

CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN WORK ETHICS AND LIFE SKILLS DURING INTERNSHIP IN BRIDGING THE SATISFACTION GAP AMONG DIPLOMA STUDENTS

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Abstract

The connectivity between work skills or work ethics and life skills is an important factor in fulfilling the 'satisfaction gap' as well as having a major impact on the success of internships of diploma students undergoing industrial trainings. This paper will highlight the definition of internships, the purpose and importance of work ethics and life skills and its bridge between them that creates one connection between students' academic majors and future careers. In many cases, it is through internships where attributes are enhanced, interests are developed, and talents are identified experientially. The uniqueness of internship serves different purposes to different students which ultimately provides a high impact learning experience and practice for students of Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI).

Keywords: Employability, Experiential, High impact, Internship, Life skills, Quality practice, Work ethics.

1. Introduction

Internship is a period filled with rich and meaningful experiences where every student will go through this phase fulfilling different purposes. The satisfaction gap that exist within this period of practice can provide a win-win-win situation particularly in the career development of professionals and academics in the institutions of higher learning and the internship students at UPSI. The connectivity between work ethics and life skills during the internship period helps in developing work knowledge, good work ethics, personal growth and enhance work skills and life skills, This connectivity utilized by students during internships helps in technological and businesses skills in this globally connected world that puts diversity and adaptability at the centre of super structured organizations whereby social technology drives new forms of productions and value creations.

An internship will offer students with a chance to learn by doing in a setting where they are supervised by a work-place professional and they will have the opportunity to achieve their own learning goals, without the responsibilities of being a permanent employee. In accordance, Durack [1] claimed that internship is an opportunity for students to go through the experiential learning process, in which they learn to relate the theories they learnt to real practice and education to working environment. Students will be working under the supervision of a faculty member from the institution of higher learning and a supervisor from the work place. Throughout the internship, the students will be earning academic credit for completing tasks that are related to their pedagogical (such as keeping a journal and doing reflective writing) aside from completing required working hours.

The internship program is necessary for all students who plan to enter the permanent workforce. It is meant to complement their academic preparation with a range of other experiences, such as student exchange program, community service, undergraduate research experiences, participation in sports events and other student organizations, volunteerism and internships. The purpose of internship is to provide training effectiveness that can directly be facilitated by adhering to employee's awareness of objectives and application of internships in the work place and proper implementation of the program. Thus, the process of internship will facilitate intern's involvement, attitudinal changes and this provides opportunity for application of new skills and knowledge in workplace, job commitment, employees' alignment to organizational visions and strategies [2].

In addition, the interns' industrial training needs can be identified through skill gap analysis that is useful and it is directly related to the core business activities. The best means of identifying employee skill gap is to rigorously match the job specification activity by activity with personal profile of the employee. By using an organizational modelling human resources management package, the best means of identifying the intern or novice employee skill gap is to rigorously match the job specification activity with the personal profile of the interns. Through these internships, the needs can be clearly revealed [3].

2. The Importance of Internships

Maintaining the quality of internships in an organization is a continuous and progressive process of organization that results in increased profits, higher

employments and accentuating demands in the market. Internships give a feel of the quality of work life concerns with the requirements, needs, working environment and job design of the employees at workplace. According to Guna and Maimunah [4], the quality of work life or work ethics experienced through internship is associated with job satisfaction, job involvement, job security, productivity, health, safety, competence development, professional skills, balance between work and personal life of every intern or future employee.

2.1. On organization

In organizations, employees are regarded with development in career-enhancing skills that leads to employee motivation and retention. There is no doubt that an effective or outstanding intern will be a valuable asset to the company and therefore will increase the chances of his or her efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out his or her duties. Therefore, the importance of internship is a learning experience that has a capacity to make positive changes and improves the ability of the interns to perform the job efficiently and with excellence. This implies that the organization is also responsible in imparting knowledge to the interns in shaping to develop their personal and professional skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Accepting interns is usually considered as beneficial for the company. Interns are viewed as the source of cost-saving, qualified and usually highly motivated labor [5-7]. This is due to the fact that interns; being that they have not yet graduated from their higher learning institution, can be paid lower than a permanent employee deserves. Aside from that, usually, interns are not qualified to receive benefits like a permanent employee such as health insurance or retirement money. To the organizations, hiring an intern gives them a chance to personally and thoroughly monitor and nurture the interns as potential permanent employees. These interns having experience working for the company and adapted to the working environment of the company, is much more appealing rather than hiring employees who have no internship experience, saving the company time and cost that should have been allocated for training the new employees.

2.2. On institution of higher learning

Institutions of higher learning earns a more enhanced reputation and trust of the public through the internships that their students undertake [5]. Besides, the interns attending the internship can contribute to the institution of higher learning sharing any input that they receive for curricular assessment. It is an addition valued experiential learning when the input received may be used to observe how their students are doing as compared to students from other institutions of higher learning.

In addition, the process of providing interns for a company may be the first step in a long-term cooperation between the company and the institution of higher learning. Having a business contact established with the company throughout the internship is helpful in friend and fund raising (Coco 2000; Gault, Redington & Schlager 2000). This collaboration is a way of building the trust between both parties, giving the opportunity and space for the institution to develop their own personal and professional growth.

