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Leveraging Work-Based Learning for Employability Skills Development in ESP Contexts: A Strategic SWOT Analysis

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Abstract

Today, the high demanding global market has urged Higher Education Institutions (HEI) worldwide to start thinking of bridging the gap between education and the job market needs. In this regard, one of the main objectives of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching and learning is to prepare learners to perform communicative tasks thrivingly in their future workplaces. Nevertheless, having a high language proficiency level is not sufficient to meet the demands of current local and global markets, other skills and competencies are needed to secure a successful career. Relatedly, Work-Based Learning (WBL) seems to be one of the promising instructional approaches to train students on the prerequisite employability skills, however, few studies were conducted to examine the potentials of this approach in ESP contexts. Against this backdrop, the study has followed a mixed SWOT analysis approach (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), using a systematic review of literature of thirty peer-reviewed articles selected from international scientific databases namely Springer, Emerald Insight, Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar, and a close-ended survey questionnaire sent to 40 Moroccan ESP teachers to examine the impact of Work-Based Learning (WBL) implementation in ESP settings on fostering learners' employability skills .The study revealed that adopting a work-based learning approach maximizes the opportunities for employability skills development, yet, there are many challenges that hinder its effectiveness in ESP contexts. Subsequently, a set of strategies and recommendations were suggested to optimize the use of work-based learning in teaching and learning ESP for increased graduate employability.

Keywords: Generic Skills; Internships; On-Site Training; Vocational Education; Workplace Environment