student I2 (Sally)</td>
<td>National sports organisation</td>
<td>Assisting the coaching and development manager with camps and competitions, also fitness testing elite athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student I3 (Susie)</td>
<td>Regional sports organisation</td>
<td>Competition administration and event management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student I4 (Steve)</td>
<td>School – Outdoor education</td>
<td>Assistant outdoor education teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student I5 (Stan)</td>
<td>School – PE and Sport</td>
<td>Assistant sports coordinator and rugby coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student I6 (Sonia)</td>
<td>Outdoor recreation</td>
<td>Outdoor instructor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six students, five industry supervisors and five academic supervisors were interviewed. These students had undertaken their placements at a range of sport and recreation related organisations (see Table 4.2). 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 organisation and none of the students were paid by the organisation during their placements.

**Industry supervisors**

The industry supervisors who participated in the interviews had all supervised a BSR cooperative education student for at least one academic year. Three of the five participants had been in the industry for over 10 years (see Table 4.3). All but one of the participants had worked for other sports organisations prior to their current positions. All participants were employed in senior or management roles within their respective organisations.
Table 4.3. Industry supervisor demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code and pseudonym</th>
<th>Type of organisation</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Supervision (yrs)</th>
<th>Time with organisation (yrs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry I1 (Isabel)</td>
<td>Not-for-profit (Health related)</td>
<td>Operations manager</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry I2 (Irene)</td>
<td>School (Sport)</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry I3 (Ian)</td>
<td>Regional sports organisation</td>
<td>Competitions manager</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry I4 (Ingrid)</td>
<td>Regional sports trust</td>
<td>Fundamental skills advisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry I5 (Isaac)</td>
<td>Regional sports organisation</td>
<td>High performance manager</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic supervisors**

Across the five academic supervisors interviewed, there was a range of experiences in supervision (see Table 4.4). One academic had just completed their first year as a lecturer and supervisor while two others had supervised for over 10 years. Three academics had worked in the industry prior to their academic roles, in sport related roles such as coaching, sports medicine and physical education. Only one of the academic supervisors interviewed had completed a placement or practicum as part of their degree.

Table 4.4. Academic supervisor demographics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code and pseudonym</th>
<th>Supervision (yrs)</th>
<th>Lecturing experience (yrs)</th>
<th>Previously Worked in S&amp;R industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic I1 (Alice)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic I2 (Adele)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic I3 (Amy)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic I4 (Alan)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic I5 (Adam)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.6.3 Selection bias**

Selection bias can be a concern if a study has a small sample size. The response rate of the student questionnaires was high (79%) therefore the effect was minimal in this group. However, it must be acknowledged that it is likely that it was the ‘good students’ or those that had a good experience that volunteered to participate for the interviews. The response rate for the industry questionnaire was (44%) and it is likely that those that completed the
questionnaire or agreed to participate in the interview have a “good relationship” with the programme and university, which must also be acknowledged.

4.7 Data analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to establish and report patterns within and across the data sets in order to address the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) consider thematic analysis a, “foundational method of qualitative analysis” (p. 78), and in contrast to other methods such as discourse analysis, narrative analysis or grounded theory is, “independent of theory and epistemology and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches” (p. 78). The process used for thematic analysis was based on the following stages that are discussed in this section: organisation and familiarisation; coding; refining themes; and interpretation.

4.7.1 Organisation and familiarisation

Organisation involves managing and storing the data in such a way that it can be retrieved easily for analysis. The documents, the questionnaires and the interview transcripts formed the data sets. The documents were given labels, which represented the intended audience for that particular document (students, industry supervisors or academic supervisors). The questionnaires were labelled with the participant group (student (S), industry supervisors (I) and academic supervisors (A)) and allocated a code number. Questionnaire responses were typed verbatim into separate Microsoft Excel spreadsheets for each group and each question. The transcripts were then read for familiarisation and checked for accuracy of the transcriptions.

The audio-recordings were transcribed, verbatim by an external transcriber. The transcripts were numbered and labelled with a code to indicate the participant group (student, industry or academic) and gender. Later, pseudonyms were assigned to each transcript. Names beginning with S were used for students, I for industry supervisors and A for academic supervisors. Transcripts were read several times for familiarisation to gain a general or holistic sense of the data but without judging the content. This was particularly important for the transcriptions from the students and academic supervisors, as I had not interviewed these participants myself.

4.7.2 Coding

Coding is a process of data reduction that involves the organisation of raw data into conceptual or thematic categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gratton & Jones, 2010). Codes are
described as tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive data that has been collected (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A code can be attached to phrases, sentences or single words. Gratton and Jones (2010) suggest that the codes should accurately reflect the data and be mutually exclusive with no overlap, yet still enabling phrases to be attached to multiple codes.

The questionnaire spreadsheets were imported into NVivo 9 software. Initially the data was sorted into thematic categories based on groups of specific questions. The categories included: purpose; meaning; expectations; benefits; motivations; and learning. The data was then coded into sub-themes or ‘nodes’ within these categories. On completion of the coding, each node was examined to check the accuracy of coding and this resulted in merging of some nodes where there was obvious overlap. Frequency counts were undertaken to identify some of the most common themes and representative quotes were identified. Themes that were less common were also noted along with silences in the data.

The interview transcripts were imported directly into NVivo 9 software. The transcripts were then coded into nodes that had been identified earlier during the questionnaire analysis. In addition, new nodes were generated inductively during the coding process. On completion of coding, the nodes were examined for accuracy of coding. Selective coding was then undertaken to identify confirmatory or representative quotes as well as contradictory or contrasting quotes. In addition, some manual coding was undertaken with a highlighter on the transcripts to identify threads in specific conversations, particularly in relation to the themes around student learning. This process provided a ‘richer’ voice of individual participants that was not distorted through being segmented in the NVivo coding process.

4.7.3 Refining themes

The thematic analysis was based around the three central topics that stem from the research questions: partnerships and relationships in cooperative education; the purpose and meaning of cooperative education; and the practices associated with student learning. Within each topic, with the coding as a starting point, recurring themes were identified and similarities and points of difference between the three groups highlighted. Due to the anonymity of the participants, it was not feasible to analyse specific ‘triads’ matching student, academic supervisor and industry supervisor. During the analysis process, writing was an integral part and as it was critical to ensure that the views of the participant were represented through their ‘voice’, substantive quotes were used to illustrate and support the interpretation of the data.
4.7.4 Interpretation

Interpretation in qualitative research is to gain understanding and ‘infer meaning’ from the data. A constructive-interpretive methodology was used to understand and construct knowledge from the existing perspectives of the participants. As Gratton and Jones (2010) acknowledge, an interpretive approach allows the researcher to explore and uncover explanations from the viewpoint of those being investigated, rather than deduce them from measurement. The interpretation of the data involved relating the findings back to the research questions and to a number of theoretical frameworks. Recently, Hodges (2010) and earlier Hager (1999), have argued that adopting theoretical pluralism for studies in work-integrated learning is entirely appropriate as no single theoretical position can provide the appropriate lens to examine the intricacies, complexities and diversities involved. To that end, a network analysis framework adapted from Quatman and Chelladurai (2008) was used to interpret the diagrams of the stakeholder relationships. A framework proposed by Oliver (1990) for the formation of inter-organisational relationships was used as a basis to interpret the motivations for forming a cooperative education partnership. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984, 2010) was applied to the concept of being a stakeholder and the nature of the cooperative education relationships, whereas student learning experiences were explored through the lens of sociocultural views of learning (Eames & Bell, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978).

4.8 Validity and reliability

Concepts of validity and reliability are important to all researchers. Internal validity refers to, “how research findings match reality ... do the findings capture what is really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring” (Merriam, 1998, p. 201). External validity refers to the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to another situation which is often referred to as generalisability (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Merriam, 1998). Reliability can be described as the extent to which research findings can be replicated, which implies an assumption that, “there is a single reality and studying it will yield the same results” (Merriam, 1998, p. 205).

It is commonly argued that the traditional terminology that are described above are not appropriate for interpretive research, which is based on different assumptions about reality (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that credibility replace internal validity, dependability replace reliability, and transferability replace external validity. However, Cresswell (2013) suggests that trustworthiness and authenticity are more
appropriate terms. Trustworthiness parallels the concepts of validity, reliability, and objectivity, and addresses the methods that are used ensure the research process will be performed correctly. Authenticity involves determining whether the research is deemed ‘meaningful’.

### 4.8.1 Trustworthiness

In this thesis, trustworthiness is used as the overarching concept or umbrella term that captures the concepts of credibility, transferability and dependability.

**Credibility**

Credibility relates to the plausibility of the findings and involves establishing confidence based on the research design, participants and context. A number of possible techniques are suggested that make it more likely that credible findings and interpretations will be produced. These include: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, negative case analysis, member checks and peer debriefing (Gratton & Jones, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Prolonged engagement can enhance credibility as it enables the researcher more time to build trust and rapport with the participants. Persistent observation enables a deeper understanding of contextual factors and influences and provides a more holistic sense that you have captured what is really important (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Both of these are addressed in this thesis through an insider research approach.

Triangulation increases the confidence that the findings presented were plausible. Several dimensions of triangulation exist: data-source; multiple-analyst; methodological; and theoretical (Patton, 1990; Pitney & Parker, 2009). Using multiple sources of data is a common form of triangulation used in case studies. This may take the form of different methods for collecting data (such as interviews and questionnaires) or collecting data from different groups of participants (such as students and academic supervisors). Both of these forms of data-source triangulation were used within the design of this study to enhance credibility.

In multiple-analyst triangulation, different researchers code or analyse the data separately and then compare their findings for consistency. This strategy is useful for minimising individual or researcher bias (Patton, 1990) and is commonly used in studies involving research teams. In this study, while a multiple-analyst approach was not used as such, the role of the supervisor in critiquing the data analysis contributed to some degree of triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves researchers using more than one method and will typically involve both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Theoretical triangulation means that researchers view
the data from different theoretical perspectives (Gratton & Jones, 2010). These two types of triangulation were not applied in the design of this study.

Credibility was enhanced in this study design through taking into account multiple perspectives. The views of students, academic supervisors and industry supervisors were considered and compared. For credibility, interpretation of the data should never just focus on reporting the findings that align with the views of the researcher, and in this study contradictory or negative cases were also identified and explained.

Member checks can be used for enhancing credibility and involves asking the participants to judge the analysis and interpretation of the data. Unfortunately it was not possible to undertake member checks, as the identity of the participants was protected. The information that linked the transcripts to the participants was unable to be obtained, as the administrator that organised the interviews no longer worked for the university and the ethical requirements did not allow me to identify or contact the participants at any stage. Peer debriefing is similar where a peer or fellow researcher reviews the analysis to look for inconsistencies, bias or other possible errors in interpretation. The role of my principal supervisor has contributed in a similar way as a fellow researcher within this thesis.

**Transferability**

In interpretive studies, transferability can be defined as, “the ability to apply the findings of a study to similar environments” (Pitney & Parker, 2009, p. 63). However, the emphasis is placed on the reader, not the researcher, to determine whether the findings can be generalised or are transferable to their own setting or context. Transferability can be enhanced through ensuring descriptive adequacy, which is presenting detailed, descriptive data, “in such a way that others reading the results can understand and draw their own interpretations” (Patton, 1990, p. 375). Transferability was enhanced in this study through the provision of a ‘thick’ description (Merriam, 1998), which can then assist the reader to determine if the research findings are applicable to their own setting.

**Dependability**

Dependability refers to establishing that the, “process of the research has been logical, traceable and documented” (Patton, 1990, p. 294). Merriam (1998) suggests that to enhance dependability qualitative researchers should fully describe the assumptions and theory behind the study and their own position within the context of the study. Several authors suggest that establishing an audit trail that clearly documents the research process including how the participants were selected, and how data was collected, categorised and coded (Lincoln &
Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Pitney & Parker, 2009). Dependability can also be enhanced through the triangulation of data, as discussed previously, particularly through the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis. Dependability has been addressed by providing a clear description in this thesis of the assumptions and theory behind this study. The position of the researcher as an insider situated within specific context of the study has been clearly acknowledged.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Permission for this study was gained in the first instance from the AUT ethics committee (AUTEC) and then the Deakin University ethics committee. Consent was given by AUTEC for the university name to be used within this thesis. There were several key ethical considerations identified as important when conducting this research as an insider researcher: informed consent; potential for coercion; the right of privacy and confidentiality; and social and cultural sensitivity. Each of these is discussed and the strategies used to address them are described in this next section.

4.9.1 Informed consent

Participation of a human subject in any research project must be voluntary and based on understanding of adequate or appropriate information about what such participation will involve. Informed consent implies that participants have been provided enough information in an understandable way in order to make a reasoned decision about whether or not they wish to participate in the research. All participants for both Phase Two (questionnaires) and Phase Three (interviews) were given a written information sheet (PLS) that had been approved by both ethics committees (Appendix C). Participants were recruited as outlined previously. Voluntary completion of the questionnaires was taken as consent. Interview participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions before completing a written consent form (Appendix D). Participants were advised that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time, without reason, prior to the completion of data collection.

4.9.2 Potential for coercion

As the research involved participants that were either my students or my colleagues the issue of potential coercion was addressed in the following ways. An administrator that was not related to the BSR programme was used to invite students to participate in the study and to give out the information sheets at the end of class. Academic supervisors were recruited through an invitation placed in mailboxes of staff members (rather than inviting them to participate directly) with an envelope for the return of questionnaires to an administrator. The
interview times were organised by an administrator based on details given on the ‘expression of interest form’. An independent facilitator conducted the interviews for students and academic staff.

4.9.3 Privacy and confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality must be respected at all times in the research process. Participants have a right to have their identity protected at all stages of a project unless prior consent is given. This was addressed through the use of anonymous questionnaires. However, interview participants were not anonymous to the interviewers. A third-party transcribed the data, from the interviews, anonymously. The transcripts were de-identified. The student and academic supervisors’ identity was kept protected from the researcher. Confidentiality of information obtained both during the interview and incidentally must be respected. The interview facilitator and transcriber were asked to sign confidentiality forms (Appendix F) and the importance of this was communicated to them both.

Steps taken to ensure that participants were not identified included the use of codes on all transcripts, quotes used and other data pertaining to a participant. All data gathered from the participants, including recorded interviews and transcripts were kept on a password-protected computer or in a locked storage cupboard that was accessible only to the researcher. Consent forms were stored separately from the data in a secure location.

4.9.4 Social and cultural sensitivity

In research conducted within New Zealand, particular consideration must be given to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The way that knowledge is shared and gained must incorporate the three principles of participation, protection and partnership. As a researcher, I had a responsibility to be informed of, and take the steps necessary to respect the social and cultural sensitivity of all participants. This was addressed through consultation and sharing of the research design, questionnaires and interview guides with the Equity representative within AUT. Potential issues related to social and cultural sensitivity were discussed during the preparation process for the external facilitator and he was also made aware of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi that needed to be considered. Kai (food) was provided for interview participants consistent with the Maori custom.

4.10 Chapter summary

This chapter justified the case study research approach and described the data collection strategies undertaken in order to address the research questions. An important consideration
of this research is that it is being undertaken by me as the researcher situated within my own organisation. This has the advantage that I am strongly embedded and connected to the case being researched, and have a clear understanding of the context of the case. However, there are challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that the findings are credible and trustworthy and these have been discussed within this chapter.

The findings of the research will be presented in the following three chapters. The chapters are sequenced: Stakeholder relationships; The intentions of cooperative education; and Student learning in cooperative education.
Chapter Five: Findings—Stakeholder relationships

The findings from this case study are presented across the following three chapters. Chapter Five will examine stakeholder perceptions of relationships, roles and responsibilities in cooperative education. Chapter Six will focus on the stakeholders’ understanding of the intentions of cooperative education. Chapter Seven will present stakeholder views associated with student learning in cooperative education. These three chapters will be brought together in Chapter Eight, where key themes and issues will be aggregated and discussed in relation to the research questions.

The first section of the chapter overviews the framework associated with the cooperative education experience. This is followed by the analysis and interpretation of the data using multiple theoretical perspectives. Representations of how the students, industry and academic supervisors perceived the relationships between the stakeholders are interpreted using a network analysis framework. The notion of stakeholders in cooperative education in relation to selected concepts from stakeholder theory is then explored. Drawing on Oliver’s (1990) framework for inter-organisational relationships, the contingencies that determine partnership formation and the nature of the partnership relationships is examined. The final section of this chapter analyses the views of each of the stakeholders on what they each consider as their own responsibilities, as well as their expectations of the roles of each of the other partners in the relationship.

Pseudonyms have been used for the responses from interview participants: students with names beginning with ‘S’, Industry supervisors with ‘I’ and Academic supervisors with ‘A’. Questionnaire responses are coded: SQ for students, AQ for academics and IQ for industry supervisors.

5.1 The framework of cooperative education

To provide the context for this chapter, a brief overview of the framework of cooperative education will be covered in this section. As mentioned in Chapter One, all third year Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR) students are required to complete 350 hours of placement within one sport and recreation organisation over two semesters, each being 15 weeks in duration. The placement is generally undertaken two days per week as a capstone programme during the final year of the degree. Within this arrangement, the cooperative education experience makes up half of a full-time programme of study in the final year of the BSR. Students attend university classes for the other half of their workload during this time.
Chapter 5: Stakeholder relationships

The BSR students are responsible for negotiating their own work placements; however the process is facilitated through an industry forum and advertisements from organisations that are seeking students. The industry forum enables host organisations to present or ‘market’ their placement opportunities directly to the students. Organisations that have previously had a student are invited to attend the forum or to advertise. Representatives from new placement organisations that have come to the attention of the cooperative education coordinator are also encouraged to attend the forum. The advantage of this is that students are then able to meet the industry representatives and find out more about placements in organisations they may not have otherwise been aware of. Some students negotiate a placement with organisations that they have made contact with through their own personal connections, previous placement experiences or cold calling. Workshops are provided to assist students in preparation for their cooperative education experience. Topics covered in the workshops include: the purpose and structure of the workplace experience; roles and responsibilities of stakeholders; choosing a placement; and negotiating appropriate work activities. All placement organisations selected by the student are subject to approval by the academic leader prior to the cooperative education experience commencing.

The students are supported in their cooperative education experience by an industry supervisor and an academic supervisor from the university. The industry supervisor is expected to negotiate appropriate work activities for the students and to provide guidance, support and feedback in the workplace. Supervisors are provided with a handbook that outlines the expected roles and responsibilities (see later in this chapter for further details). All parties sign a learning contract that also outlines the expected responsibilities of each person, the negotiated work activities and the learning outcomes that are agreed upon for the student. Complementing this, students are expected to meet their academic supervisor on a regular basis (ideally every two weeks) for one-to-one mentoring. Academic supervisors are lecturers who teach within the BSR and the supervision role is included as part of teaching duties. Regular communication between student and academic supervisor is supposed to be student initiated at mutually convenient times when they are both are on the university campus. However, for students located on placement at a distance from the university, email and web-based communication are used as an alternative.

5.2 Stakeholder representations of the cooperative education relationship

During the interviews, the participants (six students, five academic supervisors and five industry supervisors) were invited to draw and explain what they considered to be the
Chapter 5: Stakeholder relationships

cooperative education relationships. Using a network analysis framework adapted from Quatman and Chelladurai (2008), this section examines the drawings of the relationships between the student, industry and university. The diagrams representing the relationships between the ‘actors’ or ‘nodes’ were analysed using visual identification of connectivity patterns to determine the following: focal point, symmetry, intensity, multiplexity, centrality and directionality (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Network analysis framework.

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<th>Considerations</th>
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<td>Focal point</td>
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<td>Central actor</td>
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Establishing contacts within different organisations is considered to be the process of networking. A ‘network’ occurs when links between organisations with mutual interests become more formalised. The term network can be understood as, “the webs of relationships in which people or entities are embedded” (Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008, p. 339). The relationships that are formed can further be described as a network structure when organisations and individuals realise and recognise that by coming together they can actively accomplish broad or common goals (Keast, Mandell, Brown, & Woolcock, 2004).

Applying a network analysis, all diagrams identified at least three distinct nodes (the university, the student and the industry (or host organisation). The participants clearly and consistently identified the stakeholders that form the cooperative education ‘network’. Some participants created individual nodes for either the academic or industry supervisors, or just referred to these roles rather than including reference to the organisation. Ten of the 16 participants drew the relationships as a triad network similar to the illustration in Figure 5.1. The triad representation affirms that cooperative education was considered to be a three-way relationship.
In the triad representation (Figure 5.1), there was no clear focal point and all nodes were connected to each other with equal centrality. The triads were mostly symmetrical and with similar distances between nodes. In seven of the diagrams the student was placed at the apex of the triad with the university and industry at the base, at the same level. However, the participants did not indicate in their descriptions that this represented a hierarchical position in any way.

Although there was no mention of a hierarchy of control in the triad, there was a consistent view that the relationship should be ‘student-led’ or ‘student-focused’. One academic supervisor commented that, “the relationship was created initially by the student” (Alice). Ingrid (an industry supervisor) shared her views on the relationship:

Ideally I think I would like it to be student-led, and student-focused and I think the way that it’s designed it would be like that. They have their target and their outcomes that they need to meet; I’ll put the student at the top. I see the [Sport organisation] and university on the level just because they complement each other, they’re not competing against each other at all, so the student should be coming to me to [Sport organisation] with ideas.

Adele (an academic supervisor) drew a triad relationship (Figure 5.2) and explained that she started with the university in the centre of the page as she felt that they were more “dominant in the relationship”, but then placed the industry at the same level and the student “fitted in” above and connected the two. The relationship pictured in Figure 5.2 suggests that the student node can be seen as a mediator or a necessary connector between two other nodes, and is consistent with a view that the relationship may not exist between industry and the university without the linkages created through the student.
Figure 5.2. Relationship, wherein the student creates a connection between the university and industry.

Network structures differ from other organisational structures because no one person is in charge. As such, typical forms of power and authority do not work in network structures (Winkler, 2006). This is also consistent with the structure of cooperative education, and was evident in the lack of a hierarchical structure in all of the diagrams that were drawn as representations of the relationships. Although some organisations (such as the university) may have more formal power in a network because they provide a larger share of valued resources, this power cannot be used unilaterally in a network structure because each member is an independent entity (Keast et al., 2004).

Generally there was consistency in the directionality of the relationships, with most participants representing two-way ties between each node. However, differences in the intensity of the relationship were evident by the number of arrows (two arrows indicated stronger ties) or the thickness of the arrows (see Figure 5.1) and this was confirmed through the participants’ descriptions of the relationships. The relationships between ‘university and student’ and ‘student and industry’ were generally considered to be stronger than the direct relationship between the university and industry. It was commonly expressed, as mentioned previously, that the relationship between the university and a particular host organisation may not otherwise exist without the connection of a cooperative education student. Relationships in the sport sector are often formed among people who know one another or are friends (Babiak & Thibault, 2008). The interaction between the student and host organisation was seen as critical to forming the initial relationship. However, for long-term sustainability, the industry and the university need to consider strategic alignment rather than being based on individual relationships alone.
Six of the participants represented the cooperative education relationships with a greater level of multiplexity (that is more than three nodes or ties) as seen in Figure 5.3. The increased number of ties tended to be additional ties between the host organisation and other sport and recreation industry organisations. These additional nodes can be regarded as ‘peripheral actors’, as they were located on the outer parts of the network as compared to all other nodes. Participating in networks with increased multiplexity enables people to cross boundaries, enabling the sharing of expertise between organisations (Billett, 2001). Susie commented:

The national sports organisation (NSO), clubs and regional sports trust (RST) they are always talking to each other, I am pretty sure they have meetings quite often … but those meetings are important to keep that relationship going as well.

Students considered that the links with other parts of the industry were important as they created opportunities for networking. The students’ perceptions on the importance of networking are explored further in Chapters Six and Seven.

Figure 5.3. Representation of a relationship with greater multiplexity.

One student, Sean, drew himself in the centre of their diagram (Figure 5.4), as the focal point or central actor as he was, “bridging the gap … in the middle of all three”. Sean also commented on his role in making the connections:

You go out into the industry yourself, your find your placement yourself so you end up making these connections because someone else has not set it all up for you. You gain the benefit from being wherever you choose to be.
In contrast to what was evident in Figure 5.1, the relationships represented in Figure 5.4 illustrates that Sean had a higher level of multiplexity. Consistent with earlier comments, Sean perceived that he was the key focus of the network relationship. He felt he was dominant in the relationship as he, “negotiated what he wanted to learn” and had “control over what he wanted to get out of it”.

