

Evaluating the Role of Internship Programs in Developing Employability Skills amongst Students

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Abstract: *To narrow the gap between academia and industry, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduced significant educational reforms in India. As part of this initiative, internships ranging from sixty to one hundred and twenty hours were made compulsory for all undergraduate students as a requirement for obtaining their degrees. This internship programme was designed to provide a structured and outcome-oriented platform that connects students with industry, academic institutions, and community sectors, helping them translate theoretical concepts into practical experience. The government also initiated measures to engage these interns as apprentices, giving them hands-on exposure to real-world work environments. However, this raises important concerns about the programme's effectiveness. For instance, is an internship of just sixty to one hundred and twenty hours sufficient for students to acquire skills and apply theoretical knowledge in practice? Are students being placed in sectors aligned with their career interests? This paper seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of undergraduate internship programmes and explore strategies to enhance their impact and relevance.*

Keywords: Internship, employability

I. INTRODUCTION

An internship is a short-term work opportunity typically offered to students or recent graduates to help them acquire practical skills and connect them with their theoretical learning. It serves as a bridge between academic study and real-world professional experience by providing exposure to workplace environments in fields related to a student's academic background or career goals. As a key component of experiential learning, internships allow individuals to gain hands-on experience under the guidance of a supervisor or mentor who introduces them to actual job responsibilities. Depending on company policies and industry norms, internships may be either paid or unpaid.

Internships play a crucial role in developing students' technical abilities, soft skills, and professional competencies—often having a deeper impact than traditional classroom education. They offer opportunities to explore different roles, build networks, seek mentorship, and access future career opportunities. By doing so, internships enhance employability and increase students' chances of securing better job placements.

Seen as an essential learning tool, internships help bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical application in professional settings. Evaluating various aspects of internships is therefore vital to ensure a meaningful learning experience for students. In some professional programs—such as medicine, chartered accountancy, engineering, and law—internships have long been mandatory. In contrast, earlier, they were not compulsory in many traditional degree programs like B.A., B.Com., or B.Sc.

With the introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, internships of sixty to one hundred and twenty hours have been made mandatory across undergraduate courses. This policy emphasizes practical learning and skill-building to make education more holistic and employment-focused. Colleges and universities are encouraged to collaborate with industries, NGOs, and local businesses to provide students with real-world learning opportunities.

Under NEP 2020, internships have been integrated into degree programs to ensure that students gain hands-on experience as part of their academic journey. The National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) and the Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programme (CCFUP), guided by the UGC, have outlined



structured guidelines for these internships. The primary objective is to close the gap between education and employability, foster skill development, encourage career exploration, and promote entrepreneurial thinking. Internships also benefit industries, which often invest heavily in training fresh graduates. By exposing students to practical work during their studies, internship programs help reduce the need for extensive post-recruitment training. Thus, the inclusion of internships in academic curricula creates a win-win situation for both students and employers, strengthening the connection between education and the job market.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Interns who aimed to secure a job offer were more inclined to highlight their achievements and build favorable impressions, which improved their chances of being hired. Companies that intended to recruit interns tended to be more receptive to creative input, which positively influenced interns' willingness to apply for full-time roles. However, for interns who had already decided before the internship not to pursue employment with the host organization, mentorship from supervisors had little impact on their decision to apply after graduation. *Zhao, H., & Liden, R. C. (2011)*. Internships are structured, early-career experiences that blend academic learning with practical work, serving as a bridge to full-time professional roles. Often praised as a modern educational advancement, internships—also known historically as experiential learning or apprenticeships—have long been a key part of professional training, with roots tracing back to the Middle Ages and likely even earlier. *Sides, C., & Mrvica, A. (2017)*. A comprehensive internship experience allows student-teachers to apply the theoretical knowledge they've gained in real classroom settings. It also supports future teachers in selecting, organizing, planning, and executing meaningful teaching activities. *Sinha, S., & Singh, V. (2023)*. Generally, students viewed the learning through practical experience during the internship positively. In addition, factors related to the organisers' operational and administrative efforts and the role played by the host company were also identified as important in determining the success of the industrial internship programme. *Renganathan, S., Ambri Bin Abdul Karim, Z., & Su Li, C. (2012)*.

