

Internship of Undergraduates, their Academic Performance and Future Employability

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Introduction

The phenomenon of internship training is quite new to the different programs in the disciplines of arts and management. Most of the time the objective of introducing internship to undergraduate programs is to improve academic performance and future employability. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of studies examining the effects of the internship/working part time while studying. However internship can be seen as complementary to educational achievements because different skills are improved with practice. In addition, it can be treated as a substitute for education because time spent on internship reduces that on education.

Further, nature of the work assigned to undergraduates during their internship can sometimes be seen as some laborious task that does not match with their program and involving no proper coordination and supervision. The students who worked on career specific skills earned higher grades than those students engaged in general work experience (Wenz and Yu, 2010). Bukaliya (2012) in his study on Zimbabwe, pointed out that the students prefer internship, because they gain exposure to the real world of work but that there is no effective supervision and there is resistance from current employees too. Beffy et al (2010) and Furr and Elling (2000) have suggested that working while studying reduces performance at the year end examination and that the effect of part time work is smaller when the working hours are less per week. The findings of Watanabe (2005) did not contribute to proving either the positive or negative relationship between part time work and academic achievements. Though studies have looked at the effects of internship/part time work, there seem to be no studies that link such work to future employability.

In the context of Sri Lanka it is questionable whether internship has positive effects or negative effects on undergraduates' academic performance and their future employability. Existing literature seems contradictory and effects of internship/part time work have positive as well as negative effects on academic performance based on the nature of the work and duration of work. Considering the Sri Lankan context, there

is a lack of research studies particularly in the field of humanities and social science degree programs on the issue at hand.

Objectives

This study is an attempt to identify the effects of internship of undergraduates in the field of management and commerce degree programs on their academic performance and future employability and to use the findings of the study to enhance the quality of the internship program to increase the academic performance and future employability of such undergraduates.

Methodology

Primary data and secondary data sources were used for the study. Secondary data were collected from the university system. Primary data were collected from a sample of undergraduates in the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce in the University of Sri Jayewardenepura via a structured questionnaire. A control sample and an 'experimental' sample were included and required data were collected from both groups of students: those who participated in internship/training programme and those who did not participate in such programmes. The methodology is highly quantitative and multiple regression analysis was employed with the statistical package of E-views 6.0 version. Academic performance is measured based on the grade point average of the undergraduates.

Ten variables selected for the model were Gender, Place 1 (*hostel*), Place 2 (*boarding*), Place 3 (*home*), Courses followed during the university period, Training period, Study leave, Lecture note coverage, Attendance of lectures and Family Index (*equal weighted average value of the variables in the family background, namely, Family Income, Number of Children, health condition of the parents, Number of Dependents, Education background of Father and Mother*). Criteria used to measure the future employability were "waiting time for a job after graduation" and "level of job". A comparison is carried out between the 'experimental' sample (Undergraduates who participated in internship) and the control sample (Undergraduates who did not participated in internship) to identify clearly the effects of internship on their academic performance and future employability.

Results

As per the regression exercise, the following equation was developed for the academic performance of undergraduates (see Table 1 also):

$$\text{AVERAGE GPA} = C + \text{GENDER} - \text{TRAINING} - \text{STUDY_LEAVE} - \text{COVERED} \\ + \text{ATTENDANCE} + \text{FI}$$

The regression equation for academic performance shows that gender, attendance and Family Index have a positive impact on academic performance and training, study leave and lecturers use of notes have a negative impact on it. Gender is a dummy variable in the regression analysis. Therefore it can be interpreted that male students have a better academic performance than female students.

