

Virtual Internship Program: Its Efficacy and Employability to Business Students in Better Normal towards Sustainability

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Abstract

Student internship program serves as a great opportunity for every graduating student to have an actual or on-hand experience of what it would be like to work in a world wherein they are considered as part of a company. The rise of the so-called virtual internship has been substantial and acknowledged as an alternative option for the new norm because of the pandemic.

The descriptive research was utilized through online survey among graduating students of Bachelor of Science in Business Administration major in Marketing Management and Human Resource Management during Academic Year 2021-2022. The study investigates the virtual internship program provided for business students who have engaged in efficacy and employability during pandemic period, and questions whether the implementation will be sustained beyond better normal.

Keywords: virtual internship, efficacy, employability, sustainability,

Introduction

Although the Virtual Internship Program is not a new concept, universities and colleges saw it as a viable alternative to traditional internships due to technological advancements and the COVID-19 pandemic. But, exactly, what is an online internship? Work-based learning has become an important experience for business students in terms of learning, training, mentorship, and networking in recent years. The virtual internship helped students develop the necessary skills and knowledge to improve their chances of landing a good job and excelling in their future careers.

Though business students are concerned, they are not only reconsidering their career choices, but they are also hoping for the best in the face of the current uncertainty. The use of virtual platforms is growing at a rapid pace. It is now a workplace for all. Workplace dynamics have shown similar trends. This is how virtual internships came into play, with online training becoming the new norm.

Despite the fact that COVID-19 has planted deeper roots of uncertainty, virtual internships have added new colors to our rainbow of hopes and given us the courage to pursue our dreams. Virtual education is gaining popularity. In the near future, simulation will be an essential component of learning. Virtual internships are like gold mines for anyone looking to gain certified essential skills that both educational institutions and employers' value for its long-term viability.

Methodology

The research utilized the descriptive method and purposive sampling to collect the respondents' assessment towards virtual internship program. Among 355 total graduates from batch 2021 of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, only 254 were employed and responded during the study.

Results and Discussion

The study resulted to several notable findings that strengthen the objectives as well as the preliminary hypothesis of the research work. The salient findings of the study are as follows:

1. **The efficacy of virtual internship program as to learning objectives, topic and content, usefulness, knowledge of subject, independent learning, and management of learning.**

1.1. **Learning objectives.** The virtual internship program is highly effective in terms of learning objectives because it allows students to participate in group activities that will be practiced in the production of group output, it allows students to virtually experience a business setting, and it provides professional activities for the students' personal and professional growth. Unlike allowing students to participate in group activities, which will be practiced in the production of group output and provided a better understanding of the possible careers that can be pursued in the students' chosen field, which was found to be effective only.

1.2. **Topics and content.** The topics were presented to business students in order to make them aware of the importance of the virtual internship program such as: assist in finding the right job that is suited for gained knowledge and skills, utilize the students' skills to gain competencies and make decisions that will help students in career development, emphasize group activities that can be applied in the actual business setting for shared team objectives.

1.3. **Usefulness.** The program has been shown to be highly effective in terms of making students aware of what they can do well and what type of profession they could pursue, as opposed to enabling students to acquire useful knowledge that can be applied in future careers, guiding students in enhancing their skills through Virtual Internship, providing Webinars that are relevant to the students' selected field, and providing real-life experiences in working in a business setting.

1.4. **Knowledge of subject.** Activities that improve communication skills, as well as requiring graduating students to go through mock interviews to develop interview strategies, have both shown to be extremely effective. Allow students to create Subject knowledge Activities that improve students' communication skills, as well as requiring graduating students to go through mock interviews to develop interview strategies, have both been shown to be extremely effective. Allow students to create webinars to help them improve their collaboration skills; opportunities were provided to increase students' employability and use the students' gained professional skills throughout the course that were found to be effective only.

1.5. **Independent Learning.** Encourage students to have time flexibility to focus on their assigned task, provide skill-related activities that are applied and performed on the real job, contribute to improving students' professional skills, provide leadership training and webinars to help them lead a team effectively in the future, and expose students to mock interviews that were all found effective.

1.6. **Management Learning.** Allow students to broaden their perspective and develop relationships with people from different backgrounds and cultures, assist students in identifying and prioritizing the development opportunities available in the students' chosen field, and prioritize the students' organizational needs found effective only.

2. The effects of virtual internship program to business students' employability skills as to critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, originality, strategizing:

2.1. **Critical thinking.** Students' brainstorming skills in coming up with solutions to problems and dealing with situations based on available data and facts were found to be extremely effective. Applying knowledge in a real-life work setting, sharpening the ability to solve potential marketing conflicts, and improving the ability to perform well at work, all of which they learned from webinar activities, were all found to be effective.

