

**An Analysis on the Socialization of Off-campus Internship of Students at
Technological University in Taiwan**

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Abstract

There were many literature studies have shown that university students' participation in off-campus internship comes with a lot of advantages. However, literature studies on students' psychological changes after finished their off-campus internship, especially in the process of socialization, remain scarce. The paper of this study was to explore the socialization of off-campus internship of students at technological university in Taiwan. 7 internship students were randomly selected from best top 5 universities to undergo in-depth interviews. The research conclusions point out that off-campus internship experience has a tremendous impact on students' process of socialization, including: 1. Socialization process during internship of the students in technological university including five stages: observation, simulation, reflection, internalization, and behavior performance, 2. To think more things not learned in school, 3. To know how to be a good employee, 4. Be able to develop their professional network, 5. Be able to work under pressure, 6. Be better able to understand making money from working is difficult. According the conclusions, schools and internship institutions should properly plan the students' internship contents and arrange the time. Internship institutions provide interns with more difficult and challenging experiences, thereby producing more significant results in the socialization process of students.

Keywords: Socialization, Off-campus Internship, Internship, Technological University

Introduction

Many literature studies have shown that university students' participation in off-campus internship comes with many advantages, including: making up for inadequacy of on-campus practical teaching (Chang, et al, 2015; Chang et al, 2017), internship cooperatives supplementing short-term manpower (Coco, 2000) and potential future

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

employees (Binder, et al, 2015), as well as the cultivating students' employability (Koen, 2013). However, literature studies on students' psychological changes as a result of off-campus internship, especially in the process of socialization, remain scarce.

According to Business Dictionary, the definition of socialization is a process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, language, social skills, and value to conform to the norms and roles required for integration into a group or community. It is a combination of both self-imposed (because the individual wants to conform) and externally-imposed rules, and the expectations of the others (Business Dictionary, 2018). In a cooperative industry setting, socialization refers to the process through which a new employee 'learns the ropes,' by becoming sensitive to the formal and informal power structure and the explicit and implicit rules of behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the procedure of socialization during the internship of students who study in university and technological universities. Then, to explore the socialisation learning outcome of students after internship what they can learn.

Literature Review

Internship in Taiwan

Off-campus internship is very important learning experience for technological and vocational education. It is not only can increase students' practical skill but also help students to know the working procedure of enterprise. There were many evidences show that the students can adapt well after be employed if they have attended internship (Chang, et al, 2015; Chang et al, 2017; Coco, 2000; Binder, et al, 2015; Koen, 2013). For students have a larger employability, most technical universities ask their students to select internship course as a requirement credit before they graduate. That requirement credit usually takes 320 hours and regards it as 3 credit hours. Most students were employed with salary during internship which following the Labor Act in Taiwan. A variety of methods have been employed to learn about the impact of these learning experiences, which can range from several weeks to full semesters. There were some departments of university will offer the international internship opportunity for students. For example, there is an increased interest in students in the hospitality and tourism industry to gain international experience by studying abroad (He & Chen, 2010; Tuma, Janes, & Cook. 2017). Though internship has several types, the methods used to study the learning outcomes have included portfolios, journals, case studies, informal student feedback, end-of-course evaluations, individual interviews, focus groups, and surveys (Bosselman,

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

Fernsten, Manning, & Kisseleff, 1989; Xie, 2004).

According to the relative literature, scholarly research investigating internships falls into two main categories. First, studies have identified several benefits of internships. Internships help students decide on careers (Dailey, 2016; Taylor, 1988; Tuma, Janes, & Cook, 2017), and research shows that companies offer interns more jobs and higher salaries (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Taylor, 1988). Second, scholars have examined sources of intern satisfaction (Dailey, 2016; Narayanan, Olk, & Fukami, 2010), including autonomy, skill variety, and work environment that promote positive experiences (D'Abate, Youndt, & Wenzel, 2009; Rodgers, & Dunn, 2000). Despite a growing number of studies on internships, scholars have yet to theoretically explore how internships benefit. Yet, the goal of internships is to acquire practical knowledge and skills for future vocations or organizations, so this study explores internships as a process of socialization.

