An Exploration of Students Workplace Learning Placements Practice of Universities in Uganda

Eric Douglas Kalanda[1*,] Francis Likoye Malenya[2], Elijah James Otiende[3]

[1]Faculty of Vocational Studies, Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda
[2,3]School of Education Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya
Corresponding Author*

Abstract: **Workplace Learning (WPL) has increasingly attracted the attention of higher education in Uganda. The inclusion of students' placement in the academic programmes as a recommendation by national council for higher education has given WPL a more legitimate platform. As WPL is embraced the organisation of students' placement as a basis of its meaningful and effective implementation remains in doubt. This study aimed at examining the activities involved in organizing students' placement in universities in Uganda towards having an efficient and meaningful students' placement. The study was conducted on the pre, during and post placement activities to examine its organisation. From the findings, most of the key activities necessary for effective students' placements were positively rated while students' self-placement attachment, placement supervision, placement procedure, adequate access to training facilities and systematic feedback to the hosting workplaces were deficient. The study recommended that the higher education institutions should maintain the students' participation in seeking placement and augment with placement MoU's and scouting, facilitate and monitor placement supervision and establish systematic placement feedback procedures. The hosting workplaces ought to offer students adequate access to their facilities if their contribution to WPL is to purposeful.**

Keywords; **Workplace Learning, Placement, Universities, Practice.**

I. INTRODUCTION

U niversities play a significant role in fostering economic growth and stimulation of development. They are also charged with building both theoratical knowledge and skills needed in the professional requirements in the world of work. However, graduates have increasingly been found wanting in practical skills and experience when they join the world of work [1]. Students' placement (periods spent in real industry while enrolled on a course of study at a university) as a form of Workplace Learning(WPL) has therefore attracted a lot of interest due to its potential role in affording learners a better transition to the working world [2].This has led to suggestions that both universities and workplaces should be compelled to invest in WPL [1].An additional advantage of such investments is the creation of viable partnerships for future workforce.Subsequently, overtime higher education has included elements of learning at work and through work as a way of amplifying learning for work [3]. According to [4], both the industrial revolution and knowledge age have accelerated shifts in contextualization of learning between the

education institutions and work places. As a consequence, policy makers have been tasked to engage in continuous assessments, reshaping and rethinking to understand the significance of students' placements.This intensity of policy shifts originate from the clear understanding that effective learning takes place in workplaces. Students' placements have therefore not only been used to complement and supplement learning in higher educaton institutions but also been identified as one of the crucial avenues for learning and training.

According to [1] and [5], higher education qualifications have been found to inadequately prepare their graduates with both soft skills and technical capabilities for the working and professional practices. Workplaces have to re-train graduates to be able to fill the workforce needs. Effective organisation of students' placements should therefore play a central role in providing the higher education students with the opportunities to develop the required competences to seamlessly fit in the world of work.The broader area of Workplace Learningin higher education draws its academic focus from high level practical knowledge and learning in a workplace context [6] in addition to providing solutions to the theoretical gaps at work [7]. The contribution of WPL in equiping the the students with both soft and technical skills cannot be underestimated and any form of WPL that doesn't lead to this achievement can be a mischief to higher education [1] and [8]. Among the many purposes of WPL is to bring work and higher education closer so as to make the student develop skills, attributes for the reputable work and career development [9] and transiting higher education instititution graduates to the world of work [10].Accordingly, student placement programs in the higher education programme spectrum at different levels is steadily growing from the undergraduate to master and doctoral programmes [1] and [11]. The need for the structured students' placement has been emphasised with the view that students can then be provided with workplace and work cultural experience for the mastery of working [1]. The incorporation of students' experience and learning outside of the school was identified as a powerful way of motivate engagement in their learning [12].Subsequently, learning has been identified as increasingly and significantly becoming a challenge to the education professionals and institutions attributing this to the continued notion of separating learning from work which has found itself irrelevant to individuals,

governments, industry and universities in the knowledge societies requiring a bridge through workplace learning [13].

The benefits of WPL that include; improved enrollement of the students, acceptabilty of the institutional graduates by the world of work, improved reputation, networking with the community, external curriculum assessment and practitioner input [14],&[15] and consequently reducing unemployment [16]&[1] can be forfeited without well-organized student placement activities.Well implemented Workplace Learning has been opined as vital in differentaiting universities with unique graduates with attractive attributes, a curricula that is labour market oriented, improved learning environment that infuses teaching and learning methodologies with problem-based approaches and bridge gaps of theory and practice [17]. Similarly, placements provide the students with knowledge from both the university and the workplaces which are essential[18].Without, well intentioned organization the benefits of students' placement to the workplaces that include but not limited to; best selection for future employees, better hiring decisions, exposure to new ideas, creation of the networks with the universities, fulfilment of social responsibilty, and reciept of part-time help from the students' participation[10] can also be lost by the hosting workplaces.The organisation of workplacelearning therefore becomes key in understanding the processes and the efficiency of students placement as a form of workplace learning. work-integrated learning. In order to explore students' workplace learning placement practice the following research question was sought; How are the organisation of the pre-placement, during-placement and post-placement activities underscored?

