

Bridge to the Professional World: Students' Perceptions on Industrial Training Program's Efficacy and Obstacles

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ABSTRACT

Industrial training program for students is a crucial component of the academic curriculum at most universities in Malaysia. The training is designed to reinforce theoretical and academic concepts by putting them into practice in real work scenarios. Recognizing the critical importance of exposing undergraduates to the workforce as a strategic measure for securing employment after graduation, most educational institutions in the country have emphasized the need for industrial training programs. This paper aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the industrial training program at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, specifically the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, as perceived by students, and to provide insightful suggestions for enhancing its overall effectiveness. The study adopts the thematic analysis approach as its methodology. Data were collected through intern students' written reports and only the strengths and weaknesses of the internship program were focussed on. The elements for strengths were communication skills, problem-solving and critical thinking, independence and confidence, multi-tasking and time management, teamwork, technical skills, adaptability and networking and professionalism while the elements for weaknesses were excessive workload, limited access, mismatch of tasks to field of study, lack of guidance and training and inflexible work arrangement. It is suggested for the university and organizations to have a formal discussion in order to address the issues faced by both the interns and the organizations concerned.

Contribution/Originality: The primary contribution of this paper is the identification that the strengths of students' internship experiences outweigh the weaknesses. Nevertheless, the challenges faced by the students must be addressed through proactive measures and strategic interventions to foster well-rounded and employable graduates in the future.

1. Introduction

Industrial training or internship refers to the placement of students in an organization to conduct supervised practical training in the industry sector within the stipulated time before they are awarded a Bachelor's degree ([Pejabat Perhubungan Industri, UKM, 2023](#)). The training is designed to reinforce theoretical and academic concepts by putting them into practice in real work scenarios. In the National Graduate Employability plan, 2021-2025, the National Structured Internship Program (MySIP) ensures that students gain real-world work experience while also learning industry-specific skills while doing their industrial training ([Wan Amirah, 2023](#)). There are many benefits of industrial training, the most significant being its capacity in providing opportunities for students to put academic knowledge and abilities in the real world of work. Furthermore, it also provides chances for students to learn from practitioners in their respective fields. Apart from improving their generic and professional skills such as interpersonal, entrepreneur and problem-solving skills, students will also appreciate the ethical values of their respective professions.

The goal of many study programmes in Malaysian universities is to guarantee that final year students obtain practical experience in the workplace, so that potential students can be hired by industries. As for undergraduates from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), they are required to undergo industrial training for the completion of their undergraduate studies. For the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, students will have to enrol for their internship in the third semester of their third year studies; which is the last semester of their undergraduate degree. Students are advised to start searching for organizations of their choice a few months before the internship period. While students are allowed to select any organization, the Industrial Training Coordinator of each program at the faculty keeps an eye on their choices. They are encouraged to apply to top Malaysian companies like Petronas Gas Berhad, Maxis Berhad, Astro Malaysia Holdings Berhad and Star Publications Berhad, to mention a few. These companies offer numerous advantages like the opportunity to learn from experts in the field, exposing them to best practices, cutting-edge technologies and industry trends. Successful completion of a minimum eight-week industrial training is mandatory, with evaluation conducted by the industrial supervisor, university supervisor, logbook entries and the internship report. There are many aspects that are necessary to analyze the effectiveness of the internship program. One way could be investigated through students' feedback. The students' internship reports will serve as the primary focus to achieve the objectives of this study. The researcher will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the industrial training experience based on the students' perceptions.

Studying students' perception of their industrial training at the workplace is vital for maintaining the quality and effectiveness of the industrial training program. Educators and institutions can identify areas that require improvement and make the required changes to raise the program's overall quality. By gauging students' perceptions, educators can determine whether the industrial training program is effectively delivering the knowledge, skills and experiences that were initially intended. Students' perception can shed light on the development of employability skills which comprise among other things, problem-solving, communication, teamwork, and adaptability which are highly regarded by employers. Besides, by understanding how students perceive their training experience, educators will be able to identify strategies to enhance student engagement. This is important as engaged students are more likely to actively participate and learn during their training, which will lead to better outcome.