Socialization Process

Internships provide rich environment where students can learn about their future careers by way of occupational socialization (McManus, 2008). There were several studies have used socialization as a framework to determine how people adapt to internships (Dailey, 2016; Garavan & Murphy, 2001; Staton-Spicer & Darling, 1986). For example, Garavan and Murphy (2001) explained the anticipatory, encounter, and metamorphosis stages of internships, and Staton-Spicer and Darling (1986) examined communication in preservice teacher socialization. McKinney, Saxe, and Cobb (1998) emphasize the importance of informal socialization or out-of-class experiences, such as interaction with employers, and work-integrated learning. Similarly, Boyle et al. (2007) claim that high levels of interest and motivation among students are stimulated and affective responses enhanced when they leave the classroom and learn through first-hand experience. Focused on socialization within internships, researchers have viewed the internship as a microcosm of the entire socialization process as same as this study.

According to Bragg (1976), the conditions of successful socialization in education are most evident in professions such as law and medicine. In successful professional socialization, law students learn to think like lawyers and medical students learn to act like physicians. However, the process also operates in other degree programs. Furthermore, Bragg (1976) has argued that vocational curricula share similarities with professional programs. Benckendorff et al. (2012) have highlighted the pressure on universities to teach practical and vocational skills due to the tourism and hospitality industry's preference for employing work-ready graduates.

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

According to Breakey et al. (2014), there are two different approaches to tourism and hospitality management education in Australia. One is more specific to the industry and the other is more holistic and targets a wider market. Due to this vocational and holistic nature of higher technological and vocational education, socialization theory will be applied in this study (Bragg, 1976).

Methodology

Due to Taiwan's new birthrate is quite low and the number of universities is still quite large, and there were many companies in Taiwan has moved out to China or other south-eastern countries yet, only few universities students have chosen to attend off-campus internship. Therefore, in electrical engineering and computer science departments in technological university, the average number of students in a class has dropped to 15-20. Purposive sampling was chosen as the means of research subject selection in order for suitable subjects to be chosen in accordance with the objectives of this study. There were three criteria for sample selection: (1) subjects must be involved in the off-campus internship between 2017 and 2018; (2) samples who have previously learned practical courses at electrical engineering and computer science (EECS) departments in best 5 university of technology in Taiwan; (3) samples who are highly passionate about serious learning and willing to share their experiences and personal perspectives. With these criteria in place, invitations for interview were sent to instructors at 5 schools. Among these schools, each school responded to the invitation of 2 students and due to specific complications for some interviewees, in-depth interviews were conducted with students. In Taiwan, the technological university students' internship allotments are mostly two months, six months or one year at the most. Among the students from top 5 technological universities, students taking up electrical engineering and computer science (EECS) comprise the majority. Therefore, this study adopted internship students under respective disciplines as research participants, from which seven students who had completed internship were randomly selected to undergo in-depth interviews. For interviewing smoothly, researchers offered outline of interview to interviewee previously and it spends about 60-90 minutes during every interview.

In this research, open coding was chosen to process the interview transcripts as suggested in the Grounding Theory proposed by Corbin and Strauss in order to conceptualize and categorize the interview data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This enabled further classification of primary categories for further development based on the aspects of different attributes to derive secondary categories. The transcripts were then processed with axial coding to identify the correlation between primary

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

categories and secondary categories and finally selective coding to integrate and refine the theory by creating a core concept and building a complete theoretical structure on top of it. Throughout the coding process for data analytics, the three coding approaches enabled conceptualization by means of induction and deduction to identify the core scope that led to the construction of the theoretical framework.

A thematic analysis of the interview data was undertaken, and through it repeated “patterns of meaning” in the data were examined (Braun & Clarke, 2008). The researchers identified themes in an inductive way, which means that the “themes identified were strongly linked to the data themselves” (Braun & Clarke, 2008, p. 83). The thematic analysis was undertaken when all data had been coded in open, axial and selective codes. The various codes were analysed and collated into an overarching theme at a higher abstraction level. In Table 1, “socialization process during internship period” is a theme connecting the following selective codes on different stages: observation, simulation, reflection, internationalization, and behaviour performance.

