

INTERNSHIP AND STUDENTS' ACQUISITION OF FUNCTIONAL SKILLS IN BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY, MAKURDI

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Abstract

This paper investigated internship and students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi. Three research questions were raised while three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 005 level of significance for the study. Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study comprised all the 2017/2018 academic session B.Ed. Educational Management students in the Department of Educational Foundations, Benue State University, Makurdi totaling 230. Convenience sampling technique was used to sample all the 230 students for the study. The instrument for data collection was a 30 item Internship And Students Acquisition of Functional Skills Questionnaire (ISAFSQ) developed by the researchers. It was validated by two educational research experts from the department of Educational Foundations, Benue State University, Makurdi. Data collected were analyzed using mean ratings and standard deviations to answer research questions. The analysis was done using item mean with a criterion mean of 2.50 as a basis for accepting or not accepting the responses for a particular item in the questionnaire. Chi-square was used to test the three hypotheses of the study at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that internship experience, factors militating against internship programme and measures to improve internship programme have significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills. The study therefore recommended among others that, the University management and the Department of Educational Foundations from which educational management is a unit course of study should strengthened the implementation of internship programme to provide students with opportunity to acquire functional skills to perform effectively and that, this effort should be made to address those factors militating against internship programme.

Keywords: Internship, Acquisition, Functional Skills

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Introduction

The 21st century society is characterized by highly skilled based jobs. Highly skilled based jobs are fast increasing. The acquisition of functional skills by students in the same degree is to enable them cope with emerging trends and industrial culture in the world of work which has become extremely important. The demand in the labour market requires highly skilled and competent personnel of whom the Nigerian universities are expected to produce. Santiago (2009) notes that, one of the main objectives of higher education institutions is to ensure that students will be able to find employment within their chosen career. The products of universities are to be equipped with relevant skills that will be relevant on their jobs. If this is not so, the aim of the Nigerian universities in producing graduates for the outside world will be futile and the society will continue to suffer from shortage of qualified personnel.

Traditionally, university education focuses on teaching theoretical knowledge, leaving college students without practical experience and little chance of successfully competing for jobs, that employers demand practical skills and experience (Chen, Hu, Wang and Chen, 2011 & Coco, 2000). According to Santiago (2009), internship (practicum) is therefore a means through which students' can acquire functional and practical skills for work. Some higher education institutions have incorporated internship into their academic programmes by which students apply theoretical learning into practice before they graduate. Research has indicated that due to graduates' performances in internship training, it has not been fully integrated in higher institutions. Bua (2015) opines that, internship has become a major factor in the curricula and has been actively pursued as a viable procedure for bridging the theoretical world of academia and the practical world of industry. Being a profession-oriented programme, internship aims at preparing students with work-related skills and expertise related to their future career.

Internship is a process in which students are involved in real work situations, enabling them to establish career development goals. According to Bua (2015), in educational administration and management, internship is designed to link the theoretical and philosophical frameworks of educational management and leadership to problems of practice. Bua adds that, internship is work-based educational experiences that relate to specific jobs, positions, occupations or professions. It is a career-oriented curricular endeavours of practical application. According to Togara (2013), this practical activity is necessary to give students first hand skill development and knowledge which they cannot get within the confines of the classroom. The purpose of the internship is to bridge the gap between theory and practice as well as students' academic and experiential learning. In the internship exercise, students will engage in self-assessment of strengths, weaknesses, areas of particular interest and will increasingly assume responsibility for their continuing professional development and growth.

The internship exercise according to Bua (2015), should provide interns opportunities to work with and to learn from administrators in schools and other organizational settings. Through field-based experiences, the student has the opportunity to strengthen his or her qualifications and gain experience. During this period, students have the opportunity to apply knowledge learned in the classroom and gain practical perspectives regarding work and society. Bua further stresses that, for students to acquire the necessary skills during the period of internship, they are expected to assist in significant and varied administrative responsibilities under the guidance of a supervising administrator or mentor. The goal is to develop the aspiring administrators' leadership

and management abilities by engaging them in problem analysis, data collection, and problem-solving with others at the work site. Such areas that are usually addressed are; budgeting procedures, school/community relations, facility operations and maintenance, interpretation and use of statistical data for school improvement planning, curriculum development, student and programme evaluation, staff development, scheduling and the use of technology.

Internship programmes provide learning opportunities for undergraduate and post graduate students to experience professional practice and activities associated with knowledge application. Fox (2001) states that, internship is an opportunity to close the gap between learned theory and practical reality. To prepare students for their future career, most of the higher institutions in Nigeria today require students to participate in an internship programme to help them learn to apply concepts they have learned in theory in order to gain practical work experience. As a programme of study, Huang and Huang (2004) note that, institutions that require internship usually have established policies regarding the programmes which regulate matters such as minimum hours, work duties, credits and means of assessment.

