

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DEVELOP EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN INTERNSHIP

Paul Joseph Lawrance, Antonio Moreira

Abstract: Internship is an essential for students to develop employability skills in higher education programs. In Botho University undergraduate computing programs were designed to make sure that the internship program (professional practice) and academic curricula are meeting industry demands. In this article I would like to examine and evaluate student's knowledge and employability skills in terms of Learning, Self management, Teamwork and Competencies like Behavioral skills, Functional skills and Professional skills of students after completion of internship program. Based on the questionnaire, the findings shows that the students are knowledgeable and employability skills will meet in Internship program.

Keywords: Internship, Knowledge, Employability skills

Resumo: O estágio é essencial para que os alunos desenvolvam habilidades de empregabilidade em programas de ensino superior. Na Universidade Botho, os programas de graduação em computação foram projetados para garantir que o programa de estágio (prática profissional) e os currículos acadêmicos atendam às demandas da indústria. Neste artigo, avaliamos o conhecimento do aluno e as habilidades de empregabilidade em termos de Aprendizagem, Autogestão, Trabalho em equipe e Competências, como habilidades comportamentais, habilidades funcionais e habilidades profissionais desenvolvidas após a conclusão do programa de estágio. Com base no questionário implementado, os resultados mostram que os discentes desenvolveram conhecimentos e habilidades de empregabilidade conforme o programa de estágio.

Palavras-chave: Estágio, Conhecimento, habilidades de empregabilidade



Internship (professional practice) module was designed in Botho University with a 60 credits and it seems in the 7th semester. This enable the student to learn, apply and develop employability skills like learning, self management, teamwork and competences skills like behavior (communication, problem solving, and analytical skills), functional (knowledge, technical skills and job responsibilities) and professional skills (respect, commitment and loyal). Questionnaire was designed to conduct in the end of the internship program to check the employability skills of the students and check students during the internship as tutor visits to interact with students and external supervisors to get feedback about the students work and performance.

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this research are as follows:-

1. To find whether or not that student is able to gain work experience related to their career goals in Internship.
2. To make out employer-provided training for students was adequate.
3. To ensure training helped the student to acquire new knowledge.
4. To test self-confidence of student in knowledge and competencies skills to do the task.
5. To test the student ability in using the theory knowledge into practical.
6. To analyze the competence skills using creative ideas and problem solving skill.
7. To test behavior skills of the student in the work place.
8. To find the student performance based on his/her skills and abilities in the work place.
9. To insure the orientation provided by the institution guided them to do the internship.
10. To find the confidence in the intern to face the Job market, after their completion of Internship.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer the following questions:-

1. Did Internship help you gain work experience related to your career goals?
2. Was training provided to perform the task by employer adequate?
3. Did training help you to acquire new knowledge?
4. Are you knowledgeable and competent enough to perform the task?
5. Are you able to transfer theoretical knowledge into practical knowledge?
6. Did you get an opportunity to use your creative ideas and problem solving skills?
7. Gained good working relationships with my fellow workers during Internship.
8. Did your employer appreciate your skills and abilities in the work place?
9. Was orientation given by the institution sufficient?
10. After Internship, are you confident to face the Job Market?

THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

According to Mpho, Pheko & Molefhe (2016) the employability of graduates in a country like Botswana is important because, generally, the expectation from parents, graduates, educational financiers such as government sponsors and employers is that institutions of higher learning should ensure that there is an alignment between what is learnt at school and what is required by the world of work. For graduates, gaining employability skills and attributes is important because while many employers are prepared to fund training to help employees develop more sophisticated job-related skills, it has been reported that employers are not prepared to help people develop the skills that are regarded as a basic requirement for employment (Martin, Villeneuve-Smith, Marshall & McKenzie, 2008)

Internships are the link between theoretical knowledge and concepts learned in the classroom setting, and real time industry applications. Internships have long been regarded as an important component in preparing undergraduate students for the entry-level job market. Internships provide students with valuable opportunities for growth through the shadowing of mentors, attendance at meetings, and actual performance of duties. Students who have

participated in internships have reported better time management and communication skills, higher levels of self-discipline, increased initiative and have higher self-image concepts. Students participating in internships were found to have a significantly higher sense of career preparation over students without such experience in five skill areas: computer applications, creative thinking, job interviewing, networking, and relationship building. Working alongside a seasoned professional allows students to take on meaningful tasks with real responsibility. Technical competencies are reinforced, analytical skills are improved and the students are able to experience firsthand the constant need for adaptability and creativity required in today's world (Radigan, 2009).

Employability skills of graduates refer to learning, self management, team work, competencies like behavior, functional and professional skills. Students meet these skills in universities and in internship work place.