1.1. Research Objectives

It is thus the objectives of this study to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the industrial training program at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, as perceived by students, and to provide insightful suggestions for enhancing its overall effectiveness.

2. Literature Review

This literature will look into the significance of industrial training, learning theory related to internships and students' perception of industrial training programs.

2.1. Significance of industrial training

There are many benefits of industrial training for university students to prepare them for the workplace. According to [Arthur and Koomson \(2023\)](#), soft skills, confidence, career development, sense of responsibility, employability, income, knowledge sharing and networking are all provided by internships. This indicates that industrial training programs offer substantial advantages in terms of preparing them for their careers as well as bolster their self-assurance and sense of accomplishment in the process of lifelong learning. Industrial training can assist students in gaining the fundamental knowledge and abilities needed for the global market while they are still in the university. These include time management and communication skills, increased self-assurance, and increased drive ([Gill & Lashine, 2003](#)). Indeed, internships increase students' chances of finding employment since internships help them refine their work ethics and abilities, concentrate on their career choices, gain direct access to employment sources, and even make an impression on prospective employers. [Knouse et al. \(1999\)](#) believe that after graduation, students with internships typically find employment more quickly than students who did not go through the internship programs.

Engaging in internships is considered as a means of enhancing students' employability upon graduation. [Mat Yazid \(2010\)](#) highlights that employability skills are becoming more important in the graduate job market and that academic performance is no longer the only factor affecting a person's marketability. This is further supported by [Okay and Sahin \(2010\)](#) who contends that these days, employers are looking for graduates who can demonstrate the key qualities necessary to succeed in the workplace in addition to those with a high degree of academic knowledge. The employability of graduates can be improved by some of these capabilities, such as problem-solving abilities, teamwork, and oral presentations ([Karunaratne & Perera, 2019](#)).

This view aligns with [Gill and Lashine \(2003\)](#) who believe that internships can assist in fostering the development of fundamental competencies for the global workforce, including improved self-confidence, self-motivation, time management and communication skills. In actuality, internships increase students' chances of finding employment because they help the students focus on their professional goals, develop their work ethics and job skills, have direct access to job sources, and even make an impression on prospective employers.

[Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou \(2013\)](#) in their study to investigate internships in the hospitality sector found that internships can be a beneficial step in preparation for the sector as they allow people to build relationships and gain insight into working circumstances with hospitality workers and supervisors. The results further indicate that

students demonstrated a favorable perception towards their internship experience and the factors that contribute to motivation and student satisfaction are professional setting, educational opportunity, social contact with managers, and working environment.. Another study conducted by [Sisselman-Borgia and Torino \(2017\)](#) noted that through internships, participants can gain valuable experience, use previously acquired knowledge, learn new skills, and increase their work opportunities after graduation. The benefit of internships was supported by [Lam and Ching \(2007\)](#) in their study on An exploratory study of an internship program: The case of Hong Kong students. The students' capacity and self-assurance in collaborating with others, their understanding of the sector, their flexibility in responding to changes, their leadership, and their proficiency in financial management have all significantly improved.

Participating in internship programs does not guarantee that a student will be employed in a full-time job; however, among those who are in standard employment, bachelors who have completed an internship have higher odds of being in high-skilled standard employment ([Wan Amirah, 2023](#)). By engaging in internship programs, students can acquire career insights that help them make more informed judgements about the options that are accessible to them. Overall, the internship program has the potential to act as a springboard towards securing a permanent position at the workplace.

2.2. Experiential Learning Theory

When examining literature on how internships align with different learning strategies, the author derived the model of Experiential Learning Theory developed by [Kolb \(1984\)](#) to conceptualize the elements influencing the efficacy of the industrial training program. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) emphasizes the importance of concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. The learning cycle that [Kolb \(1984\)](#) analyzed in his model of ELT can further be explained below:

i. Diverging

These individuals view things from different angles. They have creative learning methods and would rather observe than do. This learning style is named for the fact that these individuals learn best when they have to gather information or generate new ideas. The learning characteristics of this style are concrete experience and reflective observation.

ii. Assimilating (watching and thinking)