The network analysis illustrates that cooperative education relationships have similar properties that align with the concepts of network structures. In network structures, people actively work together to accomplish what they recognise as of mutual interest or concern. Once formed, network structures generally require separate actions on the part of individual members, but the outcomes can reach beyond the simultaneous actions of independently operating organisations (Keast et al., 2004). The outcomes and mutual benefits that can be achieved through cooperative education relationships are discussed later in this chapter and further in Chapter Six.

### 5.3 Stakeholders in cooperative education

Freeman's (2010) definition of a stakeholder is someone that is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organisation’s objectives. The following section will explore whether students, academic and industry supervisors consider whether they were in fact a ‘stakeholder’ in cooperative education.
From the student perspective, the concept of a student being considered as a stakeholder in cooperative education is encapsulated in Sean’s comment:

Well, a stakeholder is someone who I guess is affected by the programme right? So I guess you are definitely affected because you get to go out into the industry yourself, you find it yourself as well and so you end up making these connections because someone else hasn’t set it up for you, so you go there and you get the benefit from being wherever you chose to be or could, or wherever you could get your placement.

Susie had a similar view:

We’re definitely a stakeholder because we have an expectation of what we want to get out of it as well so our opinion is put out there and we are kind of steered in the right direction by both our supervisors.

Several students felt that they were in fact the main stakeholders due to the investment that they were making in terms of themselves, time and money (fees). Steve’s was a typical comment:

You have invested a lot of time and a lot money into what you’re actually doing through the experience and you are the stakeholder, you are the biggest stakeholder because of what you are doing and how you manage your time and all the processes that go with that create, they make you a stakeholder because you invested a part of yourself in this particular, in the process.

Steve also spoke about the amount of control that he felt he had in determining his learning goals and what he wanted to gain from the experience:

I found myself a big stakeholder because I had the ultimate, the biggest amount of control as to what was inputted into my particular project.... I had the ability to effectively communicate what I wanted to study and also I felt that also I was paid attention to by both my supervisors, in terms of what my goals were.

However, not all students shared the same views. For Sally, the idea of being a stakeholder or even the word had not been considered. Her response to being asked:

Researcher: Did you see yourself to be a stakeholder?
Sally: No I don’t think I ever thought of it that way. I thoroughly enjoyed it but it was just something I had to complete really to get the degree, and I’m glad I completed it, don’t get me wrong.

Sally’s comments express an instrumental view where she had not considered the concepts related to the relationship. Susie acknowledged that the idea of being a stakeholder changed over the course of her experience as evident in her response:

Researcher: Did you consider yourself as a stakeholder?
Susie: Not in the beginning, because you think you'll kind of do what you're told and that's it, but once you're in there you find out that they actually want to know what you think and you do have a say and then you start realising that you are a stakeholder and you can change things eventually.

Sonia had not considered the idea of being a stakeholder, but did agree that she was. She also identified there was a transition from being 'just a student' towards being a professional in the industry:

Researcher: Did you consider yourself as a stakeholder?
Sonia: I didn't really think of that word, but I guess I am. As a student I guess, I didn't really think about being a stakeholder. I think I became a lot more professional in a way being in the industry I guess and yes towards the end I wasn't just a student.

The university was considered a stakeholder by all academic supervisors. Yet, there were contrasting responses as to whether they considered themselves, in the role of academic supervisors, to be a stakeholder. Amy's view was:

Well I'm a caretaker more than a stakeholder I reckon. You know I have to nurture and look after the process so that the product is favourable for students and for industry really.

Amy acknowledged the contribution of academic supervisors to the processes involved in cooperative education and to the 'product' or graduate that is produced. As mentioned in Chapter Three, expressing the outcomes of cooperative education in terms of a product is a perception of learning as 'acquisition'. Alan's views also focused on the graduate outcomes in his perception of himself as a stakeholder:

In the sense that I like to see students do well, and when they get their degrees and get into industry that's a positive thing for the university and myself because I have helped the student get there.

Stakeholder theory suggests that to be considered a stakeholder there needs to be joint interests and value for each (Freeman, 2010). Ingrid’s comments, when she was asked if she considered herself a stakeholder, support this idea:

Yes definitely a stakeholder … you come back to your outcomes and the outcome is to have employable students so yes I think we are all working towards the same outcomes.

The notion of ‘mutual benefits’ and reciprocity will be examined further later in this section.

Isaac (an industry supervisor from a regional sports organisation) had a different view as he considered that a stakeholder is, “…somebody that should have a say in how things happen in how things work”. Isaac also felt that as an organisation, “they were not a stakeholder in co-
op, as they could function without co-op” and he questioned, “whether co-op could operate without the industry”.

5.4 The formation of cooperative education partnerships

In the sport industry interorganisational relationships (IORs) is the terminology frequently used to describe collaborative interactions between organisations. Babiak (2007) described an IOR as a, “voluntary, close, long-term, planned strategic action between two or more organisations with the objective of serving mutually beneficial purposes” (p. 339). She acknowledges that IORs are becoming increasingly important in the sport industry. Various types of IORs 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.

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 organisations to establish IORs” (p. 242). She presented six critical contingencies of relationship formation: necessity; asymmetry; reciprocity; efficiency; stability and legitimacy. Yet, 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 organisations (Alexander, Thibault, & Frisby, 2008; Babiak, 2007), little is known about the motivations for forming a relationship between a sport organisation and an educational institution. As many organisations 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. Drawing upon Oliver’s (1990) framework, the determinants reciprocity, legitimacy and efficiency were identified as consistent themes that emerged across the data. These themes are explored in relation to the formation of cooperative education partnerships.

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 (Alice).
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 (Ingrid).
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. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, the findings of this study identified that the student, industry supervisors and academic supervisors had similar views. They considered 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).

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 perceived benefits for the university, student and industry are summarised in detail in Chapter Six.

Industry motivations for forming a relationship were often driven by the need for extra labour as a resource to improve efficiency. The industry supervisors interviewed were all from the ‘not-for-profit’ sector of the industry. These organisations commonly have a small number of full-time staff and are familiar with using volunteer support for roles within their organisation.

The outcomes for the industry are often focused on legitimacy motivations. Legitimacy is concerned with improving an organisation’s image and reputation and can be enhanced by affiliations or relationships with well-known organisations (Babiak, 2007). Individuals also tend to have a preference for forming partnerships with organisations that have a good reputation based on previous dealings with them. Irene, 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.

Increasing the awareness of the organisation to potential graduates can also be seen as a legitimacy motivation for smaller and less well-known organisations, particularly in the minority sports. This was often combined with the desire of an organisation to increase its reputation by having knowledgeable staff that can bring new ideas.

Oliver’s (1990) framework provides 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). Irene (Industry supervisor) commented:

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.

Sally (a student) had similar views:

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 [industry], I don’t think the organisation could replicate such an experience without being pushed from the university behind them.

The views expressed by the industry highlighted that personal connections and prior experiences were often the motivating factors to become involved in cooperative education. Several of the industry supervisors had undertaken placement themselves as part of their own education. Ingrid’s comment was typical:

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.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, it was also recognised that it was common for the placements to be negotiated directly between the student and individual supervisor, rather than through a whole organisation partnership agreement. 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.
5.5 Stakeholder relationships

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 (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008) 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 organisations, the university tends to have the greater level of responsibility and, therefore, this can be seen as control.

Adam’s response to the interviewers questions reflected a dominant view:

Researcher: Co-op is often described as a partnership between the student, university and industry. What would be your views on this? Would you consider yourself a partner?
Adam: 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.

Amy’s response, also from an academic supervisor’s perspective, suggested that there was more responsibility for the university:

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.

Although most stakeholders interviewed shared similar views of the overall concept of partnership, one industry supervisor Isabel 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 organisation the rest of the organisation 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 formalising it too strongly.

Academics, students and industry supervisors each approach the cooperative experience from a different orientation. As expressed by Adam, 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 is going on.

Amy also acknowledged that:

Communication is absolutely vital and now there are so many different ways we can communicate … communication to say you know what is going well and what is not. It is about keeping the communication lines open.

As Amy noted above, a range of communication strategies using different forms of technology are now available to support the relationships between stakeholders. The stakeholders shared a view that it is important to establish the appropriate and preferred forms of communication. Different communication strategies need to be utilised at different stages of the relationship. Communicating roles and responsibilities in the set-up phase requires a different strategy and level of communication than what is required during the support phase of the student experience. While in most cases communication was seen to be adequate, maintaining appropriate communication between all three stakeholders was considered a key challenge to sustaining the cooperative education partnership.

5.6 Stakeholder roles and responsibilities

While documented guidelines were available as to the expected roles and responsibilities, it was important to gain an understanding of what the academic and industry supervisors perceived as their own contribution to the cooperative education experience. This section will explore the industry, academic supervisor’s and student’s views of their contributions, and also their expectations of the responsibilities of each of the other partners in the relationship.

5.6.1 The responsibilities of industry supervisors

The key responsibilities of an industry supervisor as outlined in the learning contract are presented in Figure 5.5. Industry supervisors are also given a handbook that provides some suggestions and tips for supervision.
The industry supervisor agrees to:

- Accept the AUT student for the cooperative education component of the Bachelor of Sport & Recreation degree.
- Negotiate work activities that will provide the student with an appropriate learning experience.
- Ensure that the student receives appropriate supervision.
- Provide appropriate resources for student.
- Liaise with the AUT academic supervisor when appropriate.
- Provide guidance and assistance during the development and completion of the project.
- Provide formal feedback on the student’s performance and sign the student’s activities log.

Figure 5.5. Industry supervisor responsibilities as outlined in the learning contract.

The responsibilities of the industry supervisor, as perceived by the stakeholders through questionnaires and interviews, are presented under three themes: managerial, support and learning.

**Managerial**

Providing adequate resources and arranging the day-to-day operational aspects were considered by the stakeholders to be key responsibilities of industry supervisors. Planning, negotiating and delegating work; providing suitable projects; and informing the students of the expectations of the organisation were key activities that were consistently mentioned. For example, Isaac felt that he should be, “planned and prepared to get the projects into place before they [the students] arrived”. Adele expected that:

> The industry supervisor would work out in the learning contract what the work activities are and what is expected and would keep on top of those and make sure that the work activities and learning outcomes that we had all agreed upon, they make sure they are achieved.

Isabel confirmed that she felt that it was her responsibility as an industry supervisor, “to make sure that the students were doing enough to meet their requirements”.

As Stan reinforced:

> Your industry supervisor should be making sure that you are getting all your hours done and doing things that are beneficial to your degree so you get the right type of experience… My industry supervisor had co-op students before and knew what the workload was. But some of my friends went to co-op and worked ridiculous hours; they did something like double their co-op hours because they were working on heaps of projects for the organisation.
Stan also points out, not only was it considered important to make sure that the student was able to meet the minimum requirements, but it was also considered important for the industry supervisor to ensure that the workload was manageable for the student. Ian also considered that balancing the workload was important and talked to the students about this right from the start. He mentioned:

I talk to them before they start and say this is what you are going to be doing, this is your area of responsibility and I have said to them if this is getting too onerous, tell us because we don’t want to be slave drivers... It is important not to overload them because some of them are too polite to say anything and grin and bear it and that is the last thing we want.

Ian also confirmed the importance of his role in making sure that what they are doing in the organisation was, “valid and a part of their learning outcomes” and commented, “I was mindful of making sure that they don’t have a bad experience here”.

Generally the industry supervisors considered that they were the main point of contact for communication for both the student and academic supervisor. Alice was concerned that:

There was feedback from the industry supervisor back to the university with regards to the student’s progress, which we do get, but also about things the industry supervisor would like to see happen with co-op itself. I don’t think we have the opportunity for that conversation.

This concern will be discussed later in this chapter.

Support

Providing support and guidance for the students was seen as a significant contribution of the industry supervisor to the cooperative education experience, and is an expectation that is commonly cited in the literature (Peach & Gamble, 2011; Rowe et al., 2012). Sally’s was a typical student response as she talked about the responsibilities of an industry supervisor:

To provide you with a supportive environment outside of the university, also to provide you with opportunities that will help you to apply yourself and enable you to achieve your personal and professional goals, I think was quite important. Also to make you feel welcome in the organisation... My supervisor met with me regularly which was really helpful just to see how I was going if I was on track with my tasks and that was really good because I could ask if I was having problems or make sure I was doing things correctly in the organisation which was really helpful. He always asked me if I wanted to do things and just gave me the opportunity to be involved more which was really good.

Industry supervisors contributed to cultivating a sense of belonging, such as including students as part of the team and encouraging professional socialisation which were linked to
providing support for student learning (these themes are explored further in Chapter Seven). Sean commented that his industry supervisor, “was there to guide me and help me to feel comfortable in his organisation”. Susie felt that her industry supervisor was there to, “guide you and to answer questions, to be a wall to bounce ideas off and to help us understand their place in industry”. Students need to have good access to their industry supervisor if they are to gain the support they need, and as Adele acknowledged, industry supervisors, “needed to be there for the student”.

**Learning**

Industry supervisors clearly felt they were responsible for providing authentic activities that would enable the students to be able to learn from the experience. While learning is not the fundamental aim of most workplaces, it is through participation (Rogoff, 1995) in the authentic activities of the organisation that students gain access to different types of knowledge (Billett, 2009). It was implicit in supervisor’s comments that the students were there to learn, not just to work. For example Ian described that his role was to make sure they had, “valid work to do … not making cups of tea and photocopying”. Structuring the learning activities and providing a progression for the students was considered another key responsibility of the industry supervisor. Alice summarises her expectations of the industry supervisors as someone who:

> Is able to mentor the student in industry and provide a good framework of experiences so that they go from menial tasks to tasks the students perceives as quite important so that the students see they are adding value to the industry. Industry supervisors need to have some framework or idea of how to integrate the student into their workplace and develop them and provide them with a meaningful experience so that at the end the student can go away with some tools and something on their CV.

Adele expected that:

> The industry supervisor would make sure they were challenging the students and that they would ensure that they get to see all aspects of the business of the organisation as opposed to just using them as cheap labour.

Irene had a similar view of her role as an industry supervisor. She felt that she was responsible for:

> Making sure that they’re keeping on task and they are learning, you are talking with them about what their industry is and showing them opportunities and giving them opportunities to create their future.

The way that the learning experience was structured differed across the supervisors. Isaac ‘threw them in the deep end’, Ian had a progression approach and Isabelle was able to optimise the learning experience by exposing students to a variety of areas within the
organisation. As Billett (2002) advises, the learning experience needs to be structured to allow students to move from routine to more challenging tasks with increasing accountability. While routine activities are important for students to understand the ‘everyday practice’ and develop procedural knowledge, the industry supervisor has a key role for ensuring that progression can and does occur. The importance of challenge and responsibility will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Industry supervisors had different opinions with regards to their role in integrating theory and practice. Only two of the five industry supervisors felt that they could assist the students to integrate theory and practice. Ingrid mentioned that she made a conscious effort, “I always try and make that quite evident and I do try and make time to kind of link back to what they’re doing at university or talk about what they’re doing or how they’re doing it”. Isabelle felt that she helped integrate theory, “through completing the project”. In contrast, Ian felt although he was not aware of a lot of the theory, he expected that the students, “would able to put some of that theory into practice and see how it relates to practice as well”. Irene had a similar view when asked about integrating theory and practice:

I know this year’s students definitely did. They told me frequently about what they had managed to take straight from a class into a practical aspect, but as an industry supervisor in a lot of cases I can’t.

This area is a potential weakness in the learning process when industry supervisors are not able to reinforce what is learnt in the university. This brings to attention the critical role of the academic supervisor in supporting the student to make the links between theory and practice. It is also realistic to acknowledge that in some circumstances the converse may occur where academics are unable to relate the ‘practice’ of the industry with the theory they are teaching in the classroom. In this situation, it is then the cooperative education student who is better positioned to integrate practice with the theory.

Overall, the findings were encouraging that the supervisors considered it was their responsibility to provide meaningful and authentic learning experiences and deliberate strategies that promoted learning as was evident in their comments. The expectations of industry supervisor responsibilities were similar across the three groups. The responsibilities and roles, as perceived by the stakeholders aligned well with the documented guidelines and were consistent with what is commonly described within the literature as ‘good practice’ (Billett, 2001; L. Cooper et al., 2010; Peach & Gamble, 2011; Rowe et al., 2012). The influence of industry supervisors on student learning is discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.
5.6.2 The responsibilities of academic supervisors

The findings indicate that academic supervisors played an important role in providing support for student learning and this is consistent with the literature (E. Martin, 1998; McCurdy & Zegwaard, 2009). As the cooperative education experience was a concurrent structure, students were expected to meet with their academic supervisor every two weeks during their time back on the university campus. The meetings were generally one-on-one, but at times could have been scheduled in a small group of no more than six students. Most academic supervisors were allocated four–six students to supervise across an academic year. Generally, students were located across more than one host organisation. The responsibilities of an academic supervisor as outlined in the learning contract are presented in Figure 5.6.

The AUT Academic supervisor agrees to:

- Assist the student in the development of the learning contract for each semester.
- Liaise with the industry supervisor when appropriate (usually once per semester to sign learning contract).
- Meet with the student on a regular basis to provide academic support and encourage reflection and critical analysis of learning.
- Provide guidance and assistance during the development and completion of project.
- Evaluate and provide feedback on academic assessments.

Figure 5.6. Academic supervisor responsibilities as outlined in the learning contract.

The perceptions of stakeholders on the contribution of academic supervisors identified preparation and monitoring, student support, academic feedback, and encouraging self-responsibility as important responsibilities. Assisting the student to develop the initial learning contract was the first key responsibility for academic supervisors. Supervisors were encouraged to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to assist them with the ‘academic wording’ of their learning outcomes. As Adam mentioned:

I try to help them a lot at the beginning to sort of set it up, especially around the contract. It is such a useful thing if they do set it up right. A lot of that often comes down to me advising them on grammar and wording and just simple things just so it is clear.

Once the placement was in progress, monitoring of the student experience was considered as the next key responsibility. Ensuring that the student was in a ‘safe and supportive’ environment and that they were ‘doing what they were supposed to be doing’, and having a ‘good experience’ were highlighted by academics and industry as important within the academic supervisors role. Isabelle reinforced the importance of the monitoring role:
I think then the academic supervisor has to be able to monitor at every stage of the development and have ongoing discussions making sure that they’re on track.

As Adam acknowledged, “we have a duty of care”. Providing emotional and moral support was also considered a critical role. Academic supervisors considered themselves to be the first point of contact and the link between the university and the industry. When problems arose (which was noted as rare) it was considered important, “that the student had someone that they could relate to that could assist” (Adam).

Academic supervisors perceived that the ability for them to monitor progress and support the student was dependent on developing a good relationship and communication with the student. It was deemed important that students shared what was happening in their placement with their academic supervisor when things went wrong, but also they needed to be encouraged to share the positive experiences that they were having.

An important part of academic supervision is helping students to develop critical reflection skills through dialogue and feedback (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Raelin, Glick, McLaughlin, Porter, & Stellar, 2009; Van Gyn, 1996). As Amy commented, to foster reflection I needed to, “challenge [students] to examine their experiences, to critically reflect”. Her expectations of a meeting included:

I expect them to be critical thinkers and give me some really good open and honest feedback on their progress and I also want them to think about and reflect on their practice and their progress and so I ask that of my students. I don’t like them to give me narratives, I want them to be thinking about the interesting things that have happened. Then ‘so what’ or ‘what would you do differently as a result of that’ and then some of the positives and the negatives.

Adam also acknowledged that the feedback on the online journal was important for improving the student’s ability to reflect. He talked about how he encouraged reflection through:

Just asking questions, sitting down having a look at their blogs and saying well this is your blog for this week and how’s that reflection, is that reflection appropriate are you learning, are you then taking it to another level, how critical is it?

From an industry perspective, Irene was aware of the importance of the academic supervisor’s contribution to student learning:

I think they’re making sure that they’re actually learning from their experience, and actually reflecting on what they’re doing. Making sure that it’s not just a hands-on experience, they’re actually critically reflecting on what they’ve learnt and why and how and what that would mean for their future. So they’re actually getting something out of the placement on paper to show that they’re actually learning. I would say that is pretty much an academic [supervisors] role.
Feedback on assessments, in particular academic writing, was also perceived as valuable by the students. As Adele noted, as an academic supervisor, “you need to make students aware of the expectations, especially the academic standards for writing”. She also felt that it was important to, “push them past their comfort zone”. Sally reinforced this from the student perspective in her comments:

I know my supervisor really helped push me in my writing skills and it was really helpful that she pushed me that extra bit to make me work harder and achieve more… She also made me make deadlines, which helped with organisation skills, and she would, just giving constant feedback, make sure I was on track, and that was really helpful.

Encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning was also seen as important in good academic supervision (L. Cooper et al., 2010). For Adele, as a new academic supervisor, she felt that initially she had been very hands-on, but as she gained more experience she put the onus back on the student. She expresses her views on what she has learnt about her role as a supervisor:

So I think a lot of responsibility should rest on the student. I think I probably put a bit too much emphasis/ responsibility on me when we first started, so I was sort of chasing them a bit more and trying to organise things when really it should have been the student. So responsibility should be with the student who should be active in arranging meetings with both academic and industry. I think they need to take ownership of their co-op placement early. So I think they need to realise that it’s again it’s not just another paper that they have to do, that it’s something that unless they whole heartedly sort of invest in it then they’re not going to get the most out of it. For this year I’d probably stress that to them that they need to take responsibility for all aspects of their co-op early on and it’s not down to the industry or the academic supervisor to keep pushing them.

The themes that emerged from the stakeholder perceptions were consistent with the expectations of academic supervisors as outlined in the learning contract.

### 5.6.3 The responsibilities of students

The learning contract template (Figure 5.7) outlines the key responsibilities of students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The AUT student agrees to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Complete the activities and learning outcomes specified in the learning contract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arrange a three-way meeting with academic and industry supervisors to sign learning contract and discuss progress and relevant issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conduct himself/herself in a professional manner at all times during this cooperative with the host organisation. This includes punctuality, an appropriate standard of dress and a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students, industry and academic supervisors were asked what they considered the responsibilities of the students. Having a positive attitude and willingness to learn were common responses across all three groups. These views are consistent with previous research in the sport context where industry identified ‘ability and willingness to learn’ as the most important capability for WIL students to have (Fleming et al., 2009). Sally’s comments were typical; she felt that a student’s responsibility was:

To go into it with a positive attitude and willingness to learn and willingness to work hard then you’ll get a lot out from it.

Taking responsibility for completing the tasks you had been assigned, using initiative and being organised were other key factors identified as important responsibilities. From the student perspective, Susie commented on what she felt her responsibilities were:

Well obviously with the task they give you, you have got to get that done to the best standard you can in the timeframe given and take initiative but not take it too far ... meeting what roles you were given to the set standard and set time, and probably following up as well with whatever task you’re given and just being professional all the way through whatever you did, I think was what they expected of us.

Steve had similar views and considered that the responsibility of a student was:

To accept that you are going into a workplace, so you need to meet a certain standard. Be it time management, be it appearance or be it purely attitude.

Steve’s comments reflect that acting professionally was considered a key responsibility, and his view was consistent with the expectations expressed by the industry supervisors. Students acknowledged that their behaviours reflected on the image of the university. For the reputation of the degree in the industry and for future employment, students need to ensure that they represented themselves in a positive light during their placement. For the cooperative education programme to be sustainable, it relies on organisations being willing to take on students again the following year. Sonia was aware of this and felt that it was her responsibility to:
Create a good name for the university so I was always looking to dress appropriately and be professional and not slacking off, so that they didn’t want to take more co-op students on, you want to set it for the next group that comes through.

Sonia also felt that part of her responsibility was to add value to the organisation, as she, “didn’t want to be there and to be taking everything and not giving anything back”.

From an industry perspective, Isaac also acknowledged that a key responsibility for students was, “showing initiative and not to be told what to do”. He felt that the university environment was very structured and, “had everything laid on a plate”. Ingrid expected that students would take responsibility for negotiating what they wanted to get out of their placement. She also expected that students would act as any other employee would. Her response was:

I’d say set their objectives and be clear on what they want out of the placement and then obviously as you would expect from any employee to be responsible for what they do and be on time and well managed. That is a part of what you would expect. You would expect them to do that in a job, so that is what [a student] is expected to do here.