A. Workplace Learning in Uganda

The tracer study that were carried out in Uganda in 2016 by National Council for Higher Education identified that employers were unsatisfied with the knowledge and skills of the graduates.The requirement for improvement in hands-on training, attitude towards work were highlighted. Graduates were presented as having a lack of work experience a deficiency that could supposedly be addressed by students placements. Subsesquently, WPL strategies were advanced as a cure for the mismatch of the academic grades and skills [19].As conceqence,academic programmes offered at one of the universities in Uganda were expected to include Workplace Learningstrategies [20].

Like in many countries Workplace Learning in universities takes different names in different institutions but basically referring to immersion of learners (students) in a work or professional context as one of the requirements for the completion of an academic program. The nomenclature of this practice includes action-learning, cooperative education, practicum, intra and extra mural placement, problem-based learning, workplace learning, industrial training, internship, fieldwork, school or teaching practice and project-based learning ([21],[14] ,[22][23],[24], [25],[26], [8] &[27]).

B. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the experiential learning theory by David Kolb that emphasizes experience as source of learning and development in a four-stage cycle model (Experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting) as central in the learning process. Supported by studies by John Dewy, Lewin and Piaget the learning by doing concept of Confucius where the strategy of combining classroom theory and practice is critical [28].Without understanding how students' placement is organized, the risk of being misunderstood as a hollow pedagogy against other pedagogies used for teaching in universities is inescapable [17]. Organizing placements of students in universities activities in stages of a cycle of pre, during and post-placement activities was well articulated [29],[30],[31]&[32].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Pre-Placement Activities

The pre-placement stage involved the following activities according to [30], verification of sites, briefing or re-orientation of students & academic staff, pre-placement seminars or orientation, attachment (allocation of students and staff for supervsion) and issuance of training schedules by the hosting workplaces. The first stage also included preparation of students through relevant course units that are applicable to make them useful to the hosting workplaces [31].

*1) Pre-placement Seminars and Orientation:*Reference [16] advised that preparation of students before commencement of their placement by both higher education insitutions and hosting workplaces is a vital and shared responsibilty to enable students transit the the world of work for WPL seamlessly. Preparing students prior to undertaking WPL was further emphaised as very useful by [32] who rested this responsibility on the universities and workplaces that ought to use the orientation and seminars to issue training schedules and avail report writing guidelines.Duringorientation, the clarity of WPL objectives to the students and staff should be upheld and spelt out [30].The pre-placement seminars and orientation) should be a standard practice that is used to sensitise students and staff about the whole WPL cycle to assist them set realistic expectations to enable them recognise, reflect and extract meaningful learning from the encoutered experiences during WPL [33].

*2) Placement Attachment:*The mass enrolment in higher education arising from the universalisation of primary education and secondary education has resulted into more students going through to higher education. This has challenged the previous assertion that higher education was for a small portion of students seeking to receive academic type of education in Uganda [19].This has not only led to increased demand for vacancies for students' placement but also created a requirement for universities to modify their learning activities to becoming more comprehensive and diverse arising from the challenge of delivering relevant

education [34]. The students are allocated the available vacancies for placement and the academic staff accordingly attached WPL supervision sites at this stage [30]. The practice in other universities is unknown and the increased number of students in Uganda's universities could be exerting more pressure for vacancies on the workplaces offering WPL hence the need to investigate.

3)   Relevance of Courseworks Prior to Placement: The concerns of whether students undertaking workplace learning should be offered basic skills training by the universities has interested some researchers of WPL.Reference [35] suggested that gained knowledge and skills by the students before undertaking WPL ought to be applicable in the world of work. At the time of undertaking placement the students should posses basic competences applicable to the world of work.Students' placements avails the opportunity to apply their universities acquired knowledge and skills in the real work situations to prove and bridge any gaps that may exist [13]. While studying the pathways to the profession [36] further realised that the training that the students undertake while still at their universities if work related or relevant ease their learning and contribution to the hosting workplace.The observations in the backdrop suggest that non-existence of the knowledge and skills to test and prove in the workplaces impairs the intentions of WPL.

