

Problems of Internship: Opinions of the Management Undergraduates of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura

K. U. H. K. Gunarathne, S. A. K. Maduranga, K. G. K. H. Rathnayake,
P. U. W. E. Fernando, K. V. S. G. Kaushalya, T. N. Wijesekara

Abstract

Internship for management undergraduates in many universities in Sri Lanka is common. There are certain credits given to the internship of management undergraduates. However, there is no any mechanism used by the university or faculty or department to assess the effectiveness of undergraduates' internship programme. Many interns in the management faculty in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura face various issues. There are no any empirical evidences found by the faculty or each department. Therefore, what are the problems of internship is the problem of this study concerned by the researchers. To find the internship issues is the main objective of this study. 243 management undergraduates who are studying at third and fourth years were the sample of the study. There were 25 questions asked to identify the issues of internship. The primary data were analysis using the univariate analysis. The main finding of the study was that there are many issues of internship relating to the organizational issues, internship oriented issues and individual issues. Based on the research findings, researchers suggest the appropriate internship programme for the purpose of enhancing the practical exposes of the management undergraduate.

Key words: Internship, Issues, Management undergraduates

Introduction

Management is the process of planning, organizing, leading, & controlling the scarce resources achieve certain goals of an organization within the organizational environment (Arachchige and Kottawatta, 2010). There are different kinds of activities done under different labels of management functions such as operational management, marketing management, human resource management, financial management and information management (Arachchige and Kottawatta, online). Among the management functions, human resource management plays a significant role to keep the organizational objectives to its success (Opatha, 2009). Human resource management is the efficient and effective utilization of human resources to achieve goals of an organization (Opatha, 2009; Arachchige and Kottawatta, online).

In today's competitive society, students are faced with a selective job market which places premium on experience (Collins, 2001). Therefore, theory cannot be applied to the practical world as we learned (Anderson, online). It should be further developed by practicing. Otherwise it shouldn't be applicable to real world. Hand – on experience cannot be imparted through lectures (Collins, 2001). Internship program will help to attain practicable knowledge for newly employees. Industrial training or internship affords students a first hand glimpse of reality (Collins, 2001). It is the foundation for

the any kind of jobholder's career life. Internships are known for giving students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real world environments. At the same time, they will also develop skills which will help them perform better at their jobs. Internships are also very useful to interns themselves as they offer the chance to find out what working for a particular company, or within a certain industry, are really like. Internships also allow interns to make contacts with managers and recruiters, which can later be used to negotiate full-time employment.

Success of internship program can be measured by using various methods (Blasick, online; Lo, at, al, 2006). By evaluating performance of the newly employee at the period of internship is one of the best methods for evaluation. The transfer of knowledge requires engagement: from the active participation of organizational members (including staff and board). They must be able to identify and share the relevant tools, methods and tasks used in gaining the knowledge. They must share networks and communicate concepts that may be tacit or hard to articulate. They must have the opportunity to meet face to face and have the benefit of formal and informal discussions in order to identify and plan for the elimination of systemic barriers.

Internship can be an effective link between classroom educations and practice (Young, and Baker, 2004). Certain kinds of technical and practical skills are best learned in the workplace itself, under the guidance of experienced professionals. Many students anticipate that internship will provide a significant credential for their future employment. However, the experiences of interns vary. Some are given unchallenging work while others are receiving meaning full mentoring and training. A questionnaire was given to each intern to evaluate the level of learning, working environment, level of support and training, level of responsibility, and level of satisfaction concerning the internship.

In the modern world many internship program fail due to various internship problems. Therefore it is suitable to study issues of internship. In this research researchers attempt to find out what the problems of internship are.