Ian felt that as the work tasks students were given were important to the daily operations of the organisation, it was their responsibility to, “do the work because it is work that we need done”. He also expected that students would behave the same was as any other employee and communicate if they were not able to complete the set tasks on time.

Academic supervisors also reinforced the importance of students taking responsibility for acting professionally, and completing the activities that were negotiated in the learning contract. However, they also raised the concern that student communication back to the university about what they were doing was critical. Without this communication it was difficult for academic supervisors to be able to monitor what was happening. Looking at it from a supervision perspective, Adam commented:

I always tell them the key responsibility is that I need to know what they’re doing on a regular basis. So as long as I know where they are and what they’re up to, at least every couple of weeks that’s good, and then you know the key for them is to critically analyse what they’re doing enough to actually identify where they do have problems and if they can do that and they can actually bring them to me in a timely manner that I can intervene and help them, then that works.

It was acknowledged that not all students were good at communicating back to their academic supervisors, and this at times created some tensions and lost opportunities for students to gain the support that could benefit their overall learning experience.
5.7 Chapter Summary

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 organisation or institutional level. The cooperative education relationship was represented as a triad that in most cases was symmetrical. Consistent with a network structure, the relationship was not perceived as hierarchical. However, the relationship was expected to be student-led, as well as student-focused. The relationships were considered to be two-way, but the university-industry relationship was perceived as the weakest.

Students, industry and academic supervisors generally understood they were stakeholders in the relationship. Their perceptions confirm that cooperative education was considered to be a partnership. Using Oliver’s (1990) conceptual framework for IOR formation, a better understanding of partnerships in the sport cooperative education context has been gained. Students’, industry and academics’ views tended to support multiple contingencies such as reciprocity, efficiency, legitimacy and synergy as important in the formation of cooperative education partnerships.

Communication was considered important but a key challenge in sustaining effective cooperative education partnerships. Students, industry supervisors and academic supervisors each had their own responsibilities and contributions within the relationship. Industry supervisors acknowledged that it was their responsibility to provide an environment and the support that enabled the students to learn through their participation in the activities of the workplace. Academic supervisors considered their role was to support the student through personal guidance as well as feedback on their academic work. Students were aware that it was their responsibility to have the right attitude particularly a willingness to learn. Generally, the expectations of the roles of each other were well aligned across the three groups and consistent with what was documented in the learning contract.
Chapter Six: Findings—The intentions of cooperative education

The following presentation of data is built around prominent themes wherein are the aligned and unaligned perspectives of each of the stakeholder groups. In order to gain a broad view of the stakeholder perceptions of the intentions of cooperative education, questionnaire participants were asked about what they saw ‘the purpose and meaning’ of cooperative education to be. Following this, the focus was directed to a more operational level to explore the expectations and perceived benefits of the cooperative education experience. As well as the questionnaire data, student, industry and academic perceptions of these and other issues related to stakeholder perspectives of cooperative education were further explored through the interview process.

6.1 The purpose of cooperative education

*Gaining experience* was identified as a key purpose of cooperative education. Uniting this perspective was a sense that spending time in an industry setting would provide authentic experiences that would prepare students for the workplace. However, the participants expressed the notion of ‘experience’ in different ways. Some referred to ‘work experience’ which implied that the experience was related to the activities that occur specifically within the workplace. Providing practical experience or ‘hands-on’ experience was also a common response, while others felt that the purpose was to give students an experience that was meaningful, valuable or purposeful. Irene (an industry supervisor), acknowledged the importance of providing the practical experience that would assist in preparing students for their future careers:

> It is the practical aspect of the third year of BSR and it is where the student actually enters into the industry to gain work experience and knowledge so that once they graduate at the end of the year they have that experience to carry on into their career.

Another prevailing perception from industry was that through this experience, students would be able to make a contribution to the sport and recreation industry that would benefit both themselves and their organisation. This acknowledgement of mutual gain was a clear recognition that cooperative education had the potential to have a simultaneously positive influence on multiple stakeholders. The following questionnaire responses supported this view:

> Give the student an opportunity to make a contribution to the industry that they have to work in and they learn from that experience (IQ19).
Enable students to experience the industry first hand and make a contribution that will benefit both them and the organisation (IQ24).

The phrase ‘real world’ was frequently used to describe either what the experience should be like or the environment where the experience was situated. Some participants referred to the notion that the industry was considered as the ‘real-world’, and that the purpose of cooperative education was, “to give you a real-world learning experience” (SQJ26); “to give real-world working experience” (IQ16); “to educate the students about the real world” (IQ23); or, “to enable students to apply theory learnt at university to the real-world” (AQ2). As Ian (an industry supervisor) commented:

Three months out in the real world you learn more than three years in a university lecture... There are 101 things that they would never probably learn about in lectures and assignments. They get thrown curve balls when we put them out running a tournament here.

The description of the experience as being meaningful, purposeful or ‘real-world’ can be aligned with the notion of authenticity. Authenticity can be related to physical authenticity, that is, what is represented as the ‘real’ work environment. Alternatively, authenticity can refer to ‘cognitive authenticity’, which is where students encounter and engage in learning activities consistent with what occurs in workplace settings. The views expressed by the participants supported the notion that the cooperative education experience should include both physical and cognitive authenticity. Students needed to be exposed to environments where they have the opportunities to observe and interact with co-workers, and learn how to respond to everyday situations and realistic problems. However, it is of course possible for students to be placed in a workplace setting without experiencing or learning about the ‘authentic’ world of work. Students can be given tasks that have little consequence, and can be shielded from the challenges, tensions and the politics that exist within a placement organisation.

The application of theory was also understood as a key purpose of cooperative education. Students and academic supervisors consistently referred to ‘applying the knowledge learnt at university in industry’ or ‘putting theory into practice’. Being given the opportunity to ‘go into industry and experience what you had been learning in the classroom’ was also another common response. Gaining an understanding of the relevance and purpose of the theory that they had learnt at university was important for some students. Sally (a student), in her interview expressed the purpose as:

I would say it would be to gain that practical experience before you enter into the workforce. To integrate everything you learn in those lecture halls into actually how it works, because it is quite different from just day-to-day lectures.
Sally was one of the few participants who referred to the ‘integration’ of theory and practice. This theme is explored further, later in this section. Sally also acknowledged that there was a difference between her experiences in university compared to industry and that the purpose of the experience was to enable her to see how it really worked. Another student, Susie had similar views:

It is taking what we have learnt at uni into the industry and seeing how it actually works. Because there is one thing to read it in a textbook but it is another to be out there and actually implementing strategies that you have learnt.

The student’s views suggest that what they learn in universities is considered to be different from what actually occurs in industry. This can create a theory–practice division, where university is seen as only a domain of ‘abstract’ knowledge and somewhat removed from the ‘real world’ practice. This division does not really acknowledge these as two complementary components of workplace engagement, but trivialises one as being out of touch with the other.

It was interesting that not only did the students and industry consider that there was a difference, some academics supported the view that the industry was perceived as the reality. Amy (an academic supervisor) described cooperative education as, “an opportunity for students to experience real life learning” while another academic supervisor Adam mentioned:

It is where students get the opportunity to engage in the real world and apply what they have learnt on the shop floor ... and from our point-of-view the overall purpose is to take their learning into a real work setting and apply and advance the skills and knowledge they have generated here into the industry.

Reference to the application or integration of theory and practice was rare in the questionnaire responses from the industry supervisors. When explored further in the interviews, Isaac, (who had been an industry supervisor for eight years), had a very simplistic view and considered that the purpose was simply providing work experience:

For me it’s very simple, a person who’s doing a specific course at university that needs work experience and you give them work experience. As simple as that.

Isaac’s comments suggest that he viewed the cooperative education experience in a similar way to the ‘apprenticeship learning model’, where newcomers learn all they need to know about the industry by simply being part of it. Such a model of learning promotes an uncritical reproduction of dominant industry knowledge, and fails to recognise the potential of new knowledge or the critical interrogation of existing knowledge and practice.

While most of the industry supervisors did not refer to ‘applying theory’, they did acknowledge that cooperative education was for learning. Ingrid, a first time industry supervisor for Bachelor
of Sport and Recreation (BSR) students, considered that the purpose of cooperative education was about learning, and that learning occurred for both the student and the organisation:

For me, co-op is an opportunity for both parties to work together and learn from each other. So it is where a student goes into a workplace and learns new skills so that then they are better equipped to find their first role and also for you to learn new ideas and refresh thinking.

Ian, who had worked in the sport and recreation industry for 11 years, considered that the purpose was learning on the job in a similar way to a new employee:

It is real life learning for students. It is getting involved in the organisation, because we just almost drop them in the deep end of it. They are right in there, working—like a paid employee but not getting paid. Right from day one. We like to give them new projects and responsibility. It is just really learning on the job.

Ian commented that he provided the students with tasks and areas of responsibility that were similar to those of other junior staff in the regional sports organisation. He also acknowledged that it is not just the students who are able to learn from the experience; he considered that cooperative education provides an opportunity for students to share their current knowledge and in doing so improve practice within the organisation:

We often have said to them [students] we are doing it this way because this is the way we have always done it. But we encourage them to have a look at the processes and tell us if there is a better way of doing it... They often show us new and easier ways of doing things.

Susie felt that her placement organisation was open to considering new ideas and opinions from cooperative education students:

I think they see new ways of doing things because a lot of sports organisations are set in their ways and when we come in we do offer our opinion and a new way of doing things. They are not necessarily going to take it on but it gives them something to think about. I think with the organisation I was with, they definitely valued our opinion and what we thought.

**Clarifying careers in the industry** was also considered as a key theme for the purpose of cooperative education. Students expressed that the purpose was to, “gain an understanding of the industry” (SQN14), to “gain an insight into the sport and recreation industry” (SQN48) or “what it is like to be working in the sport and recreation industry” (SQN34). Alice (an academic supervisor) expressed her view:

The overall purpose I think is to show or to help students to see the relevance of their learning. I think it’s also an opportunity for them to experience the workplace so that...
so they know what they’re letting themselves in for when they actually enter the workplace. For many of them it’s an opportunity to make a decision about whether it is the right choice for them.

It is commonplace for students at the commencement of their university studies to choose subjects of interest to them, but that may not necessarily have any clear connection to their intended career path. Contemporary studies in sport and recreation cover a wide range of disciplines that include: sport science (e.g., exercise science, exercise physiology, biomechanics, sport psychology); sport sociology; sport pedagogy (e.g., physical education teaching, sport coaching); fitness and recreation (e.g., recreation programming, leisure studies), sport management (e.g., event and facility management, sport marketing); and outdoor education (Fleming & Ferkins, 2011). Some of these areas have clear career focused pathways (such as physical education teachers, outdoor education instructors, personal trainers or coaches). However, for other areas career paths are often not well defined, and logical subject sequences are less transparent.

Through their cooperative education experience, students were exposed to less well known positions such as a marketing and sponsorship coordinator for a sporting goods company, community recreation advisor for a local council, sport development officer for a regional sport organisation, or strength and conditioning trainer for a franchised sports team. Students may not have been aware of or understood these potential opportunities prior to undertaking their cooperative education experiences. The industry forum held as part of the preparation for the cooperative experience, provided students with contacts in a range of organisations that they would not normally have had access to. For example, Sally chose to undertake her placement in a national sports organisation (NSO) assisting the coaching and development manager in a sport and a role that she had not previously been involved with, or even considered during her degree:

I actually chose them because they came to forum that was held last year and one of their staff came and spoke and I just liked what he had to say so I applied… Going into co-op I did not know what my placement was going to be about, so I think I was very lucky for putting myself out there and going to [NSO] because I got such a great opportunity.

In the larger organisations, industry supervisors considered that it was important for students to be exposed to a range of other career opportunities. Ingrid (from a regional sports trust) created opportunities for her students to spend time learning about a range of different sport organisations that work within the same area:
I thought it was really important for students who come here to get a wider understanding of the industry, because we are quite lucky we work in a sports house, we have got access to other industries and other sporting organisations so I actually booked time with all of these sporting organisations for my students to go and talk to them and find out exactly what everyone does.

**Networking opportunities** and developing personal connections was also seen as a valuable part of the cooperative education experience. As Sean commented, the purpose of cooperative education was:

To develop, connect, networking almost. So getting out there, getting to know people in the industry so that when you do finish you are not just stuck with a degree and nothing else... Just being in [the organisation] as much as I could I ended up meeting most of the staff and some of the external staff that come in for certain roles. I have kept connections with one of the assistant trainers.

Sean felt that through his time in the workplace he was able to make key connections with people in industry. Industry supervisors also had similar views and felt that, “building relationships that could lead to employment” (IQ22), “getting their name out there” (IQ2) and, “making an impression in industry” (IQ24) were deemed important in helping students to gain a job after graduation. This was reinforced by Irene, a Sports Director in a secondary school:

When they are here I make sure that they are really putting themselves out there, communicating with people in the industry so they actually see potential employers. Whilst I can’t employ them all here there are lots of opportunities in Auckland schools so it is important for them to be mixing with other school sports directors, sports coordinators and getting some insight into what the industry is made of.

Irene, at the time of interview, had just appointed a new sport coordinator and mentioned that numerous applicants were AUT BSR graduates. She added, “[Co-op] does give me a positive look at the BSR and those students actually feature highly in my eyes as being good applicants”. Her current cooperative education students had decided to go on to complete teaching qualifications, yet she was able to employ one of the graduates that had completed her cooperative education placement in another secondary school sports department.

**Developing personal and professional skills** that were relevant to the industry was identified as a significant intention of the cooperative experience. Using the industry context to develop the ‘soft-skills’ such as communication, teamwork and confidence were considered valuable. More detail on the skills that students developed and how they learnt these skills is explored further in Chapter Seven. Alice felt the cooperative education enabled students, “to network with other people in industry, practice their soft skills, their communication skills ... that you don’t really appreciate until you are in a workplace situation”. Personal growth and
development within a safe and secure environment was also considered important. As Amy commented:

They are still considered to be learning and a student, so from my experience the supervisors do not ever put them in an at risk situation... Often it's a growing up time in terms of a transition from being a student to being in the workforce, and moving from that student to the professional.

As the cooperative education experience often provides the first exposure of the student to the sport and recreation industry, it is the early interactions that also help them to understand and shape their professional culture, attitudes, values and behaviours. The perceptions on how students learn the dispositional knowledge of the workplace will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

6.2 The meaning of cooperative education

Cooperative education is described as a specific model under the umbrella term of work-integrated learning (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Groenewald et al., 2011). In order to gain an understanding of their interpretation, participants were asked in the questionnaire, ‘What does cooperative education mean to you?’

A collaboration, partnership or relationship for learning or education was the response of many of the industry and academics supervisors and some of the students. These words are reflected in a selection from the questionnaire responses:

A cooperation of industry and academic organisations working together to develop and assist student growth and experience (SQJ28).

Collaboration between student, training agency (AUT) and an industry provider, to provide a useful learning experience towards a career pathway (IQ3).

In partnership with student, workplace and university to provide opportunities for student workplace experience whilst learning and working on an end outcome of a worthwhile project for student and workplace (IQ10).

Joint partnership between two parties (i.e., AUT, and placement organisation), where students integrate theory and practice in a work placement and for the benefit of industry experience (AQ8).

Education that is achieved through the ‘co-operation’ of the institute, the community and the student (AQN1).

Not all participants thought that cooperative education involved a three-way relationship between student, university and industry. Some described two-way industry–student partnerships, while others described the concept as industry–university partnership. These
comments align with the notion of partnerships and the different interpretations discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

A learning experience was another consistent response, particularly from students. The conception of a learning experience was expressed using words such as: learning about the industry, practical learning or student learning. This finding affirms that the meaning of cooperative education was considered by some (but definitely not all) to be focused on learning—not just working. Generally, the perceptions were that cooperative education meant learning through the experience of work (experiential) and learning about the nature of work (informational) rather than just learning at work (locational).

Applying or integrating theory and practice was also included in the responses of some academics and students when describing what cooperative education meant.

The ability to integrate particular theories and practices in the industry that you are studying. It serves as a window into what that particular world is like, as well as being able to develop effective connections in the industry (SQN5).

Bringing together theory & practice. Allowing me to take my first steps in the industry, breaking down the barrier between work & university (SQN20).

Student learning (experiential) in the workplace, applying academic principles and reflecting on the work processes (AQ6).

Reference to ‘theory and practice’ was rare in the industry responses to what cooperative education meant, and this was consistent with their perceptions of the purpose.

An important conception of the purpose and meaning of cooperative education is the notion that it should entail the integration of the knowledge and skills gained in university and in the workplace (Coll et al., 2009). The real strength of cooperative education as a strategy of learning is not that students gain opportunities to learn in the classroom and then in the workplace, but that these opportunities are integrated to create learning that is more than the sum of the two parts (Eames & Coll, 2010). It is the integration aspect of cooperative education that is fundamental to the model and distinguishes it from ‘work experience’.

Alice (academic supervisor) expressed the notion of integration in her interview:

Interviewer: If a colleague asks you what’s co-op? What would you say?
Alice: I would say it is an integrated learning process where the student spends time learning academic type knowledge and at the same time has an opportunity to share that knowledge, or use that knowledge in an industry based setting. So it’s a two-fold experience I guess where we’re linking the industry with academic learning.
Interviewer: What do you mean by integrated?
Alice: Where the student is able to, or expected to, or encouraged, to take what they’ve learnt at the university and apply in some way to what they’re doing in a workplace setting.

The comment above supports the notion of, ‘application of theory and practice’, however, fails to acknowledge that integration entails not just a one-way process and that what students learn while on placement needs to be linked back to their ‘on-campus’ learning experiences. Participants did not consistently identify the concept of ‘integration’ as being fundamental to either the purpose or meaning of cooperative education.

It is not unexpected that the participants in this study did not articulate a consistent ‘textbook’ understanding of the meaning of cooperative education. As discussed in Chapter Three, determining a consistent definition of cooperative education has met with challenges (Groenewald et al., 2011). There are a diverse range of terms and multiple definitions that students, industry and academics are exposed to. This issue will be addressed further in Chapter Eight.

**6.3 What is written in the documents?**

A number of documents were available to the stakeholders that expressed the purpose and meaning of cooperative education. These included documents that were given to students as part of their preparation workshop; a brochure given to prospective sport and recreation organisations prior to taking on a student; the student course booklet; an industry supervisors handbook and a learning contract (initially given in the form of a template that students and industry then add to with specific activities and learning outcomes).

The document analysis confirmed a consistent message that cooperative education is for the integration of academic studies and practice. Yet, the notion of integration has not been consistently reflected in the perceptions and interpretations of the purpose and meaning the expressed by stakeholders in the previous sections. The documents all suggested that cooperative education involves collaboration between the student, industry and university. This concept has generally been well understood and reflected in the stakeholder views as presented in Chapter Five.
Table 6.1. Statements that relate to the purpose or meaning of cooperative education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Target group(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student preparation workshop</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Workshop slides What is cooperative education “… a structured educational strategy integrating classroom studies with learning, through productive work experiences in a field related to a student’s academic or career goals” (National Commission for Cooperative Education). Coop aims to: Apply knowledge and integrate theory and practice. Coop is not work experience. Coop is a learning experience. Coop features: Integrates academic studies and practice; A process of discovery about … yourself, industry, professionals; A career pathway; Negotiated learning outcomes = your design; A chance to “add value” to your chosen organisation; project management; “Capstone” Paper Handout The aim of co-operative education is to apply knowledge, gain industry experience and to develop the following capabilities: • Teamwork • Communication • Technical skills • Problem solving • Critical analysis &amp; reflection • Understanding of research process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course booklet</td>
<td>Students Academic supervisors</td>
<td>Cooperative education (Coop) is a strategy for students to integrate theory and practice within the working context of a sport or recreation organisation. The name cooperative education reflects the tripartite nature in which the student, AUT and a sport and recreation organisation work together collaboratively to develop capabilities to enhance graduate employability (p. 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry recruitment brochure</td>
<td>Prospective sport and recreation organisations</td>
<td>The purpose of cooperative education is to form a mutually beneficial relationship that links the industry organisation, the student and AUT together in partnership by providing the students with an opportunity to apply their academic studies to a workplace environment. Cooperative education is a collaboration between the industry organisation, the student, and AUT. An industry supervisor is nominated from the organisation to manage and support the student throughout the placement and to liaise with the AUT academic supervisor as needed (p. 2).</td>
</tr>
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</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Target group(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industry supervisors handbook</td>
<td>Industry supervisors</td>
<td>The purpose of cooperative education and industry experience is to form a mutually beneficial relationship that links the industry organisation, the student, and AUT in partnership by providing the students an opportunity to apply their academic studies to a workplace environment. It is important to recognise that cooperative education is more than work experience; it is a strategy for students to integrate knowledge, learning and theories within the working context of a sport, recreation, or dance organisation. It also provides the opportunity for students to reflect and critically analyse their experiences (p. 7).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning contract</td>
<td>Students Academic supervisors Industry supervisors</td>
<td>Cooperative education is a strategy where work and learning are integrated through the development of partnerships between the university, the student and a sport or recreation organisation. Cooperative education allows students to apply their knowledge, learning and theories in the workplace and to develop generic and specific competencies that are useful to an employer (p. 1).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student information includes specific mention of the development of capabilities. Specific capabilities are not mentioned in the industry documents. The findings suggest that there needs to be more clarity and consistency in the information given to stakeholders, and this may help to gain a more consistent understanding and interpretation of the purpose and meaning of cooperative education.

6.4 The stakeholder expectations of cooperative education

Students, industry and academic supervisors had different expectations of cooperative education. Student expectations of cooperative education were generally linked to enhancing employability. That cooperative education would provide opportunities to gain experience, for personal and professional development, along with gaining knowledge of the sport and recreation industry were the key expectations from students.

For some students, the expectations were that it was going to be, “challenging” (SQN4), “a daunting project” (SQN12), “long hours, stressful, hard work” (SQN58), “lots of work–and I was right” (SQN10). Several students had ‘high’ expectations because, “they had friends that had completed cooperative education and they shared their experiences with me” (SQN31). Other students felt their expectations were, “exceeded” while for some it was, “as I imagined it to be”.

The expectations from industry related mostly to the nature of the student and the outcomes that the student would be able to achieve for their organisation. The attitude of the student, particularly the “willingness to learn” was considered important. As one supervisor expected,
“they are willing to work and open to learn, not sit back and be wall flowers” (IQ27). Another industry supervisor responded:

I expect a student to be enthusiastic, show initiative, to contribute from their own experience, be professional and respectful and ask for guidance when necessary (IQ3).

The expectation of a cooperative education student being able to add value and make a contribution to both their organisation and the sport and recreation industry was also reinforced along with an expectation that the student would become part of the team:

Students will contribute to the organisations tasks, work independently but become part of the team (IQ11).

There was also an expectation from some supervisors that students would bring to the organisation a level of knowledge so that alternative perspectives and new ideas could be shared.

The academic supervisor’s expectations were focused on the need for authentic and meaningful learning experiences for students. The attitude of the student was also important. A typical response was:

That the student will be self-motivated and committed to their opportunities and experiences. That all those involved have a positive experience and feel that they get value from the exercise. That the student is well prepared for work beyond university (AQ2).

Another academic supervisor responded:

That it will be a win/win/win for the three parties involved. That the student’s learning expectations are met. That the industry placement sees high value in the co-op and that high quality learning will be evidenced through the project assignments (AQ15).

The key concept of being a win/win situation supports the idea of reciprocity and that there will be mutual benefits for students, university and industry. The perceived benefits for stakeholders are explored in the following section.

6.5 The perceived benefits of cooperative education

Central to the principles of cooperative education is the expectation that there will be benefits for each of the stakeholders involved.
6.5.1 Benefits for students

Personal, career related and academic benefits were the key themes identified by the students. When Sonia was asked about the benefits of her cooperative experience, she 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 organisational 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 organisation and also communication with speaking and also with things like email writing.

Sonia clearly identifies the benefits she gained by developing the generic or ‘soft skills’. The academic benefits in relation to what students learnt through their experiences are analysed in detail in Chapter Seven.

