

Internship program and Students' skills: A Case of Business Students from the Faculty of Business and development studies, Bishop Stuart University.

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Abstract

Since 1990's, internship program has gained popularity as an effective approach to enhance student's employability and career development. In the world of academia, internship is seen as a period in which the students get the hands-on experience, and skills as well as providing a room for students to get what to do after their courses. As a result, internship has become a culture in most of the post- secondary institutions. The study therefore intended to establish the effectiveness of internship program in improving students' skills using a case of business students in the faculty of business and development studies, Bishop Stuart University-Mbarara. The study was limited to establishing the contribution of internship program in improving hands-on experience and skills development among students, the main challenges hindering the effectiveness of the internship Program in achieving its objectives as well as the main areas of improvement towards effective internship exercise. The study used a sample size of 136 respondents. Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study findings revealed that internship exercise has played a significant role in enhancing students' social skills than student's hands on experience. These social skills include; Interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, networking skills, identifying potential employers, public communication skills. Students' hands on experience/skills especially accounting and computer skills were not improved due to inadequate computers against many interns and limited attention given to the interns. The study further found out that there are mediating factors that hinders internship program to achieve its objectives; these included Work environment, organizational culture, students' attitude and the expertise of the supervisor. The study revealed a number of challenges hindering the effectiveness of the internship exercise. The study recommends that there a need to make a memorandum of understanding between academic institutions and the training agencies so that students can be able to train from relevant departments. The study recognized a need for the government support towards internship programs especially through providing adequate computers to the training agencies.

Key words: Internship program and students' skills.

Introduction

The idea of student internships originated in the U.S. in the early nineteenth century (Driscoll, 2006). Since 1990, internship placements has remained a central component in many European training systems as according to Olson (1993) and Snell (1996). As a result, most prospective employers in both Europe and Africa have been placing an ever-increasing level of importance on their applicants' competency. This has been done mainly to develop and improve generic skills such as communication skills, quantitative analysis, information technology, problem-solving, and ability to work with other people (Dickerson and Green, 2004), which are very fundamental in most business jobs.

Cook et al (2004) argues that internships provide students, employers, and universities with a variety of benefits. Cook argues that students are evidently the most important beneficiary of internship outcomes. In view of that, to fulfill the prospective employer's requirements, many institutions have been using internships as a means of providing their students with practical skills/experiences and preparing them for their future careers. The outcomes of an effective internship program, however, should not be limited to enhancing students' skills. To face the real-life challenges, students should also possess the necessary personal and business values.

Internships can play an important role in helping students make good career choices (Brooks et al, 1995). The study by Garavan and Murphy, (2001) also postulates that internship exercise provides an opportunity to learn specific job related skills that are not taught in class room, because some benefits of internships may persist well beyond graduation. Studies have shown that students who participate in an internship exercise have greater job stability in their early careers (Richards, 1984) and higher job satisfaction (Gault et al, 2000). Other studies have found that internships can make students more ambitious (Pedro, 1984) and can help to ease the transition from school to working environment (Paulson and Baker, 1999).

Bloom (1956) has highlighted the importance of teaching students how to apply the knowledge and concepts they have acquired through previous coursework. In the world of academia, internship is more paramount to the student's career development. It is a period in which the students get the hands-on experience, skills and a room for students to get what to do. It gives graduate students extra exposure to the real world of library work and makes further career choices and provide prospective employers the diverse areas of students' interest within

courses(Callanan&Benzing , 2004; Merrit, 2005;Plunkett, 2007). Internship further helps students to create valuable connections and networking opportunities to improve their employment and career prospects (Beard 2007; Knouse and Fontenot 2008; *Maskooki* et al. 1998).

Despite the role played by internship exercise in improving students' skills by translating the theory learnt in lecture room into real life situation, it is noted that graduates cannot directly transfer their knowledge got from class room to the workplace and use their acquired skills in their first job. Also, both research and practice indicate that graduates underperform when starting their first job (Arts et al. 2006). Therefore, the study aimed at assessing the effectiveness of internship program in improving students' skills.

Conceptualizing the meaning of “Internship”.

