

Undergraduate Students Perception on Industrial Training

Kannan Subbiah^{1*}, Suriyaprabha Kannan², Risoï Koïyu³, Lenders Monama¹

¹(Division of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Institute of TVET/ University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea)

²(Division of Applied Science, Institute of TVET/ University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea)

³(Division of Design and Technology, Institute of TVET/ University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea)

Corresponding Author: *Kannan Subbiah

Abstract: The marketability of graduates is not only depending on their academic achievements, it is also based on the occupational skills they possess to meet the job requirement. The students acquire theory knowledge from classrooms and employability skills from various sources such as classroom teaching, practical classes, industrial training, part-time work experience, field trips, social gatherings etc. Students obtain employable skills at the greatest level only through the industrial training as it is carried out in a commercial environment. The aim of the study was to determine students' perception on the relevance of industrial training and the employability skills it delivers. The study also analyzed the problems encountered by the students during the internship and possible solutions. A total of 108 Tourism and Hospitality undergraduate students from the University of Goroka, Papua New Guinea participated in this study. The findings of this study revealed that the industrial training was relevant and it provided necessary skills that the students require to meet the job market demand.

Keywords: Undergraduate, students, industrial training, relevance, employability skills

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I. INTRODUCTION

Industrial training or workplace training at the undergraduate level is gaining popularity in the current educational system as it is really addressing the expectations of the employers. The value of Industrial training is numerous. Industrial training is a structured program that aims to provide supervised practical training within a specified timeframe [1]. Industrial training dispenses great opportunity for the students to expose themselves in an actual working environment. It connects the theoretical knowledge that the students have learned in the classroom and practical skills gained from the commercial environment [2]. The employers prefer to hire people with prior knowledge and skills in order to maintain business standards and to minimize employees training expenses. Employability skills or job readiness skills are the basic skills necessary to perform the job. It also helps to get along with their fellow workers who are already on the ground with experience [3]. The level of adaptability to the working environment would be very high for the graduates who had obtained workplace training compared to the graduates without practical experience exposure. A successful industrial training tenure can be a powerful tool to increase graduates job opportunities [4].

Earlier studies on internship had revealed that the industrial training benefits both host organizations and students. The internship helps students to identify the employability skills and enable them to develop required skills to improve chances of impressing employers [5]. Employability is a capacity of an individual to secure occupation in a competitive job market [6]. The internship provides real workexperience to the students and also an opportunity for the employers to identify potential employees for their organization [7]. Students are able to assess the theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom with the practical knowledge and skills required to perform in the workplace[8]. Internship endows chance to the educators to identify any mismatch between the courses/curriculum offered and practical experience gained through the students' feedback. Identifying the mismatch would greatly help the educators to revisit the curriculum and actualize in a way the industry demands. The knowledge that the students gain from the industrial training is not limited, it also teaches process and art of learning, and allows them to refine their skills and knowledge [9]. The trainees who have performed well in the workplace are identified by the host and absorbed for employment. The graduates make use of the occasion and try to impress the employers by performing their best during internship aiming for future rendezvous. The students realize the value of their education when they undergo industrial training that exposes them to gain practical skills in a commercial environment, develop new skills and knowledge, gain confidence, network with professionals for the future appointment, earn some money etc. The educational institutions and industries are also keen in signing a memorandum of understanding as it benefits mutually. The internship is important for academia because it is connected mostly to promote their programs and graduates,

with possibilities to establish and maintain a link with industries [10]. Educational institutions are interested in providing their students with employability skills through internships. Industries are keen in on-campus recruitment as it helps to find out experienced top-ranking graduates straight from the system which cuts down the advertisement, recruitment and training cost. The top-ranking graduates with experience are always marketable. The educational institutions are organizing for the students' internship to equip them with occupational skills to maximize their marketability. The objective of this paper was to identify the Tourism and Hospitality undergraduate students' perception on the relevance of industrial training; to find out whether the industrial training provided an opportunity for the students to learn the required employability Skills and abilities, and to determine workplace issues and possible solutions.

II. METHODOLOGY

A total of 108 Tourism and Hospitality undergraduate students of the University of Goroka, Goroka, Papua New Guinea participated in this survey. The University organized industrial training for the period of 6 weeks is mandatory for the students attending the undergraduate program in Tourism and Hospitality. The students undergo Hospitality internship in level 2 and Tourism internship in level 4 (final year). The students' hands-on experience in the hospitality internship will be more or less the same as they are placed in similar hotels where nature of the work and environment is same for everyone. The experience gained by the students in the Tourism internship would greatly vary as the trainees are placed in multifaceted industries such as Airport, Tourism Offices, Museum, Art Galleries, Travel Agency, Tour companies, attraction sites etc.