Problem of the Study

According to Briggs in 2000, Cates-Mclver in 1998, Crumbly and Sumners in 1998, Haghghi in 1998, Kelsey in 2002, Singer in 2000, Whalen and Barnes in 2001, the value of experiential learning has been well documented in both business and academic journals (Moorman, 2004). Willams in 2001 pointed out that a study of United States sport management programmes found that 76% of the respondents required their students to complete an internship (Moorman, 2004). However, in the Sri Lankan practices of university undergraduates under their curriculum, the internship programme is not developed well. There are many issues and problems experienced by the intern. According to Gornstein in 1994, Ortner in 1998 and Sweift and Kent in 1999, if the internship lacks substance and the intern only provides clerical support to the organization, the benefit to the intern is lessened (Moorman, 2004). An unchallenging internship is likely to be unproductive for both the intern and the sponsoring organization (Moorman, 2004). The empirical evidences for the successfulness of internship of undergraduates are not as much of this scenario. Then, it

implies that there are problems for undergraduates' internship. Based on this research gap, researchers identified the problem of the study as the problems of management undergraduates' internship. Then the main objective of the study is to find out the internship problems faced by the management undergraduates.

Literature Review

An intern is someone who works in a temporary position with an emphasis on on-the-job training rather than merely employment (SIH-199), making it similar to an apprenticeship (Wikipedia, online). An internship is a pre-professional work experience that provides students, recent graduates, and those seeking to change careers with the opportunity to gain experience in a particular career field (Doyle, online). An internship is a period of practical training, carried out by a student within a company or organization. Interns are usually college or university students, but they can also be high school students or post graduate adults seeking skills for a new career (Wikipedia, online). In some industries, cooperative education (co-op) programs fulfill a similar mission. In other industries, you may hear internships referred to as practicums, experiential learning opportunities, independent study programs or even apprenticeship models. But it should be mentioned there is lack of researches done on this topic. Student internships provide opportunities for students to gain experience in their field, determine if they have an interest in a particular career, create a network of contacts, or gain school credit (Wikipedia, online).

Issues of internship supply and demand: A survey of academic counseling and clinical programs by Thorn is an article which has done under this topic. According that article he further expressed that although internship placement rates have remained relatively stable since 1992, larger members of students have been unsuccessful in securing an internship. Implications of current market trends in conjunction with recommendations regarding possible solutions are discussed (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2009).

Another research has done by Margaretha Hsu Shippensburg University about "*students' perceptions of a good internship*". At the conclusion he has mentioned that although this study provides useful insights into issues concerning internship experience perceived by students, it has certain limitations. Its failure to include certain variables, such as GPA, gender, length of internship, size of company, and wages may miss an opportunity to explore the effects of these factors and their interactions on the experience. In addition, there results reflect only the perceptions of students from one university. Nonetheless, the study shows that students generally anticipate a positive and meaningful internship experience. They are willing and eager to learn, to be trained, and to be challenged. There are four internship problems, which are 1) the internship doesn't meet your expectations, 2) you and your internship supervisor have conflicting goals or priorities, 3) boredom and 4) poor communication (Randall, online).

The internship problem be 1) illness, causing them to miss days or weeks of the internship, 2) the work required is not what was discussed or expected, 3) supervision is inadequate or non-existent, 4) might not know which person in the organization to contact for help, 5) direction might be vague or inconsistent or contradictory, 6) might

have too little or too much to do and 7) intern might have expected knowledge or skills (Online¹). Lack of feedback and intern unclear about learning objectives are mostly effective problem of internship according to Hagen (1981). According to Satariano and Rogers (2002) pointed out that many programme lack academic content in the internship. Moorman (2004) highlighted that there should be considered about the legal point of internship.

Method

The objective of the study is to find out the problems of internship faced by the management undergraduates in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. The survey method used to collect the primary data of the study. The sample size of the study was limited to 243 and those are the interns of Department of Finance, Department of Business Administration, Department of Marketing, Department of HRM, Department of Accountancy and other departments respectively. The sampling method was simple random sampling from the interns of each department. The questionnaire was the instrument used to gather the primary data from the selected sample. There were... statements developed to identify the internship problems faced by the management undergraduates. Simple statistical tools under the univariate analysis were used to analysis the primary data. The decision rules are given below.

Mean value > 03: Problems relating to internship are low

Mean value = 03: Problems relating to internship are moderate

Mean value < 03: Problems relating to internship are high

Empirical Data

Table No 01 presents the mean, medium, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis under the univariate analysis for the Department of Finance.