The framework for internship programmes differs between institutions, with programme hours. The attachment is compulsory for every student of educational administration and management for six (6) or ten (10) weeks in a semester. The internship requires students total time commitment of not less than 150 hours. Although, 150 hours is the minimum for completion of the internship, the experience should involve extended contact and therefore should span the length of the term (Bua, 2015). The internship is a defined part of the curriculum, a professional practicum which is implemented by arranging for students to gain actual experience through working in industry. Through practical experience, students learn the characteristics of jobs and develop advanced skills. Internship helps to familiarize students with practical skills, enhance social relationships, motivate future learning and develop a socially acceptable personality (Calloway & Beckstead, 1995).

Internship is a transition from life as a student to the world of work. The transition can be eased when graduates have been pre-exposed to what they are getting into. Consequently, Tynjala (2008) states that school learning should adopt certain features of work learning in order to integrate theory and practice. This integration can be done through mediating tools like academic internship. Although, internship seem to bridge the gap between theory and practice, it has not been found to be very effective as a problem solving tool for students' functional skills acquisition in meeting work demands in the industries. The programme has been faced with some militating factors that hinder students' participation in the exercise. Akinyele (2001) observes that internship programme has been militated by several factors to include lack of funds, poor timing of the internship programme as lectures interferes with interning period, and poor working relationship between employees and interns. Interning organizations are not quite often seems to provide stipends for the interns to cater for at most their transportation to and from place of internship. Most interns live a distance away from their place of internship, on reaching the place becomes a problem when transport fare is not available thereby militating against the success of the programme. Bua (2015) observes that the ineffectiveness of internship programme among other factors is lack of willingness on the part of organizations to accept students on internship and the organization's inability to provide for interns welfare. There is need therefore to address these factors to revamp the fate of internship.

To address these factors that militate against internship programme, Olaitan (1992) in Bua (1015) advocates that employers should accept students for industrial training and pay them stipends during the exercise. Manson and Haines (2000) state that students' internship should be supervised on daily basis by experienced personnel who is responsible for their learning experiences. Students' poor working habits/truant behaviour should be properly checked through supervision and report sent to the programme coordinator of the institution. For punitive measure against the erring staff and interns, Akinyele (2001) suggests that whether part-time or full time, industrial students should attract the same disciplinary measure for any offence committed during training. Students who put up poor working habits/truant behaviour should be given disciplinary measure that is same with the staff. This will help checkmate indices of poor working habits and truant behaviour. Nse (2012) state that the internship programme affords students the opportunity to familiarize and expose themselves to the needed experience. Thus this study sought to investigate the influence of internship experience on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi.

Statement of the Problem

Today, acquisition of functional skills is becoming one of the major concerns of Nigerian universities. Acquisition of functional skills seems to be the means by which performance can be improved. In recent past, there have been reports of inability of most graduates produced by the Nigerian universities to perform effectively in industries. This shows that there is a gap between theory and practice in the application of skills. To bridge the gap, internship is designed to solve the problem of how best to build a closer and more appropriate linkage between theory and practice. Often, it is assumed that graduates can directly transfer their cognitive knowledge to the workplace and use their acquired skills in their first job. However, both research and practice indicate that this is often not the case as graduates underperform when starting their first job. The problem is; does internship experience actually influence students' acquisition of functional skills to perform their jobs effectively or is there factors militating against the programme? If there are any, what could be the measures to address those factors? This is the problem this study sought to provide solution to.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of internship experience on students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the influence of internship experience on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi.
2. Determine the factors militating against internship programme in educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills.
3. Identify the measures to improve internship programme for undergraduate students of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. In what ways does internship experience influence educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi?
2. What are the factors militating against internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills?

3. What are the measures to improve internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills?

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Internship experience has no significance influence on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi.
2. Factors militating against internship programme of educational management have no significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills.
3. Measures to improve internship programmes of educational management have no significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills.

Methodology

The design adopted in this study was the descriptive survey as recommended by Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) for a study that use questionnaire or an interview to collect data from a group or sample that has been selected to represent a population to which the findings of the data analysis can be generalized. The population of the study comprised all the 2017/2018 academic session B.Ed. Educational Management students in the department of Educational Foundations of Benue State University, Makurdi totaling 230. Convenience sampling technique was used to sample all the 30 students for the study. The entire population was used for the study due to its relative manageable size. The instrument used for data collection was a 30 item questionnaire captioned "Internship and Students' Acquisition of Functional Skills Questionnaire (ISAFSQ). The instrument was validated by two experts of educational research from the department of Educational Foundations, Benue State University, Makurdi. The research questions were answered using mean ratings and standard deviations. The analysis was done using item mean with a criterion mean of 2.50 as a basis for accepting or not accepting the responses for a particular item in the questionnaire. Chi-square was used to test the three hypotheses of the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Findings