B.   During-Placement Stage Activities

During-placement stage involvesactivities that are undertaken when the students have commenced learning from the assigned workplace.They include;

*1.   Supervision of Workplace Learning:*Supervision is meant to provide support to the students and the host workplaces (on part of the universities supervisors) and learners and workplace mentors (on part of the host workplace supervisor)[3].Reference [6]added that it should be regular and consistent. Students undertaking WPL should be closely supervised as a duty of care by the hosting workplaces for the benefit of the student and the clients of such organization. The adequacy of WPL supervision can be a measure of the quality of WPLaccording to[8]. Reference [35] highlighted that regular interaction of the university supervisors and those mentoring the students in the workplaces is one of the activities in the placement activities that ensure that the progress of the students' learning and challenges are attended to and resolved for the benefit of all stakeholders. Reference [6] described its importance as supporting the learning and information sharing regarding the process. The demand of supervision by both workplace anduniversities requires adequate facilitation for dependable results to be realized [35].

*1) Sequencing of Learning (simple to complex task):*While stressing the structure of learning in the workplaces [37] described WPL as one that should be organised from simple to complex tasks re-enforced by the individual's interest and cooperation within the workplace less

of which participation WPL be limited and incoherent. The organisation of the learning tasks that the students have to be engaged in during placement ought to be cognizant of the level of complexity as systematic progression in the learning process is critical.

*2)   Guidance of Students:*Organisation of effective WPL is dependant on the guidance that the mentors and universities staff offer to the students during the learning process. And as [38] observed the required guidance for learning is the one from the experts. Subsequently, the credibility of guidance or mentorship impact on the value of placement.

3) Cooperation: The ingredient of cooperation for the stakeholders ensures that the needs of learning are met and achieved easily and harmoninously. As [39]emphasised the cooperation of the all the stakeholders especially students, universities and workplaces staff is key in the proper and productive implementation of placement.

*4) Training of Workplace Trainers:*The need for competent mentors or trainers in workplaces being indispensable for the training and assessement of the learning in the workplace to be adequately achieved, the in- house training of the workplace mentors was identified by [35]. The workers in workplaces are ideally percieved to be competent (posess the knowledge, skill and attitude) for carrying out the tasks in the daily work routine which they can be able to pass-on to the students however, this might not be the case.

5)   Host Workplace Facilitating and Providing Accessibility to Facilities: The workplaces that have not prioritised provisions for learning in their operations have been cautioned as doing it at the cost of their present and future success [40].Accordingly, the evaluation of work contexts that have undergone several changes in the recent times shows that learning occurs diversely and indelibly in the workplace. Therefore, organising activities in which learning can be enhanced in the workplaces seems to provide the means of achieving the anticipated success, amidst world of work complexities "work has to become learning and learning has to become work" [41].   Resource allocation for placements by workplaces to promote and encourage learning was highlighted as critical [42]in addition to workplaces granting the placement students access to different areas and facilities of expertise for learning purposes,[1] observed that learning in workplace takes place through doing, observing, listening and the workplace environment itself.However, [43] ironised the assumption that workplaces can easily offer access to the use of their expensive machinary to students without an enabling policy environment.

6)   Use of Log or Record Book: The log or record books are used in taking the outlined tasks, experiences that the students encounter during the execution and interaction with the work environemnt. It also provides them with daily reflections for future reference particularly report writing. At the same time the use of log books or records has been highlighted as crucial in easing the process of self-assessment

by the students and used by the supervisors for both continious and summative assessment in WPL[21].

C. Post-Placement Activities

The post-placement stage includes activities that are concerned with evaluation (students assessement purposed to grade the students performance and overall evaluation aimed at assessing the performance of WPL as shown in the following;

1) Report Writing: According to [35],the value of report writing in providing feedback for placements is imperative for the efficiency and effectiveness. In addition to encouraging analytical deliberation through WPL process, reports are useful in providing a full reflection of the experiences that the students and the participating staff encountered undertaking placement [6].

2) Overall Assessment: The quality of the assessment criteria and procedure should be well understood and implemented by all involved [44] as well as highly integrated [42] to re-enforce and improve the quality of the students' learning process. Assessment in placements is a provision of evidence that learning having taken place. The assessment of students' placement takes different modes; direct observation of the students at work, assessment of the students log book, interviewing the students at work, surrogate assessement (obtaining the performance views from others like the managers & peers), student preparation of the report that contains the reflections of what has been learnt [3]. Meanwhile, [6] styled assesssment as documenting learning in a measurable form.Assessment during WPL using a clear criterion or documentation for both workplace mentors and universities staff for purposes of monitoring the students' strenghts, weaknesses and performance against the set objectives is paramount according to [35]. In a similar instance [45]while emphasising the importance of assessment suggested that competences related to communication skills, self confidence, customer relations, participation, industry knowledge, ethics should be pivotal. The quality of assessment in workplace learning was also been spotted as an issue that effects standards of the academic programmes [46]. Reference [32] further emphasized that assessment of placements formed the backbone of the purposes of which WPL is instituted without which meaningful learning may not be measured or be used generates the basis for feedback concerning learning. While underpinning the importance of assessement in workplace learning [47] emphasized the need to improve the assessemnt distictively in order to provide for evaluation of all the possible learning areas or tasks that the students may encounter while undertaking their placements.

