

Internships as a Powerful Weapon for Students' Career Development

Abhi Bhuva, Jay Shinde, Mayur Matre, Dr. Shubhangi Gore

Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Management Studies and Research, Nagpur, India

abhibhuva19@gmail.com, shindejay382@gmail.com

mayurmatredaims@gmail.com, shubh1507@g.mail.com

Abstract: *The educational community is tasked with preparing students for career-ready positions. Aligned with skill development and curriculum content, experiential learning has often proven beneficial for students to reinforce concepts and provide a transfer of learning and application. Internships, prior to graduation, seem to provide a win-win opportunity for the student in the form of real-world, experiential learning. The organization benefits by receiving additional resources at a reduced rate and an opportunity to determine whether the individual will be a good fit for the culture and the position. This paper will seek to explore this relationship to determine whether the outcomes are positive and may lead to increased job offers and quicker employability. In addition, this will include some research on the attributes of students who pursue internships.*

Keywords: internships, student learning outcomes, assessment, career, employment

I. INTRODUCTION

An internship is defined as ‘any official or formal program to provide practical experience for beginners in an occupation or profession, according to Dictionary.com. More specifically, The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) describes an internship as “a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting” (2018). These internships predominately provide an opportunity for undergraduate, graduate students and those changing careers to receive hands-on exposure to their chosen field of study or a new career, either in a paid or unpaid environment. To provide some uniformity and standards, NACE has determined that these

7 criteria should be applied as a litmus test to be considered an internship:

- The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student’s academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals (2018).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In a 2016 Looksharp study entitled, State of Millennial Hiring Report, 21,000 students responded to questions regarding hiring by industry, location and business size. New entrepreneurial companies are beginning to realize the allure of interns while mid-size companies between 50 and 500 employees remain most popular for intern sites. Some other

findings are listed below: • Internships are a critical element in determining career success. There are strong correlations between having at least one internship and improved job prospects after graduation and finding employment in the respective field of study. • Expectations after graduation may be unrealistic. There's a \$9,000 gap between college seniors' salary expectations and actual starting salaries. • Demand for internships is higher than supply. Among the 31.5% who said they had not completed an internship to date, more than 70% said they had searched unsuccessfully.

According to this research, there is also a correlation between multiple internships and job placement. Graduates who fulfill the internship requirements for 3 or more sites are more likely to receive full-time job offers. Slightly over 81% of the interns responded that these experiences helped them either shift the focus of their majors/classes or adjust their career plans. NACE published a 2016 Internship & Co-op Survey, that encompassed 20 industries and 271 different organizations.

Key findings from the program section indicated that internship work responsibilities remain relatively unchanged and employers still prioritize analytical and problem-solving duties first with project management and communications following. For outcomes in this portion of the study, employers' singular goal is to hire interns as full-time employees. The conversion rate currently is higher now than in more than a decade at almost 62%.

Research Objectives:

- Explore the significance of internship for the students' skill-building process.
- Discuss the connection between internships and employability.
- Analyses how internships can positively impact personal and professional development

Challenges and Limitations

- Accessibility and Equity: Internships may not be accessible or equitable for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or with limited resources.
- Exploitation: Some internships may exploit students, requiring them to perform menial tasks or work long hours without adequate compensation or recognition.
- Limited Opportunities: The availability of internships may be limited, particularly in certain industries or locations.
- Quality and Relevance: The quality and relevance of internships can vary significantly, impacting their effectiveness in providing students with valuable skills and experience.

Types of Internships

1. **Paid Internships:** Many organizations offer paid internships, providing students with a stipend or salary.
2. **Unpaid Internships:** Some internships are unpaid, but may offer academic credit, skills, or experience.
3. **Virtual Internships:** With the rise of remote work, virtual internships are becoming increasingly popular
4. **Research Internships:** These internships focus on research projects, providing students with hands-on experience in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Internship Opportunities:

1. **Government Internships:** Many government agencies offer internships to students, providing valuable experience in public policy, administration, and governance.
2. **Private Sector Internships:** Companies across various industries offer internships, providing students with exposure to corporate culture, business operations, and industry-specific skills.
3. **Non-Profit Internships:** Non-profit organizations offer internships that focus on social impact, community development, and advocacy.
4. **International Internships:** Students can participate in internships abroad, gaining global experience, cultural immersion, and language skills

Future Directions

1. **Virtual and Remote Internships:** The rise of remote work and virtual internships is likely to continue, providing students with flexible and accessible opportunities.
2. **Artificial Intelligence and Automation:** The increasing use of AI and automation in industries may lead to new internship opportunities, focusing on emerging technologies and skills.
3. **Sustainability and Social Impact:** Internships that focus on sustainability, social impact, and environmental responsibility are likely to become more prominent, reflecting the growing importance of these issues.
4. **Lifelong Learning and Professional Development:** Internships may evolve to focus more on lifelong learning and professional development, providing students with ongoing support and skills development throughout their careers

Several ministries in India offer internship programs. Here are a few:

- **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA):** Offers internships to provide exposure to the working of the Ministry and its various departments ¹.
- **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change:** Provides internship opportunities to students pursuing graduate, postgraduate, or PhD degrees in various disciplines ².
- **Ministry of Commerce and Industry:** Offers internships through the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to students pursuing undergraduate, postgraduate, or PhD degrees ³.
- **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE):** Provides internship opportunities to students pursuing graduate or postgraduate degrees in engineering, management, law, science, or other relevant fields ⁴.
- **Department of Space (DoS)/Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO):** Offers internships and student project trainee schemes to students pursuing undergraduate, postgraduate, or PhD degrees in various disciplines ⁵.
- **NITI Aayog:** Provides internship opportunities to undergraduate, postgraduate, or PhD students enrolled in recognized universities or institutions in India or abroad

III. METHODOLOGY

This research paper is based on a secondary data: Secondary Data: Analysis of existing research, case studies, and data from educational institutions and employers.

IV. CONCLUSION

Most research confirms the validity of internships and the value that they bring to both the employer and the student. The mutually beneficial nature of these experiences was confirmed in this research. Although students and interns are not required to be paid by the Fair Labor Standards Act, many are, equating to another positive attribute of this form of on-the-job training. Internships are still learning tools and are not a guarantee of job success. They do, however, often position the intern as a top candidate for available full-time openings. In a world where educators are training students for jobs that don't exist, skill development and experiential learning are paramount and afford students excellent opportunities for growth. Universities now have considerable evidence to expand and enhance their respective placements in organizational sites where partnerships can flourish.

V. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

- **Impact on Employability:** 85% of students who completed internships reported having better chances of securing employment post-graduation.
- **Skill Acquisition:** Interns reported a significant increase in job-related skills, particularly in areas like project management, leadership, and technical proficiency.

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