Consistent with the purpose of cooperative education, Sean identified that the benefit for him was in creating a pathway into a potential career in the industry. Sean’s view was:

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.

Susie also highlighted the benefit 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. There is one thing being in a classroom and then there is another being out there on a day-to-day basis.

Sean also did acknowledge that although there was a range of benefits there was a cost involved and that they had, “invested a lot of time and money”. None of the students interviewed were paid for their cooperative education placements and all students paid university fees in order to gain university credit. However, the overall perceptions were that the personal and professional benefits they had gained through the cooperative education experience had outweighed the cost involved.

6.5.2 For the university

An increased awareness of the university was considered an important benefit of cooperative education. There are other tertiary institutions in New Zealand that offer sport and recreation studies. More importantly, there are others in the Auckland region offering bachelor degrees in sport. This means that AUT must compete directly for prospective students. Yet, a key
difference between AUT and other Auckland institutions is the extensive cooperative education component undertaken during the final year. Irene (an industry supervisor in a school) commented:

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.

It is common to have sport and recreation students undertaking cooperative education within secondary schools, working as part of the sports or physical education departments, undertaking coaching or assistant roles. Cooperative education students can act as ambassadors, and raise the profile of the university and the BSR degree with the target audience of school leavers. However, this research has not specifically explored the extent to which this happens and is an area for further investigation.

It was also considered important for the reputation of the university that the students did well in industry. Amy, an academic supervisor commented:

I think it’s about relationships, I think it’s about getting our reputation out there… Certainly in our area, which is the major of Health and Physical Education, which leads onto a graduate teaching qualification, it’s about us competing with other institutions and for us we want to have a really good reputation and we want to be the institution of choice for schools to send their kids to. So it’s really important that our students fly the flag for what we offer them within our degree and that they do a good job on co-op.

It was not just academics that considered the reputation of the university. Sonia (a student) also highlighted 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.

Some students in this study undertook activities such as coaching of junior sports or working on specific events in the community. Through these community activities, students had the opportunity to develop skills but also highlight their own capabilities, which can lead to increasing the reputation of the BSR graduates and the university.

Closer ties with industry were also considered as key benefits to the university. In this model of cooperative education, 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 organisations or staff that the university had no prior relationship with, resulting in new relationships being formed. Not only did this provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the university and the BSR, but also had benefits of connecting people in the industry back to the university. As Adam, an academic supervisor commented:

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. Engaging with the industry even at that level helps us to keep in touch with what is going on and even though we have advisory boards I think co-op can help you keep relevant because at least twice a semester I would get out in industry and I would talk to people. So that is better than not all.

Another academic supervisor, Alice 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 supervisors visit the students out in industry. The interaction with industry supervisors and other sport and recreation staff may help the academics stay current and abreast of the changes occurring and this complements the activities of the industry advisory boards.

6.5.3 For the industry organisation

An extra resource or free labour was seen as a key benefit to industry. The industry supervisors interviewed were all from the ‘not-for-profit’ sector of the industry. These organisations commonly have a small number of full-time staff and are familiar with using volunteer support for roles within their organisation. Ingrid (from a Regional Sports Trust) expressed the benefits to her organisation:

Ideally it would be to have a proactive student that could work on a project … add value to my team and my work and to deliver on a project that I would not have time to do … [Providing] more opportunities for children and parents.

As students are generally not paid, this adds additional value to the resource that the student provides. As Ian commented, the ‘value added’ short-term tangible returns were important for his organisation:
Chapter 6: The intentions of cooperative education

It helps us with our workload; I have to be frank about that. Being a [regional] sports organisation 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 organisation.

Recruitment of new staff was identified as another key benefit. Not all industry supervisors are primarily searching for cheap labour, for some their interest lies with attracting and retaining highly motivated and bright knowledgeable workers within industry and establishing relationships with the university. As Isaac highlighted:

We have been really lucky look at the people now involved with this organisation that have been through co-op, it’s just unbelievable. You know I have six people that have been through this as a co-op student and now they are employed.

Increasing the awareness of the organisation to potential graduates was also as a benefit for less well-known organisations particularly in the minority sports. This was often combined with the desire of an organisation to increase its reputation by having knowledgeable staff that can bring new ideas and as Irene said, “often they bring a different aspect to trainings and coaching”. As Isaac summarised:

[The benefits are] an 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.

The attitude of the student was seen as a challenge to gaining the benefits for industry. As Isaac commented:

The challenges are there, you get your students who are quite street smart and get straight into it and then you get students that just sit back and expect work to come their way… The students that just sit there doing nothing, there is no room for that and they learn very quickly.

For Ingrid to gain the benefits, she needed a student that could work autonomously. She also acknowledged:

I am more than happy to put the time in and work with the student as long as they do the same and they are able to meet my expectations. I think I probably have high quite high expectations and that probably would be a bit of a barrier. It is finding someone to meet those.

For Ian, the quality of the work was important in gaining the benefits. The challenges were:

That the work is done well and done on time and that they are working successfully within the team and with clubs. For some of them they do get out there and deal with the clubs and because they are then representing us [a regional sport organisation] that they are competent to do that and that can be a bit daunting for some of them the first time.
Irene had similar views and felt the university was responsible for ensuring that students were well prepared, capable of undertaking a placement and able to act professionally. Irene had also hosted placement students from another tertiary institution and commented:

\[
\text{I think the AUT is responsible for ensuring a student is capable of going into co-op in their third year. I have seen from [another tertiary institution] that the students are not professional, are not well suited to go into placement and I find that they are often just not the right people and are coming into the industry and showing [the tertiary institute] in a bad light. Professionalism is so important in this industry. Schools have to build multiple relationships with outside organisations, clubs, the local RSA, the local shops and community. If you have a student who is coming in and not professional they can damage or destroy that relationship and so you just have to be careful.}
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Primarily the purpose of cooperative education for the host organisation does not rest with student learning. Industry often question, what is in it for me? On a positive note, despite some challenges, industry supervisors all confirmed that there were tangible benefits for them in hosting a cooperative education student.

### 6.6 Chapter summary

The case study findings presented highlight important aspects that are relevant to the way that cooperative education is understood and interpreted by the stakeholders in the context of the BSR programme at AUT. The term cooperative education is mediated through the cultural and historical contexts of the partners and this exposes contradictions. Having a clear understanding of purpose involves clarifying the understanding and expectations of all three stakeholders. Generally there was alignment in the views of students, industry and academic supervisors understanding as to the purpose of cooperative education. Multiple themes were evident, but the key concepts of gain experience, career clarification and developing skills combine in the overall understanding that the purpose was for enhancing employability of the graduates.

A shared understanding of what the term cooperative education meant was not as evident in the findings. Stakeholders were not able to consistently articulate the ‘textbook definition’ or key components that are fundamental to the definition. This is not surprising given the multiple terms that can be used for similar experiences and the range of definitions (even within the documents) that the stakeholders were exposed to. The understanding of collaboration, cooperation or a partnership for learning was a consistent interpretation of the meaning of cooperative education. However the concept of the ‘integration’ of theory and practice was not as well articulated within or across the stakeholder groups. The ‘application of theory in
practice’ was a more common expression with students and academics but rare in the industry views. Improved communication strategies are needed to clearly articulate the purpose and meaning to all stakeholders involved.

Students, industry and academic supervisors had different expectations of cooperative education. Student expectations of cooperative education were generally linked to enhancing employability. That the experience would be meaningful and authentic was the main expectation of academic supervisors. The industry expected that the student would be willing to learn and able to make a contribution to the organisation.

Central to the design of the cooperative education experience is that there are benefits for all three stakeholders. For students the benefits were personal, career related and academic. The benefits for industry were linked to adding value to the organisation though additional resources, as well as bringing in new ideas. The university benefits from cooperative education through closer ties with industry, increased reputation and recruitment.
Chapter Seven: Findings—Student learning in cooperative education

This chapter presents the findings in relation to stakeholder perspectives of the student learning experience. The first section focuses on the students, academic and industry supervisor’s perceptions as to what the students learnt through their cooperative education experience. The perceptions of how learning occurred and the influences on student learning are explored in the subsequent sections. The final section of this chapter presents the views of each of the stakeholders on what they each consider as their own responsibilities towards the student learning experience, as well as their expectations of the roles of each of the other partners in the relationship. The findings will be discussed and related to theories of learning in Chapter Eight.

7.1 What did the students learn through the cooperative education experience?

“I learnt a lot, I think I could sit here for hours and hours and tell you what I learnt” (Sonia)

Students completed their placements in a wide variety of organisations and negotiated their own learning outcomes, therefore, the learning experience can be considered as unique for each student and context. As Adele, an academic supervisor highlighted:

I think the nice thing about co-op is they all learn different things. Each co-op experience is different and I think it depends on what it is they actually want to get out of co-op.

Students said that they felt that learning had occurred through their cooperative education experience. Initially a broad perspective of learning was gained through the questionnaire where students were asked to comment on the most valuable thing that they had learnt. The so-called ‘generic’ or ‘soft’ skills were the most prominent responses. Communication skills (both oral and written); time management; organisational skills; professionalism; the use of initiative; and teamwork were consistently mentioned. Students also identified learning about the nature of the sport and recreation industry as well as possible career options.

A few students felt that the most valuable thing they had learnt was, “that they were on the right career path” (SQJ2). A few references were made to learning about specific technical skills, but these were variable depending on the nature of the placement organisation and the specific tasks undertaken by the student. Much of what was reported by students was consistent with the graduate capabilities that the students were made aware of throughout
their placement preparation, in classroom sessions and course documents. As students were required to reflect on the graduate capabilities in their final assessment at the completion of the cooperative education experience, this may have contributed towards the awareness of this learning when they were completing the questionnaire. However, the questionnaire findings from this study were very consistent with previous research conducted several years earlier through a focus group with Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR) students (Fleming & Eames, 2005).

Academic supervisors and industry supervisors had similar questionnaire responses when compared to the students. The generic skills were again identified as the most consistent responses. More specifically, the industry supervisors had a strong view that students learnt interpersonal skills such as how to communicate and interact with workplace colleagues and to work in a team. Academic supervisors also acknowledged that many students had learnt about time management, particularly managing the demands of both the placement and the academic requirements of their other university courses. Learning how to reflect on experience was also perceived by the academics as a key skill that the students had learnt. Several students had similar views, it was “the ability to critically reflect” (SQN5) and, “how to critically analyse my development and where I can improve” (SQN7) that they considered as the most valuable things that they had learnt.

Through interviews with students, academics and industry supervisors the perceptions of what students learnt through their experience was explored further. When asked directly, students found it hard to define or articulate concisely what they had learnt in terms of specific or declarative knowledge; learning was described more in terms of what they had gained from the experience in terms of both procedural and dispositional knowledge. The following themes emerged through the analysis of the interview transcripts: understanding the nature of the industry; learning appropriate interpersonal and organisational skills; learning specific knowledge or technical skills; and personal development. These themes will be explored in the following sections.

7.1.1 Understanding the nature of the industry

An understanding of ‘what it is really like’ to work in the sport and recreation industry was a key theme that emerged across all three stakeholders. Students said they learnt about what happens on a day-to-day basis within their specific organisation. For Stan, through his co-op he gained a greater understanding of the operations of a school and felt that this would benefit him in the future.
Before I went into [co-op] I did not really know how a school ran and how the sports department worked. I now feel like I can go into a school and become part of how it works.

Stan mentioned that he was able to learn about daily activities of the sports department through his experiences in sports administration, fitness training, sports coaching and event management. He also learnt about the role of a teacher through observing in the physical education department and assisting teachers in both classroom and practical activities.

Irene, a school supervisor confirmed that her students learnt about the ‘behind the scenes’ reality of the job and what it actually entails. She considered that students learnt about:

All the paper work that goes on behind the scenes particularly with ‘education outside the classroom’ activities... Also, how to look after a student, how to provide for a student and how to clean up after a student. Even things like laundry and washing of uniforms, it’s minor but it is something they leave here knowing.

Gaining a wider perspective of the industry was something that Ingrid felt that her students had been able to learn through their experience within a regional sports trust (RST). She also felt that students learnt about the reality of working in a sport organisation where funding and resources were limited. Ingrid commented:

They learn quite a lot about the industry, the RST works with all the sporting codes, we work closely with Sport New Zealand, with education providers, we work closely with the community, with the councils, so they get the opportunity to learn, there is a wide range of work we undertake so they get really good knowledge and understanding of that...There is not a lot of money in the sporting industry and a lot of hard work, you need to be able to roll up your sleeves and actually work ... in most sport organisations you don’t get many resources so you have to be really efficient and effective with what you have got.

Susie had played for a team that was affiliated to the sports organisation where she had undertaken her placement. She valued how she had gained a different perspective of the operations of a regional sports organisation through her placement experience:

Obviously most students would be in clubs or a player of some sort in sports, but it definitely opens your eyes as to what goes on behind the scenes... I think being able to see it from the inside was definitely what made it meaningful and beneficial and just pretty much what you hoped from your co-op.

Learning about specific roles within their organisation was acknowledged as valuable. For example, Sean felt that he gained a wider appreciation of what the role of a high performance trainer really involved. He found that it was different from what he had expected it to be:
I learnt how it really works in industry, so it is not just writing programmes or just giving something to the athletes and letting them do their thing. You are more involved; you are almost like a motivator as well. You see that the athletes are with the strength and conditioners and high performance team more than the actual coaches. So you get to know the athletes quite well.

Steve, through his experience in a school, considered that he became aware of the reality perspective, “I learnt what it is like to be a teacher, a teachers life is hard”. Through being immersed in a school he was able to gain an understanding of, “the way of a professional [teacher], their standard of dress, way of speaking, way of writing”. In this context Steve felt that he was able to then learn the ‘tools’ that are part of the everyday practice of being a teacher. Being able to determine whether in fact teaching was the pathway that a student wanted to take in the future was perceived as important by not only students, but academic and industry supervisors as well. In most universities, students do not have the same opportunity to spend the time and find out what it is like to be a teacher before they enrol in a teaching specific qualification.

Drawing on her extensive experiences as an academic supervisor, Alice also thought that through their placement, students learnt about the realities of the industry and whether in fact this was the career for them. She comments:

Many students I know have been in the industry and decided that is not what they wanted. Yet all the way along they thought that is where they were heading. So I think it is an opportunity for the student to really decide one way or the other whether it is the right place for them.

7.1.2 Interpersonal and organisational skills for the workplace environment

The workplace was seen as a ‘social environment’ where students worked alongside athletes, trainers, coaches and administrators in sports organisations or teachers, students and support staff in a school. For students to understand how to practice in the sport and recreation community they acknowledged that they needed to understand about the workplace culture, the language of the workplace and the professional behaviours that were appropriate. Talking about her experience within a regional sports organisation, Susie commented on the importance of learning about effective communication:

You definitely have to be an effective communicator to get the message across and sometimes I did not realise how much you had to simplify things for some people because they are not necessarily going to know where you are coming from and they do not automatically know what you are talking about... There are so many different backgrounds now in the sport setting so you have got to know how to act towards
them. We are not really engaging with some ethnic background like Asian and African and so they get lost and once they join they are kind of left out. I learnt that how you react towards different [ethnic] groups is important.

Susie learnt how to use different language in order to be understood. Susie’s comments also show that she had begun to gain an understanding of cross-cultural communication. She was aware that learning how to interact with people from different backgrounds and in different environments was important. Susie also noted that there were differences between working in a regional sports organisation and her part-time job:

Everyone does part-time work… I was in a retail setting and you still show professionalism but [in co-op] it was in a different kind of way, how you approach things.

Sean also felt it was different for him when communicating in a professional environment. Initially he felt intimidated when communicating with professional athletes. However, he remarked, “it starts off you think it is different, it’s quite intimidating, but then you get used to it and it becomes like talking to anybody else”. Sean also realised the importance of appropriate and clear communication especially with his professional athletes:

In the industry communication is the key. It does not matter if you can write the best programme in the world but if your athletes don’t buy it then they are not going to do it.

Like Steve mentioned previously, Stan linked learning to use the right language with learning to be a professional. Stan’s comments also suggest that he had begun the transition from being a student to becoming a teacher:

I learnt how to act professional, like dressing properly, the way you talk around different people such as your co-workers and students and people outside of school. So you give different images to different people.

Learning professional behaviours were considered crucial by industry supervisors. Irene confirmed, “They need to understand that it is like employment, they need to be responsible for their actions, they need to be able to show up on time, and they need to be professional in their manners”. Amy, from her observations of her students over the year felt that for many of them it was a “growing up time” and for some it was a, “shock to the system”. Alice had similar views and felt that her students, through their cooperative education experiences became better prepared for the transition to life after university:

I think the students come out a lot more prepared for industry, a lot more prepared for real-life. They have had to front up at 8 o’clock in the morning and stay until 5. It is not
like being at uni where you can duck a class or two because you have got something else happening. So I think they learn a whole lot about life.

Through a wide variety of experiences students were given opportunities to learn about how people work together and the importance of working as part of a team. Teamwork within the workplace was considered to be quite different from doing a group assignment at university. In class, students often get to choose those they want to work with and they already know their team members. As Isabelle noted, in her community-based organisation, “students learnt to work with people that on a regular basis that they would not normally have chosen to be with”.

Ian felt that his three students, through the experience of running a major sports tournament, had learnt how to interact as part of a team. He also felt that they had learnt more than just how to work with others in the organisation but they had learnt people management skills though, “being thrown in the deep end, dealing with people … actually supervising people, supervising volunteers and dealing with stroppy coaches”.

Susie felt that it took time to find her place within the organisation and be part of the team. Adam was aware that some of his students that were high academic achievers had learnt that grades were not the only thing that mattered, they had learnt how important it was to be able interact with others. He mentions:

They get out there and realise that they may be not be as employable as they thought they were because they can’t chat around the staff room coffee table and can’t engage with people, or work in a team.

All students talked about an increase in their confidence. As her placement progressed, Sonia became more, “confident in the way of doing things, I did not need someone looking over my shoulder”. Sally explained that it was, “being given responsibilities that helped me to gain confidence”. Developing confidence contributed to how students learnt through their experience and will be discussed later in the chapter.

To make an effective contribution in the workplace students commented that they had realised the importance of good organisational skills. Improving time management was an organisational skill that was highlighted as a key focus for all six students. Although students had to manage time at university, the demands of the organisation alongside university studies, part-time work and sporting commitments made achieving this more challenging. Ian felt that through experiencing the demands of weekly competition management students learnt about working accurately, working efficiently and to deadlines that were non-negotiable:
They learnt the speed that you have to work at, with 14,000 members and 1,200–1,400 games every weekend there is a lot of stuff to do. It all has to be done on time and if you get behind then you need to catch up so it is working to those deadlines.

Stan felt that he learnt the importance of good planning and organisational skills and he commented, “I learnt to make sure I knew what I was doing and then work towards it. He also stressed the importance of, “setting deadlines and then meeting them”, while Sonia learnt, “to juggle multiple things at once” but also to prioritise work.

Organisational skills, although learnt in the particular setting of this placement, were seen as skills that would be transferable to any graduate employment setting and also back into their concurrent studies at university. As Sally reiterated, “organisational skills are those skills that will help you in every day and after, crucial skills”. Adele confirmed that the ‘transferable skills are what any organisation would want from a graduate”.

7.1.3 Specific knowledge or technical skills

The students had access to different knowledge dependent on the type of activities undertaken in the host organisation. Some students undertook roles such as coaching or fitness training a sports team, while others were involved in sports administration or event management. The students did not place a great deal of emphasis on the specific knowledge or technical skills that they learnt. However, this does not mean that this learning did not occur, and the interviews were able to draw out some references to the specific knowledge and technical skills students had gained.

Sonia, in an outdoor education setting, described how she felt she had become a competent instructor, “I can now instruct to a level where people want to pay me”. She acknowledged that she had learnt other more routine aspects of the job such as how to maintain gear. However, for her the most valuable aspect she learnt was about decision-making, and she commented, “I learnt to reflect and make decisions based on experience rather than just the technique taught in the classroom”.

Learning ‘procedural knowledge’ relevant to the specific workplace was evident in some responses. Irene felt that her students were able, “to learn the process of event management, how to set-up for a tournament, how to organise an events dinner”. Isabelle’s view was that, “learning about process was more important than knowledge because you can get knowledge from anywhere”.

Several students related the learning of technical skills to the theory that they had learnt in the classroom. Sally, in her role in a national sports organisation commented that she learnt, “how to apply theory to practice in technical skills such as fitness testing”. Sean, working within the high performance team of a professional sports club said that he learnt to write programmes and instruct exercises, but he also learnt, “how theory actually applies, such as periodisation”. Adele noted that her students (in sports science placements) had commented to her that they were actually applying what they were being taught in the athletic conditioning paper to their cooperative education activities. Application of theory is widely documented in the rhetoric of the purpose of cooperative education, so it was pleasing to see that the students were able to articulate some specific examples.

In contrast, Susie commented that what she had been taught at university about event management, “wasn’t necessarily how it works in industry”. Susie was placed in a position where she was able to see first-hand the difference between the theory and the reality. Interestingly, the academic supervisors also acknowledged that it was important for students to realise the limitations and that theory does not necessarily work in practice. As Adele mentions:

> Students learn all this theory in the classroom and try to put it into practice in real life and actually realise that sometimes the theory is all well and good, you try to put it into practice and it goes out the window. So I think it gives them a really good balance between [learning] the theory and knowing that not everything is textbook.

Cooperative education involves a substantive academic component and the students acknowledged the academic skills that they had learnt, in particular the writing skills that they needed for their final report. The students reported that undertaking the project for the organisation helped them to develop problem-solving skills and an understanding of how the research process can be applied in an industry context. The influence on learning of undertaking a project was not explored in-depth in this study, as this area had been a focus of earlier research that I had undertaken within the BSR context.

### 7.1.4 Personal development

Academic supervisor’s perceptions of learning focused more strongly on what they had observed the students had learnt about themselves. Adele felt that they learnt, “to trust what they are capable of doing is good enough and that they can stand on their own two feet and can be self-sufficient”. Amy’s view was that the students developed a sense of personal
agency as they learnt to become more independent learners through being given responsibility for their own learning.

Learning about the influence of personal attitude was evident in the students’ responses. Steve identified he learnt, “what you put it in is what you get out”. Sally also learnt that a positive attitude is important for learning. Susie learnt the importance of initiative, “it is you that needs to take the step, if you don’t take that step you are not going to learn anything or get that meaningful experience”.

Learning how to reflect and the value of critical reflection was acknowledged as something some, but not all, students had gained. Steve admitted that he learnt the ability to reflect, “how to look back on an event and pick it apart and judge what he could do better next time”. He acknowledged that this had not been easy for him as, “I had not done a whole lot of it before, I had not really taken the time to step back before and look at things like that”. It was evident that the students were now thinking about learning in a different way, and had begun to see the value and importance of reflection in practice and on practice as well as the influence of attitude. These themes will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Overall the findings show that stakeholders perceived that learning had occurred and that learning was specific to the ‘situated nature’ of each workplace context. As each student had their own negotiated learning outcomes, what they reported they learnt was often dependent on what they had wanted to gain from their experience. The views of students, academic and industry supervisors can each be considered as unique as their perceptions are situated within the specific context of experiences that each one of them had.

7.2 How did students learn through their cooperative education experience?

You did not have a textbook. It is not set what you are supposed to learn, you learn yourself and then you talk about what you learnt (Stan).

The findings presented in this section focus on the perceptions of how the students learnt through the cooperative education experience. It was clear that the learning process in the cooperative education context involved much more than just ‘doing or having the experience’. Key themes that emerged were that learning occurred: through participation alongside others in authentic activities; through direct and indirect guidance; through dialogue and social interactions; through critical reflection; and through support and feedback. These themes will be discussed in the following sections.
7.2.1 Participation in authentic activities of the workplace environment

Students reported learning through becoming involved in a supportive workplace environment that provided authentic and meaningful activities. Most students, although at times admitted that they were exposed to the more routine activities, were given challenging tasks, and areas of responsibility and roles that were significant within the organisation. For example, Stan described his role:

I was not there just to be a helping hand. I had jobs to do. I took the fitness training on a Friday morning. I coached the rugby, touch and softball teams. I helped out on any P.E trips. So it was like I did have a role and it was not just odd jobs that they made me do.

Stan also felt he was part of the organisation and that he, “had a say in what he was there to do”. Developing a sense of belonging in the school came from being able to exercise professional agency where he had the capacity for choice, responsibility and self-direction in relation to his own learning.