3) Provision of Placement Feedback: The relevance of feedback was emphaized by [18] as being an essentail ingredient in promoting effective learning in the students' placement. When highlighting the value of feedback in WPL[48] observed that feedback in WPL is used interchangeably with debriefing which are used to support learning through helping the students deal with the anxiety, fears, ambiguities and the unacquaintedness that they encounter in the hosting workplaces.

III. STUDY OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study was to explore the activities involved in the organization of students' placements towards having an efficient and meaningful Workplace Learningin universities in Uganda.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participantsof the Study

Theparticipants of this study were drawn from the students and academic staff who had ever participated in placement from the nine universities both public and private in Uganda. The placement supervisors or the personnel in-charge of managing the placement activities in the referred workplaces were also selected as respondents. The students that had undertaken their placements in the previous two sessions were selected due to the need to have respondents who had had recent experiences.

B. ResearchDesign and Procedure

The study adopted the triangulation mixed research method [49], both qualitative and quantitative data were simultaneously collected, analyzed, interpreted and results combined.The questionnaires were pre-tested and re-tested using the half-split method to ensure their reliability. The quantitative data were collected from the students, academic staff from the selected universities and the coordinators of placements in the referred workplaces using the approved questionnaires for each category with similar items about the activities used in the organisation of students' placements.Deploying trained research assistants, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 216 students in the nine universities and 205 (95%) were filled and returned, 108 were randomly distributed to the academic staff 97 (90%) were filledand returned and 54 questionnaires were purposively distributed to the referred placement coordinators in the workplaces and 40 (74%) were filled and returned.Qualitative data from the placement coordinators in the universities were collected using face to face interviews from their different work locations guided by the approved open-ended interview guides. Eighteen coordinators were targeted after being purposively selected and the researcher was able to interview only twelve (67%).Their responses were recorded using a digital audio recorder with their signed consent.Prior to data collection, ethics approval was obtained from the research ethics review committee of Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) (04/05-19) and a research permit obtained from the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (SS 5069).

C. Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS version 23 software, descriptive statistics in forms of percentages, means and standard deviations were generated for interpretation. The results were presented according to the categorization of the placement activities earlier discussed (Pre-placement, during placement & post placement). Using the Likert scale of 1 to 5, where the rating of 5 meant strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree the respondents were asked to rate the statements [50]. The qualitative data gathered were transcribed and subjected to content analysis and later analyzed for the emerging themes and schemes were generated. The qualitative data was presented verbatim as responses for the interviewees regarding their expressions about the different activities involved in students' placements.

V. RESULTS

A. DemographicCharacteristics of the Respondents

Table I: Sample Demographic Profile of the Placement Respondents

Demographic data	Category	Percent
Gender	Male	52.1
	Female	47.9
Age	Below 20 years	8.3
	20-30 years	69.2
	31-40 years	12.3
	41-50 years	7.4
	51 years and above	2.8

Majority of the respondents (52.1%) were male while 47.9% were females. Regarding the age distribution of the respondents, most were aged 20-30 years (12.3%) and only 2.8% aged 51 years and above as shown in Table I.

B. Pre-placement Activities

Table II: Descriptive Statistics for Pre –Placement Activities

Activity	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' placement orientation is valuable	4.15	1.16
Placement objectives are made clear to Students	3.90	1.15
Universities should seek placement for students	3.82	1.44
Course works are resourceful in preparing students	4.04	1.09
Pre-Placement Seminars prepare students	4.37	0.93
Training schedules are issued to students	3.91	1.18
Host organizations orient students	3.97	1.14
Students easily get placements themselves	2.56	1.50

Based on the responses, most statements were found to have an average rating above 3, apart from one statement (students

easily get placements themselves) as indicated in table II. From the qualitative data, the coordinators of the sampled institutions had the following responses; coordinator 1 stated that "students find difficult to get places for placements themselves." Coordinator 4 added that, "some institutions tell students to look for themselves places for their placement and when they get challenges in securing one in reputable organizations they end up in workplaces that may not offer the required training." Coordinator 11 advised that " the university has the main responsibility of getting places for training for their students but students are also encouraged to participate in looking for training opportunities through their networks." Another coordinator 6 observed that " I think we should maintain the practice of both staff and students getting places for the placements this is because some students have networks that help them access some of the reputable organizations that even staff of the university may not be able to. However, all the obtained vacancies should be subjected to an evaluation process." It is therefore clear based on the findings that the respondents were satisfied with the execution of most of the activities in the pre-placement activities.