These individuals possess the ability to investigate and evaluate models and show a greater interest in concepts and activities than in relationships or working in groups. Examples of preferred learning situations for these types of learners include lectures, readings and individual learning that gives them time to analyze and think rather than discuss. Reflective observation and abstract conceptualization are two aspects of this learning approach.

iii. Converging (doing and thinking)

These individuals are seen as practical in their evaluations of concepts and assignments and are adept at solving problems. They frequently come to the conclusions they desire and prefer learning activities like technical tasks that involve finding solutions rather than

interpersonal or group learning. This learning method is characterized by abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

iv. Accommodating (doing and feeling)

These individuals have a tendency to approach learning with a more practical mindset and like to approach issues intuitively. They might have a stronger sense of intuition and enjoy taking an experiential approach to new-found challenges. Active experimentation and concrete experiences are features of this learning approach (Mc Pheat, 2019).

Two of the most common forms of experiential learning are the practicum and internship (Eyler, 2009). It is expected of students to integrate "real-world" experiences into the academic content and to make career decisions based on this understanding. Thus, learning is viewed as a two-way process in which prior university coursework can be supplemented by real-world experience obtained through internships (Eyler, 2009 as cited in Simons et al 2012). According to Trotskovy and Sabag (2010), additionally, students can distinguish between the "real-design process in the industrial environment and the traditional learning process in the academic environment" as knowledge and experience acquired in classrooms are not the same as those received during industry internships.

2.3. Students' Perception of Industrial Training

In the context of this study, the effectiveness of the internship program is assessed based on the perceptions of the industrial training students by focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of their internship experience at their respective organizations.

Sumathi et al. (2012) in their study revealed that the students gave the internship program positive ratings as they considered favorably the knowledge gained from the internship's practical experience. The factors that contribute to this were pertaining to the host company's contribution and the operational and administrative efforts of the organizer. Another study to investigate the opinions of students attending the Faculty of Technical Education in Turkey regarding their industrial internship was conducted by Okay and Sahin (2010). They discovered that there has been an increase in students' awareness of using their time more efficiently and the students have also developed their senses of understanding ethical responsibilities. Additionally, they now have better teamwork skills. Overall, it has been found that students have favorable perceptions of the professional environments where they completed their internships. Karunaratne and Perera (2019) in their study on the effectiveness of the industrial internship program offered by Department of Textile, University of Moratuwa in Sri Lanka uncover that students expressed gratitude for the real-world work experience, transportation, food, and generous stipend that they received. The results clearly demonstrate that the industrial internship plan was successful in equipping students with entrepreneurship and personal skills.

Although internship programs offer numerous benefits, interns must also contend with certain difficulties. One challenge that interns have to face is to be assigned less critical tasks compared to full-time employees. This can be frustrating especially for those seeking more challenging work experiences. Students in Karunaratne and Perera's (2019) study have expressed dissatisfaction with the internship program's overall structure since it does not offer them comprehensive training that encompasses all organizational

departments. According to the students, weak issues in the internship program are the lack of a proper training schedule covering every department in the company and an inadequate evaluation process carried out by the human resources department.

In another study by [Nga et al. \(2022\)](#) on Challenges for Student Satisfaction of Internship Program in Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Vietnam discovered that conduct and communication, working hours, problem-solving abilities, self-confidence, supervision, and working environment were the primary obstacles encountered. The dissatisfaction voiced not only aid in better preparation for upcoming student interns, but they also show hospitality and tourism training institutions and industry businesses how ready and equipped the students are to have the most fulfilling and successful internship experience.

3. Research Methods

This paper employs a qualitative research approach, with thematic analysis as its main methodology. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique that helps researchers identify, analyze and report themes within qualitative data, such as interview and focus group transcripts, written documents and observations. Researchers identify patterns in meaning across the data, categorize them into themes to extract meaningful insights and gain a deeper understanding of the subject of their study ([Majumdar, 2022](#)). The flexible nature of thematic analysis allows researchers to draw new concepts and insights from data.