There are different researches which have been carried out about internship, however there is no standard definition of internship. Most researchers have conceptualized the meaning of internship in the following ways;

According to Gault, Leach & Duey, (2010), they define internship as a practice that involves professional employment and supervision in different academic disciplines. Gault, Leach & Duey, (2010) further argue that internship students seem to be employed in an organization as part time employees, and usually receive academic credit for their contribution at the workplace. The authors further mention that the issue of compensation is optional for the interns.

Furco (1996, p. 4) looks at internship as the exercise of engaging students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing them with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of the issues relevant to a particular area of study.

Internship is also defined as a structured and career-relevant work experience obtained by students before they graduate from any academic program (Taylor, 1988, p. 393).

Sattler (2011, p. 46) further conceptualizes internships as work experiences, often a year or more in duration, planned to occur at or near the end of a program of study. The work experiences are offered in different professional fields, with supervisors who provide meaningful support to the interns. Students are engaged in meaningful work, but can also include job shadowing (Sattler, 2011).

Whereas different scholars have defined internship in different ways, all definitions share some common elements, as well as a number of differences. However, there is a consensus among all the definitions of internships reviewed that the exercise is meant to be educational and should provide structured, meaningful and career-relevant experiences for students. Most of the difference exist in different sects like time commitments (full time or part time as well as duration of internship), as well as compensation either paid or unpaid.

Students' expectations from the Internship exercise

From a student's perspective, internship is considered more worthwhile when a student is satisfied with his or her internship experience (Clark, 2003). From a wider perspective, when seeking an internship experience, students desire mentorship from an employee at the internship organization (Callanan & Benzing, 2004). Peretto Stratta (2004) argues that, students going for internships expect the experience to be educational and to enhance their professional development in addition to providing hands-on practical experience and skill development.

It should however be noted that students' expectations from internship vary according to different criteria used by students to determine their satisfaction with the internship experience (Olk & Fukami, 2010; Peretto Stratta, 2004; Rothman, 2007). According to Peretto Stratta, 2004, students' expectations arise from monetary or in-kind compensation, convenience of internship location (i.e., proximity to residence), timing of the internship (e.g., duration, alignment with academic semester), and the opportunities for exposure and networking.

Research Objectives

The main Objectives of the study were;

1. To find out the contribution of internship program in improving hands-on experience and skills development among students.
2. To find out the main challenges hindering the effectiveness of the internship programme in achieving its objectives.
3. To suggest the main areas of improvement towards effective internship exercise.

Significance of the study

The study sought to inform higher institutions of learning to design the appropriate academic programs that meet the demands of employers in the labor market.

The findings of this study are hoped to directly benefit students by gaining high quality training and minimize their expectation gaps in the labor market, since the study intended to improve on the effectiveness of the programme.

The study hoped to benefit industrial training provider by building up a close tie with the university as well as the trainee, which would reduce misunderstandings among the three parties and hence building a sustainable win-win relationship.

Finally, the study would help the university in identify pre-placement activities and objectively administer the internship matters more effectively, thereby improving the internship programme. This is because, having an effective internship programme would reduce the university administrative burden and would uplift its reputation among the students' as well industrial training providers who are employers. This might help the university in taking competitive advantages over other universities.

Approach and Methodology

The study used a cross sectional research design, where both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection and analysis were used. The study targeted 136 respondents who were chosen from 210 as the total target population. Data was collected using a number of mixed methods, which included; interview method, focused group discussions (FGDs) and questionnaire survey method. Data from questionnaires was analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of data analysis software - Statistical Package for Social Sciences Package (SPSS). Analysis of qualitative data was done manually using content analysis, notes were written and scripts were analyzed by coding; where information of similar code categories was assembled together meaningfully.

Results and analysis

Study findings on the contribution of internship program in improving hands-on experience and skills development among students

Responses under this were sought in accordance with research objective one of this study which sought to establish the contribution of internship in improving hands on experience and skills development among students. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which agreed or disagreed with the statement anchored on a five-point likert scale presented to them. Analysis was done by grouping responses i.e. Strongly Agree and Agree to mean Agree whereas Strongly

Disagree and Disagree to mean Disagree, whereas un-decided remained in the middle as a neutral point. The analysis was done using simple differential statistics, where results were obtained inform of; frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The elicited responses are presented in table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Results on the contribution of internship program towards hands-on experience and skills development among students.