C. During-placementActivities

Table III: Descriptive Statistics of the –Placement Activeties

Activity	Mean	Std. Deviation
Universitystaff adequately supervise students undertaking placement	3.45	1.23
Supervision placement by workplaces supervisors is usually adequate	3.50	0.92
Learning tasks are organized from simple to complex during placement	3.58	1.24
Placement learning procedures are usually clear	3.27	1.21
Guidance by university supervisors is usually adequate during placement	3.65	1.27
Mentors in workplaces are cooperative to ease learning	4.01	1.11
University placement supervisors were cooperative to enhance learning	3.89	1.10
Other employees in workplaces are helpful during placement	4.01	1.08
Workplace find students from universities cooperative during placement	3.78	0.99
Workplace trainers need training for effective mentoring of students	3.86	1.22
Host workplace trainers are competent to meet the expectations of students' placement	3.47	1.17
Hosting workplaces give adequate access to their facilities during placement	3.43	1.37
Hosting workplaces usually adequately facilitate placement activities	3.96	1.22
University adequately facilitate staff to undertake placement activities	3.62	1.20
Workplaces commit sufficient resources to placement	3.45	1.14
Log or record book was useful in placement	4.10	1.21

The core implementation of WPL is engrained in the activities that the stakeholders get involved in the during placement stage. The during placement activities form part of the core executions of students' placement therefore determining its

success and effectiveness.The results from the findings as shown in table IIIindicated that all the sixteen items were agreed to by the respondents as they were above the average rating of 3 and above.However, the qualitative data findings indicated on the contrary in the following responses; regarding inadequate supervision by the university staff WPL coordinator 2 asserted that; "the academic staff sometimes don't supervise the students allocated to them for their placement where they do supervise students are not given sufficient time." Another coordinator 10 highlighted that; "the ratio of the students to the university academic staff for WPL supervision is high hence the deficient of supervision." Coordinator 3 of another university critically observed that; "the critical challenge of student supervision is the remote supervision where the supervisors don't physically visit the students undertaking their placement but use means like phone callsit'sa shame." About hosting workplaces not giving students adequate access to their facilities for placement coordinator 3 highlighted that; "there are some workplaces that are so mean to the point that they do not allow students to access even the basic areas of operation for fear of competition, they think that students will steal their technology."While emphasizing the use of the log or record books coordinator 10 re-assured that; "… the logbooks is where they keep their recording of their daily routines."

D. Post-placement Activities

Table IV: Descriptive Statistics of Post –Placement Activities

Activity	Mean	Std. Deviation
Report writing guidelines are useful to students undertaking placement	4.30	1.07
Report writing is useful for placement reflections	4.36	1.02
Overall assessment of placement was satisfactory	3.85	1.03
Assessment criteria used in placement is fit for the task	4.03	1.15
Post-placement seminars are useful for effective learning	4.33	2.35
Universities usually give feedback to students' placement hosting workplaces	3.02	1.44

The outcomes of students' placement are all measure in the aggregation of assessment and feedback obtained through written reports by the students and their assessment results derived from reliable instruments used. The results from the findings indicated that the post-placement activities were being handled well by the stakeholders as the respondents indicated an average rating above 3 as shown in table IV.The qualitative data findings regarding the post-placement activities further affirmed that; "students write placement reports that provide a reflection of the learning experience basing on the guidelines that are usually issued." according to coordinator 2. Concerning the assessment criteria coordinator 6 confirmed that; " the assessment instrument with a criterion is given to the workplace supervisors and the university academic staff to follow." Regarding holding the post-placement seminar coordinator 11 affirmed that " … we held a feedback session of the students recently and they raised

important issues like presentation of reports." About the feedback to the workplaces from the universities after students placement coordinator 9 confessed on the contrary that; "honestly we don't provide any systematic feedback to workplaces that host our students for their placement this is something we need to look into.

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Pre-placement Activities

The findings of the study found that the most of activities that are involved in the pre-placement stage were agreed to by the respondents which correspondingly conform to the advice of Taylor and Govender (2013) who highlighted the critical need to prepare the students before commencing their placement. Furthermore, similar to what [33] and [32] proposed as would be standard procedure in the WPL cycle and responsibility of both the universities and the hosting workplaces respectively. As suggested by [35], [12]and [36] the universities have to maintain the alignment of their respective coursework prior to students placements in a way that the knowledge and skills acquired by the students from the institutions before commencement of placement are relevant, applicable and contributing to the hosting workplaces. The universities should uphold and enhance students' orientations prior to placement, continue to clarify on the objectives of placements to the stakeholders (students, staff and hosting workplaces), continue to seek vacancies for the students to undertake their placements, and emphasize the importance of course works in preparing their students and carry out placement seminars. In addition, the hosting workplaces ought to maintain the provision of training schedules to the students and carry out orientation to students before commencement of their placement.Although from the findings students find it difficult to secure reliable places for their placement on their own the universities ought to use the mixed approach of obtaining places for their students placement such that the students continue to participate in the process. The contribution of the well implemented pre-placement activities in effecting meaningful learning by the students in the workplaces is one that should be well utilized by the students, universities and hosting workplaces.