Research Question 1: In what ways does internship experience influence educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of ways internship experience influence educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi

Item No	Items Description	\bar{X}	S/D	Decision
1	Provide basic skills of leadership.	3.12	0.88	Accepted
2	Provide skill of effective time management.	3.39	1.17	Accepted
3	Develop good interpersonal/human relations skills.	3.12	1.14	Accepted
4.	Acquire communication/presentation skills.	2.87	1.02	Accepted
5	Acquire problem solving skills.	3.16	1.07	Accepted
6	Develop critical thinking skills.	2.87	0.95	Accepted
7	Acquire good writing skills.	3.00	0.94	Accepted
8	Develop my creativity and initiative	2.69	0.98	Accepted
9	Get exposed to modern ICTs used in organizations.	2.96	0.82	Accepted
10	Learn how to perform a job under formalized organizational setting.	3.03	0.98	Accepted
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		3.02	1.00	Accepted

Table 1 presents the mean scores of item 1 – 10 as 3.12, 3.39, 3.12, 2.87, 3.16, 2.87, 3.00, 2.69, 2.96 and 3.03 with corresponding standard deviation of 0.88, 1.17, 1.14, 1.02, 1.07, 0.95, 0.94, 0.98, 0.82 and 0.98 respectively. This shows the various ways internship experience influence educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi. The cluster mean of 3.02 which was found to be above the mean cut-off point of 2.50 implies that, internship experience influences educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi.

Research Question 2: What are the factors militating against internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation of the factors militating against internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills

Item No	Items Description	\bar{X}	S/D	Decision
11	Poor timing of the internship programme as lectures interferes with interning period.	3.50	0.67	Accepted
12	Poor exposure of interns to practical work.	2.99	1.05	Accepted
13	Wrong placement procedure.	3.14	0.97	Accepted
14	Lack of funds to cater for welfare of interns.	2.99	0.89	Accepted
15	Poor supervisory circumstances.	2.99	1.17	Accepted
16	Poor working relationship between employees and interns.	3.40	0.71	Accepted
17	Truancy during internship by the students.	3.10	0.93	Accepted
18	Lack of willingness on the part of most organizations to accept students on internship.	3.41	1.13	Accepted
19	Lack of motivation like allowances/stipends for interns by the interning organizations.	2.73	1.01	Accepted
20	Insensitivity of organizations' management to interns problems.	2.96	0.82	Accepted
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		3.12	0.94	Accepted

Table 2 presents the mean scores of item 11 – 20 as 3.50, 2.99, 3.14, 2.99, 2.99, 3.40, 3.10, 3.41, 2.73 and 1.87 with corresponding standard deviation of 0.67, 1.05, 0.97, 0.89, 1.17, 0.71, 0.93, 1.13, 2.96 and 0.82 respectively. This shows the factors militating against educational management students' acquisition of functional skills. The cluster mean of 3.12 which was found to be above the mean cut-off point of 2.50 implies that, the above items are factors militating against internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills.

Research Question 3: What are the measures to improve internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills?

Table 3: Mean rating and standard deviation of the measures to improve internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills

Item No	Items Description	\bar{X}	S/D	Decision
21	Organizations should grant interns free access to all their facilities during the internship period.	2.99	1.08	Accepted
22	Poor working habits/truant by interns should attract disciplinary measures same with staff.	3.00	0.95	Accepted
23	Interns should undergo internship experience for at least six weeks of the school programme.	3.05	0.97	Accepted
24	A mandatory law should be made for organizations to accept students on internship.	2.96	1.01	Accepted
25	Students on internship should be properly supervised daily by Heads of Sections and send report to their department in schools.	3.19	0.90	Accepted
26	Placement of students on internship should be in recognized organizations.	2.73	1.01	Accepted
27	Interns should not be limited to only educational organizations.	2.95	1.02	Accepted
28	Industrial Training Fund/interning organizations should be encouraged to pay allowances/stipends to students on internship.	3.27	0.88	Accepted
29	Upon placement, interns' health should be properly considered.	3.12	0.96	Accepted
30	A suitable time should be designed for internship programme not to interfere with lecture periods.	3.05	1.00	Accepted
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		3.03	0.98	Accepted

Table 3 presents the mean scores of item 21 – 30 as 2.99, 3.00, 3.05, 2.96, 3.19, 2.73, 2.95, 3.27, 3.12 and 3.05 with corresponding standard deviation of 1.08, 0.95, 0.97, 1.01, 0.90, 1.01, 1.02, 0.88, 0.96 and 1.00 respectively. This shows the measures to improve internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills. The cluster mean of 3.02 which was found to be above the mean cut-off point of 2.50 implies that, the above items the measures to improve internship programme of educational management for students' acquisition of functional skills.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Internship experience has no significance influence on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi.

