Effects of Internship Among Select Business Education Students

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***Abstract*— This study assessed the effects of internships among select business education students of a higher education institution. It focused on the seven different skills namely: communication, collaboration, creativity, career and learning self-reliance, critical thinking, computing and ICT fluency, and cross-cultural understanding. Descriptive statistics and Paired T-Test were utilized to analyze the collected data from participants. The findings revealed that business students were found highly skilled in the pre-test result of the overall 21st-century internship skills. The post-test result revealed that the students were very highly skilled in the overall 21st-century internship skills. It also concluded that the level of the skills developed and improved after the internship program. With the overall result of being very highly skilled, the business students have extremely demonstrated the skills. This implies that business students possess the skills and competencies necessary for future employment.**

Keywords—internship skills; business education students

I. INTRODUCTION

In the preparation of the university undergraduate students to enter into a well-conceived work environment, it is necessary to improve and develop their life-long learning skills. As modern business owners look into the possessed and the displayed competencies of work applicants, internship serves as an outlet to equip potential employees. The university's extent of integration of internship skills among business students will be the instrument to prepare students for their job market and employability. College graduates' career preparation and their abilities to obtain employment after graduation. Accordingly, education is the bedrock of competitiveness of every college student, and economy driven by innovation and knowledge, it is very crucial to recognize what specific skills that the workplace requires. In fact, business leaders have long expressed concern that employees lack particular competencies that they say are important in the workplace (McGaw, 2013).

The study of Landrum, Hettich and Wilner (2010) stated that college graduates and employers are expressing dissatisfaction with the job competencies of new graduates. As business students work their way through school, they equip themselves with the knowledge, skills, and experience that will prepare them for employment right after the most coveted graduation day. Internship, on the other hand, plays a role in preparing them for job markets. However, questions float in if internship does have an impact on the employability of graduates. It was a good question that each student should think about, especially as they shift to upper-classmen status.

A survey conducted by Hart (2009) found that only one in four employers believe that graduates from 2 and 4-year universities are adequately prepared for employment in today's businesses. The majority of the survey respondents indicates that colleges need to improve their curricula to better prepare students for employment. One way to address this is through internships. The study of Weible (2009) highlighted that when an internship program becomes part of the curriculum, collaboration occurs among the business school, students, and the business organization. Collaborations build networks where everyone benefits. It includes all stakeholders, the learning organization, the student, and the business organization.

The study of Amey and Reesor (2009) asserted that while graduates leaving the academic learning environment might understand theories and concepts, they still may struggle with applying those theories and concepts in the work environment. Therefore, the transition from the classroom to the workplace must be improved. The study of Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami (2010) acknowledged that institutions of higher learning see students who participated in internships as having had an excellent opportunity to acquire valuable experience. These students were given the opportunity to apply the knowledge learned in the classroom to actual business organization experiences, and in many cases, they are seen as better prepared for employment. However, too little knows about the full impact of internships on graduates skill levels, and it is still unclear as to whether internships are enough to bridge the gap between expectations and reality.

Forgoing studies have reported that students established added value from experience-based learning activities such as field experience, internships, and practicum among others. Internships have been said to improve or develop individualities looked-for by employers: essential skills and attributes, personal competencies, transferable skills, job qualifications, work knowledge, professional development, and flexibility to a new position. The current study of tries to determine whether the student's internship performance and the quality of internship experience are significant factors in determining jobs after graduation. As mentioned, internships nurture in students the desired employment characteristics and help them acquire their first job after graduation (Galvan, Fisher, Casman & Small, 2013). The study of Scholz, Steiner and Hansmann (2004), used pre and post internship questionnaires, to quantify the influence of compulsory internships on scientific knowledge, general abilities, main credentials, problem-solving ability, and propensities.