B. During-placement Activities

Although the findings related to the activities involved during the placement stage of WPL indicated that most of the activities were rated positively, there were very critical ones like supervision and students' accessibility to facilities for their placement that were highlighted by the interviewees as wanting. Regarding supervision as [3] observed, with inadequate supervision the support meant for students and the hosting workplaces is compromised, consistence and regular requirements [6] are hampered, quality of placement is undermined [8],would benefits of regular interaction of the university staff and the hosting workplaces to share information is negatively affected as well. The universities should be concerned about the frequency, adequacy and

quality of placement supervision of their students by their staff.Although [35] highlighted that adequate supervision of students placement relies on the adequate facilitation provided to the supervisors, it was noted in the findings that even where the facilitation has been accorded incidences of "remote supervision" and no supervision at all continue to happen. Monitoring and punitive actions mechanisms against the errant staff to be able to realize the required supervision of WPL in their institutions need to sought. The hosting workplaces that deny students access to their facilities during placement need to appreciate their contribution towards learning as articulated by [40], [41] and [1] as they advocate for an enabling policy envisioned by [45]. The aspects of learning sequencing [34] guidance to the students [38], cooperation of the stakeholders [39] should be further enhanced for better organized WPL. In addition, the mentors of students undertaking their placement ought to be continuously sensitized as regards their influence to the learning process and shaping of the future workforce as identified by [35].The utilization of the log and record books by the students as promoted by [21] as part of the placement outputs is a brilliant activity that should be emulated. Hosting workplaces on the other hand, ought to be concerned about the training competencies of their staff that handle students undertaking placement, inadequate accessibility they offer to students to their facilities during placement and the amount of resources that the commit to the activities students placement in their workplaces.

C. Post-placement Activities

Main findings of the post-placement activities revealed that report writing was a useful input in the students' placement as it is helpful in providing meaningful and accumulative reflection of their experiences during the undertaking as supported by [35] and [6]. The overall positive evaluation of the assessment of placement as revealed in the findings is an indication of what [44] described as the being understood by the stakeholders, and integrated as asserted by [42] and clear evidence of learning having taken place [3]. The universities and the hosting workplaces should advocate for combined assessment by both the mentors in the workplaces and the university staff [35], criterion used to embrace that are relevant to the work world and positively affecting the standard of the academic programs as emphasized by [45] and [46]respectively.And as [47] encouraged the assessment criterion used in the assessment of learning even when it was evaluated as fit should be comprehensive to include all the possible learning areas. Contrary to what [18] highlighted as an essential ingredient the findings reveal that the feedback mechanism used by the universities is unsatisfactory to promote effective learning these views as similar to what [48] anticipated in the importance of debriefing. In order to help the students deal with the anxiety, fears, ambiguities and unacquaintedness they face or faced during undertaking their placements, post placement seminars and provision of feedback to the stakeholders are vital.

VII. CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to explore the activities involved in the practice of students' placements in universities in Uganda towards having an efficient and meaningful WPL in higher education. From the findings and based on the three stages of the students placement (pre, during & post-placement) activities the respondents on average agreed that the program was relatively well organised to support the desired outcomes. However, the negatively rated items are also critical in improving the quality of students placements in universities in Uganda. The negatively percieved items were; the unability of the students to secure vacancies themselves for thir placement, inadequate supervision by the university staff, hosting workplaces anabilty to provide adequate or reasonable access and utilization of their facilities to university students for their placement, unclarity to the whole procedure of placement to the stakeholder (students, university staff & hosting workplaces). Another is a wanting systemic feedback provisions regarding students placement.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The following recommendations that are aimed at improving the practice of students placement can be derived from this study.

1. The universities need to employ a mixed approach of institutional initiatives and student participation to securing placement vacancies for their students to achieve quality and required vacancies for the placements.
2. With improved facilitation, the hosting workplaces and university academic staff involved in the supervision of students placements should underscore the critical role they play in this aspect of students placement to the meaningful and effective students placement.
3. The universities should also institute mechanism for monitoring placement supervision and punitive actions against errant staff that neglect their duty to supervise the students as expected always be taken.
4. Once hosting workplaces have accepted to participate in student placement program they should responsibly consider that the students need to be given adequate access to their facilities to be able to learn the work world practices to be able to gain the expected benefits from the undertaking for their contribution to students placements is to be effective and purposeful.
5. As part of the effective organization of students placements the universities should consider putting in place systematic approaches for obtaining and disseminating feedback information to the participating stakeholders. This is vital for the improvement of the program working out the challenges that might arise and soliciting ideas to improve the practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

[1] Pop, C., & Barkhuizen, N. (2013). Exploring the effectiveness of a Workplace Learningprogramme in contributing towards the employability of graduates: the graduate interns' perspective. The African Journal for Work-Based Learning, 1(1), 28-38.