The source of data for this study was collected from 59 industrial training reports submitted by industrial training students from the English Language Studies (ELS) program of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). A total of 60 ELS students enrolled in the internship program for the semester, thus the sampling consisted of this number of students. However, only 59 reports were analyzed because one student did not mention the strengths and weaknesses of the internship in her report and was therefore excluded from the study. For the written report, the students were required to write a maximum of 25-page report which comprises background of the internship organization, job scope during the industrial training, critical analysis of the job, relevance of the job to their field of studies which include its strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for improvement. For the purpose of the study, only the strengths and weaknesses of the job were focused on. First, the researcher compiled all the strengths and weaknesses given from each report and then arranged them into a table (refer to [Table 1](#)). Then both the strengths and weaknesses identified were categorized into themes.

4. Results

Upon extracting the views of final year students concerning the benefits and shortcomings derived from their internship reports, the paper continues with the analysis and discussion of the views of the students ([Table 1](#)). Thirteen themes have been identified, eight for strengths and five for weaknesses. The eight themes for strengths are communication skills, problem-solving and critical thinking, independence and confidence, multi-tasking and time management, teamwork, technical skills, adaptability and networking and professionalism. As for the weaknesses, the themes are mismatch of tasks to field of study, excessive workload, limited access/resources, lack of guidance and training and inflexible/inconvenient work arrangements.

Table 1: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Job

Name	Strengths	Weaknesses
Student 1	Enhance soft skills and interpersonal communication skills Encourage teamwork	Excessive writing workload for interns Working outside of office hours
Student 2	Improve interpersonal communication skills, lead and engage conversations, meetings, collaborate and negotiate with major corporations Developed other aspects of skills	Irrelevant tasks that were not related to the skills learnt at the university
Student 3	Improved writing skills for marketing, advertising and entertainment purposes Encouraged critical thinking in producing content	Job scopes and workload were not really related to English major
Student 4	Helps in communication skill; deals with clients' complaints or problems Encourage problem-solving	Concepts and ideas that have learnt at the university were not applicable to the working field Difficulty in utilizing Excel at first
Student 5	Improve writing and reading skills; drafting and translating	Limited skills in facing and analysing non-academic writings
Student 6	Mastered to utilize new types of software Encouraged critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving	Job-scopes were not correlate much to what have learnt at the university Design tasks were not adding any value to language skills
Student 7	Encourage critical thinking and teamwork Trained to work under pressure and multi-tasking Beneficial to add into resumes	NA
Student 8	Enhance interpersonal communication skills Relevant and appropriate for an English major	Multiple of workload at once Time management Job scopes were not really correlated and applicable to what have learnt at the university
Student 9	Improve technical skills through technical tasks assigned Enhance soft skills and writing skill Encourage effective communication at workplace and build connections/network	NA
Student 10	Gained new experiences and new knowledge related to public relations Supportive teams to give guidance	Job scopes were not really correlated and applicable to what have learnt at the university New to public relation field and had a difficulty to adapt at first

		Not allowed to work remotely even the workload can be done at home (non-flexible)
Student 11	Encourage creativity Improve presentation skills and confidence Enhance interpersonal communication skills Expand more network/connection widely	English writing and research skills learnt were not applicable on the job scopes given English language was not instilled much at the workplace
Student 12	Improve and able to utilize writing skills effectively Become more detail-oriented in terms of proof-reading and translating articles Enhance interpersonal communication skills Encourage critical thinking	Excessive workload per person Limited employees
Student 13	Encourage critical thinking and teamwork Enhance interpersonal communication effectively Learn formal communication to deal with big stakeholders/influential individuals Become more confident in joining corporate services	Unclear job description Lack of guidance and training from supervisor
Student 14	Step out of comfort zone; enhance confidence Gain real-life working experience and new knowledge related to the company	Different field of specialization Insufficient time allocated for industrial training Lack of skills in utilizing Excel
Student 15	Improve communication and comprehension skills effectively Encourage critical thinking and decision-making Able to work independently	Tedious and repetitive tasks assigned
Student 16	Tasks assigned were suitable to the department placed Learn new knowledge related to company Instil creativity by designing and editing	Mundane tasks assigned Job descriptions were not related much to English major Facilities were not provided; desktop and WIFI (self-provided) Eccentric working culture but doable
Student 17	Encourage problem-solving, creativity Develop critical thinking and analytical skills Able to multitask Learn formal communication to deal with big corporations Enhance interpersonal communication effectively	Excessive workload with tight datelines Insufficient time allocated for industrial training