Internships and volunteer experiences make candidates more competitive in the job market. In addition to gaining exposure and experience in the field, they also provide an opportunity to see if the particular career field is the right one based on getting personal experience in the field. Recognizing the need to match skills to workplace requirements, needs the training to ensure that interns are productive in the shortest period. The focus of is on promoting and managing Internships, as well as placing interns into permanent positions, on successful program completion. To date, interns will come across both the private and public sectors, but more employers are being sought to participate in workplace provision (Baring, 2017).

In the next months, approximately 150 business interns from the College of Business will be among those who will soon undergo this rigorous process of employment section. The challenge that these business students are facing now is how to become competitive graduates equip with the following skills: communication, creativity, collaboration, career and learning self-reliance, critical thinking, computing and ICT fluency and Cross-Cultural Understanding. As interns, they already have the advantage of industry exposure, skills, and competencies that the employers are looking. Also, in the host establishment, the interns are given more responsibility that is the same to real work a student making as an advantage in the actual job. However, these do not assure them employment among other applicants.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

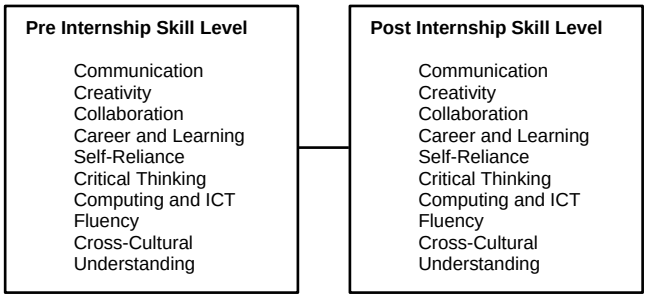

Fig. 1. The Schema of the Study

The study is drawn from the principles of learning as a lifelong activity. The concept that life and learning should go together and was later called by Leslie Watkins in 1970 as life-long learning. The concept of the life-long learning emphasizes that it be mainly self-directed and learning is carried into the real workplaces, making this type of education more remarkable and more challenging. It highlights the importance of that learning can no longer be divided into a period and place to acquire knowledge- that is, when the business interns are still in the school and a period and place to apply knowledge acquired- that is, when they will land into their jobs. The idea that learning is a life-long activity gives importance to the need of developing the skills among the student especially those that are considered a foremost criterion for employability. With these concepts, this research is done to assess the internship skills in business education of financial management students to see if they possess the necessary skills to have a prosperous future (Baring, 2017).

Life-long also represent as a multi-dimensional concept stressing political, social, personal as well as cultural and economic purposes. It is an integral part of equal opportunities. Education for sustainable development is about equipping the business interns with skills, knowledge, and values to deal with the challenges that they may encounter. The focus now is work-related and life-long learning which is primarily motivated by the scale of the pace of current economic and social change. The present goal of life-long learning is economic-related, having changed its center of significance from educational to industrial departments, to promote skills and competencies, general capabilities and specific performance as a source of competitive advantage in a hypercompetitive world of globalization (Uggla, 2008).

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For communication, Yeddu, Vijaya and Babu, (2017) stated that to excel in the career, students have to grow the passion for learning and inculcating communication skills. According to Association for Computing Machinery & Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Computer Society (2008), communication skills include an ability to make worthy presentation about technical problems and their solutions to a range of audience. Communication is not just speaking, but it also involves various aspects like listening, writing, visual, intercultural and interdisciplinary aspects. Soft skills are linked to employability and are the skills of communication and effectively working with clients (Cord & Clements, 2010). It is believed that these soft skills are learned through an engagement, such as an internship. The study also reported that it is the responsibility of higher education to help students gain access to work-related learning, as well as to engage the opportunity of learning.

Creativity serves as the basic foundation for viable economic progress. Research has also indicated that creativity has a heuristic character of which, not only is the outcome novel, so too is the creation of procedures (George & Zhou 2001). Within team creativity, it is argued that creativity involve interaction between individuals and environment (Sternberg et al., 2002). Further, given the rise of technology and specialization, creativity has become more a product of organizational effort than lone geniuses (Fisher & Amabile 2009). Creativity is component of students' core competency (McWilliam, 2007). The impressively creative quality displayed by someone with a high degree of creativity helps shape personal employability and, consequently, has become basis of competitiveness for graduates in the labor market (Chang, 2012).