| The contribution of internship program towards hands-on experience and skills development among students | Response rate | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------------|------|-------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Un-decided | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. |
| Internship has improved my public communication skills | 7(5.14%) | 1(0.73%) | 2(1.75%) | 38(27.94%) | 88 (64.70%) | 4.48 | 0.953 |
| Internship Program has Enhanced my interpersonal skills | 5(3.68%) | 6(4.41%) | 9(6.61%) | 77(56.62%) | 39(28.67%) | 4.09 | 0.821 |
| Internship Program has improved my problem-solving skills | 4(2.9%) | 7(5.1%) | 13(9.6%) | 71(52.2%) | 37(27.2%) | 3.98 | 0.733 |
| Internship Program has equipped me with accounting skills | 22(16.18%) | 35(25.73%) | 10(7.4%) | 38(27.94%) | 27(19.85%) | 2.76 | 0.549 |
| Internship Program has Equipped me with computer skills | 24(17.64%) | 53(39.0%) | 8(5.9%) | 21(15.4%) | 30(22.1%) | 2.48 | 0.463 |
| The exercise has equipped me with organizational management | 1 (0.7%) | 5(3.7%) | 17(12.5%) | 57(41.91%) | 51(37.50%) | 4.36 | 0.904 |
| Internship Program has Enhanced my networking skills | 3(2.2%) | 2(1.5%) | 15(11.0%) | 74(54.4%) | 32(23.5%) | 4.16 | 0.849 |
| Internship program has helped me in identifying potential Employers | 1 (0.73%) | 20(14.7%) | 10(7.4%) | 58(42.6%) | 42(32.0%) | 4.03 | 0.809 |

Source: Field data 2017

With reference to Table 1.1, several statements were posed to ascertain the contribution of internship program in improving students’ hands on experience and skills development among students. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers and the research assistants to ensure that the respondents give valid and reliable data. In our analysis, the mean above three shows the agreement of respondents while the mean below three shows their disagreement. In the same way, standard deviation of close to one shows the agreement by respondents while standard deviation close to zero shows disagreement by respondents.

In Table 1.1, numerous statements were modelled to determine the contribution of internship program in improving students’ hands on experience and skills development among students. In order to capture reliable data, the questionnaire was administered by the researchers and the research assistants. It was established that internship program is very crucial as far as improving students’ skills and hands on experience is concerned. It is important to note that most of the skills gained form internship exercise were rather social than students’ hands on experience/skills.

The findings of the study revealed that internship program has improved students public communication skills. This was evidenced by 92.64% of the respondents. This implies that through internship exercise, students are able to interact with other intern from different universities and from different geographical regions. This exposes them to different living styles and languages and hence enhances their public communication skills. Coupled with this, it was also found out that internship program enhances students' interpersonal skills. This was according to the majority of the respondents (85.29%). This was attributed to the team work spirit that is always exhibited among the interns.

The study findings also revealed that internship Program has improved students problem-solving skills. This was supported by the majority of the respondents (79.4%). Problem solving skills being one of the basic qualities of a business manager, internship has exhibited a high potential of improving students problem solving skills. This is mainly because of many interns who do their internship from congested places. In relation to that, internship program has equipped students with organizational management skills. This was supported by 79.41% of the respondents. This implies that the exercise is very instrumental in the life of a student since it introduces students to the real world of work.

About improving students' hands on experience/skills especially accounting and computer skills, it was established that internship exercise has not yielded the expected results. On the contribution of internship exercise towards students' accounting skills, 41.91% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the exercise has improved their accounting skills while 47.79% of the respondents agreed with the statement. Also, majority of the respondents (56.64%) asserted that the exercise has not improved their business computer skills. This was attributed to inadequate computers in most of the organisations, and yet the number of interns is increasing now and then. This implies that business interns end up not achieving the set goals since computers are critical in helping business students to put what they have learnt in class like balance sheet as well as cash inflows and outflows.

Through internship exercise, it was found out that it is a period where students network and meet their potential employers in the labor market. The findings stressed that 77.9% of the respondents consented with the statement put to them that internship exercise has improved their networking skills, while 74.6% agreed that the exercise help students to identify their potential employers. The study revealed that internship provides an avenue for students to know where they can work after their university programs. It was established that most of the students get to know what they are supposed to do only after getting g the internship exposure. This implies that the exercise is a blood stream in a student's academic life.