Internship is an opportunity for students to **learn** new ideas and techniques at the workplace and be prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills. Students should manage their own learning and acknowledge the need to learn in order to accommodate change and be prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills. Students should have enthusiasm for ongoing learning and be willing to learn in any setting – on and off the job. Students should apply learning to technical issues and people issues and contribute to the learning community at the workplace. Students can use a range of mediums to learn – mentoring, peer support, networking, information technology, courses etc.

In Botho University it is a part of the internship program “Internship Orientation” for students before their internship begins. This enables students to learn **self management skills** to have a personal vision and goals and they should evaluate and monitor their own performance. It assists students to take responsibility to have knowledge and confidence in their own ideas and vision.

Team work skills helps students to work confidently within a group, to give productive working relationships and outcomes and to work with people of different ages, gender, race, religion or political arguments. This builds them to define a role in the team and apply teamwork skills to a range of situations and it develops to find the strengths of team members to coach, mentor and give feedback. Skills like **Competencies**, effectively fall in three major groups like behavior (communication, problem solving, and analytical skills), functional (knowledge, technical skills and job responsibilities) and professional skills (respect, commitment and loyal) below it explains how students can gain effectively these skills in Internship.

In Internship students can develop **competencies-behavior skills** like **communication** by interacting with coworkers to express their ideas clearly and confidently in the form of speech or listen and understand or to write, to express themselves clearly in writing. This assists them to create new network to share their information. Skills like **problem solving**, students can apply problem-solving strategies across a range of areas to develop creative, innovative solutions and to develop practical solutions to show independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them. In terms of solving problems, students can apply a range of strategies to problem solving using mathematics including budgeting and financial management to solve problems. Students can test assumptions relevant to the specific situation to resolve customer concerns about complex project issues.

Students build up **analytical skills** in the work place, it's an ability to collect, gather, visualize and analyze information in details. This helps them to see a problem or situation from different points of view and allow them to solve complex problems by making decisions in the most effective way. Such skills enable them to take **initiative** to translate new ideas into action, to adapt new situations and to develop a strategic, creative and long –term vision.

Functional competencies skills like knowledge; student should share his/her **knowledge** in the work place to create awareness among the people. It provides fast solutions and improves the responds time and creates good co-ordination and efficiency in their work. This assists them what is expected out of them to create their work plan, keeping in mind the availability of resources, its pros and cons and try to do better results for the company as well as for the clients and for themselves.

In **technical skills**, students should have basic IT knowledge of office applications. Here the students are from computing background, they learnt software development and networking modules in their course. It will help them to do better in the work place. Students should able to troubleshoot technical issues and staying relevant on the current new trends of technology as part of their learning. In the skill **job responsibilities** students must punctual and give prior notice in case of absence. Students should successful accomplishment of a specific job or task assigned to them

Professional skills (respect, commitment and loyal), student must treat co-workers, employees, clients, vendors, and managers with **respect** is a vital aspect of demonstrating professionalism. Some ways to show respect are using the tone and words while communicating, focusing on the other person while speaking, and maintaining a calm behavior even if the other person becomes angry. Student should have **commitment** – a positive attitude to his/her work and be loyal to the organization having good manners to help, recognize and support others could reward as a **loyal** professional person.

According to Denise (2016) says students who completed internships as part of their university degree are better at making career decisions and are more satisfied with their career choices, research from the UK and Australia shows. It also seems that the longer the internship, the more employable the students feel they are.

As part of the research, 136 business students from the University of the West of England and 344 from Edith Cowan University in Western Australia were surveyed online, answering questions on how competent they felt in managing their careers and also which aspects of their internship, if any, made them more prepared in this area. Some of the surveyed students had completed an internship as part of their business degree while others had not.

In the UK, an internship for business students typically involves one paid year in the industry. This forms part of the longstanding “sandwich degree” model where students undertake two years at university, one year in industry and then return to university for their final year of study.

At the Western Australian University, the work experience was shorter with 100 to 150 hours in industry completed over a thirteen week academic semester. Business students were specializing in a range of different areas, including accounting, finance, marketing, human resource management and hospitality.

UK students who spent a longer time in industry felt they were more likely to gain employment and were better positioned than those on shorter internships. Workers who think of themselves as more employable cope better with job insecurity and are more prone to perform better in their jobs. So the longer the internship, the better were positioned.

Students, who had completed an internship, when compared with those who did not, were better at making effective career decisions. The study found this is because students figured out their own personal priorities and how this affects their career decisions. Insight into the realities of a profession helped them learn whether it aligned with their personal values and sometimes the internship told them quite clearly which career pathway not to take.