[2] Hager, P. (1999). Finding a good Theory of Workplace Learning. In D. Boud, & J. Garrick, Understanding Learning at Work (pp. 65-82). London: Routledge.

[3] Brennan, J., & Little, B. (1996). A Review of Work Based Learning in Higher Education. Crown.

[4] Hager, P. (2011). Theories of Workplace Learning. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans, & B. N. O'Connor (Eds.), The Sage handbook of Workplace Learning (pp. 17-31). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

[5] Bates, M. (2008). Work-integrated curricula in university programs. Higher Education Research & Development, 27(4), 305-317. http://doi.org/doi:10.1080/07294360802406775

[6] Costely, C. (2011). Workplace Learning and Higher Education. In M. Malloch, L. Cairns, K. Evans, & B. O'Connor (Eds.), The SAGE handbook of Workplace Learning (pp. 395-406). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

[7] Thelen, K. (2007). Contemporary Challenges to the German Vocational training system. Regulation & Governance, 247-260.

[8] Mcewen, C., & Trede, F. (2014). The value of workplace learning in the first year for university studnets from under-represented groups. Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 15(1), 55-67.

[9] Rajab, R. (2015). Building a collaborative Learning Partnership Between the Workplace and the Institution to Enhance Employability. doi:10707/395013

[10] Kintu, D., Kisilu, M. K., & Ferej, A. (2019). An Exploration of Strategies for Faciliting Graduates' Transition to the World of Work: A Case of Technical, Vocational Education and Training Graduates in Uganda. International Journal of Vocational Education and Training Research, 5(1), 1-9.

[11] Treuer, V. K., Sturre, V., Keele, S., & Mcleod, J. (2011). An integrated model for the evaluation of work Placement. Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 12(3), 196-204. Retrieved from www.apjce.org: www.apjce.org/files/APJCE_12_3_195_204.pdf

[12] Sweet, R. (2012). Work-based learning: Why? How? In S. Majumdar, Revisting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice (pp. 164-203). UNESCO-UNEVOC.

[13] Vaughan, K. (2012). The Integration of work and learning in New Zealand: A working Paper. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Education Research.

[14] Weible, R. (2010). Are Universities Reaping the Available Benefits Internship Programs Offer? Journal of Education for Business, 85, 59-63. http://doi.org/doi:10.1080/08832320903252397

[15] Rizzo, R. (2013). A case study of an experiental learning and graduate placement partnership between the South Africa Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC) and the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). The African Journal for Work-Based Learning, 1(1), 5-13.

[16] Taylor, S., & Govender, C. (2013). Education and Training for the workplace-readiness skills. The African Journal for Work-Based Learning, 1(1), 14-22.

[17] Mthembu, T. (2013). WPL-power remains at the level of WPLL and not POWER. The African Journal for Work-Based Learning, 1(1), 1-4.

[18] Sewell, W., Mason, R. B., & Venter, P. (2017). Financial Growth and Sustainability in Retail SMMES: Study of Workplace LearningPolicy. Risk governance & control: financial markets &institutions, 7(2), 204-213.

[19] National Council for Higher Education [NCHE]. (2016). Tracer Study of 2005 graduates from five universities and four colleges. Kampala: National Council for Higher Education.

[20] Kadoodooba, B. (2009, October). Kyambogo University Programmes Committee. Background and Guidelines for Review of Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes. Kampala.

[21] Council on Higher Education. (2011). Work-Integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide. Pretoria: Council on Higher Education.

[22] Devins, D. (2013). Overview of Work based learning in Europe Deliverable 6: Workbased learning as an integrated Curricullum(WBLIC). Leeds: Policy Research Institute Leeds University.

[23] Tynjala, P. (2008). Perspectives into Learning at the Workplace. Educational Research, 3, 130-154. http://doi.org/doi:10.1016/j.edurev.2007.12.001

[24] Sternstrom, M. M.-L. (2005). Between policy and practice: Structuring workplace learning in higher vocational education in Sweden and Finland. Journal of Workplace Learning, 17(3), 194 – 211. http://doi.org/doi:1.1108/13665620510588707

[25] Illeris, K. (2003). Workplace Learning and Learning Theory. Journal of Workplace Learning, 15(4), 167-178. http://doi.org/doi:10.1108/13665620310474615

[26] Costely, C., & Armsby, P. (2007). Work-based learning assessed as a field or a mode of study. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 32(1), 21-33.