Collaboration is learning through cooperation with others. Collaborative learning among business interns happens when there is a given situation in which two or more interns learn to attempt to learn something together. Moreover, there is a mutual engagement of interns in a coordinated effort to solve a problem together especially in assigned in a specific establishment. In this increasingly interdependent world, interns need to relate with others, and since they will encounter people from the range of backgrounds, it is imperative that they can interact in heterogeneous groups (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007).

Career and learning self-reliance pertains to the attitudes of focusing on career and drawing on self-initiated learning. Self-reliance is an expression of an intern's desire for self- determination, and autonomy. Since change is occurring more rapidly, and many people are having a difficult time managing it, interns cannot avoid the inevitable. Because of this, it is very crucial for a student to learn self-reliance in the career's perspective. The self-reliance skill is the fundamental skill for career development and career mapping. According to Jones (2010), people develop an increased sense of security when they have more confidence in their skills and abilities. Supporting students in their personal growth and career development may help the future organization significantly.

Critical thinking is a general term that covers all thinking processes that strive to get underneath the surface of something which the business interns could do in various forms like, questioning, probing or investigating, analyzing, testing and exploring. Critical thinking allows the business interns the detective–like skills of persistence to examine and re-examine an argument in a given situation. It takes in all the angles and weigh up evidence on every side of the situation for the conclusion. For interns with critical thinking, it is never to take something at face value but to question and think independently about an issue. Critical thinking intended to be the comprehensive and profound review (Wanga and Yi, 2008).

Computing and ICT fluency is a skill that covers information and communication technology (ICT). It is a tool resulting from the convergence of computers and digital communication and has become indispensable in the daily lives of many (Kozma, 2005). Among the interns, they cannot go away with the adaptation of computing and ICT fluency. From the confines of the classroom requirements to the delivery of their services to the various establishments where they are assigned in, it is imperative to cope up with the latest in technology making an output. ICT fluency can be pointed out as the transforming the way business is conducted, educate students, election of government representatives, and maintaining social relationships. According to Bederson and Shneiderman (2003), technology is useful because it meets human needs-people use ICT because it supports their social relationships and helps meet their informational needs.

Culture usually refers to something that is made by human beings rather than something that occurs in nature. The most critical dimension of culture concerns itself with people's assumptions about life. Culture consists of the ideals, values, and assumptions about life that guide specific behaviors (University of Akureyri, 2005). Cross-cultural proficiency does not require knowledge about every specific culture but is rather the training of understanding the social and cultural process. Such proficiency requires self-inspection and understanding

and trains business students to tackle situations where different cultural attitude clashes. The cross-cultural proficiency makes people more as well as capable of enduring insecurity and uneasy situations. Developing skills in cross-cultural understanding enables the business students' journey into the world of multiculturalism and understand different cultures in this era of global environment especially when they will land into their jobs.

Objective of the Study

This study aimed to determine and assess the level of skills among business student interns. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Determine the level of pre and post internship skills among business students in terms communication, creativity, collaboration, career and learning self-reliance, critical thinking, computing and ICT fluency and cross-cultural understanding.

3. Determine the significant difference on the level of pre and post internship skills among business students in terms communication, creativity, collaboration, career and learning self-reliance, critical thinking, computing and ICT fluency and cross-cultural understanding.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quasi-experimental research design. It exposed all subjects to the treatment or stimulus. The comparison in these designs comes from examining subjects' values on the outcome of interest before to and after the exposure (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). Hence, the descriptive survey research method was adopted. Descriptive statistics and Paired T-Test were utilized to analyze the collected data from the business students at Bukidnon State University in the Province of Bukidnon. The total population of the intern business students comes from the use of the Slovin's formula that identifies the participants required in the study. A sample of 107 was generated from a population of 147 business students for the school year 2017-2018.