Table 01: Univariate analysis for the internship problems – Department of Finance

		Mean	Medium	Mode	Std.Devi	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Organizational issues	2.25	2.25	1.75	.50	.41	-1.23
2	Internship oriented issues	2.58	2.67	2.00	.48	.17	-2.04
3	Individual issues	3.00	3.00	3.00	.59	.91	0.08

Organizational issues, internship oriented issues and individual issues relating to the undergraduates who are studying at the Department of Finance are relatively high. According to the table No 01, all mean values of the variables are below the value of 3.00. However, internship oriented issues and individual issues are either high or moderate level.

Table No 02 presents the mean, medium, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis under the univariate analysis for the Department of Business Administration.

Table 02: Univariate analysis for the internship problems – Department of Business Administration

		Mean	Medium	Mode	Std.Devi	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Organizational issues	2.25	3.00	3.50	.78	-.33	-2.0
2	Internship oriented issues	2.02	2.40	2.22	.48	1.04	-2.26
3	Individual issues	2.80	2.67	2.67	.36	.33	-.9

According to the table No 02, the organizational issues, internship oriented issues and individual issues of the students who are studying at the Department of Business Administration are relatively high. The mean vales of organizational issues is 2.25 and internship oriented issues is 2.02. The mean value of individual issues relating to internship is 2.80. However, the individual issues of the students are either moderate or high level.

Table No 03 presents the mean, medium, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis under the univariate analysis for the Department of Marketing.

Table 03: Univariate analysis for the internship problems – Department of Marketing

		Mean	Medium	Mode	Std.Devi	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Organizational issues	2.00	2.00	1.75	.29	.01	-5.8
2	Internship oriented issues	2.44	2.44	2.33	.13	.02	-5.75
3	Individual issues	2.50	2.50	2.00	.58	.04	-5.69

According to the table No 03, organizational issues, internship oriented issues and individual issues of the students who are studying at the Department of Marketing are relatively high. However, the individual issues of the students are either moderate or high level. All mean values (organizational issues- 2.00, internship oriented issues – 2.44 and individual issues – 2.50) of the internship issues are below the value of 3.00.

Table No 04 presents the mean, medium, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis under the univariate analysis for the Department of HRM.

Table 04: Univariate analysis for the internship problems – Department of HRM

		Mean	Medium	Mode	Std.Devi	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Organizational issues	2.32	2.25	1.75	.51	.15	.88
2	Internship oriented issues	2.15	2.22	1.44	.67	.17	-.75
3	Individual issues	2.05	1.67	1.67	.89	.74	.89

The mean values of organizational issues, internship oriented issues and individual issues of the students who are studying at the Department of HRM are below the value of 3.00. Then it means that all variables are relatively high.

Table No 05 presents the mean, medium, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis under the univariate analysis for the Department of Accountancy.

Table 05: Univariate analysis for the internship problems – Department of Accountancy

		Mean	Medium	Mode	Std.Devi	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Organizational issues	1.89	1.75	1.00	.49	1.27	1.00
2	Internship oriented issues	2.28	2.44	1.67	.44	-1.6	2.33
3	Individual issues	2.54	2.50	1.98	.83	.96	.41

The statistical data of the sample was revealed that the issues of organization, internship oriented and individual are relatively high for the students who are studying at the Department of Accounting. The mean values of the issues of organizational related issues, internship oriented issues and individual related issues are 1.89, 2.28 and 2.54 relatively.

Table No 06 presents the mean, medium, mode, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis under the univariate analysis for the other Department.

Table 06: Univariate analysis for the internship problems – Other Department

		Mean	Medium	Mode	Std.Devi	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Organizational issues	2.53	3.00	1.25	.98	.34	-1.68
2	Internship oriented issues	3.01	3.00	3.22	.21	.40	-1.14
3	Individual issues	2.52	2.33	2.33	.84	.56	-.31

The organizational issues, internship oriented issues and individual issues of the students who are studying at other departments except above five departments are relatively high. According to the table No 06, the issues of organization, internship and individual are 2.53, 3.01 and 2.52 respectively.