Also because of the internship, students received feedback from other professionals on what skills are needed and where they needed to improve. The recruitment process into the internship, usually resume screening and an interview, also helped them understand what employers are looking for.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of study was internship that related to students, institution and industries and the purpose of this study was to examine and evaluate student's knowledge and employability skills of students after completion of internship program. Based on the research nature, the design of the study was possible to do descriptive research methods like survey and observational.

In survey method, questionnaire was prepared in the form of closed ended questions of 10 to test learning, self management skills, team work and competencies skills in Internship. In observation method, tutor visits were used to collect data as a feedback from external supervisors in the work place to test student's performance like punctuality, communication, job responsibilities, knowledge, technical skills, willingness to learn and professional skills (respect, commitment and loyal) in the work place.

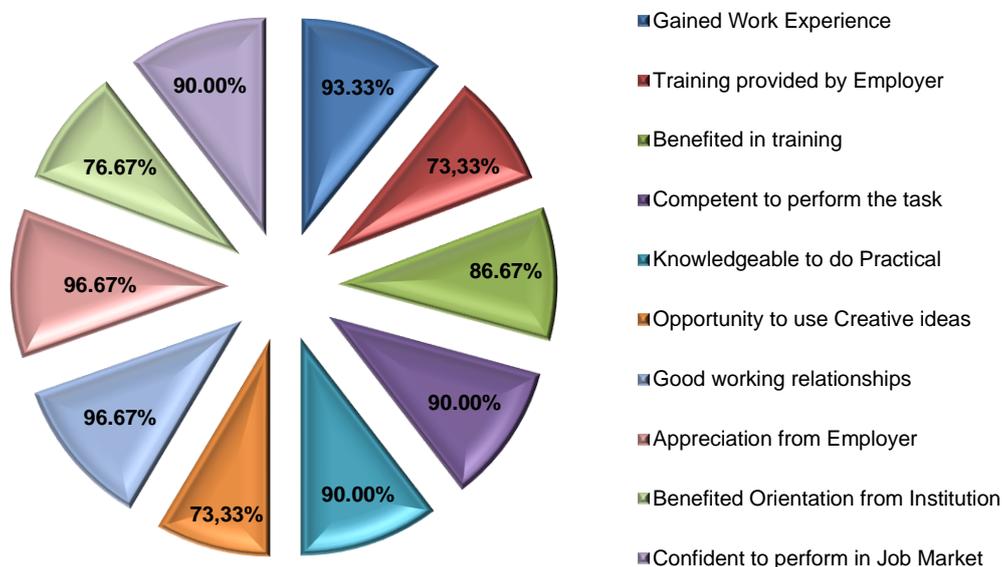
To examine employability skills in internship, thirty students were randomly picked from 130 students of data collected from the department of Projects and Professional Practice under Faculty of Computing, Botho University, Botswana, in the year 2015. The results of the questionnaire is shown below in table 1 using survey method and the results for observation method is based on the feedbacks from respective tutors and it states that 93.33% of students were doing well in the work place as a positive feedback and 6.67% of students had issues like medical and long absenteeism. Medical issues were solved with an extension to complete the internship program with an earlier meeting with company and the institution and the long absenteeism considered as a drop out, based on the rules and regulations of the course program.

Table 1: Results in survey method for 30 students.

Sl. No	Internship Questionnaire	Total	Yes	No	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	Gained Work Experience	30	93.33%	6.67%	0.00%	100.00%
2	Training provided by Employer	30	73.33%	26.67%	0.00%	100.00%
3	Benefited in training	30	86.67%	13.33%	0.00%	100.00%
4	Competent to perform the task	30	90.00%	10.00%	0.00%	100.00%
5	Knowledgeable to do Practical	30	90.00%	10.00%	0.00%	100.00%
6	Opportunity to use Creative ideas	30	73.33%	26.67%	0.00%	100.00%
7	Good working relationships	30	96.67%	3.33%	0.00%	100.00%
8	Appreciation from Employer	30	96.67%	3.33%	0.00%	100.00%
9	Benefited Orientation from Institution	30	76.67%	23.33%	0.00%	100.00%
10	Confident to perform in Job Market	30	90.00%	10.00%	0.00%	100.00%

The above table was converted to graphical representation in the form of percentages as shown below.