Improve confidence		
Student 18	Become more detail-oriented in terms of proofreading, translating and transcribing Tasks given were applicable and relevant for English major Enhance English skills as a whole; reading, listening and writing Improve interpersonal communication skills Encourage critical thinking Learn new terminologies and knowledge related to company	Unequal work distribution Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 19	Enhance interpersonal communication skills Improve speaking skills in English and foreign language (Mandarin) Encourage to be more proactive and initiative Gain real-life working experience	Excessive workload per person Limited employees Fast-paced working environment
Student 20	Expose to new experiences and industries Enhance interpersonal communication skills Improve writing skills through proof-reading and editing documents and letters Encourage problem-solving and critical thinking Resourceful and supportive supervisor Flexible working environment; casual	Insufficient time allocated for industrial training Job scopes/tasks were biased Miscommunication between clients/candidates
Student 21	Practice professionalism Improve interpersonal communication skills Encourage creativity and problem-solving Able to apply theories in the working environment	Limited employees Overwhelming workload
Student 22	Confident in working independently Encourage problem-solving and decision-making Expand new connection/network Encourage effective communication skills in business strategy Improve time management skills and be more organized	Tedious and repetitive tasks assigned Tasks given were not related to what have learnt as an English major Lack of teamwork skill
Student 23	Encourage critical thinking and creativity Able to utilize English skills in tasks given; reading and writing	Some tasks assigned were not fully related to what have learnt as an English major

	Enhance effective communication skills in dealing with clients	Lack of marketing and designing skills
Student 24	Able to implement English skills in tasks given	Unfamiliar with digital marketing Had a hard time adapting at first
Student 25	Improve writing skills Encourage creativity and critical thinking Enhance soft skills Improve time management skills by planning work strategically Encourage to be more flexible in ways of working	Tasks given were not related to what have learnt as an English major Limited employees Lack of teamwork
Student 26	Improve communication skills effectively at the workplace Able to practice professionalism	Tasks given were not related to what have been learnt as an English major
Student 27	Able to apply what have learnt at the university to tasks given Become more detail-oriented in writing and editing Encourage creativity and problem-solving Enhance the quality of teamwork	Lack of skills in utilizing Excel Tasks given were not fully related to what have learnt as an English major Lack of knowledge in advertising and marketing
Student 28	Improve communication skills effectively Encourage to think critically in solving problems Able to utilize English skills at the workplace	Inconvenient and disorganized working structure Tasks given were not related to what have learnt as an English major
Student 29	Improve interpersonal communication skills in dealing with clients Encourage problem-solving Become more organized and attentive	Disorganized documents/working environment
Student 30	Strengthen interpersonal communication skills Improve confidence and work ethic Build new network and connection Become more detail-oriented in proofreading and editing letters and documents Able to practice what have learnt at the university	Tasks were time-consuming No basic knowledge in some tasks given Less in utilizing English skills at the workplace Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 31	Accomplish in utilizing Microsoft Office Excel skills Improve English proficiency; reading and speaking Build confidence in communicating effectively	Difficulty of adapting to working environment at first Limited access to documents due to confidential matters
Student 32	Encourage creativity and critical thinking	Lack of guidance and reference material in producing teaching aids

