

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2022, Vol. 3, No. 12, 2491 – 2497

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.03.12.02>

Research Article

Industry Partners' Feedback on Students' On-The-Job Training: Basis for Curriculum Enhancement and Intervention

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Article history:

Submission December 2022

Revised December 2022

Accepted December 2022

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ABSTRACT

Training effectiveness is measured by observable changes in knowledge, skills, and attitude after training has been conducted. This study investigates the industry partners' feedback on the On-the-Job training of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Bachelor of Arts in Economics interns. The researchers utilized the mixed method approach using the embedded research design. The researchers used the retrospective -descriptive quantitative design for the quantitative data. 40 practicum students' performances were evaluated during their on-the-job training for the School Year 2019 – 2020. Data were analyzed and presented using statistic numerical measures, and the relationship of variables was tested using spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient at a 0.05 significant value. Moreover, the researchers used thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) for the qualitative data. Results show that there is enough evidence to suggest that there is no statistically significant correlation between the profile of the students and their performance in practicum at $\alpha=0.05$. Based on these findings, it is inferred that the students' sex and course have no bearing on their shown knowledge and attitude, punctuality and active presence, performance proficiencies, and interpersonal interactions abilities at work. It is also found out that the industry partners noted strengths and weaknesses to the practicum students. This study discovered that the industry partner perceived the practicum students' performance to be competent in actual practice. Additionally, these findings pave way for the Economics and Communication department to select, develop, arrange, and implement meaningful classroom activities that promote sociability and prepare students for future careers.

Keywords: Curriculum, Enhancement, Feedback, Industry, Internship

How to cite:

Bentor, C. T. S., Sabonsolin, J. C. M., & Niez, R. A. (2022). Industry Partners' Feedback on Students' On-The-Job Training: Basis for Curriculum Enhancement and Intervention. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 3 (12), 2491 – 2497. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.03.12.02

Introduction

Training is one of the most widely used ways to increase individual productivity and boost job performance in the workplace (Goldstein and Ford, 2002; Gupta and Bostrom, 2006). College students will undergo on-the-job training as a requirement for the completion of their undergraduate degree. On-the-job training, or OJT, teaches employees the skills, information, and competencies they need to execute a job in the workplace. Employees learn in a setting where they must put what they have learned in on-the-job training into practice (Heathfield, 2016). Exposure to a real-world working environment is critical for developing future professionals in various areas. Many higher education institutions (HEIs) are trying to integrate and implement an effective OJT program within some of their curricular offerings (Lerios and Sapin, 2017). Training effectiveness is likely to influence the training outcomes at different stages of the training process (Alvarez et al., 2004). Bramley (1996) noted that training effectiveness is defined as a measurement of observable changes in knowledge, skills, and attitude after training has been conducted. This study aims to understand the feedback of the industry partners on students' OJT of the School of Arts and Sciences students.

One of the voluminous challenges every academic institution faces is how their graduates would fit into the industry's standards regarding information, skills, and competencies (Mina et al., 2020). As part of the curriculum, students will undergo On-the-Job Training (OJT) in which they are deployed to different partner agencies in the IT field would provide them with practical experiences (Mina and Aydinan, 2019).

According to Dulnuan and Saulog (n.d.), an internship or practicum is a program that provides student-learners the opportunity to enhance their formal education that is full of concepts and theories with applied knowledge, skills, and desired attitudes that would eventually lead to them in gaining practical experience in recognized industries. This training is a pervasive method for augmenting student-learner's productivity and cultivating their job performance (Gupta and Bostrom 2006). The

guidelines for students' internships for all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines are provided in the CMO No. 104 series of 2017. In the said CMO, an internship is defined as applying classroom learning to a stable work environment such as commercial, industrial services, or government. The internship program allows students to put what they have learned in class into practice, receive hands-on experience in chosen industries, and improve their competencies and skills (Mengistu & Mahesh, 2019; Stansbie et al., 2016; Jamil et al., 2013; Joseph et al., 2015; Mengistu & Mahesh, 2019; Stansbie et al., 2016).

Furthermore, if students become entrepreneurs, the OJT program helps them gain real-world experience in their future workplaces and businesses, making them more competitive and competent as individuals. More importantly, on-the-job training helps in the formation of students to acquire professional work ethics (Dawaton, 2021). The administrative effort and functions of the host agencies are essential in the OJT program (Karunaratne & Perera, 2015; Renganathan et al., 2012). The host agencies are expected to provide adequate training opportunities for trainees and follow the conditions set in the Memorandum Agreements forged with the University (Dawaton, 2021).

Biliran Province State University is the only state university in the small-island province of Biliran in the Eastern Visayas region. It consists of eight schools or colleges across academic disciplines, including the School of Arts and Sciences, where business administration, economics, and communication belong. Although there are many studies on the industry's feedback during the OJT of the students, no research has been conducted yet looking into the industry feedback for the School of Arts and Science OJT students. Hence, the researchers conduct this study.

