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Are the learning opportunities of computer-mediated internships comparable to those in traditional internships?


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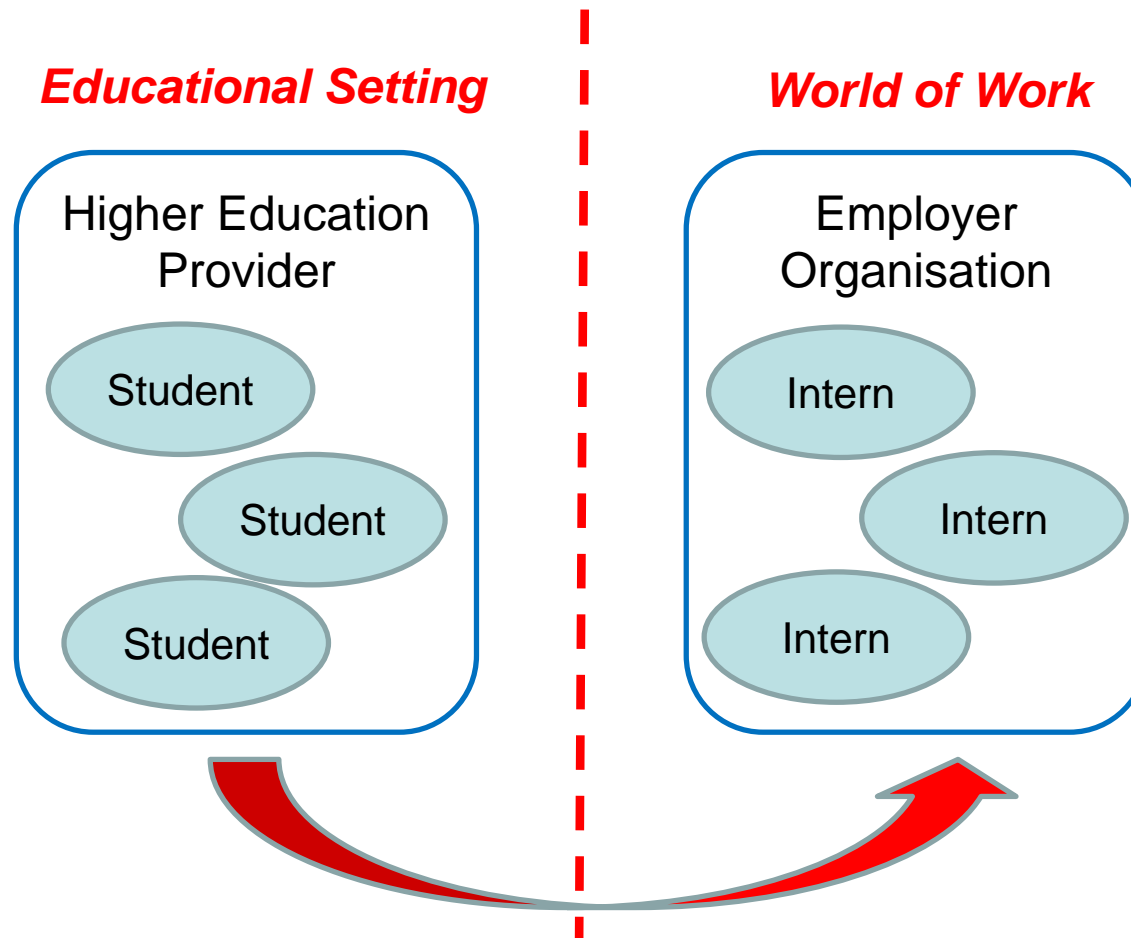
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Background

- Traditional higher education degree programs focus on technical knowledge transfer (Guile & Griffiths, 2001)
- Increasing recognition that technical skills alone are not enough (Bayerlein, 2015; Coll & Zegwaard, 2006; Fleming, 2008; Jackson et al., 2017)
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 - Shift towards developing transferable skills, and transitioning students from education to the world of work (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Jackson et al., 2014; Rosenberg et al., 2012)
 - Internships are key enablers in this shift (Burritt et al., 2010; Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council, 2007; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008)

Traditional Internships



Value of Internships

- **Internships are able to create benefits in almost all disciplines** (Candy & Crebert, 1991; Maertz et al., 2014)
 - **assist in the structured transition from education to the world of work** (Guile & Griffiths, 2001; Knouse et al., 1999),
 - **prepare for the demands and rigour of the workplace** (Guile & Griffiths, 2001; Jackson, 2015; Rosenberg et al., 2012; Wilton, 2012),
 - **demonstrate the application of technical skills in complex workplace settings** (Jackson et al., 2014; Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008),
 - **improve professional/transferable skills** (Maertz et al., 2014; Orrell, 2011; Smith & Worsfold, 2015),
 - **create future employment opportunities** (Hergert, 2009), and
 - **enable a self-assessment of a student's suitability for their chosen career** (Rothman & Sisman, 2016)

Limitations of “Traditional” Internships

- Number of available placements is limited
(Jackson et al., 2017; Wray & McCall, 2007)
- Quality of placements varies (Maertz et al., 2014)
- LOs are largely linked to location boundedness
 - develop of interpersonal/communication skills (Taylor, 1988)
 - enable extensive (ad-hoc) guidance and advice from colleagues and supervisors (Heron, 1999)
 - Integration into the social environment of the workplace (Konradt & Schmook, 1999)
 - Particularly challenging for students from low social-economic backgrounds, students with caregiving responsibilities, disabled students, etc.