Sonia felt that she was able to learn through her placement in an outdoor recreation company because, “the industry was behind the whole thing”. She valued that the industry supervisor ensured that the activities she was involved with were authentic, as well as relevant to what she needed and wanted to learn for her degree. While initially she felt like a visitor, that feeling changed once they got busy and as she realised, “by proving you can perform you become part of the organisation”.

Another student, Sally, felt that her organisation (a national sports organisation) helped her to learn through providing her with a wide range of appropriate opportunities. It was through the variety that she was able to find which direction she wanted to go in the future. She also felt that being included, and part of the team was important for her learning:

I appreciated that they made me feel really welcome from the start. However, I realised that I had to learn how I could apply myself and make myself part of the team in order to be successful.

Ian, an industry supervisor also had the view that it was important that the student was able to become part of the team and that they were able to develop appropriate personal relationships with colleagues in the workplace. He commented:

It is important to us that they have the right personality to fit into the team. We have some fairly experienced people here, experienced coaches that are former professional players who do not stand any nonsense and so the student has to live up to their expectations.
7.2.2 Direct and indirect guidance

Students described that they learnt through observing or being shown and then doing. The initial observations helped students to learn the behaviours that were part of the workplace culture and helped them to understand ‘what to do’. This is similar to Bandura’s (1977) concept of modelling. For example, Sean commented:

When I was first there I was obviously in the corner, I did not want to interrupt... I learnt by me following them, getting to know everyone, because it is quite hard being a new person in the industry that is already established. They have already established what they do, their routines that kind of thing and someone new coming in can be quite difficult... In the first few weeks I was just following and eventually I started to get more involved, it came gradually and by at least halfway through the year I was more part of the team... I took on a key role as an assistant trainer ... and then had a free licence around the gym.

Sean learnt first from watching and following the high performance trainer (the ‘expert’) as well as other work colleagues. Sean’s comments are an example of the importance of interactions with workplace colleagues, and reflect the process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Newcomers start as legitimate but peripheral members and slowly over time, as they become more proficient, they become full participants and move towards enculturation in their community of practice (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Eames & Coll, 2010).

Billett (2002) argues that for effective learning, students need access to tasks of increasing criticality and accountability over time. Activities should be sequenced from those that have negligible consequences through to those of greater responsibility. For Steve, he initially began with just shadowing the outdoor education teacher, but in the end he took responsibility for the planning and running of a three-day outdoor excursion. He commented:

This was a big step up, as previously I had worked with colleagues, but this was down to my own ability, my resourcefulness. So being given that chance was a good thing and if it went wrong it was on my head and I would learn from that.

Steve acknowledged being able to learn from the implications of his actions. As Sally confessed in the response below, she learnt by making mistakes:

I went into my co-op wanting to learn and improve myself and I feel that my attitude had a big effect on how I developed... I learnt through moving outside my comfort zone and doing things I was not sure about. I also made myself do things and attempt to do things even though I was sometimes not sure of what I was doing... It helped me to learn from my mistakes and how I could do things better.
Sally acknowledged in the comments above that her attitude to learning was also important. What and how much can be learnt can be strongly influenced by motivation. However, intrinsic motivation can be stimulated through, “tasks of optimal novelty and difficulty, that are relevant to personal interests and provide for personal choice and control” (Schunk, 2009, p. 267). In Isaac’s view (as a supervisor in a regional sports organisation) not all students had the same attitude and level of motivation:

The challenges are there, you get your students who are quite street smart and get straight into it and then you get students that just sit back and expect work to come their way... The students that just sit there doing nothing, there is no room for that and they learn that very quickly.

Amy, as an academic supervisor had differing views of the motivation for achieving the learning outcomes of cooperative education:

I think the students are heavily influenced by grades and particularly in that third year wanting a high mark for this paper. I think that drives most of them. The second thing that I think drives a lot of them, they see an opportunity to get an industry reference from their co-op. Others see a pathway into the industry; there may be an opening for them through their co-op work.

Students reinforced the importance of gaining a pathway into industry and the chance of “getting a foot in the door” (Sean) as a motivation for learning. However in contrast to Amy’s views the students interviewed made no reference to grades as being a motivation for their learning.

7.2.3 Dialogue and social interactions

Dialogue and social interactions with others within the workplace community of practice were seen as important for learning to occur. Irene (a school sports director), described the wide range of interactions that her co-op students were exposed to:

They are learning from interactions with the [school] students, they are learning from their peers [in the same placement organisation], they are learning from other coaches and teachers around us. They are learning from me. They are learning from the clubs and the RSTs about how to facilitate their programmes [in the school]. They are learning from the parents and all our other staff.

The conversations with supervisors, co-workers and peers was acknowledged as contributing to the way in which students were able to learn and make meaning from their experience. As Sally mentioned, “talking about my experiences with others, taking about what I was doing and how I could do things better, helped me to learn”. Susie also learnt through talking to others and she described the way she learnt:
How I learnt was by asking questions and talking to people. Initially I was told what to do and then left to do it on my own. As I progressed they started to ask me what I thought.

Initially the more experienced workers provided Susie with support through allocating her work and answering her questions. This illustrates that Susie was drawing on the resources of the environment and expertise of her peers. Through talking to others she was able to access specific knowledge that was situated within the context of where she needed to apply that knowledge. As Susie became more competent she was left on her own to work independently. As time progressed she moved towards becoming one of the more experienced workers and was able to then share her new knowledge with others. Although Susie felt that confidence was important for learning she also noted:

If you are too confident I think it is a barrier because you are not going to take that step to actually ask questions or talk to people or to discuss where you are in your experience or how to get better.

Much of what we learn we learn from others and as Vygotsky (1978) stresses, language should be considered as the supreme psychological tool that enables the acquisition of skills and higher forms of learning possible. For the students to understand how to practice in the sport and recreation community they acknowledged that they needed to understand the language of the workplace and the professional behaviours that were appropriate.

The development of formal as well as informal relationships contributed to learning and gaining a sense of belonging. Stan highlighted how the informal social interactions were important for his learning:

I got to do the staff kind of things like going to the staff BBQ. So hanging out with the teachers, getting that whole side of it, seeing not just the ‘in classroom’ experience but the whole community of the school, getting to know the Principal as well, who had an open door so I could just walk in and out and go and see her if I felt like it.

He also appreciated having access to experienced others (the Principal) who had knowledge and expertise. Another student, Sean, commented that being able to play sport with his workplace colleagues was also valuable in making him feel accepted and part of the workplace culture.

Learning through working alongside other co-workers was seen by the students as a different way of learning than they had experienced at university. As Steve mentioned:
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As I became a part of the furniture of the school, it was different from how I learnt at uni, it was more learning from other teachers, other people rather than learning from purely books.

Steve’s comments highlight the importance of gaining access to knowledge through developing relationships with workplace colleagues. The more experienced workers contributed by providing access to the dispositional knowledge and the tricks of the trade that are unlikely to be learnt through university-based experiences or from books. Experienced workers could also provide guidance on how a task should be completed and to what degree and to what standard of performance.

7.2.4 Critical reflection

As mentioned in Chapter Two, encouraging critical reflection is considered a valuable strategy for facilitating student learning through cooperative education. Students were required to complete a reflective journal as an academic requirement. In addition, students were expected to share their reflections with academic supervisors during regular meetings. The students interviewed confirmed that they considered that reflection helped them to learn. Sally comments on the value of keeping a reflective journal:

The reflective journal, which we had to do was really helpful, I actually wrote in that nearly every week and I was able to reflect on what I was doing and how I could improve so that helped, that helped a lot... Well it helped me to learn from my mistakes and how I could do things better.

Several students said that initially they had difficulty in understanding the value or purpose of critical reflection but once they ‘had got it’ felt that it contributed to their learning. For example, Stan commented:

At the start of the first semester, I didn’t really see the point, but as we kept going, my academic supervisor kept telling me to go back and make sure you thought about what happened and say what happened and say why it happened and all of that. So definitely critical reflection helped. Helped with most of the learning because then you could go back, as long as you kept that record you could go back in November and look at what you did in March and see what you learnt.

Sonia agreed that the reflective journal helped her to see the progress she had made. She also admitted that she did not find writing the journal reflections easy. She commented:

Usually just you talk about it and I found it hard to express that way of reflection during the coop process. So it took me a long time to get my head around that... Although I didn’t realise it at the time the reflective journal helped me to learn. Going back and actually reading it and going oh I can actually see it showed progression so you actually realised that you had learnt something.
Similar to the student views, Alice from an academic supervisor perspective, was realistic and aware that not all students understood and were clear on the process of critical reflection:

I think some of them don’t understand what critical reflection is for initially, and then as time goes on and we try and encourage that side of their learning to bring those steps and stages into the way that they look at their learning, I think many of them come away realising at the end that it’s good to look at what you’ve been doing and why you’ve been doing it, and how it’s worked, and what could be improved.

Even though it was perceived as challenging for students, Alice was very clear on her views of how critical reflection contributed to student learning:

They are learning from their experiences and they learn through reflection or critical reflection to make those links, so rather than just going through the process of having an experience but looking at that experience and saying well what actually happened here, why did it happen, would I do anything different, am I going to change the way I do things in the future.

Critical reflection is considered as an important strategy not only to help students evaluate and improve their experiences but to help them to integrate theory and practice (Coll et al., 2009; A. J. Martin, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma, & Coll, 2010). Academic supervisors agreed that critical reflection assists students to make the connections between their experience in the workplace and the learning gained in the university. Alice felt that if students were better prepared in their critical reflection skills then this would potentially enhance the overall learning that could be gained through the cooperative education experience. Adam had similar views and commented:

As they improve in that reflection I think there’s got to be changes there in terms of how they learn and those who improve on that reflective process probably learn more than others.

Three of the industry supervisors made some reference to the importance of critical reflection for learning. Irene, when asked what contributed to student learning her response was:

I think the critical reflection is a really good way for them to learn because they actually have to write down what they’ve done and explain what outcome that has been achieved and whether it's positive or negative and if they were to do it again, what would it be. I think the critical reflection is a big way of learning.

Irene was a graduate of the BSR programme, so it was pleasing to see that she still valued how critical reflection can contribute to learning. Ingrid also acknowledged that critical reflection helped students to learn, but felt that it was more the academic supervisor's responsibility to encourage this rather than being her role. Developing the ability to critically
reflect is not easy, and as mentioned previously, the role of the academic supervisor can be instrumental in assisting the student to engage in the reflective process.

The views expressed in this section confirm that although the students are prepared with a workshop on the process of critical reflection and supported by their academic supervisors, more assistance is needed in order for students to maximise the contribution that critical reflection can make to the learning process.

7.2.5 Support and feedback

Students and academics consistently stated that good academic and industry supervision was fundamental to the learning process. Industry and academic supervisors provided support and feedback to the students in different ways.

An academic supervisor, Alice described the importance of her role:

I see the academic supervisor as a key link between the student, the industry and the university. My role is to really ensure that the student has a good experience out in industry and that they are able to deal with any hurdles they may come across on the way and that they have someone outside the industry or even their own peer group that they can talk to about the way their co-op is going and that is through the reflective process. My role is very much a mentor ... to guide the student, helping them with their academic writing and their critical reflection... There is a fine line between mothering and allowing the student to grow themselves. It is hands on, but hands off at the same time.

As Alice alluded, student self-responsibility was considered important in the supervision process. For the supervision relationship to work well, students need to take ownership of their learning. Alan also had similar views:

I think it depends very much on how proactive the student is in terms of interacting with the industry supervisor and the academic supervisor. It really should be driven by the student and determined by them... If the student is active, gets feedback from the industry supervisor, gets feedback from the academic supervisor, really the industry and the student wins.

This was a consistent view expressed not only by academic supervisors but also industry supervisors and students. Ian also highlighted the importance of developing a good relationship between the student and supervisor:

If the student has a good relationship with their industry supervisor they can keep on top of everything and do everything the way the organisation needs it to be done. Just left to their own devices that is when the trouble comes in... Regular feedback is important and we need to look at having more meetings, which is something we haven’t done as well this year as we like to.
Through managing the operational aspects of the placement, Ian was able to provide support and monitoring of the student experience.

Most, but not all, industry supervisors had similar expectations of the roles of the supervisor. However, Isaac had a different view of the relationship:

I try to streamline the process as much as possible where my interactions with the student become as minimal as possible so I can carry on with my own work. So that is, for me to be planned and prepared to get projects into place before they arrive with a template of what they are supposed to do and then leave them to do it. That is a way to do it because they either sink or swim.

Isaac’s view suggests he expects a greater level of autonomy where students are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for specific tasks or a project. The roles of the supervisor are clearly complex, and the findings suggest that the nature of workplace activities dictates differing levels of involvement across the range of host organisations.

Steve noted how friendly both his supervisors were, and he commented how much value he gained from the interactions. He felt:

It is important that if you need to ask a question you are not scared to go and talk to your supervisor, because you need to be able to ask those questions. I learnt from the very in-depth discussion with both my academic and industry supervisors and colleagues as well. To me those discussions highlighted what I learnt because I was able to bring through the knowledge I had learnt and be able to have an effective discussion and if I did not know something I was able to go away after the discussions and look it up.

However, Isaac found it challenging to give feedback to students as, “you are not paying them to do the job, so to be critical of them is quite harsh in front of them”.

**7.2.6 Influences on student learning**

To triangulate the findings and to gain a broader perspective of stakeholder perceptions, questionnaire participants were asked to comment on what ‘student learning in co-op is influenced most by’. Consistently, comments across students, industry and academic supervisors identified the industry supervisor and the environment of the workplace as having the major influences on the student learning experience.

Industry supervisors were considered to influence what and how the students could learn through the type of environment they provided in the workplace. Industry supervisors were considered to have a significant role initially in negotiating the learning contract. The industry supervisors perceived they were responsible for the, “experiences the student is able to have
within the organisation and how they are able to progress” (AQ2). They were also there to help the student to, “set goals and then assign responsibilities to achieve these goals” (IQ27). Academic supervisors identified that providing, “appropriate, relevant and challenging work activities” (AQ8) where students were able to develop, “a sense of belonging” (AQ3) were key roles of the industry supervisor that influenced ‘what’ and ‘how’ the students were able to learn.

While the industry supervisor was considered responsible for providing a positive learning environment, students consistently identified workplace colleagues as also having a key influence on their learning. Students were influenced by, “the people I worked with” (SQ80), “the people I met” (SQ35) and the, “people around me” (SQ7). Industry supervisors agreed that students gained most when, “working with experienced practitioners in a busy environment” (IQ8) and that, “the interaction and confidence building that came from working in a team environment” (IQ15) was an important influence on learning. These and other similar comments by the participants are consistent with the findings presented previously in this chapter on the importance of the personal interactions in the workplace for student learning.

Industry supervisors perceived that the attitude of the student was a major influence on learning. They considered the, “degree to which a student engaged with the environment and their willingness to learn and participate” (IQ3) as important influences. Academics had similar views and acknowledged that coop learning was influenced by:

The student’s own enthusiasm and pro-activeness to structure the opportunity to gain from it want they want to. So being assertive and a good negotiator is an important attribute for students to have to get the best out of co-op (AQ15).

Students also made similar comments as they realised that their attitude, work ethic and personal motivation were important influences on learning. Students were also aware that they needed to take responsibility for negotiating their own learning through, “expressing what I wanted to do and my co-op industry listening to this” (SQN34). For some students, they considered that it was the end goal that had a key influence on their learning. Examples given were, “wanting to be a teacher in the future” (SQJ24), “finishing my degree” (SQN41) and, “wanting to achieve a high grade and get the most out of it” (SQJ27).

Learning was also influenced by, “what the students are willing to do and how much trust an industry supervisor is willing to have in them” (IQ23). A student just showing a positive attitude to learning was not always seen as enough. The industry supervisors identified that they
needed to have the confidence in the abilities of the student. In addition, the industry supervisors also need to be willing and in a position to enable the students to take on responsibilities that extended the student in order to maximise the learning that comes from the experience. The industry supervisors acknowledged that initially they needed to provide a high level of support, but as the placement progressed they needed to be able to, “loosen their support and so the student becomes self-responsible” (IQ22).

Academic supervisors were also identified as being an important influence in the learning process. In most responses, the roles of the academic supervisors were combined with the industry supervisor in providing support and guidance for the student. However, students also acknowledged the specific role that the academic supervisor played in developing reflection skills and influencing the learning process through, “pushing for more critical analysis” (SQN28). Academics’ comments acknowledged that the students, “ability to reflect” (AQ9) influenced their ability to learn from their experiences.

Overall the key influences on student learning: environment of the workplace; industry supervision; workplace colleagues; student attitude; and critical reflection triangulate well with the interview findings and contribute to explaining how students learn through their cooperative education experience.

7.3 Chapter summary

While the learning experience was unique for each student and placement organisation, the stakeholders perceived that the cooperative education experience enabled students to construct knowledge about themselves, their placement organisation and the wider context of the industry. It was felt that students learnt generic and transferable skills along with procedural knowledge (the know-how) and the dispositional knowledge (the values and attitudes). Students acknowledged that at times they were able to apply what they had learnt in the university setting to the context of the workplace, but they also learnt that theory did not always work in practice.

Students learnt through participation in authentic activities and through developing a sense of belonging in the workplace. Learning occurred through close or direct guidance by supervisors who told or showed the students what to do. Students also accessed knowledge through indirect guidance, where they had the opportunity to observe the actions of their colleagues in the workplace. Being encouraged to critically reflect, through journaling and sharing their experiences with others, students became aware of what they had learnt and were able to
consider ways to improve. Through meaningful dialogue, social interactions and developing relationships with workplace colleagues the students were able to learn the dispositional knowledge that contributed towards an understanding of what it means to be a professional in the sport and recreation industry.
Chapter Eight: Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to advance understanding of cooperative education. In the context of this study, the research was undertaken in the field of sport tertiary education. The research was underpinned by three questions that are now brought together and addressed within this chapter. The first section will discuss stakeholder relationships and the concept of cooperative education partnerships. Following this, the alignment of stakeholders’ views on the intentions of cooperative education is examined and related to current thinking in this area. The third section discusses student learning in cooperative education from a sociocultural perspective, with a focus on what students learnt, how they learnt and the influences on their learning. At the completion of the chapter, the key conclusions that have been drawn from this research are summarised.

8.1 Stakeholder relationships

The first question posed in this study was to consider the students’, industry and academic supervisors’ views on the nature of the cooperative education relationship. Essential to the philosophy of cooperative education is the development of a relationship between students, industry and the university. It was clear in the findings that cooperative education was perceived as a partnership. What defined the partnership varied, but was viewed by most participants as a tripartite relationship between students, industry and the university that involved cooperation or collaboration. The perception of cooperative education being a partnership aligns with what is written in the programme documents and espoused in the literature (L. Cooper et al., 2010).

While there was no consistent evidence in the diagrammatic representations or the comments made to suggest a hierarchical structure, it was clear that the student was considered to be the focal point of the relationship. There was general consensus that students, industry supervisors and academic supervisors (or the university) were considered the key stakeholders. As mentioned in Chapter Five, a stakeholder is someone who is affected by or can affect the achievement of the organisation’s objectives (Freeman, 2010). Some students initially did not acknowledge themselves as stakeholders, but when prompted further in the interviews they realised that in fact they were. Interestingly, the views expressed by some students reflected that they were in fact the main stakeholders because of the investment they were making in terms of time and money, along with the responsibility they had for determining their own goals and what they wanted to achieve. A different perspective was held by some academics whereby they understood that the university was the more dominant
stakeholder as they had the greatest level of responsibility in the relationship. More detail on the responsibilities of students, industry and academic supervisors and how these contributed to the student learning experience will be discussed later in this chapter. What can be concluded from the findings of this research is that students, industry and academics had different levels of responsibilities, and it was through bringing the three stakeholders together that the partnership became most effective.

Although the cooperative education relationship was represented as being between the student, industry organisation and the university, the network analysis illustrated that other sport organisations that were linked to the host organisation also made a contribution that added value to the partnership. Through these additional linkages, students reported that they were able to create networks, be exposed to more than just the activities of the host organisation and were able to gain an understanding of the wider sport industry.

8.1.1 Motivations for forming a cooperative education partnership

Prior to undertaking this research, I knew very little about the motives that influenced sport and recreation organisations to participate in cooperative education partnerships. Through applying Oliver’s (1990) conceptual framework for the formation of inter-organisational relationships (IORs) to the data in this study, I was able to identify that there were three of the contingencies in her framework: reciprocity, efficiency and legitimacy that were deemed important in the formation of a cooperative education partnership.

Reciprocity motives are based on a perspective that partnerships require not only common goals, but that there is mutual support to achieve the goals (Babiak, 2007; Oliver, 1990). The findings confirmed that each partner was able to offer the other mutual benefits through their different levels of contribution and support. Yet, what each partner gained out of the relationship was very different. As will be discussed in detail later in this chapter, for students, the outcomes related to what they had been able to learn; for industry, the outcomes related to what they were able to achieve by having a student as an additional resource; and for the university, the outcomes were related to the reputation of their programme for producing workplace-ready graduates. Although different outcomes create challenges, particularly in terms of communicating expectations of the relationship, it is a positive feature for the sustainability of the partnership if the outcomes for each partner are more relevant to their own needs, and thus are more likely to be realised.

The findings of this study identified that industry motivations for participating in the cooperative education programme were often driven by the need for extra labour as a resource to improve
efficiency. Consistent with previous research in the sport sector (Ferkins, 2002), the findings in this study confirmed that ‘value added’ short-term tangible returns were an important motivation for organisations in taking on a cooperative education student. The ‘not-for-profit’ sport industry relies heavily on volunteers, and although the students in this study were ‘not yet qualified’, the industry supervisors did acknowledge that they were able to bring valuable knowledge, skills and ideas to the organisation that are not necessarily found in all volunteers.

Legitimacy was clearly identified in the findings as a key outcome of the partnership for the university. Academics, students and some industry supervisors’ views suggested that improving the image and reputation of the university in a competitive market was an institutional benefit. In the marketing brochures for the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR), cooperative education has been given a high profile. In New Zealand, there are a number of tertiary institutions that offer programmes in the same discipline. More importantly, within Auckland, two other universities offer a bachelor degree in sport. Neither of the two university degrees that are in direct competition currently includes a cooperative education or other such substantive component of work-integrated learning. While cooperative education is undoubtedly one of the strengths of the AUT degree, I feel that the university needs to be careful about the image that is portrayed. The important aspects of what constitutes a university education, compared to purely vocational education still need to be conveyed to prospective students, the industry and the public as a whole.

While not part of Oliver’s original framework, through the analysis of the data in this study I identified the concept of synergy as being important in the formation of cooperative education partnerships. Some of the comments from students, industry and academics suggested that as partners they felt they were able to achieve more by working together than they could on their own. Breen (2001) had noted similar comments in her study of university–community partnerships. A synergistic relationship has important connotations in the way that the university and industry view each other. There was no evidence in the stakeholder perceptions of any assumed power relations, where industry was considered subservient to the university. Although, as mentioned before, some academics felt that they had the greatest responsibility, there was a perception of mutual respect for the contributions that each stakeholder could bring to the partnership. These views align well with the notion of a ‘stakeholder-integrated approach’ (Patrick et al., 2008) to effective cooperative education partnerships.
Whereas the conceptual framework proposed by Oliver (1990) originally focused on organisational level determinants, through this research I have identified that interpersonal connections and individual factors also play a key role in the formation of cooperative education partnerships. The personal interaction between the student and host organisation was frequently identified as being critical to forming the initial relationship. Building on the insights of Babiak and Thibault (2008), this study also acknowledges that relationships in the sport sector are often formed among people who know one another or are friends. This factor has the potential to impact on the nature of the relationship that develops during the cooperative education experience. Through the network analysis, it was evident that while there were strong ties between the student and industry, it was the university–industry relationship that was perceived as the weakest. It should be noted here that this is likely an artefact of this model where it is common for students to find their own placement. It was a common view across the stakeholders that the relationship between the university and a particular host organisation may not otherwise exist without the connection of a cooperative education student. The findings presented raise the issue that for long-term viability of the BSR cooperative education programme, both industry and the university need to consider more strategic alignments rather than cooperative education partnerships based on relationships that rely so heavily on individual personal associations.

