

## How Internships Influenced Professional Development? Hotel and Restaurant Management Graduate Perspectives



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**ABSTRACT:** Exploring on a journey through the perception of Hotel and Restaurant Management graduates. This study explores the perceptions of students about their internship experiences and focuses at how it relates to their professional development. The study is based on the theoretical framework of Situated Learning theory developed by Lave and Wenger. This theory offers a thorough lens through which to view the relationship between professional development and experiential learning. There were 206 respondents in this study. The research employed quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher used a localized questionnaire to identify the influence of the Internship experience on the professional development of the respondents. The statement for each variable is tested for its reliability. The testing for the reliability of the questionnaire, with 30 respondents, graduates in different colleges except for Hotel and Restaurant Management. There were revisions made from the original instrument to fit the locale of the study. Additionally, the professional development mean is very high. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' internship experience and their professional development. It could be deduced in this study that job placement affects their internship experience.

**KEYWORDS:** Internship, Professional Development, Hospitality Industry, Graduates

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The impact of internships on graduates' perceptions is essential in the ever-changing hospitality business. The purpose of this study is to explore the significant influence internships have on the career advancement of those pursuing degrees in hospitality management. For college institutions, the personality transition from a student to a professional is challenging, Gill (2020).

As a Catholic school, St. Michael's College offers its interns the opportunity to gain practical work experience through the internship program. However, it is a challenge to distinguish the influence of the internship experience on the professional development of the students after completing the training. Bawica (2021) research highlights the value of internship experience in enhancing employability skills.

Several professionals have noted that internship programs offer a variety of advantages to students' growth. They are acknowledged for combining classroom instruction with real-world experience to help graduates advance their professional knowledge and skills. The main reason they involve the intern in service activities is to give them practical experience that enhances their knowledge or comprehension of problems related to a specific sector of the business, Support the students to bridge the gap between the theoretical learning process and the practical reality Lutsenko (2023).

### 2.0 THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

This study is guided by the situated learning theory Lave and Wenger (1991). Lave and Wenger Situated learning theory that was used for professional development and explains effective education that involves learning that is obtained in true connections of practices, social interaction, and collaboration are essential components of situated learning learners become involved in a "community of practice" which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired wherein students involve in increasingly more complex tasks within social communities and improve professional and personal learning process through participation in the real work environment.

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to assess and articulate from a student's perspective the contribution of the Internship that they experienced in St. Michael's College Iligan City Bachelor of Hotel and Restaurant Management degree to the preparation and developing students' professional development.

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Specifically, it tries to answer the following questions:

1. what is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Job Title as an Intern and Length of Internship Experience?
2. What is the extent of the respondents' internship experience on their Professional Development Components in terms of Professional Development and Professional Skills?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' internship experience and their professional development components in terms of professional development and professional skills?
4. What enhanced internship program could be crafted based on the result of the study?

### 4.0 METHODOLOGY

In this study, the explanatory sequential research design was used. It is an integration Qualitative for the discussion of the result and Quantitative for the Statistical procedure of the study to get the precise result. The respondents of the survey are two hundred twenty-nine (229) graduates of St. Michael's College Iligan City A.Y (2014-2019) who already completed their internship program in the different sectors of the hospitality industry. The researcher used a localized questionnaire to identify the influence of the Internship experience on the personal and professional development of the respondents. The statement for each variable is tested for its reliability. The survey questionnaire is composed of the demographic profile of the respondents' (Anjum, 2020) and the Professional Development Components.

The researcher employed a quantitative method of treating the data for analyses suited. Frequency and Percent were used to describe the respondents' profiles, Mean and Standard Deviation tools were used to describe and measure the average location and variation of the respondents' self-assessment on the factors influencing the internship experience and the personal development component, Spearman (rho) Rank Correlation was utilized to analyze the significant relationship between the respondents' internship experience and their professional development components.

### 5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents the results and findings that answered the statement of the problem. An enhanced internship program was established based on the study's findings as an output.

**Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profile (n = 206)**

Demographic Profile		Frequency	Percent
Job Title as an Intern	Back Office Assistant	13	6.3
	Front Office Attendant	20	9.7
	Food & Beverage Attendant	79	38.3
	Housekeeping Attendant	44	21.4
	Kitchen Assistant	33	16.0
	Others	17	8.3
Length of Internship Experience	500-750 hours	116	56.3
	751-1000 hours	60	29.1
	1001 hours and above	30	14.6

Table 1.1 presents data about the profile of the respondents displayed that 79 or 38.3 percent out of 206 respondents were assigned as a Food & Beverage Attendant. Only 6.3 percent or 13 respondents are assigned as the Back Office Assistant. The result indicates that typically many of the HRM graduates were placed in the sections of the hospitality operation that have direct interaction with the guests. Food and Beverage and Housekeeping Departments were the most common area of their internship. In terms of the Length of their Internship Experience. More than a half, 116 or 56.3 percent experienced a length of internship within 500-750 hours. Only 30 or 14.6 percent of the respondents experienced a length of 1001 hours and above during their internship.

The hospitality industry is diverse, and the travel tourism industry offers numerous opportunities (Pencarelli, 2020). According to the CHED Memorandum Order No. 62 Series of 2017 and the School Handbook, the practicum workload is intended to help the undergraduates apply their formal education in a real work environment. To complete their course, they have to enroll in their practicum where the students are obliged to undertake a 600-hour practicum in different areas of the tourism and hospitality industry. However, due to the requirements at which they had their internship, some respondents stated that they have to undergo more time than was expected as they are needed by the hotel during peak seasons.

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**Table 2. The extent of the respondents' internship experience on their Professional Development Components in terms of Professional Development and Professional Skills**

Indicator	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent
Professional Development	4.43	.624	Very High
Professional Skills	4.45	.602	Very High
Total	4.44	.613	Very High

Table 2.1 presents the Summary of the Respondents' Level of Agreement in the Internship Experience Influence on their Professional Development Components. For Professional Development the total mean is 4.43. Furthermore, for the Professional Skills, the mean is 4.45.

This implies that the Internship Experience has a "very high" influence on the Professional Development and Professional Skills of the graduates. Clearly expressed by the respondents' responses stating, "I have already developed new and essential skills, such as time management and teamwork. It also develops my professional skills where it promotes the development of my knowledge and capability that will be advantageous for future promotion"; Internship provides real life experience and exposure; "I had learned a lot about the people and communication skills through my internship experience."; Learning doesn't just take place in the classroom but participating in internships can provide students with a wealth of other benefits like students can apply their classroom learning in professional environments; Yes, Because through the internship program you can gain more knowledge on the field that you have chosen, and it helps also to boost your confidence as an individual to become ready in the future. And also it can help you as a person to hoan your skills. Anything that you have experienced in your internship it can be apply also in our current job as an hotelier; I answered yes because being exposed in the field helps you gain more knowledge on how the business/industry works and know what skills that you need to improve or build to excel on your chosen career path; Yes, completing an internship is valuable link to a graduate and will help me develop my skills employers wants; Yes, Internships are investment in our future career. You'll gain actual work experience and learn how to communicate in a professional environment as well; Furthermore, it was also mentioned that both considerably affect the students' satisfaction with their internship experience in general (Sam, 2023).

**Table 3. Relationship between the Respondents' Internship Experience and their Professional Development Components in Terms of Professional Development and Professional Skills**

Internship Experience	Professional Development Components	Correlation	
		Coefficient (Spearman rho)	p-value
Industry	Professional Development	.686**	<.001
Involvement	Professional Skills	.645**	<.001
Student's Self-Commitment	Professional Development	.772**	<.001
	Professional Skills	.687**	<.001

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level (Highly Significant)

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the respondents' internship experience and their professional development components in terms of professional development and professional skills. These relationships were found to be positively strong to a very strong degree of association between respondents' internship experiences and their professional development components. The professional development components of the respondents were significantly correlated to their internship experiences.