	Build a good rapport with students and the community involved Strengthen interpersonal communication skills Expose to different perspectives and values	No tasks given on the first week of internship
Student 33	Encourage networking and build new connections Improve writing and speaking skills in English effectively Boost confidence in communicating effectively	Tasks assigned were not related to what have learnt as an English major Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 34	Improve writing skills Encourage creativity in producing visual aids	Unable to apply all practices learnt at the university on tasks given Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 35	Enhance interpersonal communication skills Encourage creativity and critical thinking Improve English proficiency, writing and speaking skills Become more detailed-oriented Well-structured working schedules	Unclear job descriptions/responsibilities No basic knowledge in marketing Difficulty of adapting to a new field at first
Student 36	Punctuality in settling tasks assigned Develop time management skills Enhance multitasking effectively Ability I adapting with working environment	Limited experience in working physically Insufficient time allocated for industrial training Fast-paced working environment
Student 37	Strengthen effective interpersonal communication Gain new knowledge and experience about the company Ability in adapting and working independently in any working settings Encourage creativity in designing posters and video editing Boost confidence level in presenting ideas	Several tasks were unrelated to the English field Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 38	Able to practice and apply what have learnt at the university on tasks given Enhance research skills and widen literacy information Practice professionalism either in written or spoken form	Difficulty in tasks assigned Accommodate lower levels of proficiency in English Poor working environment Ineffective communication system
Student 39	Develop and improve clerical skills Become more detail-oriented	Insufficient time allocated for industrial training No allowances provided
Student 40	Ability to write effectively	Difficulty in adapting at first Unfamiliar field of work

	Strengthen communication skills and styles; formal and informal Become more precise and detail-oriented Encourage problem-solving and critical thinking	
Student 41	Ability to translate languages Ability to utilize graphic design skills Encourage creativity Become more detail-oriented and independent	Lack of guidance in some of tasks given
Student 42	Become more confident Ability to work independently Ability to adapt in the working environment Encourage to write critically and creatively Strengthen communication skills	Intimidating and overwhelming tasks Difficulty of utilizing and adjusting writing styles
Student 43	Expose to business strategies Ability to utilize knowledge in writing for marketing purposes Encourage creativity in video editing Ability to advertise certain products effectively	Difficulty in communicating due to work from home mode Tasks assigned were too broad and mundane
Student 44	Become more observant, detail-oriented and confident Ability to write effectively Enhance interpersonal communication skills	Insufficient opportunity to learn more
Student 45	Ability to utilize knowledge in comprehension skills Enhance interpersonal communication skills Encourage teamwork among colleagues Ability to be punctual and multitasking	Several tasks were a bit inappropriate for an English major
Student 46	Ability to work independently Ability to utilize writing skills effectively Become more confident Enhance communication skills	Difficulty in communicating due to work from home mode Difficulty in managing time
Student 47	Ability to utilize English in speaking Become more observant, confident and out-spoken Ability to adapt according to different situations Enhance interpersonal communication skills	Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 48	Ability to write effectively Encourage creativity Flexibility skills in writing	Difficulty in managing time Tight datelines

Student 49	Well-structured task specialization Skilled and helpful employees/colleagues Encourage interpersonal skills	Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 50	Positive working environment Enhance interpersonal communication skills Enhance confidence Ability to utilize writing skills Encourage problem-solving and critical thinking Improve graphic design skills	Language capabilities were not utilized to the fullest
Student 51	Helpful and encouraging employees/colleagues Strong grip in learning media and communication	Not yet a sustainable company and still new Insufficient time allocated for industrial training
Student 52	Ability to utilize and improve speaking and reading skills effectively Enhance communication skills Encourage critical thinking and problem-solving Build rapport between clients/customers Expand network and connections	Limited use of the English language at workplace
Student 53	Encourage creativity Ability to utilize language skills to do translation Strengthen communication skills effectively	Limited exposure to graphic designing skills Unequipped with necessary knowledge to be able produce and publish work independently
Student 54	Helpful and encouraging employees/colleagues Enhance confidence in approaching people Ability to utilize writing skills	Fast-paced working environment Tight datelines Inability to work under pressure
Student 55	Ability to utilize language skills in proofreading and copywriting Ability to work independently	Difficulty in adapting to the new field of work
Student 56	Become more detail-oriented and precise Ability to utilize writing skills in translating Ability to communicate effectively	Unfamiliar with several terminologies in the property development sector
Student 57	Ability to apply and utilize theories on teaching Encourage teamwork Enhance effective communication skills with students Ability to adapt quickly	Limited topics to teach due to the kindergarten level Lack of problem-solving and decision-making skill
Student 58	Strengthen communication skills	NA

	Instil resiliency Expand networking and connections	
Student 59	Ability to comprehend tasks quickly Ability to utilize language skills effectively Helpful and encouraging employees/colleagues	Limited exposure to explore more tasks Insufficient time allocated for industrial training

4.1. Strengths

4.1.1. Communication Skills

Industrial training provides students with opportunities to communicate in real-world scenarios. They interact with colleagues, superiors and clients which requires them to use effective communication to convey ideas and share information. Majority mentioned that they have improved speaking, reading and writing skills through this internship program. Besides, their interpersonal skills have also enhanced and they were able to apply language skills effectively.