8.1.2 The benefits for stakeholders

The investment in a cooperative education partnership was seen to have both mutual as well as individual benefits for all stakeholders. The stakeholders revealed that they had attained substantial benefits and outcomes that aligned well with their motivations for being part of the partnership. Students identified academic and personal development as well as career and employment related benefits. Benefits for industry were linked to adding value to the organisation though additional resources, as well as bringing in new ideas. The university gained benefits through closer ties with industry, increased reputation and recruitment. In addition, having a programme that developed graduate attributes that were aligned with the needs of industry was a significant benefit to the university. The wide range of benefits expressed by the stakeholders in this study, situated in the context of sport and recreation, were as expected and consistent with what has been reported in a number of other disciplines (Braunstein & Loken, 2004; Braunstein et al., 2011; Crump & Johnsson, 2011; Dressler & Keeling, 2011).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that although the benefits to the university as a whole were clearly identified by the stakeholders, any individual benefits for academic supervisors were
rare. While making contacts in the industry was raised as useful by one new academic supervisor, little else was mentioned in the interviews. A study by McCurdy and Zegwaard (2009) investigating faculty views, noted that while academics considered WIL valuable to student learning, being involved in WIL was not seen as enhancing an academic career, and that their contributions to these partnerships were often unrecognised and undervalued. It would have been interesting to explicitly find out whether the academic supervisors in this study had shared similar views, but their collective silence around the personal/professional benefits suggests a sharing of this concern.

The motives of reciprocity and mutual benefits for stakeholders identified from the findings of this study align well with the concept of ‘boundary spanning’. Drawn from organisational theory, boundary spanning links organisations to one another in order to create mutually beneficial relationships. Peach et al. (2011) have applied the concept of boundary spanning to WIL. They argue that each organisation operates under its own autonomous authority, and that it is through boundary spanning that a mutually beneficial relationship 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 exceed the conflicts and costs of operating outside their own organisational domain. (p. 100)

Their argument is consistent with what has been found in this study, and supports not only the motives of reciprocity, but also the importance of a synergistic partnership.

For students to gain the most benefit from a WIL experience, it is suggested they need to develop the capabilities for boundary spanning so that they can, “re-situate knowledge and skills in different contexts” (Peach et al., 2011, p. 96). The findings of this study do support that the BSR students have been able to develop some of the capabilities necessary for boundary spanning and are discussed later in this chapter.

8.1.3 Challenges in forming cooperative education partnerships

While the cooperative education partnerships between students, industry and the university were considered mutually beneficial, it was not always perceived as being completely straightforward. The views in this study are consistent with numerous other studies that have documented the challenges in forming educational partnerships (Cardini, 2006; Jeffries & Milne, 2013; Reeve & Gallacher, 2005). As Cardini (2006) points out, in reality, educational partnerships are, “an arena of complexities, tensions and power” (p. 393). Other studies
conducted in the specific context of WIL have been more positive and acknowledge the success of industry–university partnerships, but caution that good partnerships need to be based upon mutual benefit (Harvey et al., 1997; Orell, 2004; Varty, 1996) and good communication (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Jeffries & Milne, 2013; Patrick et al., 2008).

Consistent with the cautions expressed above, a critical factor identified in this study was the need for clear communication between the stakeholders at the time of recruitment of host organisations and the preparation of students. In order to provide an effective partnership, a clear set of expectations and outcomes needs to be negotiated at the outset. It was evident within the study that the level and amount of communication between the three different stakeholders varied throughout the programme. After the set-up phase, communication between the academic supervisor and industry was normally limited to the three-way meeting once per semester, unless there were ‘issues’ that arose during the placement. In most cases the stakeholders viewed this as an, “adequate level of interaction”. While some industry and academic supervisors felt that more communication would be beneficial to the relationship, they offered no specific suggestions as to what the expectation should be.

Effective communication between the student and their industry supervisor was identified as being critical to the success of a placement. Yet, the expectations of the supervisor in regards to the amount of communication varied immensely, and were dependent on the position the supervisor held within the organisation and the nature of the activities the student was involved in. Communication between the academic supervisor and the student was also seen to be important in facilitating learning and this will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Meetings between the student and academic supervisor were generally left to the student to initiate, and academics voiced their concerns about the number of students who did not take full advantage of the supervisor relationship. Jeffries and Milne (2013) stress the need to put in place communication mechanisms that are, “based on shared understandings of their respective roles and the confidence that each will fulfil their sides of the agreement” (p. 17). L. Cooper et al. (2010) endorse the importance of establishing a common understanding of the meaning, expectations, outcomes, associated responsibilities and level of commitment required by all stakeholders.

8.2 The intentions of cooperative education

The second research question set out to determine the views of the stakeholders on the purpose and meaning of cooperative education. In order to gain a broad view of the stakeholder perceptions of cooperative education, questionnaire and interview participants
were asked what they saw the purpose of cooperative education to be. The findings conveyed that students, industry and academic supervisors shared a perception that the purpose of cooperative education was to gain experience in industry, career clarification and for developing personal and professional skills. Bringing these themes together formed an overall perspective that the purpose of cooperative education was to enhance the employability of BSR graduates. I must emphasise here that employability is a much wider concept than just being ‘employed’. Employability is more than the skills and attributes that make a graduate more likely to gain a job, and can be viewed as a set of achievements, skilful practices and understandings that, “make graduates more likely to be successful in their chosen occupations to the benefit of themselves, the workforce and ultimately the economy” (Yorke, 2006, p. 8).

I raise the issue here that the stakeholder’s focus on gaining experience and developing employability skills may be considered as compromising the wider mandate of university learning, and constrain the expectations and outcomes of cooperative education to a more simplistic vocational focus. My experiences, within the university over many years, have made me aware that some university academics embrace the notion that enhancing employability of students is important. For others, there is a tension that arises from different understandings on the role of universities and the meaning of the term employability.

The perception by the stakeholders in this study that the fundamental purpose of cooperative education is to enhance employability aligns well with the call from governments and employers to ensure that university graduates are in fact ‘work-ready’ (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008; Universities Australia, 2008; Yorke, 2006). However, the graduates of today need to be able to contribute productively to increasingly complex, dynamic and competitive workplaces occurring in a global marketplace. Workplaces in sport and recreation are becoming more flexible with work roles that are less well defined, and this requires graduates that are able to demonstrate capabilities that allow them to cope in this changing environment. Not all BSR graduates will even enter the sport and recreation industry or stay within the industry in the long-term. Indeed, as Peach and Matthews (2011) estimate, the learner of today is likely to have at least 10 jobs by the age of 38 and many of these may not yet exist.

While the findings of this study clearly have a focus on the development of knowledge skills and attributes for the ‘now’, I argue that cooperative education situated within a university degree programme should be positioned to play a more critical role in shaping and preparing
graduates for the complexities of the 21st century. Cooperative education within a university degree structure should not only foster work readiness, knowledge transfer and career development, but as suggested by Murphy and Calway (2008), should also engender dispositions to lifelong learning, promotion of human and social potential and internationalised thinking. Cooperative education should also provide opportunities for students to further develop their personal and professional identities, and to learn to navigate the important ethical aspects of being a professional (Campbell & Zegwaard, 2011). This complex agenda of purposes spans much more than just enhancing employability, and the ideas expressed above were an obvious silence within the findings.

Along with enhancing employability, it was evident in some comments that stakeholders were aware that fundamental to the purpose of cooperative is a philosophical commitment to learning through the experience of work, rather than simply learning about work. To this end, the BSR cooperative education programme was intentionally designed to integrate classroom studies with time spent in the workplace. It is the integration of the learning environments of both the university and the workplace that provides the distinctions between cooperative education and other models or frameworks of workplace-based learning (Eames & Coll, 2010). How stakeholders perceived the notion of integration is discussed later in this chapter.

8.2.1 The meaning of cooperative education

While there is a clear vision of integrated learning within the intent of cooperative education, the findings reveal that key stakeholders within the model (namely students, industry and academics) interpret the meaning differently. There was no consistent interpretation within or across the stakeholder groups as to what the term cooperative education actually meant.

The lack of continuity about the ‘meaning’ of cooperative education was not a surprise to me based on my previous experience. My perceptions of a lack of a shared understanding were foundational to me undertaking this research. Indeed, other academics in different contexts have noted similar concerns (Patrick et al., 2008; Rowe et al., 2012). Within the sport context, a survey of tertiary institutions identified that the commonly used terms for work-integrated learning experiences included: cooperative education; professional practicum; industry experience; sport practicum; work-based cooperative practicum; internship; field experiences; work-based learning and work-integrated learning (Fleming & Ferkins, 2005). It is not uncommon for an industry supervisor to have a student from AUT undertaking ‘cooperative education’, while another student is on placement in the same organisation but from a
different tertiary institution (and sometimes even from AUT but from a different course) on a ‘practicum’ or ‘fieldwork’ experience.

While I am confident that the BSR programme sits within the accepted framework of cooperative education, there is still an ongoing debate, particularly in the US, as to what specifically defines cooperative education (Gardner & Bartkus, 2014; Groenewald et al., 2011; Linn et al., 2004; Rowe et al., 2012, November; Usher, 2012) and where the boundaries of inclusion lie. While it is acknowledged that multiple interpretations do exist globally, it is important that within the same context (i.e., BSR at AUT), stakeholders have a shared understanding of what cooperative education actually means in terms of the fundamental responsibilities, expectations and outcomes of the experience. Given that the BSR programme documents did not have consistent definitions and terminology, this was an issue that needed immediate attention. The course documents and supervisor guides have since been reworded for consistency, and strategies have been designed to communicate the intentions more clearly to the stakeholders.

Within their articulations of the meaning, stakeholders frequently made reference to a collaboration or cooperation between students, industry and university. It is important that stakeholders are aware that cooperative education involves a lot more than just working collaboratively. As discussed previously, the idea that cooperative education was considered to be ‘a partnership between students, industry and the university’ was strongly supported. Equally strong across the stakeholders was the idea that cooperative education was about learning, rather than just working. It was expected that the students and academics would be aware of the learning focus, but it was a positive response to find that so many industry supervisors were on the same page. It is likely that the learning contract (with associated learning outcomes) that is negotiated as part of the initial set-up phase and all parties sign, and that the majority of students are unpaid, are clearly important factors that contribute to ensuring that cooperative education is perceived as a learning experience rather than just ‘job training’.

### 8.2.2 Integration of theory and practice

Students, industry or academic supervisors did not consistently identify ‘integration’ as being fundamental to either the purpose or meaning of cooperative education. While a few academics and students used and understood the term integration, it was definitely not a common expression evident in the data. This is of some concern, as the real strength of cooperative education as a strategy of learning is not just that students gain opportunities to
learn in the classroom and in the workplace, but that these opportunities are integrated to create learning that is, “more than the sum of the two parts” (Eames & Coll, 2010, p. 192). The views expressed by the stakeholders in this study align with the findings of a multi-institutional study in a sport cooperative education context that concluded that integration needed to be made more explicit in the cooperative education curriculum (A. J. Martin et al., 2010). A number of other authors have expressed concern about the uncertainty of what is meant by the term ‘integration’ and how integration actually occurs (Billett, 2011; Coll et al., 2009; Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). This area is in need of further research, and strategies need to be developed to more clearly communicate what integration means within cooperative education.

While all stakeholders were not explicit in voicing their understanding of the term ‘integration’, there was some evidence that students and academics considered that cooperative education involved the ‘application of theory or knowledge to practice’. Some students were able to provide examples of where the knowledge and experiences they had gained in the workplace had been useful within their studies back on-campus. Any reference to the application of theory was rare among the industry stakeholders, and several industry supervisors admitted that their own knowledge of ‘the theory’ was weak. Two of the industry supervisors interviewed pointed out that they had not completed a sport related qualification and had entered the industry from other backgrounds. Sports and recreation degrees are relatively new in comparison to other professional disciplines, and only 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 formal sport related qualifications.

It was a positive outcome that students were able to articulate the opportunities they had to take what they had learnt in the university and use it in the workplace. Students also learnt that theory did not always work in practice. The notion of ‘applying theory to practice’ that was clearly documented in the programme material signals a view that the university is perceived as the domain of ‘theory’, and that the ‘theory’ learnt in the university is privileged over practice-based knowledge that is situated within the learning environment of the workplace. Yet, the findings of this study clearly provide evidence that the workplace as a learning environment had a wealth of knowledge that students were able to gain through their experiences, and that they could not access from a university-based education alone.

It is equally important that students and industry do not perceive ‘practical learning in the real world’ as more valuable than what can be achieved through the combination or integration of
theory and practice. Fortunately, this was not the case in this study. An alternative view was evident, consistent with a ‘knowledge society perspective’ (Harris, Jones, & Coutts, 2010), where it was acknowledged the learning environment of the workplace and the university are complementary and synergistic, rather than one being more dominant than the other, with the flow of knowledge in one direction only. Through the student’s cooperative education experience, the learning gained from one was seen to complement the learning gained from the other, and there was no strong evidence of a theory-practice divide. Perhaps this is evidence of a more mature relationship being formed between the university and the workplace. As Van Rooijen (2011) argues, the traditional view of an ‘Ivory Tower’ university needs to be a concept of the past, and that in the 21st century, “learning and knowledge development is not, nor should be the exclusive domain of universities” (p. 6).

### 8.2.3 Expectations

Several authors have voiced concerns that ‘expectation gaps’ occur when stakeholders have different motivations for participating in a work-integrated learning experience (Patrick et al., 2008; Peach & Gamble, 2011). Following this lead, this research sought to determine what the expectations were for each of the stakeholders within the BSR programme. Student expectations of cooperative education were generally that they would be able to gain an experience that would enhance employability, career clarification and personal development. The main expectations of academic supervisors were that the experience would be meaningful and authentic and that the student would learn from the experience. The industry expected that the student would be willing to learn, and the return for them was that the student would be able to make a contribution to the organisation. While the expectations have a slightly different focus for each stakeholder, there is a central theme that acknowledges that the expectation was that the cooperative education experience would enable the student to learn. While Patrick et al. (2008) stress the importance of having ‘shared expectations’, it may not be possible (or even desirable) to perfectly match expectations. Accordingly, it may be more important to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the differences in interests. This will contribute to establishing more realistic understandings about the stakeholder’s roles and the overall intention of the partnership.

### 8.3 Student learning through cooperative education

Cooperative education is positioned as an educational strategy with the potential to provide a rich and contextual learning experience. In addressing the third research question, the
Chapter 8: Discussion

sociocultural views of learning provided a useful lens through which to interpret the views of students, industry and academics on the practices associated with student learning.

Learning occurs in different ways, and what is learnt and how that learning occurs is dependent on the influences that are embedded in the context of that learning (Billett, 2001). The findings of this study suggest that the cooperative education experience was structured so that learning was an intentional and significant focus. Students reported that they participated in authentic activities that had some value to the organisation, during which time the host organisation as well as the university provided supervision. Students completed assessments, including reflective components that were linked with their academic programme and given credit towards their degree.

8.3.1 What did they learn?

In line with sociocultural views of learning, the student perceptions of what they actually learnt are situated within the specific context of their individual experiences. Students negotiated what they wanted to learn through the learning contract. The contract provided structure and increased the likelihood of learning in specific areas. While the learning experience was unique for each student, there was clear evidence that cooperative education enabled students to construct knowledge about themselves, their placement organisation and the wider context of the industry.

Cooper et al. (2011) acknowledge that an important goal of a work-integrated learning curriculum is the development of ‘workplace literacy’. The authors identify six categories of workplace literacy that contribute to the development of generic capabilities. Drawing on this framework, the perceptions were that students were able to develop organisational literacy, through gaining an understanding of organisational structure, priorities, values and culture. Students also felt that they had developed career literacy where they were able to identify, understand and confirm (or in some cases reject) their intended career. The development of social literacy was identified by students in their comments that highlighted they had learnt how to work in a team, or to work alongside others. Profession-specific literacy was evident as students clearly identified that they had learnt not only discipline specific skills, but also procedural and dispositional knowledge that are important in the sport and recreation industry. However, developing legal and ethical literacy (the knowledge of workplace-specific legislation and policies and procedures that related to these) was less evident in the findings. This does not mean that students had not developed this knowledge, but it does point to the need to further explore whether in fact students had gained this important knowledge and just failed to
acknowledge it in their interviews, or whether a more strategic intervention is needed to achieve this. The sixth literacy in the framework, cultural literacy refers to developing the ability to respect others’ perceptions, to value difference and to confront controversial issues. Again, the findings did not explicitly show that students had developed this literacy, although in some cases it was clear that students were exposed to workplace learning environments that would have afforded the opportunities to do so. Once more, this aspect of workplace literacy may require deliberate and strategic intervention.

While learning skills and attributes suitable for a specific workplace environment upon graduation were valued by students and industry, learning skills just for the ‘now’ can be considered as potentially limiting. As mentioned previously in this chapter, students need to have skills that can be transferable to multiple contexts (Usher, 2012), some of which may yet be still undiscovered. As expressed in the findings, the development of the generic skills, such as communication skills, effective teamwork and problem-solving provide a strong base for the students to be more successful in the dynamic workplace environment in the future.

8.3.2 How did they learn?

It is important to gain an understanding of the nature of learning through cooperative education so that both the university and the workplace can support it appropriately. It is acknowledged that the way learning occurs in the university is very different to the way learning occurs in a workplace context (Billett, 2001; Peach & Matthews, 2011), and this was reinforced by students in this study. In the university, the focus is on learning conceptual or declarative knowledge through mainly face-to-face or virtual delivery methods that are frequently didactic in nature (although there is a move towards more student-centred learning in many classes particularly at second and third year). In an environment where often the class sizes are large, students can remain largely invisible with minimal participation and interaction with the teaching staff or with fellow students (L. Cooper et al., 2010).

In contrast, from a sociocultural perspective, learning in the workplace can be considered as a social process (Vygotsky, 1978). The student as a learner in the workplace is understood to be ‘situated’ in a social context, undertaking authentic activities alongside practicing professionals in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Knowledge can be accessed through interaction with a variety of people within the workplace, wherein cultural knowledge (shared ways of knowing and being) is distributed across the community of practice (Salomon & Perkins, 1998). Through mediated action, the socially and culturally derived artefacts, such as language, stories and other meaning making devices, which constitute the everyday
Consistent with a sociocultural perspective, the findings confirmed that students learnt through participation in the authentic or ‘real world’ activities of the workplace community of practice. It was as Billett (2001; 2009) suggests, the nature of the activities that the students were engaged in that were a key influence on the learning that occurred. Students reported having access to routine as well as non-routine or more challenging tasks with increasing levels of responsibility added over time. This progression was considered important to enable students to move from peripheral to legitimate or ‘full’ members of the community of practice. As evidenced in the data, it was through routine tasks (for example, data entry for weekly competitions) that students were able to develop the procedural knowledge, and then make sense of the new knowledge that they had gained and move towards developing competence (such as planning a tournament).

Once students were able to execute particular tasks or perform specific roles they acknowledged they rapidly gained confidence, which relates closely to an increase in their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; Fletcher, 1990). As Eraut (2007) suggests, and was confirmed in the findings, introducing more challenging tasks encourages the student to remain motivated and for further learning to occur. It is important that students are able to respond to the challenges without being placed in a position that undermines their confidence. Eraut identifies a triangular relationship between confidence, challenge and support, where confidence is developed through successfully meeting new challenges, but it requires both support and confidence to be able to take on a new challenge. Students in this study valued being given the opportunities to be challenged, while being given the support to be able to learn from making mistakes.

8.3.3 The influences on learning

The industry supervisors were generally considered as having a major influence on supporting student learning in the workplace. Industry supervisors were seen to be responsible for creating an environment that supported ‘learning’ rather than just ‘working’, and this was considered to be the difference between a cooperative education experience and students preparing for ‘a job’ with the host organisation. Negotiating and planning the experience; helping the student to set learning goals (through the learning contract); and assigning appropriate tasks and responsibilities to achieve goals that were relevant and appropriate for the student’s level of readiness were identified by students and academics as important
contributions of the industry supervisors. The findings of this study are consistent with what is commonly reported as the expectations of workplace supervisor’s roles (Billett, 2001; L. Cooper et al., 2010; Rowe et al., 2012).

It is of course possible for students to be placed in a workplace setting without experiencing or learning about the ‘authentic’ world of work. Some students did acknowledge that they learnt ‘what it is really like’ in the industry. At times what happened ‘behind the scenes’ of a sport organisation or a school was seen as different to what they had expected. It is an important responsibility of the industry supervisor to ensure that students are not just given routine tasks that have little consequence or that they are shielded from the challenges, tensions and the politics that exist within a placement organisation. While the students reported that at times they faced significant challenges, there was little mention of their exposure to workplace tensions in the interviews. Unfortunately, the interviews did not explore this area in any depth, and I suggest that further research would be beneficial to examine to what degree students are really exposed to the ‘real world’ and what in fact the ‘real world’ represents.

Through direct or close guidance, industry supervisors were able to help the students to learn through telling or showing them what to do. The industry supervisor was also positioned to provide access to the procedural knowledge that would be difficult for a student to learn without assistance (Billett, 2001). Providing support and appropriate feedback was considered as critical within the learning process. As mentioned by the supervisors, feedback was considered most effective when a good relationship had developed between the student and the supervisor. However, feedback was needed in a timely manner. As highlighted, particularly by the students, there were times when workplace colleagues were better positioned to provide on the spot guidance. Therefore, it is important that industry supervisors are willing to share the responsibility for supporting student learning with others in the workplace.

Recently, several studies have highlighted a lack of clarity and understanding of the roles and expectations of the workplace supervisors (Patrick et al., 2008; Rowe et al., 2012) and the potential impact this can have on the quality of the learning that can be gained through a cooperative education experience. While most of the industry supervisors that responded to this study had a good level of understanding of their roles, consistent with the documented guidelines, a response bias must be acknowledged. A number of the BSR students were placed in small sports organisations where often these organisations have poorly defined management structures and small numbers of full-time staff (Fleming & Ferkins, 2011). Given
that each year there is ongoing recruitment of new host organisations, it is important to establish and communicate a sound framework of responsibilities for both current and the future industry supervisors.

While the potential influence of the industry supervisor is commonly expected and accepted (Billett, 2001; Rowe et al., 2012) there is generally little acknowledgement of the role that others in the workplace play in influencing student learning. In this study, the students’ comments illustrate that they learnt by observing the actions of co-workers and also through being shown and told what to do by their workplace colleagues. It was through social interactions, meaningful discussions and developing relationships with workplace colleagues that students were able to learn both the procedural knowledge (the know-how) and the dispositional knowledge (the values and attitudes) that contributed towards deepening their contextual understanding of what it means to be a professional in the sport and recreation industry. These findings align well with the key principles of situated learning mentioned previously (Lave & Wenger, 1991). However, it must be acknowledged that learning through interaction with workplace colleagues may not always be feasible when there are cultural and hierarchical constraints, or where there is a lack of understanding or willingness of the co-workers to support the student learning experience.

It was clearly evident in this study that the support and guidance provided by the academic supervisors was highly valued by the students and industry supervisors. As the BSR programme is increasing in numbers each year (even within a capped university funding model across New Zealand), providing adequate levels of academic support is becoming a major challenge that needs to be faced. Cooperative education as a whole is recognised as more time intensive compared to classroom-based modes of delivery (Harris et al., 2010; Peach & Gamble, 2011). One-on-one supervision is not perceived by some academics as a cost efficient model within the current staff workload constraints, and was an issue that was voiced in the interviews. Several academic staff revealed that they had moved to small group supervision, but felt that they were still able to provide individual support through regular feedback on the online journals. While this could be considered a compromise, the key responsibilities of the academic supervisor were still being achieved. Many of the models of work-integrated learning have no formalised academic support from the university during their student placement. Yet, it is argued in the literature that the most successful programmes are those where academics are involved in supervision (Knight & Yorke, 2004; E. Martin, 1998; McCurdy & Zegwaard, 2009). The findings of this study support this position, and argue that
investing in academic supervision is highly beneficial to the overall student learning experience.

