

INTERNSHIP ROLES IN TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPEMENT OF STUDENTS

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Romanian specialist`s studies show a harsh reality: Romanian universities programs have only theoretical value, creating specialists but not for real life, but for a more abstract environment. Our university graduates are doing very well in a stable economic and institutional environment that offers relatively easy material and financial resources, with a set of skills and professional skills which fail to meet harsh reality of the labor market.

An effective solution for professional skills development is the accumulation of work experience during college in the environment and on the job we have in view by following an internship program. As a form of practical education through work, internship meets young people, particularly students keen to gain experience through practical work in a job within a company or institution chosen, giving them the opportunity to translate theoretical knowledge into practice and to develop skills and experience of labor market activities that waits for them.

This paper is an original applied research conducted in the West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration.

It aims to identify whether there is a need for specialization Management students to acquire work experience before graduating, to what extent they are able to assess their skills and work in a company and especially the role of internship programs in professional and personal development of students.

The results show that participation in an internship program is beneficial not only for students but also for employers.

Leading to increased competences and to training and professional skills and personal development, internship becomes a more attractive alternative for young people because it gives them the opportunity to be "a ringer" of an employee on the position you have in view. Without being employed, students can gain practical experience in a certain position they sought in a company or institution on the labor market, practical experience they need so much and they can also learn what responsibilities and tasks the job entails and whether or not they are suitable for that position.

Keywords: internship, professional development, practical experience, gained confidence, applying faculty knowledge.

JEL Codes: I23,A20, J23, J24

1. New demanding on labor market

The labor market suffered intense changes in the last decade. All the changes indicate that the culture of a job for a lifetime had ended. As a consequence, the security of the position held by employee is based on performance and skills set and not on the parental dependence.

Nowadays, employers from all the sectors require high standards; from their employees that are continue adapted to environmental changes, talent, competences, new and superior abilities and

skills that will offer them higher opportunities of performance and promotion within and outside the organization.

We are talking about a new attitude regarding work: an attitude of responsibility towards the actions taken, and to the obtained results. Practically, every employee will have to assume new responsibilities for personal and professional development.

In this new context, the partnership between the academic and the entrepreneurial environments acquires a fundamental role in providing quality human resources that are competitive on the labor market.

Unfortunately, studies reveal that the programs in Romanian universities have only a theoretical value, creating specialists that are not well prepared for the real life, but for an abstract environment. Our university graduates manage a stable economic and institutional environment very well, an environment that offers pretty easy material and financial resources, because they are having a set of skills and professional abilities which fail to meet harsh reality of the labor market.

For a long time, Romanian universities haven't taught students to think critically, to understand, to act and react rationally and constructively in a changing society as the Romanian society is, and preferred to offer a theoretical specialized view, but almost always without pragmatic links, without applicability. (Korka M., 2003).

Values of education had changed in Romania, these having to adapt to a turbulent and dynamic environment.

In this way, freedom of thought and expression, professional responsibility, moral and social development, creativity and innovation, adaptability, critical and reflexive thinking represent only a few parameters that build the new educational paradigm.

2. Internship role in training and development of competences and personal and professional skills

The resume of a fresh graduate can be a real challenge for an employer. The lack of experience is one of the sensible points that every young person faces. This is the reason specialists advice fresh graduates to mention in their resume besides the school good results, relevant curses, awards and obtained distinction, scholarships, summer jobs or part-time jobs, voluntary activities, practical stage, training and professional development programs, trainings, internships.

Internship- definition

Internship is a form of practical education through work. This represents the possibility to acquire experience on a certain position in a company, without being their employee. Considered by the specialist as the first step in the professional career, internship does not necessary mean advancing in your career, but gaining new skills and necessary experience to complete your education, and helps you to access the domain you are interested in working.

Internship participants can learn from inside how a company works, what does the position they have in view imply, they can find out the latest news in the field and can acquire knowledge and practical experience useful in the future.

Internship program helps the youth, especially students eager to gain experience through practical work in a job within a company or institution chosen, giving the opportunity to translate theoretical knowledge into practice and to develop skills and experience activities on labor market that awaits.