Qualitative data was also obtained about the contribution of internship program in improving students' hands on experience and skills development among students. Respondents had different and varying views about the contribution of field exercise. One of the key respondents had this to say about the contribution of field exercise;

...Internship is a period where students are supposed to put in practice what they have been studying in class room. It has played a significant role in improving students' skills. Once they come from the field, we have noticed some improvement in the skills especially when they are

presenting their internship reports. Many have portrayed an improvement in interpersonal and public communication skills. Internship has done a lot though some of its contribution cannot be directly measured... (Interview 2018)

Another key informant had this to say;

...For sure internship is a good exercise for students. There is where I went and found students busy in offices doing office work. Students were busy attending to clients and is appeared as if they were employees of those organisations... (Interview 2018)

Study findings on the main challenges hindering the effectiveness of Internship exercise.

Responses under this section were in line with research objective two which sought to establish the main challenges hindering the effectiveness of the internship program in improving students' skills and hands on experience. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which agreed or disagreed with the statement put to them on a five-point Likert scale. Analysis was done by grouping responses i.e. Strongly Agree and Agree to mean Agree whereas Strongly Disagree and Disagree to mean Disagree, whereas un-decided remained in the middle as a neutral point. Analysis was done using simple differential statistics, where results were obtained in form of; the frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The elicited responses are presented in table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Findings on the main challenges hindering the effectiveness of internship exercise

| Items | Response rate | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------|------|------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Un-decided | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. |
| Little time given to internship period hinders its effectiveness | 8(5.9%) | 18(13.2%) | 11(8.1%) | 38(27.9%) | 56(41.2%) | 3.89 | .745 |
| Sexual harassment is one of the hindrances to the effectiveness of internship programme | 35(25.7%) | 17(12.5%) | 10(7.4%) | 26(19.12%) | 41(30.1%) | 3.16 | .669 |
| Lack of intensive supervision from University's' academic staff. | 11(8.1%) | 25(18.4%) | 4(2.9%) | 47(34.6%) | 39(28.7%) | 3.62 | .788 |
| Financial problems prevent learner/interns from concentrating | 0(0.0%) | 11(8.1%) | 10(7.4%) | 39(28.7%) | 72(52.9%) | 4.30 | .982 |
| Some agencies give interns little attention | 1(0.7%) | 15(11.0%) | 3(2.2%) | 41(30.1%) | 68(50.0%) | 4.25 | .971 |
| Some agencies allocate few days for interns | 11(8.1%) | 11(8.1%) | 14(10.3%) | 42(30.9%) | 55(40.4%) | 3.98 | .835 |
| Some agencies exempt the interns from participating in some activities | 4(2.9%) | 13(9.6%) | 2(1.5%) | 57(41.9%) | 56(41.2%) | 4.12 | .911 |
| Inadequate computers obstructed me from enriching my accounting and computer skills | 13(9.6%) | 21(15.4%) | 8(5.9%) | 35(25.7%) | 57(41.9%) | 3.72 | .829 |

Source: *Field data 2017*

Table 1.2, shows the opinions of respondents in relation to the second objective which thought to find out the challenges hindering the effectiveness of internship exercise in achieving its objectives. Several statements were posed to get their opinions. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers and the research assistants to ensure that the respondents give valid and reliable data. In our analysis, the mean above three shows the agreement of respondents while the mean below three shows their disagreement. In the same way, standard deviation of close to one shows the agreement by respondents while standard deviation close to zero shows disagreement by respondents.

The findings indicated that little time given to internship period is one of the hindrances towards the effectiveness of internship exercise. This was agreed upon by 69.1% of the total population. In relation to this, some agencies give interns little attention on top of allocating few days for interns. This was consented by 80.1% of the respondents. This implies that the interns are not given enough time to apply all the theories learnt in class into practice.

Results of the study also indicated that lack of intensive supervision from University's academic staff has also affected the effectiveness of the exercise. This was supported by the majority of the respondents (63.3%). This means that the interns do not get enough guidance from their academic supervisors and this limits them from getting the basic knowledge and skills while in the field.

Financial challenges was also found out to be one of the main challenges that obstruct interns from concentrating. The findings stressed that 81.6% of the respondents consented with the statement put to them that financial challenges obstruct students from concentrating during internship hence hindering its effectiveness. This implies that financial implication is closely related with students' ability to concentrate, and students need to be provided with at least lunch and transport.

