

Analysis

**Impact of Internship on Management
Students – An Empirical Study**

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Abstract

In the modern economic scenario all over the world- “Management” – as a stream of education has acquired new dimensions. Summer Internship, which is a supervised practical training undertaken by students is an integral part of management education (John E B and Hendrik H, 2006). Despite the increasing use of internship in B-Schools, there is a dearth of research into the impact of such internship on management students. The research paper aims to elicit the impact of summer internship on management students: what they learnt out of it in terms of acquiring career related skills and how the internship helped them to see a realistic picture of their future career expectations. A sample of 100 management students who have completed 6 weeks summer internship was taken from the city of Ahmedabad. The interns reported a number of significant learning outcomes of which the most significant were time management skills, ability to interact with different kinds of people followed by ability to work independently with greater sense of responsibility. The students

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believed that learning outcomes would support their future professional development and the internship had prepared them for their first job.

Key words: Internship, management interns, summer training, learning

Introduction

Today's managers operate in a highly dynamic business environment. They need to do multi-tasking, take decisions, implement them and monitor results. There is a shortage of talented pool of human resources who can successfully work in a highly competitive and complex business environment. B-Schools can play an important role in developing future managers and leaders who can play a vital role in developing a business organization. Management education can supplement On-The-Job training being given by the companies to the management trainees.

Industry practitioners and educators both agree that management curricula need to reflect recent and future industry needs and developments, to ensure graduates are equipped with appropriate industry-relevant skills. The combination of theory with practice is viewed as an essential component of a student's management education. The internship component of a student's management education can hold real educational benefits in preparing them for future managerial roles. B-Schools should successfully prepare graduates for the demands of the future by offering the curricula that reflect the needs of industry, whilst maintaining the academic rigor and underlying philosophy associated with a university education.

The benefits of internship programmes to students, to the host organization, and to the university have been well documented and listed below.

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Benefits of internship to the students:

For students, major benefits include the opportunity to integrate learning in the classroom with professional practice, and the injection of reality into abstract theoretical concepts (O'Hara and Shaffer, 1995). Similarly, Ciafalo (1989) and Nevett (1985) pointed out that internships allow students to forge links between what is taught in the classroom and real professional practice. The internship also enables students to experience an enriched learning environment so that classroom materials are viewed from different perspectives (Martinez, 1996). As students are required to learn directly from experience, internship engage students as active mediators of their own learning (Wynd, 1989); therefore, they are more likely to develop skills in 'learning how to learn' in their future careers. It has been suggested (Coleman, 1976) that such experiential methods increase the motivation of the learner, lead to a greater sense of achievement and self-efficacy (Bernstein, 1976), and lead to a greater sense of responsibility for future career development (Williams, 1990).

Benefits of Internship to the Organization

The organization where a student undertakes internship can evaluate a potential employee over a period of time without making any firm commitment regarding future employment. It is possible to assess the attitudes and technical competence much more effectively when working with the candidate than during an interview. During the period of the internship the student does not normally receive any substantial remuneration (Maynard, 1997), yet contributes effectively to the organization if he/she is technically competent.

Benefits of Internship to the University/B-School:

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Internship allows the B-School to gauge the relevance of its curriculum in a professional environment. Feedback from the company mentors can be helpful in training the students and hence increasing their employability. Lucrative Pre-Placement Offer to competent students can increase the B-School's rankings in the eyes of prospective students and other companies who wish to come for campus placement. The corporate interaction can help the B-School to get access to experienced managers who can be invited as guest speakers and their knowledge and wisdom can provide valuable insights into corporate life to the students (Coco, 2000).

Research Objectives:

The objective of this research is to elicit the impact of summer internship on management students: what they learnt out of it in terms of acquiring career related skills and how the internship helped them to see a realistic picture of their future career expectations.

Research Methodology

A random sample of 100 management student interns was taken from the city of Ahmedabad. The students were exposed to 20 statements related to learning outcomes from summer internship like career related skills, benefits of keeping a log book or weekly progress reporting system and benefit of internship in helping them to frame a realistic picture about future career expectations. The responses were noted on a five point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the sample

N = 100	No. of respondents (%)
Gender:	
Male	77
Female	23
Age:	
Below 21 years	00
21 – 23 years	85
23 – 25 years	10
Above 25 years	05
Program in which the student is enrolled:	
MBA (Pharmaceuticals)	53
MBA (Agri Business)	25
MBA (Financial Services)	14
MBA (International Business)	04
MBA (HR)	04
Industry where internship is undertaken:	
Financial Services	17
Pharmaceuticals	49
Retail Services	00
Import Export	02
Media and Advertising	03
Agro based company	18
Any other	11

Learning Outcomes - Career Related Skills

Internship should enable interns to learn career-related skills in a work-place setting. They should learn certain important professional skills that will enhance their employability in the

future. Kelly and Gaedeke (1990) found that oral communication, written communication, problem-solving, analytical skills, computer applications, and teamwork skills were the six most highly rated attributes by employers when making hiring decisions. The interns were asked questions related to learning to do things independently, developing great sense of responsibility, working under pressure, computer skills, leadership skills, interpersonal skills and ability to apply classroom learning to work place environment.