Table 4: Chi-square test of the influence of internship experience on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi

Opinion	Fe	Fo	Df	Level of Sig.	X ² _{cal}	P. Value	Decision
SD	10	57.5	3	0.05	153.930	.000	Ho
D	18	57.5					Sig.
A	76	57.5					
SA	126	57.5					

Table 4 revealed chi-square = 153.930 at df = 3; P=.000<0.05. Since the probability value of .000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, this shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. This result implies that internship experience has significant influence on

educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi.

Hypothesis 2: Factors militating against internship programme of educational management have no significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills.

Table 5: Chi-square test of the influence of factors militating against internship programme of educational management on students' acquisition of functional skills

Opinion	Fe	Fo	Df	Level of Sig.	X ² _{cal}	P. Value	Decision
SD	26	57.5	3	0.05	60.887	.000	Ho
D	35	57.5					Sig.
A	68	57.5					
SA	108	57.5					

Table 5 revealed chi-square = 60.887 at df = 3; P=.000<0.05. Since the probability value of .000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, this shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. This result implies that factors militating against internship programme of educational management have significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills.

Hypothesis 3: Measures to improve internship programmes of educational management have no significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills.

Table 6: Chi-square test of the influence of measures to improve internship programme of educational management on students' acquisition of functional skills

Opinion	Fe	Fo	Df	Level of Sig.	X ² _{cal}	P. Value	Decision
SD	12	57.5	3	0.05	217.930	.000	Ho
D	14	57.5					Sig.
A	54	57.5					
SA	150	57.5					

Table 6 revealed chi-square = 217.930 at df = 3; P=.000<0.05. Since the probability value of .000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, this shows that the null hypothesis is rejected. This result implies that measures to improve internship programme of educational management have significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding revealed that internship experience has significant influence on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi. This finding agreed with that of Zopiatis (2007) who reported that internship enabled students to apply classroom theory within the actual world of work. The finding is also in agreement with the view of Bua (2015) who states that internship is designed in educational administration and management to link the theoretical and philosophical frameworks of educational management and leadership to problems of practice. Through internship, students make right decision on areas in educational administration, develop good interpersonal/human relations skills, acquire problems solving skills, feels better prepared to enter the world of work, get exposed to modern ICT use in organizations, learn how to perform a job under formalized organizational

settings among others. Coco (2000) explains that the major role of an internship is to offer a planned transition from the classroom to the job and it is a natural bridge between universities and the labour market.

The second finding showed that factors militating against internship programme of educational management had significant influence on students' acquisition of functional skills. The finding is in line with Akinyele (2001) who stated that internship programme has been militated by several factors to include lack of funds, poor timing of the internship programme as lectures interferes with interning period, poor working relationship between employees and interns. The finding further agreed with Bua (2015) who also found that the ineffectiveness of internship programme among other factors is lack of willingness on the part of organizations to accept students on internship and the organization's inability to provide for interns welfare.

The third finding revealed that measures to improve internship programme had significant influence on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills. This finding is line with the findings of Olaitan (1992) that employers should accept students for industrial training and pay them stipends during the exercise. In support of this finding Manson and Haines (2000) state that students' internship should be supervised on daily basis by an experienced personnel who is responsible for their learning experiences. Furthermore, in support of this finding, Akinyele (2001) suggests that whether part-time or full time programme, industrial students should attract the same disciplinary measure for any offence committed during training. Students who put up poor working habits/truant behaviour should be given disciplinary measure same with staff. This will help checkmate indices of poor working habits and truant behaviour.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is discovered that internship experience, factors militating against internship programme and measures to improve internship programme have significant influence on educational management students' acquisition of functional skills in Benue State University, Makurdi. As a result, the study concluded that internship experience provides students with functional skills to perform effectively in the work industry. However, internship programme has been militated by a number of factors such as poor timing, lack of proper supervision, poor funding among others in which the study offers measures to address these challenges to improve internship programme of educational management students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The university management and the department of Educational Foundations from which educational management is a unit course of study should strengthened the implementation of internship programme to provide students with opportunity to acquire functional skills to perform effectively.
2. Relevant stakeholders of internship programme such as the school, Industrial Training Fund, interning organizations and interns themselves should recognize their individual role and work collectively in addressing the factors militating against internship programmes. By this the school should ensure proper timing, placement and supervision of interns among others, the ITF should assist in providing for the welfare of interns The interning organizations on the other hand should accept students on intern and provide them with stipends and cordial working relationship

that should be maintained whereas the interns should dedicate their time to the exercise and avoid poor work habit/truant behaviour so as to pave way for successful internship exercise.

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