4.1.2. Problem-solving and Critical Thinking

Interns are often committed to making decisions about project priorities or solving day-to-day challenges. The responsibility entrusted to them requires them to think critically about the potential outcomes of their decisions. Some of the responses mentioned that the experience encourages critical thinking and creativity. Besides, it also provides them the ability to adapt to different situations, expand their network and connections further. Their ability to apply and utilize theories learned at the university to the tasks given was regarded very beneficial as well. All in all the internship has given them the opportunity to gain new knowledge and experience about the company; in short, gaining real-life working experience.

4.1.3. Independence and Confidence

Developing independence and confidence includes being able to work on one's own initiative, adjust to changing circumstances, and create a good atmosphere. It entails not just doing things independently, but also facing difficulties head-on and quickly grasping what needs to be done. This combination helps provide a solid basis for both career and personal development.

4.1.4. Multi-tasking and Time Management

In most workplaces, punctuality is regarded as professionalism. The internship students mentioned that they learned good time management skill during the experience. Besides having managed to meet deadlines, they could also multitask at the same time.

4.1.5. Teamwork

Effective teamwork should allow each member in the team to communicate efficiently and openly with other team members besides having a team sense of belonging. Many believe

that their internship experience furnished them with the opportunity to build rapport not only between colleagues, but also with other student interns and the community.

4.1.6. Technical Skills

Technical skills are the precise knowledge and proficiency needed to carry out particular activities and make use of particular instruments and programs in practical settings. Nearly every profession and sector, from IT and business administration to health care and education, need a diverse range of technical abilities (Staff, 2023). Often, acquiring these skills requires specialized education and training. Some of the internship students were lucky enough to get the privilege of utilizing graphic design skills, translate languages and produce as well as publish their work under the supervision of their industrial supervisors. As a result, they improved their technical skills through the technical tasks assigned.

4.1.7. Adaptability and Networking

A proactive approach to learning and a smooth integration of new abilities are both necessary for demonstrating adaptability. Some of the intern students indicated their capability to adapt to the working environment. This resulted in good rapport with clients and customers which led to strengthened communication skills. The consequence of this is effective networking that extend beyond professional exchanges. These integrated abilities support team and organisational resilience and overall success in addition to individual progress.

4.1.8. Professionalism

Professionalism is appropriate behaviour and attitude at work that promotes positivity and effectiveness. It includes dressing appropriately, treating others with respect, continuous learning, adaptability and maintaining a positive attitude, among others. During their industrial training, some of these students had the chance to cultivate and demonstrate professionalism in their workplace. Besides enhancing clerical proficiency, some mentioned that they were able to commit to ongoing professional development; for example applying knowledge to copywriting.

While acknowledging its strengths, the students also articulated certain weaknesses in their industrial training experience.

4.2. Weaknesses

4.2.1. Excessive Workload

Excessive workload at the workplace was one of the weaknesses expressed by the internship students. Some of the students were not pleased with the excessive writing workload imposed on them, multiple workloads to be completed at one time, resulting in an unequal work distribution. Besides, they complained that sometimes tasks assigned were too broad, mundane, tedious, repetitive, intimidating as well as overwhelming.

4.2.2. Limited Access/Resources

Some organizations faced the challenge of shortage of manpower. This restricted the students' ability to explore and engage in a variety of assignments. As a result, they missed

out on opportunities to contribute to a more comprehensive range of projects. Since some students were allowed to work remotely, they had limited exposure to physical work. This may have hindered the students' ability to adapt to tasks that require hands-on engagement. Limited use of the English language at the work place posed another challenge to the students as this could have impeded effective information exchange. Besides, time constraint was another weakness mentioned as two months of industrial training was considered too short for students to develop their skills at the workplace.