Findings & Results

This section focuses on the perceptions of students after internship and their relevance to their reflection about learning during intern in the cooperative company. Furthermore, the section considers students' reflections on their socialization process that the university in which they are enrolled engages to help them develop in the degrees. Abbreviations of the students' names (e.g., John, Mary, et al.) are used after quotes from respondents to protect their anonymity. The data analysis developed the following selective codes through Nvivo10 software: observation, simulation, reflection, internationalization, and behaviour performance (see Table 1). Each of the selective codes contained a number of axial codes. The central theme “socialization process during internship period” was developed by connecting the selective codes. The axial codes most frequently mentioned in each selective code by the students will be discussed in the following section. Perceptions, such pattern of communication; guanxi (relationship building); and Team work with co-workers were most frequently mentioned (7 students) as being important for the cooperative company. In contrast, only two students mentioned the other axial codes (see Table 1) as being important perception and learning for working in assistant positions in the cooperative company.

Guanxi (Co-workers' relationship within the company)

All of students are incommunicative and observe their working environment when they step into cooperative company first time. For understanding the transection

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

from axial code into selective code, this study selected a perception about Guanxi (Relationship building skills) as an example. All students mentioned the importance of guanxi (relationship building skills) in the cooperative company. It was considered crucial to keep good relationships with colleagues, managers, and customers. For example, good relationships with customers would guarantee return visits. John explained from his internship experience in a company how sometimes staff were expected to visit their loyal customers during the special days. And sometimes those frequent customers are the most important customers because they generate a lot of revenue. Students have learned how to keep a good relationship with others and how to keep the loyal customers buy something again. It means that students understand how a company makes money by relationship building.

In order to satisfy those customers, staffs they really need to have the interpersonal communication with those customers with more patients. And sometimes they would have different approach, and sometimes they will even want to make a friend with those customers... (20180810-John)

The importance placed on guanxi is comparable to the findings of Henderson (2011), who claimed that guanxi is crucial for their graduates with a bachelor degree to obtain an entry-level position. Three students claimed that guanxi (relationship building skills) could not be learnt at the university inside. The rest of the students did not mention how this skill could be learnt in the technological university context.

Team work with co-workers

All respondent students mentioned teamwork skills as important for an intern in the cooperative institutes. One respondent argued that the factory is very large; therefore, the staff members need to be able to collaborate:

... teamwork is very important. Everybody should be a member of one team because company like have more than hundred or few hundred staff... (20180812-Mary)

The literature also emphasized the importance of teamwork skills. Benckendorff et al. (2012) and Wilkins and Raybould (2006) studies revealed that teamwork skills were generally considered more important than other skills categories. Furthermore, collaboration is one of the learning outcomes of Bachelor degrees in higher education (Whitelaw et al., 2015). Most hi-tech or large companies composed several project

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

teams for solving-problem they encountered. The intern will be an assistant within the teams and they simulated the speaking way and behavior from others in the company. For example, one student claimed that the mentors gave instructions to the interns about how to work in teams:

In nearly every meeting we have teamwork assessment so it's really good. I think I developed a lot in this aspect ... And the mentors also gave us some guidance about it. (20180816-Jack)

Table 1

Summary of axial and selective codes and central theme

Central theme: socialization process during internship period	
Axial codes (perception and learning)	Selective codes (stage)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Patten of communication (oral, written) ● Guanxi (Co-workers' relationship within the company) ● A part of business operational procedure ● Ethic Code ● Leadership skill ● Critical thinking ● Problem solving 	Observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rules for working ● Team work with co-workers ● Speaking way and behavior ● Dress code 	Simulation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep Learning ● Try and error ● Taught by mentor or leaders in department/company ● Marketing skill ● Gaining benefit 	Reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using the professional term communicate with co-workers ● Working on time ● Focus on performance of work ● Working under pressure ● Inter-culture 	Internationalization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Requirement as same as formal employee ● Reputation ● Honoring to be a member of the company 	Behaviour performance

Conclusion

Through qualitative analysis, the psychological process of socialization of the technological university students who had completed internship was summarized. The research conclusions are as follows:

1. Socialization process during internship of the students in technological university including five stages: observation, simulation, reflection, internalization, and behavior performance.