In choosing an internship program, people may consider several criteria. They can start from a position that they would like to occupy in the future, in this case seeking internships on similar positions in companies or they can choose an internship that takes place in the country or abroad, or based on the offer of the companies or institutions that offer this kind of practical programs.

Reasons for which internship is the best choice in gaining work experience during college in the environment and on the job you desire are: to put into practice the knowledge acquired in theory,

to see what the job in the studied field involves, to gain experience, to know how to approach problems in that area, to learn from professionals, to assess the level of their professional training, to see if their choice is according to their career plan, to learn new things, for self-assessment, for new career opportunities, to have an inside perspective of the field, to be made aware of future trends field, to be familiar with company policies, for professional skills development.

Examples of internship programs:

- The "Work and Travel" - intercultural exchange program covered by the U.S. government, administered by the Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs U.S. State Department that allows students and graduate students to work on a specific period in the United States of America;
- European Organization for Nuclear Research offers students the opportunity to access further training and start a career in science. For the technical program can complete future engineers, IT specialists or applied physics specialists. The administrative program they are looking for human resources specialist, communications, administration and librarians. What is important to note is that they provide a monthly allowance, enough to cover expenses for one person in the Geneva area, health insurance and related expenses. The program can take between 8 weeks and 36 months, depending on specialization (www.startub.unibuc.ro).
- LLL- Lifelong learning program includes four sectors: for undergraduate education, Comenius, Erasmus for higher education-for-training Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig for adult education, a program focused on language and IT in education and last but not least, the Jean Monnet support program for European institutions and associations.

3. Case study on the role of internship in training and professional development of FEAA-UVT management students

Internship is that program that allows you be the "ringer" of an employee on the position you have in view. Without being employed, students can gain practical experience in a certain position they sought in a company or institution on the labor market, practical experience they need so much and they can also learn what responsibilities and tasks the job entails and whether or not they are suitable for that position.

Beginning with the idea that people are the greatest resource for any organization and that the values a company promotes are focusing on education and development and supporting the concept of internships, this study aims to identify to what extent students need to gain work experience before graduating, to what extent they are able to assess their skills by working in a company and, especially, the role of internship programs in professional and personal development of students.

To achieve this objective, research method used is questionnaire-based. Arguments that justify the choice of questionnaire-based survey as a research method are: the possibility of explaining the research objectives and how the questionnaire was completed, subject's availability to answers the questionnaire when they find the time, we ensure anonymity, and low cost.

As for research instrument used to collect information the questionnaire was chosen. It contains 12 questions and the information obtained was processed using Excel program.

The questionnaire was distributed to a number of 255 students from specialization Management, of Faculty of Economics and Business Administration from the West University of Timisoara (200 bachelor degree and 55 master degrees). Of the 255 surveyed, 40 respondents were younger than 20 years, 200 respondents between 20-25 years, and 15 respondents have age over 30 years. Also 65.22% are students at bachelor studies, 21.74% master studies and 13.04% are employed.

Sampling was random and it was based on criteria related to: education level, specialization, age, interest for personal and professional development by participating in events such as conferences,

workshops, trainings and seminars. We mention that the results obtained from this sample should be understood as having a role that not generalized the internship role and importance to students of economics, but there are highlighting aspects that have to be known by students.

The two assumptions that start from this research are:

Hypothesis 1: internship programs generate a new attitude towards work: increase awareness and involvement;

Hypothesis 2: internship programs lead to increased competence and professional skills and personal development.

The study results show some interesting aspects as the following: first, we noticed two categories of respondents: those who have participated in training and professional development programs and those who did not participated to any program. So, among participants in professional development program (Lifelong learning program, with 4 branches: Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig, practice programs offered for students or masters by the university, traineeship exchange program; summer school and internships) the most familiar program was practical program offered by the university (30.61%), opposite the exchange program of traineeship (4.08%), and among students who did not participate in any of these programs, results have shown the same information, differing only percentage (33.73%) for practical programs of university and (8.43%) for the exchange program professional internships.

-Being asked: " Which program from the mentioned would they choose to acquire new knowledge", both categories of respondents chose the internship as a program for professional development with a percentage of 38.24% and 27.66%.