Findings

According to the empirical data, following findings can be drawn.

1. Organizational issues relating to internship of all students who are studying at all departments are relatively high.
2. Internship oriented issues of all students of all departments are relatively high.
3. Individual issues relating to the internship of all students of all departments are relatively high.
4. As a overall view, the issues of organizational related issues, internship oriented issues and individual issues of all departments in the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce are relatively high.

Discussion and Recommendation

Internship is a degree requirement of the Department of Accounting, the Department of Marketing, and the Department of HRM. However, it is an alternative subject for the Department of Finance and the Department of Business Administration. In the practical view point, internship for the management students is essential and important to apply the theoretical knowledge before joining the industrial world after getting degree. Therefore, above departments hope to get the practical experiences of the students from the working environment. However, the mechanism of internship for all departments is relatively week and its support remains at a very low level.

An internship is an educational experience in an environment providing field application of a student's theoretical classroom learning. Internships are arranged for students who wish to undertake a study involving both academic and applied experience and agree to receive the number of credits commensurate with the scope of the project. An internship is planned by the student in cooperation with a faculty supervisor and site/field supervisor. Therefore there should be a proper internship mechanism to fulfill the needs of intern. The internship mechanism proposed to the Faculty can be illustrated using following features.

Curriculum

Internship for the specialized courses should be included regarding the students' requirements as well as considering the availability of the internships in the business world. According to the many interns in the Faculty, they stress that the content of internship is difficult to meet the demand or requirements of the specialized degrees. Therefore, the Faculty or the Departments should be reviewed the real learning outcomes from the course of internship and develop the proper learning outcomes under the curriculum to develop the interns of the Faculty. Especially there should be specifically mentioned the duration of internship or hours required to fulfill the internship (online, Public Service Internship Guidelines).

Supervisor's Role

Students interested in pursuing an internship for academic credit should consult with their academic advisor to discuss how the internship credit will fit into their program of study. Therefore, there should be a supervisor appointed to each student. Academic advisors are encouraged to talk with advisees early in the students' academic career about internships and the timeliness of arranging the experience (online, Student Internship Guide). Interrelationship with friendly manner of supervisors is must and they have to maintain good affairs with the interns. Through this good affair, supervisor can assess the real problems faced by the interns and has to be adjusted the learning outcomes of each intern (online, Student Internship Guide). The major responsibility of the supervisor is to find out an opportunity to the students and audit the progress of internship programme.

Internship Prospect

The faculty or the Departments have to develop proper internship prospect including all information to parties, intern and organization (online, Student Internship Guide). The objectives of the internship, guidelines of internship, evaluation and assessment methods of internship, learning constrains etc should be clearly stated on the internship prospects.

Student's Role

The student intern is responsible for selecting the internship and seeking out a faculty supervisor. The Faculty or the Department supervisor should be a person who has knowledge about the field in which the internship is requested (online, Student Internship Guide). The intern is also responsible for meeting with the site supervisor prior to the internship to clarify expectations and responsibilities, complete an

Internship Learning Contract and Internship Approval Form, working the required number of hours, seeking out supervision on site as needed, and completing the academically-related tasks which are agreed upon by the faculty supervisor and intern (online, Student Internship Guide). In addition, the intern maintains high standards of professionalism while at the internship site.

Field/Office Supervisor's Role

Student interns are supervised by a staff person employed by the site organization. Typically, the site supervisor has experience and expertise in the area in which the student is interning (online, Student Internship Guide). Site supervisors are responsible for interviewing interns, determining qualifications for the position, orienting interns to the organization, supervising, directing, and evaluating their work (online, Student Internship Guide). The ideal site supervisor will serve as a mentor, sharing the pros and cons of a career in the field and giving suggestions for entering the profession. S/he will also have sufficient experience in the field to draw from and will share that experience with the student intern (online, Student Internship Guide). The site supervisor meets with the intern on a regular basis to guide performance, answer questions, and provide background information and resources related to the intern's work (online, Student Internship Guide).

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