Students reported several positive learning experiences during their internships, including the opportunity to connect with industry professionals, adapt to workplace culture, build self-confidence, engage in problem-solving, improve social skills, and gain motivation for future academic and career goals. However, they rated the program poorly in areas such as fostering creativity, teamwork, managerial skills, research and project development, and the desire for lifelong learning. While students appreciated the hands-on work experience, transportation, meals, and decent stipends provided, they expressed dissatisfaction with the overall structure of the internship. Specifically, they felt it lacked comprehensive training across different departments within the organization. Many suggested extending the internship duration from six months to a full year. The study also recommends establishing stronger communication between universities and internship providers to effectively address challenges faced by both students and host organizations. *Karunaratne, K., & Perera, N. (2019)*. The internship was largely regarded as highly effective, contributing positively to the development of employability skills and shaping students' attitudes toward their future careers. The study's findings confirmed that both well-structured academic internship programs and accessible internship placements are essential components for creating successful internship experiences that benefit both students and employers. *Bawica, I. M. (2021)*. Higher education equips students with the essential knowledge and skills needed for their professional growth. These competencies are utilized as students move from academia into the workforce, enabling them to contribute effectively to organizations. Both soft and hard skills are important to increase students' internship opportunity for students whereas, students having command on soft skills have achieved greater satisfaction in their internship programme. *Franco-Ángel, M., Carabali, J., & Velasco, M. I. (2023)*. Employers, now more than ever, are emphasizing soft skills as just as important, if not more valuable, than hard skills (*Börner et al., 2018; Franco-Ángel et al., 2023; Succi & Canovi, 2020*). Within university student internships, Experiential Learning Theory offers a crucial framework for explaining how students connect their academic studies with hands-on practice. Internships provide tangible experiences where students engage in professional environments, putting into practice the theories they have learned in class to address real-world situations (*Rawlinson & Dewhurst, 2013*).



Objectives:

- To know the significance of internship in employability of the students
- To understand challenges faced by students going through internship programme
- To understand effectiveness of the internship program
- To identify the factors affecting the satisfaction of students towards internship programme

Statement of Problem

Internship is viewed as the gate way towards building a career. It provides experiential learning. NEP 2020 made internship as a part of curriculum hence it became mandatory for students to learn practical skills.

Despite the widespread implementation of internship programs in undergraduate curricula, there remains uncertainty about how effectively these programs enhance students' practical skills, employability, and career readiness.

Many internship programs vary in structure, duration, and quality, which may impact the overall learning experience and professional development of students. This research seeks to investigate the effectiveness of internship programs in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application, and to identify areas for improvement to better prepare undergraduates for the workforce.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between participation in internship programs and the employability of undergraduate students.

H2: Factors like duration of internship, stipend and area of internship significantly influence the level of student satisfaction with the internship program

H3: Students were provided significant guidance and support from college to gain internship opportunity

Research Design

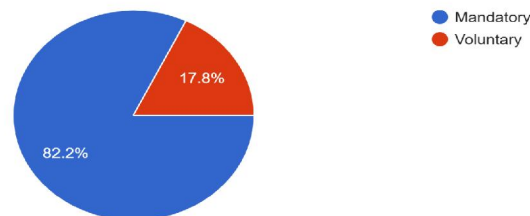
The present research is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data comprises questionnaire surveys collected from under graduate students who are undergoing internship programmes. Secondary data is collected from journal, published articles, newspaper clippings, college website, UGC website, etc.

Sample size of 146 students across various undergraduate students were considered for conducting this study. Samples were collected using stratified convenient sampling.

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Type/ Purpose of internship programme

Type of Internship
146 responses



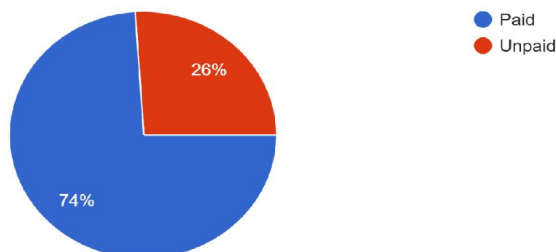
Out of 146 respondents, 120 students are doing internships because it is a part of their curriculum and mandatory to earn credits against it. Only 26 students have done their internship voluntarily. It shows the perspective as well as willingness of students towards doing an internship. Efforts are required to make students understand the significance of internship in their career and make them aware about the benefit of doing internship.



Stipend of internship

Whether you internship is paid

146 responses

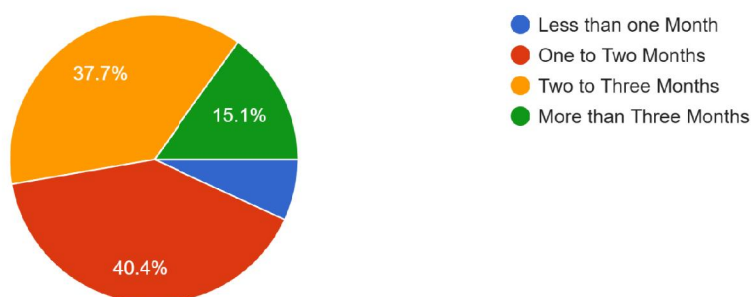


Remuneration for the work done is prime motivational factor along with learning for doing an internship. Out of total respondents, 108 students reported that the internship they are doing is paid internship. 38 students are doing internship without any payment.