Learning Outcomes - Weekly Progress Report/Log Book

Log book entry is '*a potent vehicle for reflecting on experience, for clarifying our assumptions and behaviour, for improving our powers of observation and for promoting consistency between our beliefs and practices*' (Raelin, 1993). To facilitate reflective learning, interns need to record their daily activities, periodically assess the progress and determine the ways for future improvement. Weekly progress report helps them to keep a track of the work done, identify the stage of project work and plan the future course of action accordingly.

The views of interns were taken on weekly reporting and/or maintaining a log book. The responses were invited in the following areas:

- Helpfulness of weekly progress report/ log book in keeping a track of work progress
- Enhanced students' commitment towards work
- Burden of weekly reporting as it is a compulsory requirement
- Avoiding it because of lack of time to fill it and submit to mentor

- Motivates the interns to recollect what they have learnt during the entire week
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Learning outcome - Crystallization of Career Path

The internship offers a realistic job preview for management interns. It leads to crystallization of their personal interests and career ambitions. Internship helps them to know their compatibility with a particular career option and makes them realize whether they should pursue the same career or think of an alternative option. The interns were asked about learning certain skills like time management, communication, team work, flexibility, technical, problem solving and stress management skills that can help them to be successful in their career.

Data Analysis

Of the various variables studied, the research wanted to identify the most important variables which have an impact on the interns. For this, analysis of mean was done. An analysis of the means allows for the identification of the items of information or variables recognized as the most important. Of all the sub-variables studied, the most important variables were identified based on their mean values. Variables with highest mean value were considered the most important under each category. The same is shown in table 1 below:

Table 2: Descriptive analysis

No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
	<i>Career related skills:</i>		
1.	I learnt how to do things independently	4.18	0.8333
2.	I developed a great sense of responsibility	4.21	0.7560
3.	I am more able to work under pressure	3.91	0.8656

4.	I learnt better computer skills during internship	4.03	1.0773
5.	I am able to apply classroom knowledge to my work environment	4.01	0.7452
6.	I have acquired leadership skills	3.64	0.8821
7.	I learnt how to interact with different kinds of people	4.58	0.7808
	<i>Weekly progress report/log book:</i>		
8.	Weekly progress report/log book helps me to keep a track of my work progress	3.93	0.8196
9.	I am committed to submit my progress report regularly	4.00	0.9211
10.	I do it simply because it is a college requirement	2.85	1.2257
11.	I have no time to fill it because of other commitments and I simply avoid sending it regularly	2.47	0.9995
12.	It motivates me to recollect what I have learnt during the entire week	3.86	0.8290
	<i>Realistic picture of future career expectations:</i>		
13.	Time Management skills	4.50	0.7177
14.	Communication skills	4.41	0.7260
15.	Team work	4.05	0.9360
16.	Leadership	3.86	0.9536
17.	Flexibility and adaptability	4.14	0.7656
18.	Technical skills	4.20	0.8287
19.	Problem solving skills	4.27	0.8628
20.	Stress management	4.05	0.8453

From the above table following interpretations can be done:

1. In case of career related skills, statement no. 7 which states that “I learnt how to interact with different kinds of people” got the highest mean value of 4.58 and hence was considered the most important of all the career related skills.

2. In case of weekly progress report/log book, statement no. 9 which states that “I am committed to submit my progress report regularly” got the highest mean value of 4.00 and hence was considered the most important of all.
3. Time management skills got the highest mean value of 4.50 amongst all the statements related to realistic picture of future career expectations and so was considered to be the most important skill.

Findings and Implications

Internship should enable interns to learn career-related skills in a work-place setting. In a study on the perceptions of employers and students with regard to skills relevant to career preparation, Kelly and Gaedeke (1990) found that oral communication, written communication, problem-solving, analytical skills, time management skills and teamwork skills were the six most highly rated attributes by employers when making hiring decisions. The findings of this study revealed *interpersonal skills* (ability to interact with different kinds of people), *reflective learning* (commitment towards filling log book regularly and using it as a tool to recollect the learning and track the work progress), *time management, communication and problem solving skills* as the most important skills that interns learned during the internship. These findings were in line with the work done by Kelly and Gaedeke (1990). Internship prepared students for the roles they wish to perform in their future career. It allowed them to gain a realistic picture of the life as a management executive in corporate world. It provided them with a realistic preview of what professional life is like, and gave them a clearer and more accurate view of what to expect from their future work.

Conclusion

The study was undertaken to find out the impact of internship on management students in terms of learning career related skills, to clarify the ways in which the students learnt from the experience, and to see if the internship experience assisted students in determining their career choices. The students themselves identified that the learning outcomes of internship were interpersonal skills, reflective learning from log book, time management and communication skills. They believed that these skills would help them develop the qualities needed for future professional development. The literature on internships is largely focused on the workplace application of technical skills acquired by the intern in the classroom. However, this study revealed that the interns identified the learning of personal and interpersonal skills as being more important than the refinement of technical skills.

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