

THE APPLICABILITY OF INTERSHIPS IN SHAPING FUTURE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

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Annotation: *Internships have an impressive contribution towards future career prospects in professionalism by bridging the gap between theory and practice. The present research examines mechanisms through which internships enhance employability, skill acquisition, networking, and career development. Theoretical foundations of the present research are based on Experiential Learning, Human Capital, and Career Construction theories for emphasizing internship functions towards empowering new professionals with employable competencies. Through qualitative case study research techniques, questionnaires, and interviews, the results are unveiled that internships are flexible, offer industry contacts, and increase employability. Pre-enrolment in internships, cooperative university-industry collaboration, mentoring schemes, and discriminatory-free placement are the research recommendations on career advantages to be adopted.*

Key words: *Internships, employability, talent development, networking, career development, experiential learning, university-industry partnership.*

Introduction

With the present job market becoming increasingly competitive and competition on a day-to-day basis, gaining experience through means of on-the-job training is increasingly necessary for young working professionals. Regardless of how solid the theoretical background is, the capability to apply it in a real work setting is one of the most determinantal elements in ensuring a successful career. In this view, internships are a constructive mechanism of empowering young professionals to bridge theory and practice, professional capability, and potential career prospects. The internship

process not only acquires students and fresh graduates their initial professional experience but also opens the window of opportunity to make them adaptable in the labor market, establish good relationships with employers, and secure permanent employment in the future.

The article explains the position of internships in an aspiring professional's life, the importance of their presence in their professional future, and how these help them land a good job. Students today are not only forced to study but also work. Some of them work for financial independence, while others do so for exposure to their careers or acquiring skills for their future careers. Learning and labor is a process that requires so much responsibility and commitment, requiring so much time management, patience, and self-discipline on the part of the learner. While doing so, the learner gains independence, requiring work and experience in life in order to make his future professional.

The issue of working and studying simultaneously by the students is considered here, their motivation, and its influence on further development. A majority of contemporary students are obliged to work and study. Some of the students aspire to become financially independent, but others would want to attain some experience and practical skills in the field in order to determine their future. Study and work are processes requiring vast time management, patience, and accountability on the part of the student, and both have pros and cons. On the other hand, internships are a proper platform through which young professionals can equate theoretical assumptions and practice, acquire professional

experience, and develop future career prospects.

Literature review

Internship is a critical element of career growth of an individual by integrating practice experience as an adjunct to theory. The theory of internships as transition between work and education can be contested with the help of some theories like experiential learning theory, human capital theory, and career construction theory.

Experiential Learning Theory

David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) emphasizes the necessity of learning through experience. Experience reformation by Kolb (1984) creates knowledge, and it consists of four steps to it: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Internships are

not any different, and they provide the students with a medium through which they can translate class learning (abstract conceptualization) to life (concrete experience), seeing what they have learned, and experimenting and refining their skills through active experimentation. With this learning by doing, problem-solving and flexibility in the workplace are achieved.

Human Capital Theory

According to Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), training and education constitute investments in human capital that increase productivity and employability. Internship is an investment that increases the competence, knowledge, and skills of the student and lifts the student in the labor market. The employers require some experienced people, and internships enable people to gain industry knowledge at a youthful age and hence be job market competitive.

Career Construction Theory

Mark Savickas' Career Construction Theory (2005) is founded on active career construction by the individual with the assistance of experience, narrative, and flexibility. Internships allow space to try out careers, discover oneself professionally, and work in flexible conditions. Internships promote career development because they try out skills in actual situations, explore industries, and align ambitions with job market requirements.

Social Learning and Networking Theories

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) predicts that people learn by observation, imitation, and feedback. Internships have an internship learning phase where students get themselves exposed to professional practitioners, observe workplace cultures, and discover the best ways of doing things in their fields of study. Networking theory also entails the beneficial attainment of professional contacts and social capital in a career's development. Internships offer a platform where students can establish a relationship with their potential employer, fellow students, and mentors and position themselves in the best position to be hired in the future.