The study also found out that some agencies exempt the interns from participating in some core organizational activities which they are supposed to do after their courses. This was supported by 83.1% of the total respondents. This implies that students do not get what they are supposed to get while in the field since they cannot participate in some of the relevant activities.

The study findings also indicated that inadequate computers limits interns from enriching their accounting and computer skills. This was supported by 67.6% of the total respondents. This implies that the basic hands on and skills development among students cannot be adequately attained without computers since some of the applications need the computers that are well connected to internet.

In relation to the challenges hindering the effectiveness of internship exercise, the researchers carried out in-depth interviews with the key informants who were mainly the university administrators. The qualitative data from the key informants was in line with the responses got from the interns. Almost all key informants voiced that though internship is a good practice for institutions with double benefits to both the students and academic institutions, it is facing a number of challenges which hinders its effectiveness. In this regard one of the participants had this to say:

...internship is very instrumental in the life of students. We have specific objectives for internship or field exercise. First of all, the exercise is intended to enable students apply the theoretical knowledge they have been getting in class into practice. Secondly, it is intended to enable students get exposed to the real world of work and also be able to identify the suitable organisations where they can work after their course. Some of these objectives have been achieved but we still have some challenges that affect the exercise. Some of them include...

FDGs from field supervisors.

... We receive a number of students from different institutions every year who come to do internship from our organisations. We try to help them, but we are facing a number of challenges especially the big number of interns. All institutions send students at the same time, and we find it hard to meet their expectations on top of our fixed schedules. First of all, they come towards the end of the financial year when we are busy making the end of year report. For sure.... internship is a good exercise, but there are gaps to fill if we are to help these students benefit. The timing is very challenging, and something should be done...

The above qualitative data from the key informants and from the focused group discussion show that the exercise is facing a number of obstacles which hinders its effectiveness. Most of these challenges are institutional and social in nature. This implies a need for a strong hand in order to wipe out the challenges hindering the effectiveness of internship program.

Study findings on the main areas of improvement towards effective Internship exercise.

Responses under this section were obtained in accordance to research objective three which aimed at establishing the main areas of improvement towards effective internship exercise. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which agreed or disagreed with the statements put to them on a five-point likert scale. Analysis was done by grouping responses i.e. Strongly Agree and Agree to mean Agree whereas Strongly Disagree and Disagree to mean Disagree, whereas un decided remained in the middle as a neutral point. Analysis was done using simple differential statistics, and results were obtained inform of; frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The elicited responses are presented in table 1.3.

Table 1.3: Results on the main areas of improvement towards effective internship exercise

| Items | Response rate | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------|----------------|------|-------|
| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Un-decided | Agree | Strongly Agree | Mean | Std. |
| Intensive supervision is needed to improve internship exercise | 0(0.0%) | 12(8.82%) | 4(2.9%) | 32(23.5%) | 88(64.7%) | 3.87 | 0.886 |
| Institutions should get involved in securing internship placements for the students | 1(0.7%) | 2(1.5%) | 1(0.7%) | 44(32.4%) | 81 (59.6%) | 3.98 | 0.971 |
| Institutions should form MOUs with some agencies where the students can do internship from | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 9(6.6%) | 54(39.7%) | 66(48.5%) | 3.92 | 0.901 |
| There is need to extend on the period for internship training | 13(9.6%) | 14(10.3%) | 8(5.9%) | 39(30.7%) | 53(39.0%) | 3.63 | 0.729 |
| There is a need for seminars between institutions of learning and agencies to identify gaps and areas for improvement | 2(1.47%) | 5(3.68%) | 3(2.20%) | 40(29.41%) | 86(63.23%) | 3.96 | 0.945 |
| Agencies should foster student participation by allowing them to get involved in relevant organizational activities. | 2(1.47%) | 5(3.68%) | 0(0.0%) | 38(27.94%) | 91(66.91%) | 4.02 | 0.954 |
| Training agencies should provide students with more computers which are connected to internet so as to enhance their computer and accounting skills | 0(0.0%) | 0(0.0%) | 2(1.47%) | 30(22.06%) | 104(76.47%) | 4.09 | .985 |

Source: *Field data 2017*

Table 1.3, shows the opinions of respondents in relation to the third objective which sought to find out the main areas of improvement towards effective internship exercise. Several statements were posed to get their opinions. In our analysis, the mean above three shows the agreement of respondents while the mean below three shows their disagreement. In the same way, standard deviation of close to one shows the agreement by respondents while standard deviation close to zero shows disagreement by respondents.