2.2. **Problem-solving.** Develop the ability to determine the essence of the problem and analyze actions to address the situation. Assessing students' problem-solving skills through a mock interview activity that provided impromptu-situational problems, preparing students for their future careers through online trainings, improving problem-solving skills through case studies, and enhancing students' ability to generate ideas for problems encountered were effective.

2.3. **Creativity.** The program has been shown to be highly effective in terms of establishing technical skills in entering marketing careers, enhancing students' creative skills by requiring them to create webinar programs, enabling students to think and create unique ways to approach a specific task, and improving their capabilities in crafting competent technical skills. Only when the creative ability was discovered and applied during training was it found to be effective.

2.4. **Originality.** Guide the students in identifying their strengths in order to excel in their own area, determining their sense of uniqueness to one another, crafting the students' own perspective in marketing strategy, constructing own way of introducing strategies with the assistance of the program, and challenging the students to demonstrate their own distinctive skills alongside their fellow students remarked as effective only.

2.5. **Strategizing.** Utilize the students' resourcefulness to generate efficient ways to overcome challenges, learn how to set quantifiable goals for themselves that they can use in their future career, gain a better perspective of the reality of work, and appreciate their own skills in improving decision-making skills were found to be Highly Effective. Practiced gaining a complete understanding of a situation from a broader perspective before making judgments and formulating effective solutions that were only found to be effective.

3. The relationship of virtual internship program efficacy to employability of business students.

According to the data gathered, there is a significant relationship between the virtual Internship program's learning objectives, topic and content, usefulness, subject knowledge, independent learning, and learning management and business students' employability skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, originality, and strategizing.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following concluding statements are drawn:

1. The efficacy of virtual internship program on learning objectives provided satisfaction to students' employability because the topics provided were sufficient to cater to the students' needs in knowing the importance of acquiring necessary skills that they will use in their career as well as the usefulness of in helping business students improve their abilities to do work. It was effective in terms of providing activities in which students developed strong competitive skills and prepared them to work collaboratively. Furthermore, business students learned how to be more adaptable in any work environment and honed their leadership skills by utilizing productivity tools that will be used in prioritizing and managing tasks in order to increase organizational involvement.

2. The Virtual Internship Program had a significant impact on business students' employability because it provided activities that improved students' ability to focus and evaluate problems in order to create solutions for potential marketing conflicts. Honed the students' creativity skills to illustrate a problem or task in a new or different approach and to use imagination to generate new ideas, as well as their analytical thinking, which was also improved and proven to be utilized. Unusual abilities and skills were discovered, and the results showed that it broadened the students' own marketing perspective, which could be used in any situation. Similarly, in providing students with the necessary strategizing skills for developing strategic goals for their future careers.

3. Business students' employability in correlation with data as to learning objectives indicated that students were satisfied with the activities offered by the program and made a significant contribution to the students' employability. In terms of topic and content, the program provided a comprehensive discussion and aided students in selecting the best path. In terms of usefulness, was successful in providing a virtual real-world work experience and was deemed necessary for the student's future career. In terms of subject knowledge, the students enhanced their professional abilities and knowledge, increasing their employability. In terms of Independent Learning and Learning Management, students learned how to be independent and

self-sufficient by monitoring their progress and evaluating their growth in terms of adjusting their plans in achieving their desired goals and knowledge when it comes to learning of work culture that they could adapt for their future employment.

Recommendation

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Establish an online collaboration platform with both local and global and ensures that everyone is on the same page. Ideally, there should be Video Conferencing and Project Management online tools in place to aid this process. Interns can also use these online platforms to clarify tasks and ask questions. Likewise, managers are able to send reminders, delegate online projects, and offer advice. The key is choosing the right online collaboration tool for business students' needs like certain tools offer more flexible scheduling features and template integration.

2. Explore with specialized activities solely for business students such as; Simulations, case studies, branching scenarios, and online training examples, give virtual interns real world experience in a supportive online setting.

3. Conduct weekly webinars that give interns, managers, and coordinators a chance to touch bases. They can discuss the virtual intern's progress and create a plan to help them improve. If working with a group of virtual interns, these webinars allow them to interact with each other and share online training experiences. These webinars also provide helpful tips that they can use on the job. To make them even more interactive and engaging, invite virtual interns to host an online training event. Assign topics and tasks and ask them to create an online presentation. Define expectations in advance so they know what to include and give them plenty of time to prepare.

4. Consider to conduct online pre-assessments, surveys, and interviews to find out how much they know and how well they know virtual internship. This also allows to place them in the right position and department.

5. Provide online support and feedback so that interns can continually improve. As such, with one-on-one guidance and help them identify strengths and weaknesses. Turn every mistake into a learning opportunity and give them the tools needed to expand the knowledge. This may be in the form of peer-based feedback, manager evaluations, or online self-assessments that identify areas for improvement.

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