Internships, in theory, are not temporary work experience but are critical career development tools. They provide experiential learning, human capital formation, allow individuals to set up their careers, and provide networking. Since the employment world is more competitive, internships are a formal way through which

future professionals bridge the knowledge gap between academics and professional achievement.

Methodology

The research is conducted using the help of qualitative research methodology in revealing the influence of internships on career prospects in the future. The research process seeks to examine the influence of internships in career building, knowledge gain, and job searching at a deeper level. Questionnaires, interviews, and case studies of the students, graduates, and employers are employed in gathering data.

Research Design

Qualitative processes were employed in obtaining in-depth information with regards to employer and intern attitude and experience towards how internships contribute to professional development. The purpose of the research is to look at realistic situations to uncover the contribution internships make to talent acquisition, readiness for work, and business connections.

Data Collection Methods

1. Questionnaires: Both structured and semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to the interns and current students who had been through internships. The questionnaires were applied to identify their experience, skills acquired, and how they influence their careers.

2. Interviews: Employers and interns were interviewed in depth to provide their views on the performance of internship programs. Employers provided comments on the impact of recruitment procedures due to internships, while interns provided lessons learned.

3. Case Studies: Purposively chosen case studies of successful employees who began as interns were studied. The case studies offer evidence of the worth of internships to professional success and long-term job satisfaction.

Data Analysis

Data gathered were thematically coded, summarizing responses into broad categories of skill acquisition, employability, networking, and career choice. Trends and patterns were observed to determine the overall effect of internships on careers.

Ethical Concerns

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research. The participants were informed of the proposed study and consent was obtained prior to data collection. Privacy and anonymity were ensured to offer honest and honest answers.

This research technique promises adequate examination of internships in career development that provides immense input to students, institutions of higher learning, and workers. Findings from this study will further assist in carrying out internships as a connection between theoretical training and professional attainment.

Recommendation

- **Promote Early Internship Enrollment:** Students are advised to take up internships early in their study period to enhance experiential learning and skill development in their respective field.
- **Incorporate Internships within Career Goal:** Proper selection of internships allows students to gain domain knowledge, thus paving the way for future business leaders.
- **Enhance University-Industry Partnership:** Universities need to create well-coordinated partner relationships with organizations to formulate formalized, competency-based internship modules.
- **Promote Mentorship and Networking:** Interns must be provided with professional connections with mentors and fellow workers so that they can increase their professional prospects.
- **Ensure Equal and Inclusive Internship Opportunities:** High-quality internships with pay must be offered by organisations so that everyone can benefit from the opportunity.
- **Develop Technical as Well as Soft Skills:** Internships must include not only technical skills but also communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.
- **Promote Continuous Learning:** Interns need to learn from experience, get feedback, and adapt to evolving industry requirements.
- By adhering to these recommendations, students, employers, and universities can maximize internships in achieving successful careers.

Conclusion

Internship is an essential element in the professional life of young professionals in bridging the gap between experience and knowledge. With a competitive job market,

experiential learning in the form of internships equips students with the necessary skills, work experience, and networking that makes them much in demand. Synthesis of experiential learning theory, career construction theory, and theory of human capital formation legitimates internships as a benefit with employment systems taking on a temporary role of development—a catalyst to the realization of long-term professional satisfaction.

Research findings attest that internship, technical and softer skills, play a role in making individuals employability ready, flexible, and problem-solvers. Additionally, employer feedback, formal mentoring, and school-business partnership will go on making internship programmes more effective, hence well-

positioned for professional development. To be made sustainable and inclusive, employers, policymakers, and schools will need to join forces in ensuring that well-organized, inclusive, and quality experiences are available. In this way, internships will continue to be a working life-defining experience, and students will experience smooth school-to-work transitions.

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