Duration of Internship

Duration of Internship

146 responses



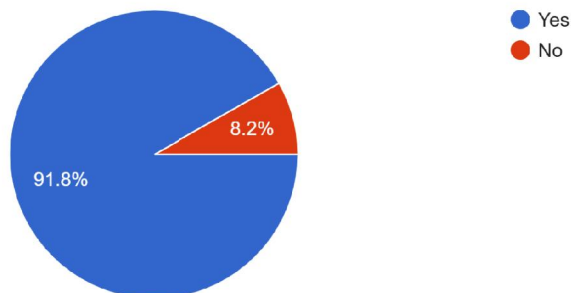
Out of Students who are undergoing internship programmes, 59 students have preferred an internship of one to two months. 55 students have preferred internships of two to three months. 22 students are satisfied with an internship of more than three months. And 10 students opted for an internship of less than 1 month. As per the guidelines of UGC, an internship of minimum 120 hours in a semester is mandatory. The above analysis shows, students are willing to do internship more than what has been made mandatory to students.



Field of Internship

Is the internship related to your field of study?

146 responses

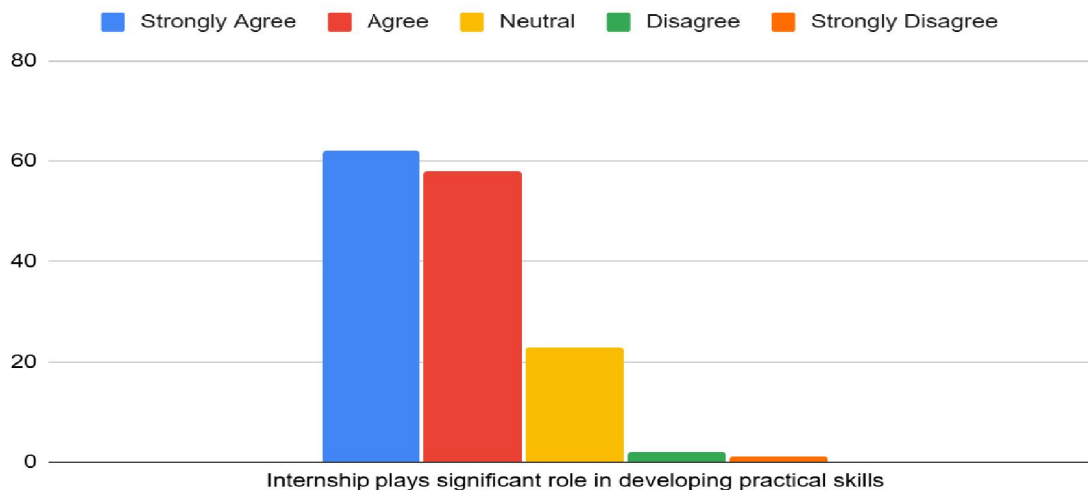


Internship provides you an opportunity to explore the areas where in a student can build their career. As far as UG Commerce and Management students are concerned, they have different areas like taxation, finance, marketing, banking, insurance, accounting, etc. to build their career into. From the above survey, it was found, 134 students are doing internship in the area of their field of study, whereas, 12 students are interested in doing internship which is not related to their area of academics.

Role of Internship in shaping career of students

It was understood that 43.46% students strongly agree that internship plays a significant role in shaping future career. 39.72% of students agree to the statement. 15.75% of students neither agree nor disagree. Only 1.36% of students are of the opinion that internships have no role to play in shaping careers. From this, it is clear that, students signifies an internship opportunities and they understand importance of it in shaping future career

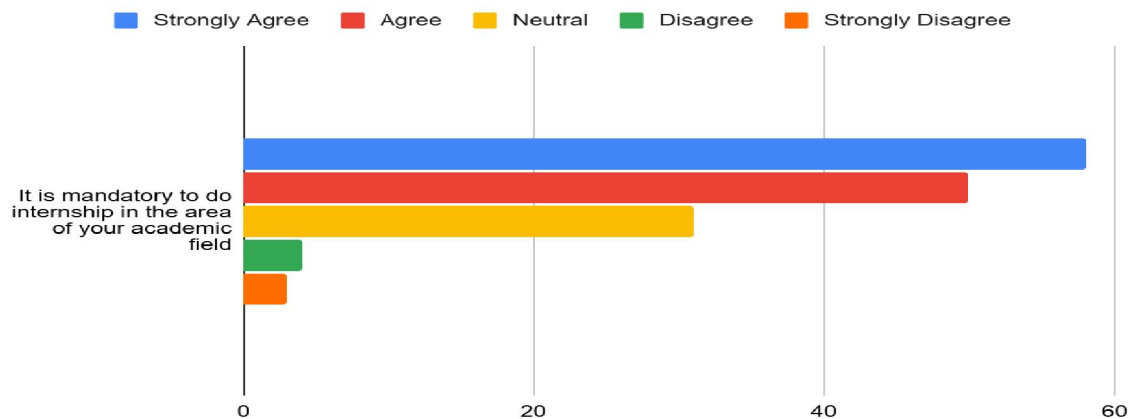
Role of Internship in developing practical skills