- Being asked: "What business objectives can be achieved by following an internship", the answer of poll was: to gain practical experience (23.94%, 26.53%), learn new things from professionals (22.54%, 27.55%). There was also a percentage of 21.13% who considered an internship important for contacts in the field they want to work in the future.

- Being asked if they attended any professional development program offered by the university, 57.14% of them were involved in faculty practice programs, "the factory of entrepreneurs" being another practical experience for 23.81% of them.

Please note that the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of West Timisoara, practical programs offered are: "Simulated enterprises" that aims to simulate the activity of a company and management decisions to be taken in various situations arising the scenarios presented, "Practeam" entails a period of one month of practice in companies in Timisoara in the economic department. "Entrepreneurs Factory" aims to help students who have a business idea and want to implement it by having a chance to present it to members of Timisoara business environment. This program included trainings programs as: personal development, career planning, leadership, time management, creating a business plan and opportunity to visit three successful companies in Timisoara.

- Regarding the time and place of an internship program: 57.14% of those surveyed have benefited from such programs for a period between 1-4 weeks, 38.10% for a period of 1-3 months and 4.76% for a period between 3 to 12 months while 95.24% of respondents chose subjects performed an internship in the country, not abroad.

-Because the students practice programs can be paid either symbolic or by the companies where they have participated at internships and also by the university through awards for those who were the best: 47.62% of respondents were not paid in any way for participation in such programs, while 14.29% of them received various awards for performance and outstanding achievements in the program and 38.10% were materially paid.

- Regarding the difficulty of tasks and responsibilities that participants faced during the programs, the answers reveal that 76.19% of those polled considered the tasks facile, and 23.81% have considered the tasks very easy.

For the question about which are the necessary ingredients for a successful career in Romania, respondents had a variety of answers. The most common were: confidence, courage, ambition, perseverance, experience, adaptability, responsibility, passion, luck, involvement, reliability, creativity, knowledge, intelligence, respect, learning all the time. Responding to these responses confirm a hypothesis: "internship programs increase the level of empowerment and involvement." - In our opinion the question: "How do you think this experience changed your way of being?" Is one of the most important aspects that are involved in an internship program and the answers received show that: most say they have more confidence in their self and more courage, more knowledge, accumulating some experience are more responsible and persevering to achieve their objectives, they are more professional than before this experience. Others have got a picture of what it means to have a job and what labor relations mean. So, confirming the hypothesis 2: "internship programs lead to increased competence and professional skills and personal development".

4. Conclusions regarding internship role in training and professional development of students

Internship has certain benefits not only for students, but also for the employers.

Internships provide work experience opportunities to university students, recent graduates and people considering career changes. Employers are willing to hire interns with little or no experience, especially if the intern is willing to accept little or no monetary compensation. However, the benefits of doing an internship go far beyond your pay-check.

Gain Valuable Work Experience

An internship provides the opportunity to gain hands on work experience that the students can't get in the faculty. First time job seekers and career changers aren't usually desirable candidates, but companies are willing to train them as interns and give them the experience they would need to get a job.

Have an Edge in the Job Market

Employers are usually more concerned with the students work experience than their qualifications and internships are often the only way to get the work experience they need to secure a job. Many employers prefer or require applicants who have done an internship or relevant work experience.

Transition into a Job

Employers see interns as prospective employees and many finish their internships and continue working with the company full time. Internships are the number one way for employers to find new staff in the USA.

Decide if this is the Right Career

If the student is not sure if this is the right career for him, doing an internship is a great way to try it out. Internships are generally short-term, so the young candidate can test his future career without committing and find out if it is a career that will satisfy him.

Networking Opportunities

Internships are a great way to meet people in different fields. An internship allows students to meet people who might help them land a job later on and give the contacts in the industry they're trying to break into.

Apply Faculty Knowledge

An internship can be seen as the pinnacle of the university education and give the chance to use the skills the students have learned in the faculty in a real-world setting. It's a chance to prove the worth of their qualifications and to show what they can perform.

Gain Confidence

After the students have done an internship, they has more confident in their self.

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