The findings of the study indicated that there is a need for intensive supervision of the exercise by the university supervisors. This was supported by the majority of the respondents (88.2%). This is also indicated by the mean which is above 3 (3.87) and the standard deviation close to 1 (0.886). This implies that intensive supervision would maximize the net benefits of internship program to students.

The study also established the need for academic institutions to get involved in securing internship placements for the students. This was agreed upon by 92% of the total population. This is an indication that most students find it challenging to get relevant placements that fits their programs of study. Coupled with the above, the study revealed the need to form memorandum of understandings (MOUs) with some agencies where the students can do internship from. This was supported by 88.2% of the total population. This implies that MOUs would make it easy for students to get relevant placement areas where they can carry out their internship from.

Coupled with the above, the study identified the need for seminars between institutions of learning and agencies to identify gaps and areas for improvement. This was supported by the majority of the population (92.64%). This implies that the issue of internship is not one man's responsibility, but rather need combined efforts if it is to achieve its set objectives. This would help in building a win-win situation between academic institutions, placement Centre's as well as students.

Results of the study indicated that there is a need to provide students with more computers which are connected to internet so as to enhance their computer and accounting skills. This was agreed upon by 98.5% of the total population. This is also confirmed by its mean which was above 3 and the standard deviation which was close to 1. Due to computerized era where most organisations have adopted computerized accounting systems, it implies that students' access to computers would enhance their accounting and computer skills.

The researchers carried out in-depth interviews with the key informants in the study. These were mainly the university administrators, and the intention was to find out the main strategies they have laid to make internship exercise more effective. It was established that the qualitative data from the key informants was in line with the responses got from the interns. Almost all key informants voiced the same views about what they think can be done to make internship more effective. In this, one of the participants was quoted saying;

...actually, we have put a number of strategies to improve internship exercise. First of all, we are aligning our curriculums to makes sure that some of these courses that are community based be taught before students go for their field exercise. Also, there were some departments which were allowing students to do their internship in year one. We resolved that at least internship should begin after second year when students have learnt enough than doing it in year one when they have not learnt enough. Even when someone is doing a diploma, someone can do it after his or her course... we have also made sure that university supervisors go for internship supervision as early as possible to enable students be guided in case someone is placed wrongly... (Interview 2018)

Another key informant had this to say;

...We are always looking forward to address the issues of internship as possible as we can. We are planning to organize the seminars with placement Centre's to make sure that we work together and improve the exercise. Through the seminars and workshops, some of the loop holes can be dealt with and ironed out...

The above qualitative data concurs with the responses from the interns in a number of aspects. Findings stressed that there is a need for intensive supervision from the University staff, the need for MOU's as well the need for computers which are well connected to internet so as to enhance their computer and accounting skills.

Discussion of results.

The study established that internship program has improved students' public communication skills. This was evidenced by 92.64% of the respondents. This means that internship program provides students with opportunity of interacting with other interns from different universities and from different regions. This exposes interns to different living styles and languages and hence enhances their public communication skills students' interpersonal skills. This concurs with the findings of Beck and Halim, (2008) as well as Sapp and Zhang, (2009) who asserts that the exercise enhance students' interpersonal and communication skills. This can also be attributed to the team work spirit that is always exhibited among the interns. This make internship a necessary practice since interpersonal and public communication skills are some of the requirements from many employers.

The study also revealed that internship exercise helps students to network and meet their potential employers in the labor market. In the study, 77.9% of the respondents consented with the statement put to them that internship exercise has improved their networking skills, while 74.6% agreed that the exercise help students to identify their potential employers. The findings are in agreement with the study by Cook et al. 2004; D'abate et al. 2009; Gault et al. 2000; and Narayanan et al. 2010 who argues that internship provides students with the opportunity to network for their first job after graduation. In relation to the above, Sattler, (2011) asserts that internship exercise provides interns with opportunity for career exploration. Sattler, 2011 adds that field experience enables interns to identify their potential employers. This means that internship exercise provides student' with opportunity to know where they can work after their university programs. The study also found out that most of the students get to know what they are supposed to do only after getting the internship exposure. This confirms the fact that internship is no longer a journey but rather a destiny for students.