2.3. On interns

The most advantageous benefit that an internship can give an intern is basically the quality of the work experience itself. Having working experience on their resume appeals better to their prospective employers, as this means that they are more familiar with the working world that can be brought to their future employment [8]. Internship brings forth many advantages that interns can benefit from such as improvements in their career direction, job preparedness of the interns, the interns' marketability, job expectations, interpersonal skills and leadership [6] that is basically highlighting the profound benefits of the enhancement of work ethics and life skills of interns.

3. The Outcomes of Internships

3.1. Work ethics

During internships, students or interns learn a system of moral principles which is called ethics. The etymology of ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, meaning habit, custom, disposition or character. Ethics are debated from human rights to professional behaviour. In a business world, an ethical code is a defined set of principles which guide an organization in its activities and decisions and the organization's philosophy may affect its productivity and reputation. The work ethics of a staff or the ethical behaviour of a novice or a senior staff ensures work is completed with integrity and honesty and staff that are ethical adhere to policies and rules while working to meet the aims of the enterprise.

Additionally, the work ethics of the interns is not only by working hard and being diligent as in today's super structural organizations, an alternative perception suggests that the work ethic is broader, obsolete and is readily marketed to society. Therefore, attaining and engaging quality work ethics provides an impact to an ethically positive, healthy work culture that enhances high morale among employees. During internships, the interns attain good work ethics when they became productive and work at a faster pace and accomplish more work, they do not quit, stay highly persistence until the work which they are tasked is completed. Ethically, they understand the importance of cooperation and teamwork and they have high integrity and values coincide with company policy.

3.2. Life Skills

In today's competitive employment market, interns must not only have positive work ethics, but they must also inculcate strong life skill that meets the employer's requirements. Life skills are abilities and behaviours that help interns to effectively deal with the events and challenges of everyday life. Employers want job candidates to be able to solve problems creatively and handle common challenges that may emerge and interns with strong life skills would be able to handle everything from interactions with others to identifying and processing their emotions.

3.2.1. Remarkable professionals

Internships opens the path for students to develop and nurture their professional knowledge and professional skills. Hence, the professional skill is something that can be taught and assessed. These professional skills such as teamwork and communication are developed better through student experiences in project work

than through the traditional lectures and course work. Interns cultivate great attributes or character traits: adaptability, eager to questions, resilience, self-awareness, thoughtfulness and a strong will to learn.

3.2.2. Good communicators

Interns with good communication skills are able to convey information to others, either verbally or nonverbally, in writing or through body language and be good listeners. It is an important skill in the workplace as the interns need to communicate with their superiors, colleagues, peers and customers and clients.

3.2.3. Great team players

They work well and get along with others, portraying very high EQ, and can manage conflict, negotiating and networking while recognizing diversity, showing leadership qualities in all collaborative settings.

3.2.4. Excellent decision makers

In this respect, interns are expected to be analytical, good problem solver, critical and creative thinkers as they make important wise decisions. Employers need staff with a great attitude and are skilful in time management. Chu, et al. [9] considered that the components of the attitude include aspects such as commitment to the job, time management, willingness to provide support as well as able to provide support and prioritise tasks.

3.2.5. Information technology (IT) and Digital literacy (DL) skills

Interns who possess good IT skills have an added advantage as a likely candidate to be chosen for almost every job in today's market. As interns progress tremendously during the internship, they become increasingly adept in areas related to programming, productivity software education and social media postings. These technical skills are important because nearly every job relies on different tools, programs and processes. If these sought-after technical knowledge and skills are attained, the interns will be more competitive candidates with super structures organizations.

3.2.6. Self-management

During the internship program, interns learn to manage anger and stress as well as stay focused while successfully completing tasks given at the work place. They learn to multitask on routine matters, improve self-esteem and build high confidence to reach their full potentials, all of which are essential life skills. The development of life skills helps students to think, solve problems, handle responsibilities and, take responsibility and develop a great sense of self awareness and appreciation towards others. Hence, this will encourage continuous self-learning and development to ensure quality of work in a changing environment.

4. Importance of Connectivity of Work Ethics & Life Skills

It is worth noting that by having gone through the internship program, the diploma students at UPSI gained many benefits that will better prepare them for the demands of today's workforce. Reflecting on the outcomes of internships by diploma

students of UPSI, it is noted that accepting and going through an internship has many benefits to the students. Some of the benefits include gaining valuable working experience that will strengthen their resume. By having good work ethics, the interns will have a better understanding of the working class and be able to adept and adjust well to the working environment.

Interns who engaged in life skills learned ways to work under the guidance of their mentors, experienced first-hand on applying academic concepts to real life skills, improved their job-related skills and increased their own marketability as oppose to those who did not undergo the internship program. Interns with a strong connectivity between work ethics and life skills inculcated effective habits that guided them in their work behaviours as well as ensuring consistent high productivity. As a result, interns created for themselves opportunities for employability necessary for their future-career environment.

5. Conclusion

Implications of the internship program underwent by UPSI Diploma students suggest that more opportunities should be given to improve their competencies, behaviours, life skills and work ethics with the aim of providing better prospects in their employability upon graduation. On that note, supporting international internship programs would be the way forward in enhancing the students' prospects particularly in technical areas of skilled labour as employers continue to seek graduates with these skills and qualities to be in their organizations.

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