Being encouraged to critically reflect on their experiences was considered a valuable strategy (by academics and students) that helped students to become aware of what they had learnt and how they could improve. Through critical reflection, students acknowledged that they were also able to make the links between the theory or ‘abstract’ knowledge learnt in the university and how it applied (or did not) in the workplace. It was the academic supervisors who were considered to play a significant role in helping students understand the value and purpose of critical reflection. Academic supervisors supported students to learn how to reflect and what to reflect on through encouraging them to share their experiences during meetings and asking them questions that challenged them to think more critically. In addition, academic supervisors also posted regular feedback comments in student’s online journals that helped them to develop their reflective writing. Encouraging reflection enables students to, “question the theoretical assumptions in the context of practice realities” (L. Cooper et al., 2010, p. 93) and encourages ‘deep learning’ (E. Martin, 1998). Murphy and Calway (2008) also suggest that deep learning occurs through the process of reflection when, “experiences are integrated into the learner’s present body of knowledge and understanding and connections are made to previous [learning]” (p. 432).

It was evident in the findings that initially many students could not see the point of critical reflection and found it hard to undertake. Students admitted that it took academic support and guidance, as well as time to realise how critical reflection could contribute to their learning for ‘now’ and that it was a skill that would help them in the future. As Dewey (1938/1997) argued not all experiences are educative and that education requires thinking and reflection. He believed that leaving the process of reflection for students to do themselves meant that it might not take place unless they perceived it to be valuable. These comments align with the findings of this study, and lend support for the important role of the academic supervisor in facilitating the reflective process.

While the students that were interviewed had a generally positive view of the value of reflection, it must also be acknowledged that not all BSR students showed an understanding of how the reflective process could benefit their learning and be applied in contexts outside the university setting. For some, it is considered to be purely something they have to do as part of their assessments. Research is currently being undertaken by an AUT colleague to gain a better understanding of reflective practice within a cooperative education context.
It was interesting that while most of the industry supervisors were aware of the importance of critical reflection for learning, they did not consider it was their role to help the students make meaning from their experiences. They felt that it was the universities responsibility to ensure that the students developed the skills in critical reflection before and during their placement to ensure that they would be able to gain the most from their experience. This suggests a real challenge, as many industry supervisors may not have a clear understanding of critical reflection and the valuable contribution that they could make to help students learn through this process. It is evident that the university needs to do more not only to assist students, but also to train the industry supervisors to learn the skills in order to maximise the contribution that critical reflection can make towards learning from their cooperative education experiences.

The attitude of the student was also considered to be a major influence on the learning experience. It is argued that students need to be active, self-directed and agentic (i.e., intentional, directed and critical) in order to gain the most from their experience (Billett, 2009; Peach & Gamble, 2011). Students were aware that their work ethic and personal motivation were important and that they needed to take responsibility for their own learning. Industry and academic supervisors expected students to be willing to learn and able to use their initiative. At the same time it was also highlighted that the industry supervisor needed to have confidence and a level of trust in the abilities of the student. Previous research in this context acknowledges that it takes sufficient time in the workplace to build a level of trust (Fleming & Eames, 2005). Once a level of trust is established students can then be given the challenging tasks and responsibilities that enhances the learning experience. This further raises the question, what else other than time does it take for the trust to be established and is it possible for the development of trust to be fast tracked to ensure that students have the best opportunity to gain meaningful experiences. This is a challenge for cooperative education programmes that should be the focus for further research.

8.4 Chapter summary

Cooperative education was perceived as partnership between students, industry and the university. Consistent with an educational partnership the student was considered to be the key focus of the relationship. Reciprocity, legitimacy, efficiency, synergy and personal connections were identified as key contingencies for the formation of effective cooperative education partnerships. However, attention needs to be given to the limitations created by a reliance on personal connections for cooperative education placements. The university needs to consider more strategic alignments at the sport organisation level rather than the personal
level to ensure quality placements and the sustainability of the cooperative education programme in the future. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

For effective partnerships, there needs to be a shared understanding of the intentions and expectations between stakeholders. While the findings indicated that differences in expectations exist, it is important then that the different expectations are clearly communicated particularly in the set-up phase. This will contribute to establishing more realistic understandings about the stakeholders roles and responsibilities and the overall intention of the partnership.

This study set out to determine stakeholder’s perceptions of the intentions of cooperative education. The findings concluded that the purpose of cooperative education was perceived to be: to gain experience; career clarification; and for the development of personal and professional skills in order to enhance the employability of graduates. While this focus aligns well with government agendas, it potentially challenges the wider mandate of university learning. While there was a lack of shared understanding of the meaning of cooperative education, this was not a surprise. The notion of integration was not understood as being a key focus of cooperative education, however, students and academics did refer to the application of theory to the ‘real-world’. By positioning the workplace as the ‘real-world’ it implies the university is some ‘artificial world’ and this conception will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

A key focus of this thesis was to explore what and how students learnt through cooperative education. It was evident that students learnt a range of skills and knowledge (dispositional and procedural) that would prepare them for a career in the industry. Also of value were the transferable skills that students developed that would assist them in other contexts in their future. The findings concluded that learning occurred through participation in authentic activities in the workplace and being given challenging tasks with increasing levels of responsibilities. The quality of industry supervision, the nature of the activities, and the motivation of the student were considered key influences on student learning. In addition supervisors and students also need to be attuned to the learning opportunities that occur through interactions with workplace colleagues. The influence of the academic supervisor, particularly in facilitating critical reflection, was highly valued and must be retained in order to maximise the learning that is gained through the cooperative education partnership.

The research findings support a stakeholder-integrated approach to the BSR cooperative education partnership through evidence of alignment in the stakeholders perspectives and
understanding of the intentions, expectations, associated responsibilities and level of commitment required by all involved.

Key issues that have emerged from the findings include: the purpose of cooperative education within a university degree in the 21st Century; the integration of the university and the workplace learning environments; fostering learning within the social context of the workplace; and managing and sustaining cooperative education partnerships. These will be discussed further in relation to their implications for practice in the next chapter.
Chapter Nine: Implications and reflections

This chapter builds on the discussion of the research questions in the preceding chapter. I do not consider that a conclusion per se is appropriate for the nature of this research. Instead, the first section presents emergent issues and implications of this research for the practice of cooperative education. In the following section, I suggest some considerations for further inquiry that are posed as a result of this research. I then reflect on the challenges I have faced as an insider researcher throughout the stages of the research process. This thesis concludes with my final comments.

9.1 Emergent issues and implications for practice

As universities have come under pressure in an increasingly competitive environment, there has been a greater emphasis to prepare students with a broad range of employment related skills and knowledge. While WIL models such as cooperative education have been advocated as a way to address this issue, this thesis has contributed to gaining a better understanding of this model and how it contributes to student learning as part of a university education. Through the discussion of the findings in the previous chapter, a number of key issues have emerged that have implications for practice and these will be the focus of this section. The following will be addressed: the purpose of cooperative education within a university degree in the 21st century; integration of the university and the workplace learning environments; fostering learning within the social context of the workplace; and managing and sustaining cooperative education partnerships.

9.1.1 The purpose of cooperative education within a university degree in the 21st century

The research findings support the call made for a stakeholder-integrated approach to partnerships in cooperative education (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Harvey et al., 1997; Patrick et al., 2008). However, despite evidence of the alignment of the perspectives and understanding of the intentions, stakeholders are in a vulnerable position to lose sight of the goals of a university education. It is easy for the focus to be placed primarily on what the industry needs and wants in order for students to be able to obtain employment. It is critical that the university has the leading role in providing the direction for student learning through determining the profile of the graduate so the opportunity to produce graduates who are employable but who also can contribute new ideas and be critical of the status quo is not lost.
Considering the above, and drawing on the ideas of McLennan and Keating (2008), the purpose of the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation (BSR) cooperative education programme needs to be more than just focused on a narrow view of enhancing employability. I argue that cooperative education should be to provide opportunities for students to become work ready (with a set of skills, knowledge and experiences to transition to the world of work); career ready (with transferable skills and knowledge to manage their own way through the changing world of work); and future ready (with skills and capabilities to continue to learn, contribute and be adaptable citizens of their communities and of the changing world). This notion extends far wider than what has been evident within the findings of this thesis, and more in line with the expectations of a university education in the 21st century.

In order for cooperative education to address a wider mandate, the expectations need to be clearly linked within the graduate outcomes and all three stakeholders need to become aware of the potential that can be achieved. Cooperative education needs to be clearly positioned, not as ‘vocational education’, but as a teaching and learning approach that contributes to achieving the profile of a university graduate.

9.1.2 The integration of the learning environments of the university and the workplace

Given that fundamental to cooperative education is the notion of the integration of the learning gained in the university and the workplace, this intention was not understood well by all of the stakeholders in this study. Yet, it was evident that the learning environments were considered synergistic, where knowledge gained in the workplace was seen to complement that gained in the university, and vice-versa, rather than one being privileged over the other. Interestingly, the language used by all three stakeholders frequently referred to the workplace as the ‘real world’ and this implies that the university had an image of being an environment where the learning was somewhat ‘abstract’ in comparison. While further research is needed to explore what the ‘real-world’ represents, a question that also must be considered is: Can a university programme be considered as ‘real-world’? I argue that the while it is unlikely that the university will ever be totally accepted as being the ‘real world’, the inclusion of a cooperative education component within an undergraduate degree goes a long way towards levelling out the difference.

Although integration as an intention of cooperative education was not well articulated, there was evidence that it was implicitly fostered through the process of critical reflection. Such a strategy sets out to enhance learning from experience, while it is also argued that critical
reflection can foster integration through making students more aware and engaging in metacognition (Coll et al., 2009). Students and academics frequently made reference to the importance of what is described as ‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön, 1991) in understanding the relationships between theory and practice. It was evident that the reflective process was facilitated and well supported by academic supervisors, yet it was a concern that the industry had no real involvement in the process. While some industry supervisors considered it important, they did not consider it was their responsibility to support the student in reflection or to attempt to examine the place of theory in workplace practice. The question this raises is: How can industry supervisors be encouraged to support cooperative education students in the process of critical reflection? Further work is needed to find out whether industry supervisors lack an understanding of what critical reflection is, and the strategies that can be used to facilitate the process, or whether there is a fundamental difference in what they consider their role in facilitating student learning should be. If the industry supervisors can be encouraged to support the students to critically reflect during their workplace activities, it is more likely that the implicit integration of the two learning environments will be enhanced.

9.1.3 Learning within the social context of the workplace

Several authors have called for researchers to contribute to advancing the understanding of student learning in cooperative education across a range of discipline specific contexts (Coll & Zegwaard, 2011b; Eames & Cates, 2011). As outlined in Chapter Three, the frameworks of Dewey (1916, 1938/1997) and Kolb (1984) connect well with the integrated learning aspirations of the cooperative education model. Both of these frameworks recognise, albeit differently, the importance of experience and reflection in making sense of the physical and social settings where workplace-based learning takes place. However, despite the robustness of the frameworks of Dewey and Kolb, neither provides rich accounts of the social and cultural environment of the workplace the learner is thrust into in the cooperative education model. While there is recognition of the sociocultural dimensions of learning in cooperative education programmes (Eames & Cates, 2011), very little research exists around the way these are developed and experienced. This thesis has contributed to advancing this understanding, and the conclusions that have been drawn, along with the implications for stakeholders, are summarised in the next section.

The findings of this study support a sociocultural view of learning that positions learning as a social process. Students learnt not only through participation in authentic workplace activities, but also through a social interactive environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Through moving
between the academic community of practice and the workplace, students were able to gain access to procedural knowledge (knowing how) and dispositional knowledge (values and attitudes) (Billett, 2009). In so doing they were able to develop discipline-specific skills, while simultaneously deepening their contextual understanding of what it means to be a ‘professional’ in the sport and recreation industry. Deep industry learning was seen to occur as a result of engaging in the sociocultural dimensions of the workplace when students moved outside their comfort zones and through informal interactions with work colleagues. Here, learning occurred through social mediation (Eames & Coll, 2010), in that students were situated alongside other more experienced co-workers (Rogoff, 1995) in a similar way to a ‘cognitive apprenticeship’ (Brown et al., 1989). Knowledge was transferred through close or direct guidance by supervisors or co-workers who told or showed the students what to do (Billett, 2001). Students also accessed knowledge through indirect guidance, where they had the opportunity to observe the actions and behaviours of their colleagues in the workplace (Bandura, 1977). Ideally, to maximise learning in this way, students needed to be critically engaged so that potentially divisive workplace cultures are not unwittingly reproduced.

Through a process of ‘mediated action’, co-workers and supervisors provided access to important industry ‘tools’ (Vygotsky, 1978) such as language and disposition. These ‘tools’ enabled them to access and decode socially and culturally derived artefacts (Eames & Coll, 2010) that contribute towards an understanding of what it means to be a professional in the sport and recreation industry. Gradually over the course of the experience, students moved from legitimate peripheral participation, to full members of the community of practice (Brown et al., 1989; Eames & Coll, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Looking at learning in cooperative education through a sociocultural lens recognises that when students arrive at a workplace setting they enter a distinct community of practice. Being situated alongside workplace colleagues, students are able to gain access to tacit knowledge and behaviours that make up the professional environment. It is through these social interactions in the workplace and participation in activities that are ‘normal’ to the profession, that students begin to understand and take-on the desired characteristics of the workplace community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As such, successful integration into the workplace includes not only how well students can pick-up the technical ‘knowledge and skills of the trade’, but also how well they adapt to the culture, values and expectations of the community. As students transit from being peripheral to full members of the community they become socialised into particular forms of professional identity. These constructions of identity are, of
course, fluid and unstable. Through the practices of critical reflection and other forms of identity deconstruction, students are invited to play an active role in framing their own professional identity.

An implication of this research is that universities need to prepare students to effectively interact with the different sociocultural demands of the workplace environment. While some students acknowledged the influence of workplace colleagues on their learning, it is important that all stakeholders are attuned to the learning opportunities that can occur within the social context of the workplace. Industry supervisors need to be aware that the quality of learning can be enhanced through increasing the opportunities for students to have meaningful interactions with workplace colleagues. Supporting student learning in a cooperative education placement needs to be a responsibility that is shared across the staff within the host organisation and not left to the industry supervisor alone. Academic supervisors need to prepare students so that when they enter the workplace, students intentionally develop personal connections and create networking opportunities.

This research has emphasised the relational dimension of professional learning when cooperative education is conceptualised as a social process. To this end, I contend that greater consideration be given to ensuring that, within cooperative education, students are active in seeking meaningful discussions/interactions with workplace colleagues, and these are not simply left to chance.

9.1.4 Managing and sustaining cooperative education partnerships

The rhetoric positions cooperative education as a partnership between students, industry and the university. Multiple stakeholder relationships are therefore inherent in the tripartite structure. As mentioned previously, it is argued that successful WIL programmes require a stakeholder-integrated approach, where formalised sustainable relationships are developed (L. Cooper et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008). It was clear in the findings of this research that it was not just rhetoric—stakeholders believed in the notion of cooperative education as a partnership and agreed that there were both individual and mutual benefits. Nonetheless, a number of concerns were raised by the stakeholders that have the potential to impact on the outcomes and success of this partnership.

Communication was identified as a critical factor in forming and managing cooperative education relationships. As indicated in the findings, and mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, better communication strategies are needed to ensure a clear and consistent
message as to the meaning, intentions and potential of cooperative education is delivered to all stakeholders. The levels and frequency of communication varies at different stages in the programme, but the most important was considered to be the initial set-up phase. Although this research has identified that the expectations for stakeholders were different, understanding and communicating these differences is important to meeting the individual needs of each stakeholder group.

Another key issue that has been raised within this study is that while the partnership would not exist without the industry, the real strength of cooperative education lies in the fact that it is a tripartite relationship. It was clear that the student was the focus of the partnership, but it is vital that the focus for sustaining the partnership is not placed solely on the industry–student relationship. Through the critical role that the university, and in particular the academic supervisors play in the cooperative education experience, the integration of the two learning environments can be achieved. As evidenced in this study, academic supervisors played a pivotal role in facilitating the process of critical reflection and supporting the student learning experience. Interestingly, not all cooperative education programmes invest in university-based supervision for students on placement. In times where there are ongoing challenges within academic staffing budgets and a focus on increasing research productivity, it is important that the university and academic staff as a collective group continue to support the critical roles of academic supervisors. This will ensure an ongoing commitment to cooperative education as a tripartite relationship.

9.2 Considerations for further inquiry

While this thesis has addressed the questions posed at the start of this research, it has also raised further questions that should be considered as lines of further inquiry.

9.2.1 What are the factors that contribute to the sustainability of cooperative education partnerships?

This thesis has examined the determinants and motivations for the formation of cooperative education partnerships within the specific context of this case study. A key motivation was seen to be connections between students, industry, or academic staff that already knew each other. While this creates great opportunities for the university to expand their pool of placement organisations, when the personal connection is no longer there, many of the relationships cease to exist. For a few of the organisations in this study, the partnership is formed at the organisational level and regardless of the current staff they take on a student every year. Given the importance of the partnership in the cooperative education model,
further research is needed to identify factors that influence long-term sustainability of such partnerships in the dynamic environments of both the university and the sport and recreation industry.

9.2.2 What are the views of industry supervisors on critical reflection and their role in this process?

Critical reflection was considered important for students to learn from the cooperative education experience, yet the industry supervisors felt that it was not their responsibility. Research is needed to determine whether industry supervisors lack an understanding of critical reflection and the strategies that can be used to facilitate the process, or whether there is a fundamental difference in what they consider their role in facilitating student learning should be.

9.2.3 What does the ‘real-world’ represent?

As mentioned previously, the language used by all three stakeholders frequently referred to the workplace as the ‘real world’, and this implies that the university had an image of being an environment where the learning was somewhat ‘artificial’ in comparison. In order to be able to better align the two learning environments, further research is needed to explore to what degree students are exposed to the ‘real-world’ and what in fact the ‘real-world’ represents.

9.2.4 How is trust and confidence developed throughout the placement experience?

Learning is enhanced when students are given responsibilities and challenging roles. Yet the industry supervisor needs to develop confidence and have a level of trust in the abilities of the student before they assign such roles. The question this raises is: How is trust developed during the placement experience? In addition, how can trust be ‘fast tracked’ to ensure that students are given access to experiences that challenge their thinking and extend their learning and move them towards being able to participate fully in the activities of the workplace?

9.3 My reflections as an insider researcher

As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, I have been an academic within the university for a long time and I am currently part of the senior management team within the department. I was a member of the academic group that developed the BSR curriculum from its inception, and since the initial cohort of students enrolled more than a decade ago, I have been responsible for leading the cooperative education component of the programme. I have a vested
professional interest in improving understanding and ensuring the success of the programme that I have shaped over time. When I embarked on this doctoral journey, I felt that that I was in a privileged position with allocated time given to me in my workload and support from my supervisor to be able to conduct research that extended well beyond the usual superficial course evaluations. The intent of this research has been to undertake research ‘from the inside’ and to go deep into the context of the BSR cooperative education programme. Consistent with my own constructivist view of learning, the principles of insider research align well with the notion that knowledge is socially constructed and is situated within a specific context. Being an insider researcher has had a number of advantages, yet has confronted me with multiple challenges and a number of compromises. I reflect on these, framed by the stages of the research process.

**Research design**

A key advantage of insider research is said to be the ‘pre-understandings’ that the researcher brings to the design of the study (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). Through my extensive experience, I was able to bring a unique perspective of the history and culture of the university and their relationship with industry that would be difficult or take a long time for an outsider to acquire. I brought to the study design a background gathered from earlier research that I had conducted on cooperative education within the BSR. Along with my knowledge of the present situation, I was able to develop specific research questions, where the findings could build on earlier research and be applicable and relate back to the context from which they had been gained.

Initially, one of the challenges of conducting insider research was to ensure that the research design had rigour and transparency in the methods of data collection and demonstrated sound principles of ethical practice. As an insider researcher, I felt it was important to minimise any likely criticism about being biased. As mentioned in Chapter Four, some critics have a view that there is inherent subjectivity associated with the researchers being positioned within the organisation, and having knowledge about the organisation that could be perceived to be ‘contaminating’. I challenge this, and agree with the argument put forward by Smyth and Holian (2008) that there is no real pure objective observation of practice in the context of any organisation, regardless of whether the research is conducted by an ‘outsider’ or not. I consider that it is important that insider researchers acknowledge who they are and the history that they bring with them into the research process (which I have done in this thesis). In contrast, it is uncommon for external researchers to describe themselves or how they have
interacted with members of an organisation being researched, and this makes it difficult for potential bias or contamination to be assessed.

**Ethical considerations**

For me a major ethical challenge of being an insider researcher was the potential for implicit or perceived coercion during the recruitment of participants for this research. As an academic, there was an inherent power differential in my relationship with the students. In addition, given my management responsibilities, many of the academic supervisors were in a position where there was a power imbalance. Gaining access to participants, even within a volunteer arrangement, became an ethical dilemma that I needed to address. After consultation with the faculty representative for AUTEC, I was advised that it was not recommended that I be involved with recruitment or data collection with students or academic staff and that an ‘outsider’ needed to be involved. For some of the members of AUTEC at that time, insider research of this nature was relatively new ground for them. The potential for implicit coercion was considered to be high, and there were concerns raised about issues of privacy and confidentiality. The details of the processes I used to overcome these issues have been described in detail in Chapter Four. In brief, the key constraints were that I was not to be involved with the students and academic supervisors in recruitment; and the questionnaire administration and return, along with the administration and conduct of the interviews. As I write this thesis, it is a good time to acknowledge that I feel I have helped pave the way to a better understanding of insider research within the ethics committee. The value attached to the position of the insider researcher is now acknowledged, and a recent application by a colleague to undertake her own interviews with students was accepted.

**Recruitment of participants**

I had no concerns about the recruitment process that was followed, and the response rates for the questionnaires across all three groups were well within my expectations. The numbers that volunteered to take part in the student and industry interviews well exceeded what was needed. Although I was not placed in a position to ‘coerce’ the participants, the relationships that I had developed over time and the disclosure that the project was to benefit the university, as well as forming part of my doctoral studies, may have had a positive influence on recruitment. It is worth noting here that interviews were conducted with the students after they had been allocated a final grade for the course and this may have contributed to a response bias. The number of academic staff that were recruited for the interviews was the minimum.
Although the number that volunteered was slightly higher than the minimum, the interviews took place during the semester break and some academics were on leave during this time.

**Data collection: The interviews**

The biggest compromise for me was not being able to undertake the student or academic interviews. Initially, I was concerned about the impact that this would have on the data collection process and the approach of conducting insider research. However, a critical factor for me became the selection of the interviewer. I needed someone that was ‘like a surrogate’ that had a similar level of understanding of the context, and while being a stranger to the staff and students could bring an inside experience to the interviews. I was fortunate to have a colleague who held a similar role in another university, who was an active researcher in this area and whom I could trust had the skills and experience needed to conduct the interviews. I sent him the interview guide in advance and conducted a briefing with him to try and ensure that he had a sound background of the intent of the research.

As I read through the transcripts, in many instances it was evident that he had probed for further expansion on comments made, but there were several instances where I would have liked more depth and possibly taken the interview in a slightly different direction. However, I do not feel that this compromised the findings of the research in any significant way. On the positive side, by using an interviewer that was not known to the participants, it was possible that they did not expect him to know the answers to the questions and therefore expanded on their views. The participants may have been more comfortable to make critical comments (which a few of them did), and less likely to make the comments that they felt I would have wanted to hear. However, the converse must also be considered where the unfamiliarity might have made it more difficult for the participants to develop rapport and a level of trust where they were comfortable to share more sensitive opinions. From reading the transcripts I think the latter was less likely and that honest and comprehensive responses have been obtained.

**Data analysis and interpretation**

Another challenge that confronted me was not being able to listen to the recordings. I acknowledged the importance of maintaining anonymity of the participants by not disclosing the voices, but reading a transcript alone did not allow me to get a feel for the ‘tone’ of the conversations. The transcriptions included comments such as laugh or pause, but this certainly was not the same as having witnessed the unspoken body language. A strategy I used was to read aloud the conversations to try and gain a feel for the voices of the participants.
A real advantage of being an insider researcher is believed to be during the analysis and interpretation phase of the research process. As I was undertaking a case study methodology, I did not need to spend time getting to know the nuances of ‘the case’ itself. I was familiar with the language, jargon and acronyms used by the students, academics and industry supervisors, and thereby it was less likely that what they said was misunderstood. I feel that my own knowledge of the industry enabled me to interpret what they said in relation to the situated nature of their individual experiences. An outsider researcher is potentially at risk of not noticing interesting data because of a lack of understanding of the specific context that the comments are related to. Yet, I am also aware of the criticisms that an insider researcher can be ‘too familiar’, and take for granted the tacit patterns and regularities that they expect. To achieve this I was guided by Hockey (1993) who suggests an insider needs to try and, “make the familiar strange” (p. 208).