Figari (1994) asserts that evaluating training systems, programs, or courses is frequently a social, institutional, or economic need. The study's primary objective was to assess BIPSU students' performance and industry-related abilities throughout their practicum. Additionally, it tried to characterize practicum students in terms of (i) sex and (ii) degree. Additionally,

this study assessed students' practicum performance in the following areas: (i) Knowledge and Attitude; (ii) Punctuality and Active Presence; (iii) Performance Proficiency; and (iv) Interpersonal Skills. Industry perceptions of students' practicum performance were also evaluated, as was the relationship between performance and their profile. Finally, this research also assessed the industry's perceptions of the students' practicum.

Methods

This study utilized the mixed method approach using the embedded research design. It is appropriate in the study as researchers used different questions that require different types of data, both quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative data of the study plays a secondary role and would not be meaningful if not embedded within the primary data. The overarching goal and fundamental tenet of mixed methods research is that using both quantitative and qualitative methods together yield a more comprehensive grasp of study issues and complicated phenomena than either method by itself.

Research Instrument

The researchers used the standardized questionnaire on performance evaluation of the university's On-the-Job Training Manual.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Sex	f	%
Male	11	27.50
Female	29	72.50
Total	40	100.00
Course	f	%
Bachelor of Arts in Economics	22	55.00
Bachelor of Arts in Communication	18	45.00
Total	40	100.00

Most (72%) of student respondents are female, while only 11 (27%) are male. Women have not only closed the gap in educational attainment between men and women but have also surpassed men's college enrollment rates (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Research Respondents

For the quantitative data, the researchers employ the retrospective-descriptive quantitative design. All 40 practicum students' performances during their on-the-job training for the School Year 2019 – 2020 were evaluated. The design was deemed appropriate since the outcome of interest had already occurred at the time of the study. Performance ratings were retrospectively identified through the students' OJT manual, where performance evaluation sheets were rated by the partner agencies' heads of office.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data were analyzed and presented using statistic numerical measures, and relationships of variables were tested using spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient at a 0.05 significant value.

Data Analysis

Meanwhile, the researchers used open-coding for the qualitative data using the thematic analysis. It is appropriate in the study as the researchers examine the set of texts in transcripts to identify common themes. The researchers used the six-steps thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006).

22 (55%) of the 40 respondents are graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Economics, while 18 (45%) are graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication. This finding only indicated that women are more likely to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree than men.

Table 2. Performance of the Students in Practicum in terms of demonstrated knowledge and attitude

Criteria	Mean	Description
Showed enthusiasm and interest towards work	1.75	Very Good
Did work neatly and accurately	1.85	Very Good
Demonstrated initiative in accomplishing the assignments	1.85	Very Good
Easily grasp instructions and asks clarifications if necessary	1.90	Very Good
Accepts criticisms gracefully and shows enthusiasm to learn the tasks	1.86	Very Good
Average Mean	1.84	Very Good

Table 2 revealed that regarding the students' demonstrated knowledge and attitude towards their practicum, 25 (61%) were rated as very good in this aspect of their work performance. Partner agencies, as represented by the

department head, believed BA Economics and BA Communication students could quickly grasp instructions and easily ask for clarifications if necessary. Only one (2%) was rated with a poor performance in this criterion.

Table 3. Performance of the Students in Practicum in terms of punctuality and active presence

Criteria	Mean	Description
Reports to work on time and regularly	2.02	Very Good
Did the assigned tasks without hesitations and complaints	1.75	Very Good
Accept criticisms gracefully	1.95	Very Good
Give suggestions and contributed new ideas	2.12	Good
Average Mean	1.96	Very Good

It is evident that, in terms of punctuality and active presence, 19 (46.3%) of the students were rated as very good by the hosting industry, which means that students reported working on time and regularly and were also able to

give suggestions and contribute new ideas at work. This finding implied the industry's positive observation and feedback of students' punctuality and active engagement in the workplace.

Table 4. Performance of the Students in Practicum in terms of proficiency in performance

Demonstrated evidence of development as a result of his training	1.82	Very Good
Showed sound judgement and accept responsibility	1.70	Very Good
Valued quality of work	1.77	Very Good
Shows willingness to learn new skills/knowledge-quick in absorbing and retaining knowledge as well as learning, and adjusting to changes	1.75	Very Good
Demonstrated proficiency in communication skills (both written and oral work) and listen attentively	2.02	Very Good
Demonstrated dependability in dealing with urgent tasks or situations	1.87	Very Good
Has the ability to keep confidential matters	1.77	Very Good
Showed focus and is well disciplined in his/her duties	1.82	Very Good
Average Mean	1.82	Very Good

The hosting industry assessed 27 (64.9%) students as very good in proficiency and performance, indicating that the latter had demonstrated proficient writing, oral, and listening communication abilities. Furthermore, these

students were thought to be dependable when confronted with critical tasks or situations. This finding meant that the partner industries had recognized the practicum students' competent performance.