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

2. Think more things not learned in school: Internships are an excellent way to branch out from the university course into the industry in which students are studying and expand their list of contacts, from university-based lecturers and tutors to people who are currently working in the industry. Most internships will enable students to work closely and develop professional working relationships with a specific manager and team within the organization, as well as meet a range of people in other departments and outside the company (The Good Universities Guide, n.d.). This is the first time that they make money through their own abilities. All the interns were quite excited. From expectations, tension, unfamiliarity, observation, communication, discussion, work execution, and correction to the re-execution of a series of learning processes, all of them are rare experiences that cannot be learned in school.
3. Know how to be a good employee: All the interviewee in this study believe that everyone is part of the company and must be a member of the work team. Interns can learn by observation what the roles and responsibilities of a particular career are from people working in the field. Through observation and imitation, interns will learn behavior and performance expected of a good employee and which behavior is to be avoided. Therefore, many companies prefer to hire students who have completed internship programs. This is because many interns have better work habits, possess excellent soft skills, and have higher technical and industry skills since they have received formal job training and professional guidance (Manhattan Early College, 2018).
4. Develop professional network: Everyone needs to make money to maintain his/her livelihood as same as company income. They need to connect with their stakeholders for substance. Partaking in an internship allows you to establish deeper relationships than you normally would talking to a stranger one-on-one. Being an intern gives you more opportunities to build connections with company professionals that can be very beneficial for your future career (Kumar, 2017). By entering an internship institution, one will have the opportunity to see the company's operating goals and final profitability. Perhaps one will not know the turnover, gross profit, net profits, etc., one will have gained an initial understanding of the goals, costs, and profitability.
5. Able to work under pressure: According to the definition of the Career Center of the University of Leeds, pressure can be defined as "The stress or urgency of matters requiring attention, the burden of physical or mental distress and the constraint of circumstances." (Career Center of the University of Leeds, 2017). When a person starts work for the first time, this individual faces supervisors,

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

direct superior, indirect supervisors, colleagues, and even consumers. Hearing different voices from different people, the individual must have the ability to judge the priority, an inevitable process of socialization (Chang, et al, 2018). The scale of a company larger, the more rules are set. For an intern who has just entered an internship institution, the intern needs to spend a considerable amount of time understanding the company' regulations and unspoken rules. However, work cannot wait and many tasks in the company come with time pressure. During the internship, interns are likely to grow from their mistakes and learn by trial and error. A word of correction from the supervisor will more likely than not lead to progress and growth on the part of the intern.

6. Better able to understand making money from working is difficult: Many internships are paid which means student can gain valuable work experience and make money at the same time. A paid internship will provide money to fund students' college tuition and expenses (Fremont College, 2018). Most internship institutions provide interns with living allowances in Taiwan. Internship institutions will at least give a minimum salary in accordance with the Basic Labor Act. One can only realize how difficult it is to make money by the time one receives one's paycheck at the end of the month. Some interns become more filial to their parents; others cherish more every penny they made.
7. Reflect on one's future work: Some students begin college with a major or career path in mind, and end up changing their minds later on. Taking on an internship while in college allows students to work in their desired field, helping them decide if the field is right for them. By graduation, students who interned are more likely to feel confident they chose the right degree (Fremont College, 2018). After internship, students can better know about their insufficiencies and whether they are suitable for the job or not. Only when one has a keen interest for the job can one last long in it; high performance can only be achieved if there is high work motivation. Some students after going through an internship urgently look forward to graduation to enter the workplace; others choose not to enter the same company to work; still others using their insufficiencies decide to pursue post-graduate studies after their internship.

The research conclusions point out that off-campus internship experience has a tremendous impact on students' process of socialization. Therefore, schools and internship institutions should properly plan the students' internship contents and arrange the time. Internship institutions provide interns with more difficult and challenging experiences, thereby producing more significant results in the

AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

socialization process of students. Nevertheless, there were some limitations related to the conclusions as mentioned above. First, culture different might be important factors that need to consider in this study since the definitions of socialization usually vary by culture. Thus, the socialization was based on the environment which is company for student internship in this study. According to the “2017 White Paper on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Taiwan”, there are 1,408,313 SMEs in Taiwan, accounting for 97.73% of all enterprises' in Taiwan (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2017). Under the operational condition of SMEs with low capital and high cash flow, every company must constantly compete with other similar companies. To maintain their competitiveness and sustainability, they need to constantly innovate, making employees working under pressure a normal. Students have different experiences and socialization processing which depend on their different internship companies.

On the other side, according to the results of this study, during the internship socialization processes will affects students' occupational career in the future. This also means we must plan intern program carefully with institutions. Depending on the resources available for the internship program, this feedback can be used for information, intervention, or as part of a more comprehensive approach (McManus, 2008), aimed at clarifying how we can maximize the positive outcomes of internships and the future careers of students. Further research can be considered in subsequent studies.

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AN ANALYSIS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF OFF-CAMPUS INTERNSHIP

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