The questionnaires were completed by the students who had undergone internship in 2015 and 2016. The industrial training questionnaire contains four parts. The first part is about the students profile; the second part deals with the relevance of industrial training; third part examines the skills and abilities derived from industrial training and final part analysis the workplace difficulties and possible solutions. Five point Likert Scale was used to measure part two and three of the questionnaire. The survey instrument for the part three was adapted from the industry survey questionnaire by Wang [11]. An open-ended question was chosen in part four to obtain the views of students on the difficulties experienced during the training and their solution

III. RESULTS

3.1 Students' Profile

The total number of 108 students from level 2 to level 4 of the program 'Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management' participated in the survey. More than half (53%) of the respondents were level 4 students who completed both Hospitality Internship and Tourism Internship at the time of filling in the questionnaires. The students from level 2 (45%) had attended only hospitality internship. Only 2% of the students had undergone more than two internships that included from their prior learning institutions. The standard duration for each internship was six weeks. While the 53 percent level 4 students underwent twelve weeks of internship in total, the 45 percent level 2 students attended six weeks of internship. The two percent students' internship duration was 18 weeks in total. The participants were asked to indicate the relevance of industrial training on a 1-5 item Likert Scale questionnaire. '5' = Strongly agree, '4' = Agree, '3' = Neutral, '2' = Disagree and '1' = Strongly disagree. A set of generic questions were developed to get the opinion from students on the relevance of industrial training. The survey questions tabled below have been organized in an ascending order based on the highest mean to lowest and ranked accordingly.

3.2 Relevance of Industrial Training

Table 1: Tourism and Hospitality Undergraduate students' Perception on the Relevance of Industrial training

Components	Mean	Ranking
Training provided workplace skills and knowledge	4.71	1
Training provided opportunity to gain practical experience in a commercial environment	4.68	2
Training was relevant to the program	4.66	3
Training provided opportunity to link theoretical knowledge and practical experience	4.65	4
Training provided opportunity to experience a prospective career path	4.61	5
Training provided confident on my future job opportunities	4.44	6
Training helped me to get a part time job during my study	3.91	7
Industry experience would help me to secure full time job after I complete my studies	3.76	8
The six weeks industrial training was sufficient to learn employability skills	3.51	9

Mean scores were derived to know whether the students have positive response towards the relevance of industrial training. The survey results indicated that the respondents' views were between the ranges 'strongly agree and agree' with the highest mean score of 4.71 and lowest 3.51. None of the questions mean was indicated

as strongly disagree, disagree and neutral. However the trainees expressed six weeks internship was inadequate and rated with the least mean score of 3.51.

3.3 Employability skills and ability

Table 2: Tourism and Hospitality Undergraduate students’ Perception on the Employability Skills and Abilities learned from Industrial training

Skills and Abilities	Mean	Ranking
Oral Communication	4.51	1
Practical Skills	4.50	2
Industry Knowledge	4.49	3
Customer Service Skills	4.47	4
Adoptability to work	4.43	5
Self Confidence	4.42	6
Time Management	4.41	7
Team Working Skills	4.40	8
Interpersonal Skills	4.39	9
Written Communication	4.38	10
Work Ethics	4.37	11
Organizational ability	4.24	12
Critical Thinking	4.15	13
Attention to detail	4.13	14
Management Skills	4.10	15
Leadership Skills	4.04	16
Problem solving Skills	3.98	17
Creativity	3.97	18
Marketing & Sales Skills	3.94	19
Event Management Skills	3.85	20
Legal Understanding	3.82	21
Decision making	3.79	22
Research Skills	3.75	23
Negotiation Skills	3.72	24

The survey results revealed that the respondents were exultant with the skills and abilities they have learned from the industrial training. The mean score range was between 4.51 and 3.72 which indicated the respondents agreed that the industrial training has imparted them with employability skills and abilities. According to the respondents, the top three attributes they learned during the internship was ‘Oral communication, Practical skills, and Industry knowledge’. The attributes rated at the least were ‘Decision making, Research skills, and Negotiation skills. The mean scores were within the range of strongly agree and agree. None of the skills and abilities mean was indicated as neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