The study made use of a researcher-modified questionnaire from the study of Baring (2017), to gather data. It has two parts; the first part is intended to capture the demographic profile of the interns regarding their age and gender. The second part is questions designed to capture the skills of the students using the skills indicators of communication, creativity, collaboration, career and learning self-reliance, critical thinking, computing and ICT fluency creativity and cross-cultural understanding. The instrument undertook validity and reliability test with Cronbach's alpha of 0.795 from a sample of 30 participants separate from the 107 respondents.

A random sampling procedure was used in selecting the respondents of this study. A Pre-test was employed to the respondents before they were sent to internship and post-test was also employed right after the internship. Paired T-Test is applied in identifying the significant difference of the level of skills before and after the internship.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

TABLE 1. The Summary of Pre-Test and Post Test Internship Skills

Internship Skills	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Communication	3.84	0.38	4.14	0.38
Creativity	3.72	0.56	3.98	0.53
Collaboration	4.52	0.47	4.62	0.39
Career and Learning Self-Reliance	4.08	0.50	4.29	0.44
Critical Thinking	3.69	0.48	4.00	0.50
Computing and ICT Fluency	3.94	0.58	4.23	0.51
Cross-Cultural Understanding	3.94	0.52	4.23	0.48
Overall	**3.96**	**0.49**	**4.21**	**0.46**

Table 1 presents the Summary of Pre-Test and Post Test Internship Skills. The result showed significant changes to the level of skills acquired and developed before and after internship. The result of the Pre-Test showed that the interns were found to be highly skilled with (3.96) score in the overall internship skills. This implies that the skills were very well demonstrated. The result of the Post-test showed that the intern were very highly skilled (4.21) in the overall internship skills. The result implies that the skills were extremely demonstrated as revealed by the post-test result. It can be inferred from the results that business students' skills improve significantly after completing internships due to the practical experience and exposure gained in a professional work environment. Through internships, students have the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom to real-world situations, enhancing their understanding of key concepts and their ability to solve complex business problems. These experiential learning opportunities enable business students to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ultimately equipping them with the practical skills and industry knowledge necessary for success in their future careers.

TABLE 2. Paired T-Test of the Level of Skills Before and After Internship.

Internship Skills	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper				
Career and Learning Self-Reliance	.053	.486	.047	-.040	.1465	1.13	106	.260	Not significant
Collaboration	.097	.636	.061	-.025	.219	1.58	106	.117	Not significant
Creativity	.262	.782	.076	.112	.412	3.46	106	.001	Significant
Cross-Cultural Understanding	.278	.692	.067	.145	.410	4.15	106	.000	Significant
Computing and ICT Fluency	.286	.766	.074	.139	.433	3.86	106	.000	Significant
Critical Thinking	.299	.662	.064	.172	.426	4.67	106	.000	Significant
Communication	.302	.494	.048	.207	.397	6.32	106	.000	Significant

Legend: at $p < 0.05$ – there is Significant Difference
at $p > 0.05$ – there is No Significant Difference

Table 2 presents the Paired T-Test of the Level of Skills Before and After Internship. The Pre and Post-test of students Career and Learning Self Reliance significant difference of (0.260) implies the null hypothesis is accepted. The result implies that the skill before and after the internship had minimal improvement. The study of Arogundade (2011) argues entrepreneurship education will equip the students with the skills to be self-reliant and task the government and other education stakeholders should make sure that educational program at all levels of education are made relevant to provide the youths and graduates needed entrepreneurial skills.

The Pre and Post-test of students Collaboration appeared to have (0.117) significant difference therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. Interns have an expectation in the work environment that they will have close relationships with colleagues, be able to work on teams for the social interaction aspect and the benefit of a team is the opportunity to avoid risk through equal contributions (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). The Pre and Post-test of students Creativity appeared to have a significant difference of (0.001). The students perceived that their creativity skills has developed after internship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. According to Galvan (2014), cultivating interns' ability prepares them in all possible undertakings ahead of them.