Table 5. Performance of the Students in Practicum in terms of interpersonal relations

Showed tact in dealing with supervisors and co-trainees.	1.80	Very Good
Showed courtesy and professional ethics.	1.80	Very Good
Demonstrated the appropriate social graces, poise and decorum during the entire training	1.85	Very Good
Average Mean	1.82	Very Good

During their practicum, 21 (52.5%) students were evaluated as very good in their interpersonal relationships. Partner agencies, through their department heads, considered that BA Economics and BA Communication

students exhibited good social graces, composure, decorum, courtesy, professional ethics, and tact when dealing with supervisors and co-trainees. Only one (2.5%) received a poor rating on this performance criterion.

Table 6. Correlation between the profile and the Practicum Performance of BiPSU Liberal Arts Students

	Correlation Coefficient	P - value
Sex and Degree	0.219	.174
Sex and Practicum Performance	0.005	.976
Degree and Practicum Performance	-0.004	.979

****Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Data revealed that there is enough evidence to suggest that there is no statistically significant correlation between the profile of the students and their performance in practicum at $\alpha=0.05$. Based on these findings, it is inferred that the students' sex and degree have no bearing on their shown knowledge and attitude, punctuality and active presence, performance proficiency, and interpersonal interactions abilities at work. As evidence, the service industries are emphasizing worker diversity as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Flykyt & Holberg, 2015). It was discovered that regardless of gender or degree, students' performance was the primary foundation of practicum performance evaluation.

Themes

The researchers came up with two categories of themes for the qualitative data: the strengths and weaknesses of the students based on the insights on the industry partners.

Based on the data, three themes emerged as the strength of the practicum students: willingness to learn, hard work, and positive attitude towards their work as interns.

Willingness to Learn refers to the strength of the practicum students, which means

eagerness to learn new things or apply their learnings in the classroom to the actual industry that they are working. The industry partners noted that practicum students are "excited to learn new things." They emphasized the students' enthusiasm and appreciated the students "accepting suggestions." Smith (2017) noted that practicum students develop critical skills in the industry that they cannot develop in the four corners of the classroom.

Hard- Working refers to the word the industry partners described as the practicum students of Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Communication. It means practicum students tend to work with energy and commitment during their work. Industry partners praised the practicum students as workers that "do not show laziness and tardiness upon accomplishing the work." They pointed out the "passion and enthusiasm in every task" that the practicum students made.

Positive attitude pertains to other good attitudes that the practicum students performed. It relates to trying and braving new ideas and makes people excited to go to work with their fellow workers. It also means being optimistic about the situations, interactions, and yourself. The industry partners rated the practicum

students as “very confident to do the job well done, very accommodating, and respectful.” They also noted some remarks on leadership, having a sense of humor, and “showing interests and enthusiasm in work.”

With all these great attitudes that the practicum students performed, some weaknesses need to improve and could lead to a possible intervention from the department. Here are the weaknesses that the industry partners observed:

Tardiness means being late for work. It dramatically affects business productivity in any organization (Sanfilippo, 2022). According to Britanico (2022), timekeeping issues of the employees are common problems in Philippine HRs. In this study, industry partners noted remarks of two practicum students stating “she had many late during the first month” and “most of the time late if not absent.”

Timid refers to the industry partners' observation of the practicum students as “very shy.” It means showing a lack of courage and confidence and being easily frightened in doing work. It includes “getting nervous in public speaking,” “having difficulty in understanding Cebuano terminologies,” and “hesitating to initiate ideas related to their tasks.” Most of the practicum students got these remarks from their industry partners.

Communication Skills are the most common weaknesses of the practicum students that industry partners observed. It refers to the ability of the practicum students to write and speak comprehensively and thoroughly. The industry partners emphasized that practicum students must enhance their communication and presentation skills. This weakness may somehow become the outcome of the other weakness which is being timid. When practicum students lack confidence and courage, they cannot do their job well. The industry partners noted that “more work experience will help the communication skills and confidence.”

Conclusion

Giving real-work experience through on-the-job training is critical for students to transfer their knowledge to practical work and for academic institutions to create many networking opportunities and important contacts

within the industry. This on-the-job training program was designed to encourage students to apply their technical skills in real-world situations and to provide them with the professional skills necessary for entry into the workforce. This study discovered that the industry partner perceived the practicum students' performance to be competent in actual practice. Additionally, these findings pave the way for the Economics department to select, develop, arrange, and implement meaningful classroom activities that promote sociability and prepare students for future careers. This study also recommends that the department implement interventions before their practicum to enhance the students' weaknesses in transforming their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values for personal and professional growth, self-determination, and lifelong learning.

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