3.4 Respondents view on difficulties experienced during internship and solutions

The majority (61%) of the respondents indicated that they did not encounter any problem during the internship. Only 39 percent respondents experienced difficulties during internship. Among 39 percent more than half of them reported that the fellow workers did not cooperate with them during the internship. Mainly the workmen with the lack of formal education thought that the trainees would replace them right after completing their study. Other issues reported by the minority respondents were a) supervisor was not helpful, b) there was no transparency in the workplace, c) high expectations from the trainees, d) differences among workmen, e) sexual harassment, f) stealing, g) could not know how to use the accounting and front office software, h) no prior knowledge of the chemicals used in the housekeeping, and i) inadequate knowledge in accounting. Suggestions given by the respondents were a) the host organizations should educate the employees on their role in training the students, b) create an amicable working environment and establish trust and transparency to remove differences among workmen, c) students should be viewed as trainees without high expectations, d) good control measures should be in place for stealing and sexual harassment, e) educational institutions should include software for front office and accounting in the curriculum, and organize more in-class practical before placing students on internship.

IV. DISCUSSION

The outcome of the survey results revealed that the industrial training was more effective in terms of learning employability skills and abilities. The major benefits accruing to student trainees who participate conscientiously in the internship are the skills and competencies they acquire [8]. The benefits derived from industrial training are innumerable if it is planned and executed well. Previous research on industrial training with different perspectives also proved its significance to the studies. The respondents rated the relevance of

industrial training between the highest 4.71 and lowest 3.51. The employability skills and abilities were rated between the highest 4.51 and lowest 3.72. The mean range was between agree and strongly agree. The figures above clearly indicated that the respondents were satisfied with the relevance of industrial training and the employability attributes that they have learned.

The last three questions received the least rating in the relevance of industrial training were 'training helped to secure part-time job, training would help to get full-time job after graduation, and six weeks internship was sufficient to learn employability skills'. The training put them in a better place to secure part-time jobs during semester break. They were also confident in obtaining full-time job after graduation but the trainees felt six weeks internship was insufficient. It takes time for the trainees to adapt to work environment mainly in their first internship in level two compared to the second internship in level four. Increasing the internship duration will certainly raise the level of learning skills and abilities and job opportunities.

The top three rankings in the learning attributes were 'Oral communication, Practical skills and Industry knowledge' while the trainees rated least on 'Decision making, Research skills and Negotiation skills'. It may not be possible for the trainees to make decisions in the workplace while they are in the process of observing and learning new skills. The host organization may not involve them in decision making as it would affect their business. Decisions are made by the supervisors, managers depending on the nature of issues. It will also be difficult for trainees to be involved in research and negotiation within the short duration unless the task is assigned specifically. Increasing the internship duration from six weeks would help students to learn the employability skills to a greater extent. The internship plan can be carefully designed to provide necessary skills within the specified time schedule.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study recommended the following to improve the benefits of the industrial training towards maximizing the employability skills. The tertiary educational institutions should work closely with the industries that are hosting industrial training to plan and implement the internship effectively.

- The current 6 weeks industrial training duration can be increased to a minimum of 12 weeks per session.
- Encouraging students to attend part time jobs during their vacation to gain work experience that is imperative for their employment.
- The students can be engaged as casuals by nearby hotels during weekends on regular basis to have more hands-on experience.
- Apart from the internships, the students may be engaged in the university operating restaurant and mess on a regular schedule to obtain more hands-on experience which can also be assessed as a practical component.
- More opportunities can be created for the students to learn employability skills. The program offering division can liaise with the tourism industries to engage students on festive seasons and peak period when industries require additional manpower.
- Feedback from the industries and students on industrial training can be obtained and analyzed every year on regular basis to make sure the objectives of the industrial training is achieved in high standards.
- Create an environment in the classrooms that replicate the features of real work settings [3].
- Ensure the industrial training placement is in line with the programs offered.
- Educating students thoroughly on the significance of industrial training would help them to concentrate and learn more during the internship.
- The host organization can plan in advance and forward the training schedule to the students before they start the internship. Working on the training schedule after students' arrival will affect the effectiveness of internship.

VI. CONCLUSION

The internship is a structured learning experience where students could connect theoretical knowledge with the practical skills. In current scenario industrial training is introduced as part of the program requirement for students attending Tourism and Hospitality programs in order to provide them employability skills to increase their job opportunities. This study revealed that the industrial training was relevant and the students learned employability skills through the internship. The educational institutions and industries can work closely to strengthen the benefits of the industrial training which would help educational institutions and host organizations mutually.

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