Motivation for this study

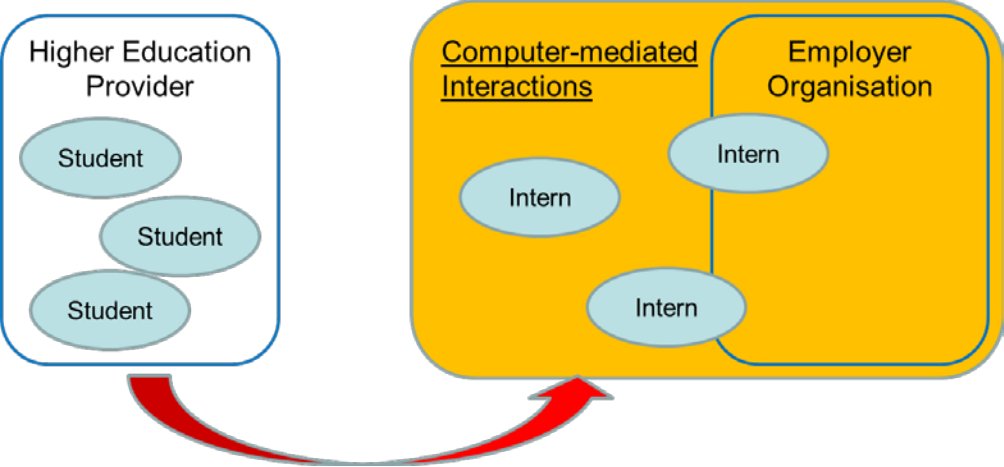
- We know that internships have substantial benefits for students, but...
 - their use in contemporary degree programmes remains limited
 - the long-standing disconnect between classroom learning and workplace practice continues
- Why is this???
 - Limited placements ... quality concerns ... location boundedness and its associated challenge



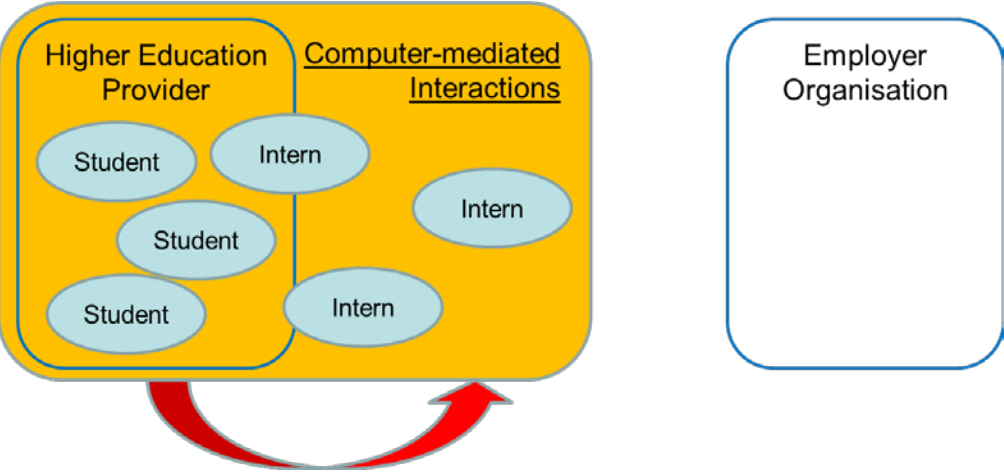
Are computer-mediated internships a solution?

Computer-mediated Internships

E-Internships



Simulated Internships



Assessment Approach

- The expected LOs of the three internship types are assessed using the evaluation approach of Kraiger *et al.* (1993)
 - Cognitive LOs
 - development of students' mental skills to improve the assimilation and organisation of theoretical knowledge
 - Skill-based LOs
 - assimilation of the practical processes and activities used/required in a given workplace
 - Affective LOs
 - acquisition of professional attitudes, values and identities that exist within a given workplace or industry

Value of Computer-mediated Internships

	Learning outcomes			Traditional internship limitations		
	Cognitive	Skill-based	Affective	Location bound	Placement number	Placement quality
Traditional internship	●●●	●●●	●●●	n/a	n/a	n/a
E-internship	●●●	●●○	●●○	●●●	●●○	○○○
Simulated internship	●●●	●●●	●○○	●●○	●●●	●●○

Key Takeaways

- Computer-mediated internships are able to replicate many of the LOs of traditional internships
- BUT, not all LOs are equally well supported!
 - Affective LOs in are difficult to create in simulations
 - Skill-based and affective LOs in e-internships require careful planning, support, and the right work-project
- Student's pre-existing "*online learning skills*" are likely to be a key determinant of their success in computer mediated internships

Future Work

- Empirical comparison of LOs supported/developed in three internship types...
- Assessing the process through which LOs are developed in traditional and simulated internships
 - Early indications are that the processes similar
- Watch this space...

Questions

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