The Pre and Post-test of interns Cross–Cultural Understanding appeared to have (0.000) significant difference. The students perceived that their cross-cultural understanding has developed and improved after internship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Cultural competency has been defined as "the ability to work effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or the organization being served" (Hanley, 1999). The construct of cultural competence has quickly become an important part of graduate training (Furlong & Wight, 2011). In fact, evidence suggests that educational interventions intended to improve cultural competency are capable of positively impacting the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of professionals (Beach et al., 2005).

The Pre and Post-test of interns Computing and ICT fluency appeared to have (0.000) significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. The students perceived that their computing and ICT fluency has developed and improved after internship as it was ranked number 3. Based on the findings, it is evident that internship experience is very relevant to student interns because it creates the opportunity for them to practice what they have learnt in school. In line with this, Nse (2012) stated that industrial training experience provides students the opportunity to practice what they have learnt. Through internship, students make right decision on areas based on the various sections they experienced. The experience also gets students exposed to modern ICTs used.

The Pre and Post-test of interns' Critical thinking appeared to have (0.000) significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Critical-thinking abilities should be reflected in the entry-level professional's approach to making decisions and solving problems (Joyce & Voytek. 1996). Employers are expressing interest in only those job applicants who possess among other skills the ability to analyze, assess, evaluate, compare, and contrast. Critical thinking is necessary to compare evidence, evaluate competing claims, and make sensible decisions in areas, such as health, financial, and civic issues. The students perceived that their critical thinking skills has developed and improved after internship as it was ranked number 2.

The Pre and Post-test of students Communication appeared to have the highest significant difference of (0.000) which implies that the skill has developed after the internship. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Internships also develop other personal abilities that are essential for career advancement and are sometimes explicitly required by certain jobs, such as problem-solving skills, leadership and communication skills and interpersonal skills (Ruhanen et al., 2013). A study of the outcome of the internship program at the Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute, examining ten years of records, showed that students acquired communication skills, improved creative thinking abilities, and improved job interviewing and networking skills and improved self-confidence and leadership skills (Bennett-Wimbush & Amstutz, 2011).

Conclusions

The findings of the study concluded that the interns of Financial Management of Bukidnon State University at the different host training institutions were found to be highly skilled in the pre-test result of the overall internship skills. In fact, the interns are very highly skilled in collaboration variable and are highly skilled

in other six skills namely: communication, creativity, career and learning self-reliance, critical thinking, computing and ICT fluency and cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, the post-test result revealed that the interns are very highly skilled in the overall internship skills but remain to be highly skilled in communication, creativity, and critical thinking. It also concluded that the level of the skills has developed and improved after the internship as evidenced by the result of an analysis. With the overall result of very highly skilled, the interns extremely demonstrated the skills. It is also worth noting that there is a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test of the level of skills developed in an internship. It denotes that the internship program of Financial Management of the College of Business is certain to its internship objectives.

Recommendations

Internship skills can be successfully integrated into the curriculum if the host training institutions and the business schools work more closely. The business school curriculum needs to be integrated with the objectives of the host training institutions to successfully produce students with the breadth of knowledge and specialized skills needed for future work opportunities. The faculty in business schools need to rely less on the traditional teaching techniques and embrace a teaching paradigm that will make the learning environment a reflection of the workplace. Teachers and instructions should fully implement and follow OBE-Outcomes Based Education to address creativity and critical thinking skills. Provide them activities relevant to what is in actual workplaces. The Academic institution should continuously sustain and improve the skills which the interns were very highly skilled through research and new interventions to satisfy the demand of the labor market and the future employers. A curriculum intervention may be developed to target the development and enhancement of the specific competencies in communication, creativity and critical thinking that will help interns demonstrate competitive skills from their respective host training establishment to their future and actual workplace. A similar study should be done in another setting covering a broader scope, larger sample and more variables included in the study.

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