Table 1: Output-Multiple Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable: AVERAGE_GPA				
Method: Least Squares				
Date: 09/07/12 Time: 23:00				
Sample: 1 60				
Included observations: 60				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
GENDER	0.125832	0.103519	1.215546	0.2295
TRAINING	-0.002781	0.148276	-0.018758	0.9851
STUDY_LEAVE	-0.014366	0.034473	-0.416738	0.6786
COVERED	-0.062477	0.103616	-0.602966	0.5491
ATTENDANCE	0.789142	0.156297	5.048983	0
FI	0.433776	0.133555	3.24791	0.002
C	1.402412	0.428634	3.271821	0.0019

Source : Compiled by authors

However, according to the results only attendance and Family Index are significant in determining academic performance. Since the calculated "F" Statistic of 5.58 exceeds the table value of 2.25 for the F distribution with 6 and 53 degrees of freedom, the model can be considered significant at 95% level of confidence. Therefore, we conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship among the explanatory variables with average GPA.

According to the Table 2, graduates with internship have 4 months, 14 months and 2.5 months average waiting time to secure Staff Assistant, Lower Level Management and Middle Level Management positions respectively. The graduates who did not have internship, on the contrary, spent only 2 months of waiting time for Staff Assistant level jobs, while their waiting time for Lower Level Management and Middle Level Management jobs are 15 months and 7 months respectively.

Table 2: Employability and Internship

Statues	Employed	Unemployed		
Number of Graduates	50	10		
Internship %	88%	80%		
Average Waiting Time	Internship Graduates	Non Internship Graduates		
Months	5	6.5		
Nature of the Employer	Private	Government		
Number of Graduates	16	34		
Internship %	94%	88%		
Average Waiting Time	2.5	7		
Average Waiting Time - Internship Graduates	2.6	6.4		
Average Waiting Time - Non Internship Graduates	0	8		
Service Years	< 1 year	1 - 2 years	2 - 3 years	> 5 yrs
Number of Graduates	22	18	8	2
Internship %	81%	94%	88%	100%
Average Waiting Time	5	7	1	7
Average Waiting Time - Internship Graduates	5	7	1	7
Average Waiting Time - Non Internship Graduates	6	15	0	No
Level of the Job	Staff Assist / Clerical	Lower Level Management	Middle Level Management	
Number of Graduates	13	10	27	
Internship %	85%	99%	88%	
Average Waiting Time	3.5	14	2.5	
Average Waiting Time - Internship Graduates	4	14	2	
Average Waiting Time - Non Internship Graduates	2	15	7	
Average Service Years - Internship Graduates	less than 1 year	2 year - 3 year	1 year - 2 year	
Average Service Years - Non Internship Graduates	1 year - 2 year	1 year - 2 year	less than 1 year	
Current job compare with	Degree	Training	Professional	
Yes	33	34	20	
No	17	16	30	

Source : Compiled by the Authors Note : Time is in months

In addition to that, those who had internship training appear to have been able to gather more years of “higher level” experience within a given period of time than those who had not undergone internship training. This is indicated by the fact that those with internship training behind them managed to step into higher positions after spending less than 1 year in the Staff Assistant Level, and obtaining 2–3 years and 1-2 years average service experience in Lower Level Management and Middle Level Management jobs respectively, while those without internship have had to spend on average 1–2 years in Staff Assistant and Lower Level Management levels and less than 1 year experience in the Middle management level.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce (FMSC) of University of Sri Jayewardenepura comprises of twelve departments and some of these do not insist on the undergraduate internship in 3rd year and 4th year in the degree course. Internship is a credited elective course in departments that offer internship as a subject for the degree course.

According to the finding of the paper, it can be concluded that Internship is not a significant variable in determining undergraduates’ academic performance. Therefore internship does not seem detrimental to academic performance. Attendance of lectures and Family Index are significant variables in explaining the academic performance of undergraduates. Therefore, the departments and the FMSC have provided night time lectures to motivate attendance in an attempt to strengthen undergraduate academic performance.

Second major conclusion is that Internship is highly correlated with employability of undergraduates. Those who did not have field internship had to spend more time in lower level job positions and their waiting time to obtain middle level and higher level jobs are greater than those with internship training.

It is therefore suggested that the internship is important and therefore that further issues, such as quality of the internship, financial strength of the students, and the equality among the students should be focused on and can be uplifted by having proper linkages among the three parties (FMSC, internship trainees, and industry). In this context issues such as the length of the internship training period, payment for interns, the nature of work and cooperation of other workers needs to be addressed.

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