[27] Leslie, D. (1991). The Hospitality Industry, Industrial Placement and Personnel Management. The Service Industries Journal, 11(1), 63-74. http://doi.org/doi:10.1080/02642069100000006.

[28] Kolb , D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning. Retrieved from learningfromexperience: http://www.learningfromexperience.com/images/uploads/process-of-experiential-learning.pdf

[29] Department of Education. (2016). Workplace Learning . Government of Western Australia, Australia. Retrieved from www.det.wa.edu.au: http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/policies/workplace-learning.en?oid=au.edu.wa.det.cms.contenttypes.Policy-id-6632279

[30] Makerere University. (2014). Guidelines for Field Attachement. Retrieved from www.mak.ac.ug: http://policies.mak.ac.ug/policy/guidelines-field-attachement

[31] Kalanda, E. D. (2013). Industrial Training as a Workplace Learning Approach for Hotel Trainee of Kyambogo University (Unpublished master's thesis) . Kampala: Uganda.

[32] Murdoch University. (2011). Work Integrated learning Policy. Retrieved from www.murdoch.edu.au:http://www.murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Education/_document/MUSE-Documents/Work-Integrated-Learning-Policy.pdf

[33] Parterson, A., Keevy, J., & Boka, K. (2017). Exploring a Work-Based Values Approach in South African Colleges to improve Employability of Youth: Literature Review. Johannesburg: JET Education Services.

[34] Maclean, R., & Pavlova, M. (2012). Vocationalisation of secondary and Higher education: pathway to the world of work. In S. Majumdar, Revisiting global trends in TVET: Reflections on theory and practice (pp. 40-85). UNESCO-UNEVOC.

[35] Merwe, d. (2013). Workplace and lecture hall synergy. The African Journal for Work-Based Learning, 1(1), 23-27

[36] Bowman, L., & Lund, A. (2007). Pathways to the Profession: a study in integrating journalism degree programs with the world of work. ATN Evaluation and Assessment Conference: Assessment and Evalaution for real world learning (pp. 1-8). Brisbane, Queensland: Department of Teaching and Learning Support Services.

[37] Billet, J. (2004). Workplaces participatory practices: Conceptualising workplaces as learning environments. Journal of Workplace Learning, 16(6), 312-324.

[38] Billett, J. (2000). Guided learning at work. Journal of Workplace Learning, 12 (7) 272-285.

[39] Gribble, C., Blackmore, J., & Rahimi, M. (2015). Challenges to providing work integrated learning to international students at Australian Universities. Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning, 5(4), 401-416.

[40] Boud, D., & Garrick , J. (1999). Understandings of Workplace Learning. In D. Boud, & J. Garrick (Eds.), Understanding Learning at Work (pp. 1-12). London: Routledge.

[41] Barnett, R. (1999). Learning to Work and Working to Learn. In D. Boud, & J. Garrick (Eds.), Understanding Learning at Work (pp. 29-43). London: Routledge.

[42] Mathews, P. (1999). Workplace Learning: developing an holistic model. The Learning Organisation, 6(1), 18-29.

[43] Okello, B. (2010). Complexity and Contradictions in Vocational Education in Uganda [Lecture notes]. Kampala, Uganda:, Kyambogo University Faculty of Vocational Studies.

[44] Byrom, T., & Aiken, V. (2014). Doing it Differently: Re-designing the Curricullum to face the Challenges of Student Work-based learning Opportunities. Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning, 4(3), 271-283.

[45] Martin, A., & Hughes, H. (2009). How to make the Most of Work Integrated learning A Guide for Students, Lecturers & Supervisors. New Zealand: Massey University Press.

[46] Corrin, L., & Smith, M. (2007). Development of a cross-faculty model for the enhancement of academic standards of work-integrated programs. ATN Evaluation and Assessment Conference: assessment and evaluation for real world learning (pp. 25-30). Brisbane, Queensland: Department of Teaching and Learning Support Services.

[47] Scholtz, D. (2020). Assessing workplace based learning. International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 21(1), 25-35.

[48] Winchester-Seeto, T., & Rowe, A. D. (2019). Who is holding the mirror? Debriefing and reflection in work-integrated learning. International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 20(4), 335-349.

[49] Creswell, J. W. (2007, March 9). An Introduction to Mixed Methods Research. Lincoln, Nebraska, USA: University of Nebraska.

[50] Sullivan, Gail &Artino, Anthony. (2013). Analyzing and Interpreting Data FromLikert-Type Scales. Journal of graduate medical education. 5. 541-2. http://doi.org/doi10.4300/JGME-5-4-18.