Achievement of Students in Internship 2015

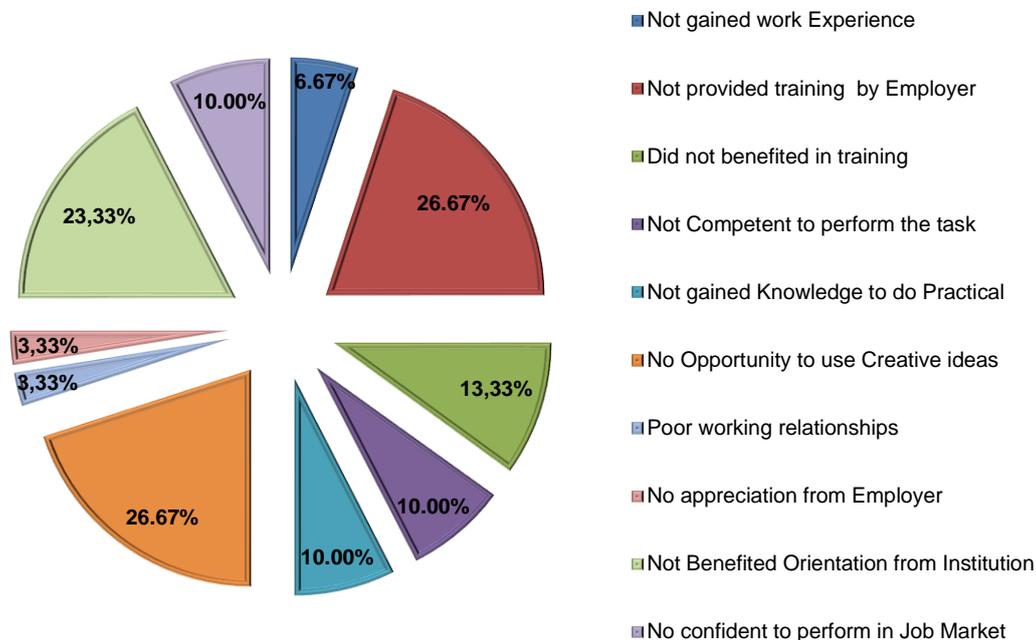


The above pie chart reflects the achievement of student's performance of internship in Botho University 2015. 93.30% of students were gained work experience in the internship program. This reflects industry experience that enabled students to develop competencies skills in the work place. 73.33% of students were trained by the employer; this was an opportunity for students to learn the new working environment and the tasks they need to perform. 86.67% of

students were benefited in the training; this reflects students were gained knowledge in their training program. 90% of students were competent to perform the task. This enabled students to develop problem solving and analytical skills. 90% of students were knowledgeable to do practical; here it reflects the curriculum supported them to perform well in the industry and enabled them to develop technical skills. 73.33% of students were able use their creative ideas, here it reflects they used their knowledge, analytical and problem solving skills.

In the field study it was observed that some of the industries were not having enough resources for students to use their creative ideas. 96.67% of students were able develop good working relationships; here it reflects their behavioral competence and professional competence skills of students. 96.67% of students were appreciated by their employers. This reflects students can perform well in the industry. 76.67% of students were benefited orientation from Institution. This enable students to develop self management skills to have a personal vision and goals and they should evaluate and monitor their own performance. Here I insist that the attendance was poor on the orientation day only 73.33% of students were attended and it was focused on Internship guidelines addressed by different departments related to students, institution and industry challenges. 90.00% of students were confident to perform in job market; here it reflects students are confident, because of their knowledge and industry experience.

Students were not achieved in Internship 2015



The above pie chart reflects about students were not achieved skills in Internship 2015. 6.66% of students were not gained work experience; this may be not having enough tasks to perform in the work place. 26.66% of students were not provided training by employer, in this aspect industries has to take initiative to train students, because training help them to learn and understand the task and the new environment well. 13.33% of students were not benefited in the training provided by the industries, this may be not helped them to understand the task they need to perform or a new learning environment not related to their academics or students were not knowledge to understand and relate the task. 10% of students were not competent to perform the task assigned, this may be a poor training or not knowledgeable to perform the task. 10% of students were not gained knowledge to do practical, this may be lack of theory knowledge to do practical or lack of training from the industry.

26.66% of students were not got opportunities to perform their creative ideas; this may be depends on the industry development. 3.33% of students were in poor working relationships; this depends on the intern and the industry to create good working relationships. 3.33% of students were not appreciated from the employer, may be students were not performed well to reach industry expectations. 23.33% students were not benefitted orientation conducted from the institution, as I mentioned above, poor attendance on the orientation day and even students got opportunities to contact respective departments to clarify their doubts. 10% of students were not confident to perform in job market; this reflects students were lack of knowledge and industry experience.

CONCLUSION

Employability skills are essential for graduates in higher education; students develop such skills in institution and in industry during their studies and in internship program. In the above research study shows that students gain employability skills like knowledge, self management skills, team work skills, behavioral skills, technical skills and professional skills during their internship program in university. To make more beneficial of these skills, students, institutions and industries should take keen on training, orientation programs and inter communications significantly. Based on the performance of the students in internship, the industries have to emerge to employ the students. Need to do research in this area employability of graduates in Botswana.

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