Area of Internship

The majority of students are of the opinion that internship is beneficial only if it is done in the area of their academic field. 58 students strongly agree to the statement whereas 50 students agree. 31 students are neutral about it. However, 4 students disagree and 3 students strongly disagree that internship must be done in the area of academic field. Internship is like a pilot job where a student can tap different opportunities to see what really interests him/her. Hence, some students feel, experience from unrelated area of academic field may also bring career building opportunities to them.

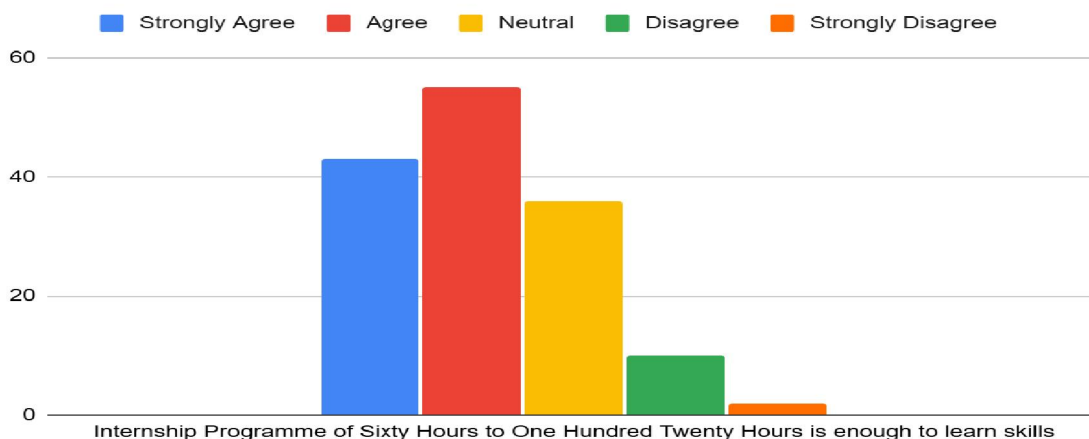
Area of Internship



Duration of Internship

UGC has made internship programmes mandatory for sixty to One hundred and twenty hours. Respondents were asked questions regarding whether it is enough to acquire practical skills. It was observed that, Only 29.45% students strongly agree that given period is enough to learn practical skills. 37.67% students agree that 60 to 120 hours are enough. 6.84% students are in favour of the opinion that more time shall be given for internship in order to acquire practical skills. The above data shows, students are in favour of learning practical skills through internship and wish to spend more hours in gaining hands on experience.

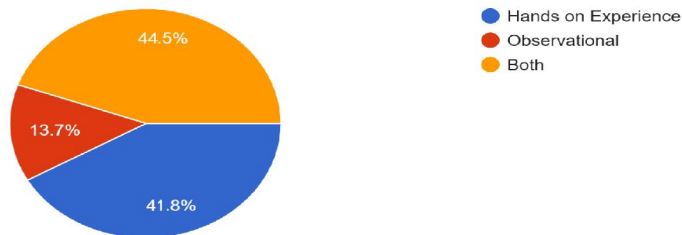
Duration of Internship



Internship Outcome

To understand the experience of students about the learning outcome of an internship, a question was asked regarding their learning during internship. It was found that 41.8% of students actually learnt practical skills during their internship. 13.7% of students said their internship was mostly observational. However, 44.5% students said, they experienced both observational and hands-on experience during their internship programme.

Did internship offer hands-on experience or was it mostly observational
146 responses



IV. CONCLUSION

Internship plays a significant role in the career of a student. Under NEP 2020, after making it a part of academics, students are viewing internships as an opportunity to learn. Internship gives you space to check what are the areas that can be explored as a career in future. After conducting this study following conclusions can be drawn

Students are aware with significance of internship

Students require support from college and universities to gain more internship opportunities in the area they like

The purpose of internship is to learn practical skills hence, student shall given learning from mentor or supervisor from that point

Students can improve technical skills, communication skills, team building and collaborative skills, time management skills during their internship programme.

Upon asking overall rating to the satisfaction of the internship programme, it was found that, students have rated the internship programme as four star out of five. Which means, students are moderately satisfied with internship being the part of academia.

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