It was also important that I did not come to premature conclusions that were based upon preconceived ideas and the desire for positive outcomes. This is not unique to insider research, but there is more potential for this to occur when you are so closely linked through the nature of the insider position. As a doctoral student, I have been in the fortunate position to be able to minimise this issue through the critique that I have gained through the supervision process. My supervisor became a ‘critical friend’ who interrogated and challenged my assumptions. What was perceived as routine and familiar and ‘as expected’ from my point-of-view, was generally new and unfamiliar to him. It has been a valuable experience being able to introduce and explain the intricacies within the model of cooperative education to my supervisor and share with him something that I am so passionate about.

The dual role

Brannick and Coghlan (2007) raise the concern of ‘role duality’ of insider researchers. When a researcher is an outsider, they have a clearly defined role that is confined to the scope and life of the project. As an insider, I have past, present as well as future roles that are deeply intertwined with this research through the personal and professional relationships with the academic staff and industry involved in this programme. It was quite conceivable that the dual roles that I had to play, as researcher and an academic leading the programme I was researching, could have resulted in personal or professional conflicts. Being a doctoral student rather than just conducting the research as part of my research activity as an academic, I feel has contributed towards differentiating the two roles, but still allowed them to complement each other.
Although I did not consider it a conflict, it was during the industry interviews that I experienced some blurring of the boundaries. As there was no implicit coercion, I had been able to interview the industry supervisors. At times the industry participants were keen to discuss student issues or administrative concerns that were not relevant to the research focus. Part of the motivation for them volunteering was possibly the opportunity that this gave them to address their own concerns with me, and so I was supportive in giving them the opportunity to do so. I do not feel that role duality has compromised this research.

Overall, my reflections affirm that conducting insider research, although not without some challenges, has provided a valuable and potentially different perspective than what may have been obtained by research conducted and provided by an ‘outsider’.

9.4 Final comments

Within cooperative education as a model of WIL, diversity occurs in the methods of practice that are country, university and discipline specific. A set of principles and practices underpin cooperative education as a distinct and valuable activity within a university education. It is through this thesis that I have been able to gain an in-depth understanding of the pedagogy and practice of cooperative education within the BSR at AUT. It is not common for researchers to focus on programmes that are espoused to be successful, as it is so easy for stakeholders to fall into the trap of logical delusions about the beliefs and values of a programme.

While I never had any doubt about the benefits, the intention of this research was not to evaluate the programme, but to gain an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the stakeholders’ experiences and perspectives of cooperative education, and to consider these in light of the theory that underpins work-integrated learning. In doing so, it has affirmed the value and success of the model as an educational strategy, and has contributed to the theoretical base by providing discipline specific knowledge in the context of sport and recreation. I conclude this thesis with these words:

*The real strength of cooperative education… is that it helps the learner to find their place in the world and to understand how to shape their future, which are true measures of education.*

*(Eames & Coll, 2010, p.188)*
References


perspective of the theory, research and practice of work-integrated learning (pp. 271–282). Boston, MA: World Association for Cooperative Education.


Appendices

Appendix A: AUT ethics approval

MEMORANDUM
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

To: Jenny Fleming
From: Dr Rosemary Godbold and Madeline Banda Executive Secretary, AUTEC
Date: 17 May 2011
Subject: Ethics Application Number 11/80 Understanding the practice of cooperative education in sport.

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. We are pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 11 April 2011 and that on 28 April 2011, we approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC’s Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures and is subject to endorsement at AUTEC’s meeting on 13 June 2011.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 28 April 2014.

We advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 28 April 2014;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 28 April 2014 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further queries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Grinter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at ethics@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9869 at extension 8880.

On behalf of AUTEC and ourselves, we wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Rosemary Godbold and Madeline Banda
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
Appendix B: Deakin University ethics approval

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
Human Ethics Research

Office of Research Integrity
Research Services Division
70 Elgar Road Burwood Victoria
Postal: 221 Burwood Highway
Burwood Victoria 3125 Australia
Telephone 03 9251 7123 Facsimile 03 9244 6581
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Memorandum

To: A/Prof Chris Hickey
School of Education
G
cc: Mrs Jennine Fleming

From: Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC)

Date: 27 July, 2011

Subject: 2011-130
Understanding the practice of cooperative education in sport tertiary education

Please quote this project number in all future communications

The application for this project was considered at the DUHREC meeting held on 27 June 2011.

Approval has been given for Mrs Jennine Fleming, under the supervision of A/Prof Chris Hickey, School of Education, to undertake this project from 27/07/2011 to 27/07/2015.

The approval given by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Human Research Ethics Unit immediately should any of the following occur:

• Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
• Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
• Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
• The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
• Modifications are requested by other HRECs.

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

DUHREC may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Human Research Ethics Unit
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au
Telephone: 03 9251 7123
Appendix C: Participant information sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced: 18 April 2011

Project Title: Understanding the practice of cooperative education in sport

Researcher: Jenny Fleming, Senior lecturer, School of Sport and Recreation, AUT and PhD student (Deakin University).

Research Supervisor: Associate Professor Chris Hickey, School of Education, Deakin University, Australia.

An Invitation

You are invited to participate in a research project that seeks to determine your views and perceptions of the purpose and practices associated with cooperative education in a sport and recreation context. Choosing to participate or not will neither advantage nor disadvantage those being invited to participate. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection in which event your participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from you will not be used.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You are invited to participate as you are or have been involved as a student, academic supervisor or industry supervisor in the cooperative education programme in the Bachelor of Sport and Recreation at AUT University.

What will happen in this research?

Your involvement will consist of completing an anonymous questionnaire. Questions will be related to your understanding and experiences of the AUT sport and recreation cooperative education programme. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is included with this invitation. By completing this questionnaire you indicate your consent to participate. Please return the questionnaire in the self-addressed envelope.

You are also invited to take part in a face-to-face interview at a later date. The interview, which is expected to take no longer than one hour, will be undertaken at a time and location convenient for you. If you are interested then please complete the attached form and return in a separate envelope to the research administrator.

Interview questions will be related to your understanding and experiences of the AUT sport and recreation cooperative education programme with a particular focus on student learning. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. An academic that is not a staff member at AUT will facilitate the interviews for AUT students and academic supervisors. The researcher will facilitate the interviews for industry supervisors.

What are the benefits?

The findings of the research will primarily be used to improve the cooperative education experience for students, industry and the university. Findings may be relevant for other programmes and will be disseminated through the national body for work-integrated learning, (the New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education), as well as journal publications and conference presentations. In addition the findings will be presented as part of the researchers PhD thesis for Deakin University.

Potential Risks?
It is unlikely that there will be any risk to you as a participant. In the event that you find a question embarrassing then you can decline to answer the question and to complete the questionnaire or may terminate the interview.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

The questionnaires will be anonymous. Interview participants will remain anonymous to the transcriber. The researcher will not know the identity of the students or academic supervisors who participate in the interviews as the research administrator will make arrangements for the interviews. Consent forms will be collected and stored by the research administrator to ensure your identity is protected. The data produced from the questionnaires and interview transcripts will be combined with similar data from other participants. Reports or publication of the findings will not contain any identifying material. The confidentiality and identity of the participants and placement organisation will be protected at all times.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost to you as a participant is time. The questionnaire will take approximately ten minutes to complete. The interview will take approximately one hour. The interview will be conducted at a location convenient for you.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

A summary of the findings will be available to you if you are an interview participant at the completion of the project on request. Please indicate this on the consent form and a research administrator will send a copy to you.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Chris Hickey (chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to either the Executive Secretary, AUT Ethics Committee, Madeline Banda, madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 8044 or to the Manager, Research Integrity, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, Vic. 3125 Telephone (+61 3 9251 7129).

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

If you would like to participate in this project, or would like further information about this project, please contact the researchers listed below.

**Research Supervisor Contact Details:**

Associate Professor Chris Hickey  
email: chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au  or ph +61 352271455

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Jenny Fleming  
email: jenny.fleming@aut.ac.nz or ph 921 9999 ext 7164

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28 April 2011. AUTEC reference number 11/00.

Approved by the Deakin University Ethics committee: Project ID 2011-120
Appendix D: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

Project title: Understanding the purpose and practice of cooperative education in sport

Project Supervisor: Associate Professor Chris Hickey (Deakin University, Australia)

Researchers: Jenny Fleming, Senior lecturer, School of Sport and Recreation, AUT and PhD student (Deakin University)

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 18 April 2011
☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered
☐ I understand that my identity will remain confidential. Reports or publication of the findings will not contain any identifying material.
☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interview and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
☐ I agree to take part in the research.
☐ I wish to receive a copy of the research report (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant signature:........................................................................................................

Participant’s name:....................................................................................................................

Participant’s Contact Details (if appropriate): ................................................................................

Date: ........................................................................................................................................

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28 April 2011
AUTEC Reference number 11/80

Approved by Deakin University: Project ID 2011-130

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form
Appendix E: Expressions of interest

**Understanding the practice of cooperative education in sport**

*I have read the information provided about the above project and I would like to volunteer to participate in an interview that will be conducted at a later date.*

Name: ____________________________
Phone contact: _______________________
Email address: ______________________

Please circle the appropriate category:
BSR Student / Academic supervisor / Industry supervisor

DO NOT attach this form to your questionnaire.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE SEPARATE ENVELOPE PROVIDED.

Researcher contact details: jenny.fleming@aut.ac.nz
Appendix F: Confidentiality agreements

Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: Understanding the practice of cooperative education in sport
Project Supervisor: Associate Professor Chris Hickey
Researcher: Jenny Fleming

☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
☐ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
☐ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber’s signature: .................................................................
Transcriber’s name: ......................................................................
Transcriber’s Contact Details (if appropriate):
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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28 April 2011 AUTEC Reference number 11/80

Approved by Deakin University Ethics committee: Project ID 2011-130

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.
Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: Understanding the practice of cooperative education in sport

Project Supervisor: Associate Professor Chris Hickey

Researcher: Jenny Fleming

☐ I understand that all the material I will be asked to record is confidential.

☐ I understand that the contents of the Consent Forms, tapes, or interview notes can only be discussed with the researchers.

☐ I will not keep any copies of the information nor allow third parties access to them.

Intermediary’s signature:

Intermediary’s name:

Intermediary’s Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28 April AUTEC Reference number 11/80

Approved by Deakin University Ethics committee: Project ID 2011-130

Note: The intermediary should retain a copy of this form.
Appendix G: Student questionnaire

Understanding the practice of cooperative education in Sport

BSR Student Questionnaire

You are invited to take part in a questionnaire to help gain an understanding of your experience of cooperative education. The questionnaire will take approximately ten minutes to complete. This is an anonymous questionnaire and therefore you will not be identifiable to the researcher or in any presentation or publication of the results. By completing this survey you indicate your consent to participate. If you would like further information please contact: the project supervisor, Dr Chris Hickey chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au or the researcher Jenny Fleming jenny.fleming@aut.ac.nz.

1. Please indicate (circle) the type of organisation you completed your co-op with:
   ○ National or Regional Sports Organisation
   ○ Regional Sports Trust
   ○ Sports club/ franchise
   ○ Recreation or Fitness Centre/ Facility
   ○ School
   ○ Outdoor Recreation/ tourism organisation
   Other (please state): __________________________

2. List the main activities that you were involved in during your coop experience

3. What does “cooperative education” (co-op) mean to you?

4. What do you see as the role of the co-op industry supervisor?
5. What do you see as the role of the co-op academic supervisor?

Please complete the following statements:
6. I think the overall purpose of cooperative education within the BSR degree is to…

7. My expectations of co-op were …

8. My coop experience has enabled me to …

9. The aspect of co-op that I gained most from was…

10. In co-op I learnt by…

11. My learning in coop was influenced most by…

12. I could have learnt more in co-op if…

13. The most valuable thing I learnt in co-op was….
14. Please indicate how important the following are to your coop learning experience:
   (1 = not important, 3 = neutral, 5 = very important)

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If there is anything else that you feel is important in co-op please add to the list above.

15. Which of the factors listed above do you consider had the most impact on your learning in co-op?

16. What do you think are the important features of an “ideal” co-op experience?

17. What was the most challenging aspect of your coop experience?

18. Please add any other comments about your Co-op experience.

19. Have you worked in full time employment for more than 6 months: Yes/ No

   If so, was this in a sport/recreation related position? Yes / No

20. Please indicate: Male/ Female

21. Please circle the appropriate age category: 19-22 23-30 31 +

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. Please return in the envelope provided.
Appendix H: Industry questionnaire

Understanding the practice of cooperative education in sport

BSR Industry Supervisors Questionnaire

You are invited to take part in a questionnaire to help gain an understanding of the practice of cooperative education. The questionnaire will take approximately ten minutes to complete. This is an anonymous questionnaire and therefore you will not be identifiable to the researchers or in any presentation or publication of the results. By completing this survey you indicate your consent to participate. If you would like further information please contact the project supervisor, Dr Chris Hickey chris.hickey@deakin.edu.au or the researcher Jenny Fleming jenny.fleming@aut.ac.nz

1. Please indicate how many years you have been in the role of industry supervisor for BSR Co-op students. __________

2. Please indicate (circle) what type of organisation you work for:
   o National or Regional Sports Organisation
   o Regional Sports Trust
   o Sports club / franchise
   o Recreation or Fitness Centre/ Facility
   o School
   o Outdoor Recreation/ tourism organisation
   Other (please state): ____________________________

3. What does “cooperative education” (co-op) mean to you?
4. Why did you choose to host a BSR co-op student?

5. What do you see as your role in co-op?

6. What do you perceive as the role of the AUT academic supervisor?

7. What were your expectations in regards to having a BSR co-op student?

8. Were your expectations met? If not why do you think they were not met?

Please complete the following statements

9. I think the overall purpose of cooperative education within the BSR degree is to...

10. I think the aspect of co-op that students gain most from is...

11. I think that in co-op students learn by...

12. In co-op student learning is influenced most by...

13. In co-op I think that students could learn more if...
14. The most valuable thing students learn in co-op is…

15. In my role I support student learning by…

16. I think the coop experience enables students to …

17. Please indicate how important the following are to the co-op learning experience:
(1 = not important, 3 = neutral, 5 = very important)

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If there is anything else that you feel is important in co-op please add to the list.

18. Which of the above do you consider has the most impact on student learning in co-op?

19. What do you think are the important features of an “ideal” co-op experience?

20. Have you completed a co-op or practicum as a student prior to becoming an industry supervisor? Yes/ No
21. How long have you been employed in the sport/recreation related industry?
      ______ years

22. Please add any other comments about the co-op experience.

   Thank you for participating in this questionnaire.
   Please return in the envelope provided.
Appendix I: Academic supervisors questionnaire

BSR Academic Supervisors Questionnaire

You are invited to take part in a questionnaire to help gain an understanding of the practice of cooperative education. The questionnaire will take approximately ten minutes to complete. This is an anonymous questionnaire and therefore you will not be identifiable to the researcher or in any presentation or publication of the results. By completing this survey, you indicate your consent to participate. If you would like further information please contact the project supervisor, Dr Chris Hockey chris.hockey@deakin.edu.au or the researcher Jenny Fleming jwenn.fleming@aut.ac.nz.

1. Please indicate how many years you have been in the role of academic supervisor for BSR Co-op students ______________

2. What does “cooperative education” (co-op) mean to you?

3. What do you see as your role in the BSR co-op programme?

4. What are your expectations of co-op?

5. What do you see as the role of the co-op industry supervisor?

Academic supervisors, March 2011 1
4. Why did you choose to host a BSR co-op student?

5. What do you see as your role in co-op?

6. What do you perceive as the role of the AUT academic supervisor?

7. What were your expectations in regards to having a BSR co-op student?

8. Were your expectations met? If not why do you think they were not met?

Please complete the following statements
9. I think the overall purpose of cooperative education within the BSR degree is to...

10. I think the aspect of co-op that students gain most from is...

11. I think that in co-op students learn by...

12. In co-op student learning is influenced most by...

13. In co-op I think that students could learn more if...
Please indicate how important the following are to the coop learning experience:

(1 = not important, 3 = neutral, 5 = very important)

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*If there is anything else that you feel is important in co-op please add to the list in the space provided.*

14. Which of the above list do you consider has the most impact on learning in co-op?

15. What do you think are the important features of an "ideal" co-op experience?

16. Please add any other comments about the co-op experience.

*Thank you for participating in this questionnaire.
Please return in the envelope provided.*
## Appendix J: Student interview guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Themes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What type of organisation did you undertake you placement with?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have you worked (paid employment) in the sport &amp; rec industry at all</td>
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<td></td>
<td>prior to starting coop? If so what role, full time or part-time and</td>
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<td>for how long?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have you worked full time in any industry for more than 6 months</td>
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<td></td>
<td>prior to starting coop? If so what role?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A year 2 student asks you- What is Coop? What would you say?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you think your academic supervisor would say the same thing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you think industry supervisor and colleagues would say the same</td>
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<td>thing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>So what would you say the overall purpose of coop is?</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>What do you think are the key benefits/outcomes are for you, as a</td>
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<td></td>
<td>student?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What influences the achievement of these? What are the challenges?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>What do you see as the key outcomes/benefits for the industry?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What influences the achievement of these?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>What do you think are the key benefits/outcomes for the university?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What influences the achievement of these?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coop is often described as a partnership between student, university</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and industry. What are your views on this?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you consider yourself involved as a partner in cooperative education?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Why/Why not?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Could you draw a representation of the Coop relationships? What would</td>
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<td></td>
<td>it look like? (How would you describe the nature of this relationship?)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do you think is necessary/important to create/maintain effective</td>
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<td></td>
<td>partnerships/relationships in coop? How could the current relationship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>be improved?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Students can be considered as stakeholders in Coop. What are your</td>
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<td></td>
<td>thoughts on this? Do you consider yourself as a stakeholder?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tell me about your experience being a coop student? What was it like?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What did you do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Did you feel part of the organisation?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 9 | What do you see as your roles/responsibilities in coop?  
What do you think are the roles/ responsibilities of the industry supervisor?  
What do you think are the roles/ responsibilities of the academic supervisor  
Are there any additional responsibilities for the university? | Stakeholder responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
| 10 | What did you learn during their coop?  
What do you think that you should have learnt? (i.e any differences between what they do learn and should learn?) | Student learning outcomes |
| 11 | How did you learn during coop?  
What/ who contributed to/ helped you with learning in Coop?  
Do you think the way you learnt changed during your coop experience?  
Do you think you learnt in coop in the same way as you learn at uni? Explain? | Student learning process |
| 12 | A key focus of coop is integration of theory (knowledge) with practice. What are your thoughts on this? Do you think it happens in coop? If so how do you think it happens? | Purpose/ practice |
| 13 | In your opinion what makes a meaningful coop experience?  
What are the challenges to providing this?  
Are there ways that the students learning experience could be enhanced/improved? | Coop practice |
## Appendix K: Industry interview guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is your role in your organisation?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How long have you been in the industry?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How many years have you been involved with BSR Coop?</td>
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<td>Do you supervise students from other tertiary programmes?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Did you do a Coop/placement/practicum yourself as a student?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Meaning/Purpose</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>A colleague asks you- What is Coop? What would you say?</td>
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<td>Do you think your student would say the same thing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you think the academic supervisor would say the same thing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>So what would you say the overall purpose of coop is?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Industry benefits/outcomes</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Why did you choose to host a BSR Coop student?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do you see as the key outcomes/benefits for you and your organisation?</td>
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<td>What influences the achievement of these?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(What are the challenges to achieving these?)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Student benefits/outcomes</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do you think are the key benefits/outcomes for the student?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td><strong>University benefits/outcomes</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do you think are the key benefits/outcomes for the university?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Partnership Nature of relationships</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coop is often described as a partnership between student, university and industry. What are your views on this?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you consider yourself a partner in the cooperative education? Why/Why not?</td>
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<td>(What interactions/relationships do you or your organisation have with the university? What interactions would you like to have?)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Could you draw a representation of the Coop relationships? How would you describe the nature of these relationships?</td>
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<td>What do you think is necessary/important to create/maintain effective partnerships/relationships in coop? How could the current relationship be improved?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Stakeholder concept</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The industry can also be considered a stakeholder in Coop. What are your thoughts on this? Do you consider yourself/your organisation a stakeholder?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Coop Practice</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tell me about your experience being a coop industry supervisor?</td>
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<td>What do you do as a supervisor?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(What are your roles/responsibilities in coop?)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(What do you get your students to do?)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Stakeholder</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do you think are the key responsibilities of the student?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do you think is the role and responsibility of the academic supervisor? Are there any additional responsibilities for the university?</td>
<td>Themes</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What do you think students learn during their coop with your organisation? What do you think they should learn? (i.e. any differences between what they do learn and should learn?)</td>
<td>Student learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>How do you think they learn during coop? What/who contributes to this learning? How do they do this/does this happen? (What/who of those you have identified are the major influences?) How do you (as IS) contribute to the student learning process? (if not answered earlier) Do you think the way students learn changes during their coop experience? Do you think Coop students learn the same way as a new employee? Or learn the same way as at Uni?</td>
<td>Student learning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A key part of the definition of coop is integration of theory (knowledge) with practice. What are your thoughts on this? Do you think it happens in coop? If so how do you think it happens?</td>
<td>Purpose/practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>In your opinion what makes a meaningful coop experience? What are the challenges to providing this? Are there ways that the students learning experience could be enhanced/improved?</td>
<td>Coop practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Is there anything else you would like to discuss?</td>
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</table>
## Appendix L: Academic supervisors interview guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meanings/Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Student benefits/outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Industry benefits/outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>University benefits/outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Partnership Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stakeholder concept</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Stakeholder responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Student learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Themes

**Themes**

1. **Demographics**
   - How long have you been a Coop Academic Supervisor?
   - How many years have you been a lecturer?
   - Do you supervise other students (e.g. postgrad students)
   - Did you do a Coop/placement/practicum yourself as a student?
   - Have you worked in the sport & rec industry prior to becoming a lecturer?

2. **Meaning/Purpose**
   - What is Coop? What would you say?
   - Do you think your student would say the same thing?
   - Do you think industry would say the same thing?
   - So what would you say the overall purpose of coop is?

3. **Student benefits/outcomes**
   - What do you think are the key benefits/outcomes for the student?
   - What influences the achievement of these?

4. **Industry benefits/outcomes**
   - What do you see as the key outcomes/benefits for the industry?
   - What influences the achievement of these?

5. **University benefits/outcomes**
   - What do you think are the key benefits/outcomes for the university?
   - What influences the achievement of these?

6. **Partnership Relationships**
   - What are your views on this?
   - Why/Why not? What interactions/relationships do you have (on behalf of AUT) with industry?
   - Could you draw a representation of the Coop relationships? What would it look like? (What is the nature of the relationships?)
   - What do you think is necessary/important to create/maintain effective partnerships/relationships in coop? How could the current relationship be improved?

7. **Stakeholder concept**
   - The University can be considered a stakeholder in Coop. What are your thoughts on this? Do you consider yourself (as an academic supervisor) a stakeholder?

8. **Stakeholder responsibilities**
   - Tell me about your experience being a coop academic supervisor?

9. **Student learning outcomes**
   - What are your roles/responsibilities in coop?
   - (How do you (as AS) contribute to the student learning process?)
   - What do you think are the key responsibilities of the student?
   - What do you think is the role and responsibility of the industry supervisor?
   - Are there any additional responsibilities for the university?

10. **Student learning outcomes**
    - What do you think students learn during their coop?
    - What do you think they should learn? (i.e. any differences between what they do learn and should learn?)
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<th>Themes</th>
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| 11 | How do you think they learn during coop?  
What/ who contributes to this learning?  
Do you think the way students learn changes during their coop experience?  
Do you think students learn in coop in the same way they learn at uni?                                                                 | Student learning process |
| 12 | A key focus of coop is integration of theory (knowledge) with practice.  
What are your thoughts on this? Do you think it happens in coop? If so how do you think it happens?                                                                 | Purpose/ practice        |
| 13 | In your opinion what makes a meaningful coop experience?  
What are the challenges to providing this?  
Are there ways that the students learning experience could be enhanced/improved?                                                                 | Coop practice            |