4.2.3. Mismatch of Tasks to Field of Study

Internships provide students with the opportunity to build professional networks in their chosen field. If the tasks given are not aligned with their field of study, the students may lose valuable learning experiences that could contribute to their academic and professional development. Some students indicated that tasks assigned to them were not related to what they studied at the university as ELS students. As a result, some had difficulties to adapt to the new field of work.

4.2.4. Lack of Guidance and Training

A lot of complaints focussed on lack of guidance and training during their internship experience. The absence of clear guidance and training would pose challenges in understanding the requirements of the task given. Limited guidance on acquiring knowledge for example, in advertising and marketing could impede the students' ability to contribute strategically to assigned tasks.

4.2.5. Inflexible/Inconvenient Work Arrangements

Despite the nature of the workload being conducive to remote work, some expressed dissatisfaction over the inflexible policy that restricts the ability to work remotely. While there are advantages of working from home, some argued that it could contribute to an inconvenient and disorganized working structure which could impact workflow efficiency. Furthermore, the remote work setup has led to miscommunications between clients and the industrial training students. Besides, many expressed grievances over the absence of allowances for internship students. Many interns are expected to work for free or for a meagre stipend, which can be financially challenging. This financial constraint could reduce their motivation and affect their morale at the workplace.

4.2.6. Other Specific Challenges

Other specific challenges mentioned besides the above are difficulty in utilizing Excel program and other tasks, eccentric working culture, unfamiliarity with digital marketing, unable to meet tight deadlines, difficulty in managing time and difficulty in adapting to the new working environment.

The internship program is anticipated to serve as a bridge between these undergraduates and the professional world, offering an appropriate platform for the undergraduates to encounter the challenges of the industry. It is hoped that the results of the study can identify areas of improvement for the current industrial training program in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of the current study is to analyze data that empirically examines claims related to benefits and shortcomings incurred by the student interns. It is anticipated that these findings will be meaningful to future students, the university and industries who hire graduates with internship experience. On the whole, the effect of internships on these final year students at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia has been positive. The findings suggest that the strengths of the internship experience outweigh the weaknesses. Improvement in skills like communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, multi-tasking, time-management, teamwork, technical, adaptability and networking coupled with the development of professionalism, confidence and independence not only enhances the overall competence of intern students but also underscores the program's effectiveness in fostering well-rounded and employable graduates.

On the other hand, although internship experience generally gained positive responses, the challenges faced by the students need to be addressed as well. The problem of excessive workload, limited access and resources, mismatch of task to field of study, lack of guidance and training as well as inconvenient work arrangements require proactive measures and strategic interventions. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure a more supportive internship environment, fostering a positive and enriching experience for the student interns. Heavy workload, for instance can lead to increased levels of stress to them which can negatively impact their mental and physical well-being and could affect their overall performance at the workplace. Limited use of the English language may hinder effective information exchange, potentially affecting the quality of work and team dynamics. A mismatch between the internship tasks and field of study can lead to missed learning opportunities. Ensuring that interns are engaged in tasks that align with their field of study enhances the overall quality of the internship experience and could contribute to their career development. Interns may miss out on valuable learning opportunities when there is a lack of structured training programs. Thus, organizations should prioritize providing training programs and ongoing guidance to ensure that interns have impactful learning experience. Organizations should also consider providing fair compensation for student interns, acknowledging the financial realities many students face. Without allowance, the intern students may struggle to cover their basic living expenses. This may create stress and distraction, affecting their ability to focus on their internship responsibilities.

Therefore, in order to offer better quality internship experiences, it is imperative that the university, students, and employers have the same perspectives and expectations. It is suggested for the university and organizations to have a formal discussion in order to address the issues faced by both the interns and the organizations concerned. If properly supervised, an internship that provides practical experience might genuinely serve as "a gateway to the real world" for students (Collins, 2002:93). This study has provided a foundation for further research as well. Future research may incorporate comments from industry supervisors and university lecturers, as this study is solely focused on students' perceptions. Although the present study has pointed out certain areas that require enhancement, additional investigation is required to explore other domains that contribute to the significance and accomplishment of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's industrial training program.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researcher used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (RECUKM). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Conflict of Interest

The author reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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