Results of the study indicated that financial challenges obstruct interns from concentrating. This was supported by 81.6% of the respondents. This concurs with the studies of Sattler, 2011 and Schmutte, 1986 who argues that one of the challenges hindering the effectiveness of the internship exercise is insufficient funding that enable students to concentrate. They assert that most students do not become active because of financial challenges especially the failure to acquire meals since most agencies do not provide transport and lunch. In addition to meals, there are also administrative challenges (e.g., paperwork) (Sattler, 2011). This implies that financial implication is closely

related with students' ability to concentrate, and students need to be provided with at least lunch and transport.

The findings indicated that little time given to internship period is one of the hindrances towards the effectiveness of internship exercise. This was agreed upon by 69.1% of the total population. In relation to this, some agencies give interns little attention on top of allocating few days for interns. This was consented by 80.1% of the respondents. Birch et al. 2010 asserts that most companies complain that students who go for internship often do not have any work experience and need guidance in their daily work. However, this is not the case since the study found out that areas of placement give them allocate them few days in addition to little time that is scheduled for the exercise. This makes the study by Schmutte, (1986) applicable. Schmutte asserted that lack of interest on behalf of an involved stakeholder most especially the training agencies hinders internship. Therefore, the lack of interest by areas of placements hinders internship objectives to be achieved. Schmutte, (1986) adds that there is lack of mutual understanding between institutions of learning and the placement centers.

The study identified the need for seminars between institutions of learning and agencies to identify gaps and areas for improvement. This was supported by the majority of the population (92.64%). This concurs with the studies of Birch et al. 2010; Hurst and Good (2010) who argues that there is a need for in-depth understanding on the interactions between the three stakeholders. They assert that there is a need for interaction between different stake holders in the internship exercise; namely Students, agencies and the institutions. Birch et al. 2010 further argues that this interaction eliminates unnecessary blames on either of the party. According to Narayanan et al. (2010), he argues that feedback is very much important during the internship exercise. Narayanan asserts that students get the most out of their internship experience when they receive sufficient and relevant feedback from both their academic and company supervisor. In addition, studies reported that feedback is considered as an important element in maintaining the quality of the internship program and supervisors should provide appropriate feedback on the interns' tasks (Brooks et al. 1995; Johari and Bradshaw 2006; Narayanan et al. 2010). Hence organizing seminars between the three stakeholders of internship would help in identifying the gaps and the main areas of improvement towards effective internship exercise hence the need for the collaboration between the three Stakeholders.

Conclusion

The present study on the effect of internship program on Students' skills established the role of internship exercise on improving students' skills. However, the study findings revealed that internship exercise has played a significant role in enhancing students' social skills than student's hands on experience. These social skills include; Interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, networking skills, identifying potential employers, public communication skills. The study also unearthed the fact that Students' hands on

experience/skills especially accounting and computer skills were not improved due to inadequate computers against many interns.

Recommendations

The study established the need for seminars and workshops between academic institutions and placement areas. This is because, internship becomes more meaningful when there is sufficient and relevant feedback from both their academic and company supervisor. Also, feedback is considered as an important element in maintaining the quality of the internship program and supervisors should provide appropriate feedback on the interns' tasks. Therefore, "effective problem solving" happens when you combine resources and experience together. Sharing and leveraging those resources means that you reach to new consensus and be able to obtain tangible results. This calls for a strong collaborative network between academic institutions and placement centers. This can be eased by signing memorandum of understandings between academic institutions and the training agencies.

There is a need for government hand towards internship exercise. The study observed a number of challenges that hinder effectiveness of internship exercise. Most of these challenges were institutional in nature, which can be ironed out when there is government support. Some of these challenges included; lack of equipment to use (especially computers that is connected to internet), as well as limited office space. It was such challenges tantamount into allocating students few days for interns. As a way of fueling the exercise, the government should also allocate welfare fund to different Organisations so as to enable them get interested in the exercise since internship is not part of their appointments.

There is a need to extend the period of internship so as to enable students benefit more from the exercise. Most institutions allocate internship exercise a period of not more than two months. However, the students are given specific days of the week when they are supposed to come for training. This period is not enough. In relation to this, there is a need for intensive supervision from the university, as

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