Based from the respondents who stated, "Yes, Internships are investment in our future career. You'll gain actual work experience and learn how to communicate in a professional environment as well". Additionally, they stated further "Internship does not only give you experience in the career field you want to do, it also prepares you for what to expect in the field which increases confidence in your work. Being an intern gives you more opportunities to build your professional network that can be very beneficial for your future career promotion". This implies that respondents with a higher extent of industry involvement tend to develop a higher level of professional development components in terms of professional development and professional skills. The results also indicated that the graduates' internship experience cause them to set their goals and recognize the skills that they need to get a job in their area of interest and transformed them professionally. (Baird, 2023)

#### 4. Hospitality Management Enhanced Internship Program

##### Rationale:

The study's conclusions highlight the significant influence internships have on recent graduates' career advancement in the hospitality industry. The improved internship program seeks to strengthen partnerships with business partners by implementing the

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research's conclusions, giving students access to a wide variety of beneficial employment possibilities to better prepare students for the constantly changing needs of the hospitality business. This program will be a guide for students to be equipped and be guided in the growing trends of the hospitality sector.

**Table 4. Enhanced Internship Program**

Areas of Concern	Objectives	Activities	Persons Involved	Time Frame	Evaluation
<b>Internship Curriculum Enhancement</b>	Review and refine the internship program curriculum to align with current industry trends and emerging skills demand.	Create a curriculum review committee involving industry professionals, and alumni. Identify and integrate emerging industry trends and skills into the curriculum.	Curriculum Review Committee, Faculty, Industry Professionals	Throughout the academic year	Monitor the integration of updated curriculum components. Gather feedback from students on the relevance of newly incorporated elements.
<b>Professional Skills -Computer Skills</b>	Students will be able to gain knowledge and skills particularly on the basic computer and technical skills in the industry.	Enhancement of the curriculum in the area of computer subjects. Acquisition of programs (e.g. Property Management System; Point of Sale System; cloud-based system; Microsoft office).	Deans; Faculty; Practicum Director; Interns.	During the Internship	Implementation Grade in Computer subjects.
<b>Reflective Internship Approach</b>	Promote a culture of reflection among interns to analyze their learnings and challenges. Identifying areas for personal and professional growth during their internships.	Integrate reflective exercises into the internship curriculum. Encourage interns to journal their experiences and participate in group discussions.	Faculty, Internship Supervisors, Mentors	Throughout the internship period	Review interns' reflections to assess their depth and insights. Collect feedback on the effectiveness of reflective exercises in enhancing professional growth.

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<b>Regular Feedback and Mentorship</b>	Implement a structured system of regular feedback and mentorship for interns throughout their placements.	Develop a feedback and mentorship framework outlining regular check-ins, evaluations, and mentorship sessions.	Internship Supervisors, Mentors, Faculty	During the internship period	Assess the frequency and quality of feedback provided.	Collect interns' feedback on the effectiveness of mentorship in their professional development.
	Promoting continuous learning and professional growth.					

### 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions were made:

The Hotel and Restaurant Management internship program of St. Michael's College improves professional development of the students. The study has given us important new understandings into how internships influence the professional growth of graduates. The results indicate that a significant proportion of graduates were employed in areas of the hospitality sector where they had direct contact with customers, especially in the departments of food and beverage and housekeeping.

Furthermore, the study establishes a substantial beneficial relationship between internship experiences and professional development components. The study concluded further that there is a positive influence of internship experiences on their professional development. Graduates expressed the opinion that internships are investments in their future jobs and highlighted the practical skills they learned during their internships, such as teamwork and time management. The results indicate that internships help students improve professionally and get ready for the challenges of their chosen hospitality industry career in addition to offering real-world work experience.

Furthermore, the null hypothesis on both significant relationships between the internship experience and the professional development of the respondents is rejected.

### 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the foreign findings, the following recommendations are drawn:

#### To the Admin

That industry partner collaboration may be strengthened, and internship program structure must be improved. Through proactive industry professional engagement, academic institutions can acquire valuable insights into changing industry trends and customize internship programs to effectively address the changing needs of the hospitality industry.

#### To the Practicum Providers

That they may provide nurturing atmosphere for interns, promoting their growth and establishing a mutually beneficial partnership between academic establishments and business associates.

#### To the Students

Interns should show commitment, professionalism, and a sincere desire to learn by approaching their positions with a positive and proactive attitude.

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