

Internship Learnings Acquired by Advertising and Public Relations Alumni Batch 2016-2019 of Polytechnic University of The Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the internship learnings and skills acquired by Polytechnic University of the Philippines Advertising and Public Relations Alumni Batch 2016- 2019. Researchers used a qualitative method in gathering data to be able to get valuable information and significant data. A specific number of 10 informants was chosen to be evaluated using a purposive sampling technique. The study employed a narrative inquiry method to examine the roles and learning acquired by students during their internship. Using focus group discussion (FGD), researchers selected a group of people to have discussions with a moderator on a specific topic or issue. The study revealed that internship experience is relevant in nurturing the skills and competencies of the students, as well as helping to recognize their field of proficiency, which has a huge impact on their post-graduation plans. In addition, the learning gained by students in the industry is greater than what they learn in school. However, there is an important influence on school learning that has aided students in moving into agencies. As a result, this study advises students to make the most of their internship experience in order to advance in their chosen profession.

Keywords: *Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Internship, OJT, Interns, Advertising Agency, Accounts, PR Industry, and Creatives*

1. INTRODUCTION

Experience is a great teacher. The internship mandated by institutions around the world is a formal or official program that provides practical experience for those who are new to a certain occupation or career. Internships integrate classroom learning and theory with hands-on experience obtained in a professional or group setting. (Julia M., 2018). In an increasing number of institutions, internship programs are part of the academic curriculum. They are an effective way to get students involved in real-life situations. Students may put what they've learned in class to use and reinforce what they've learned. Their regular reviews enable them to have a better understanding of their strengths and limitations. They can compare and contrast several job options before making a long-term commitment.

The Advertising and Public Relations Department can utilize this to enhance the OJT standards and internship evaluation. Internships usually last at least one full-time term (quarter or semester), but they can last up to two semesters. Students are given academic credit for their internships, and they are frequently given tasks that require them to reflect on the similarities between their work experiences and the principles they have studied in class. In comparison to a standard classroom-based educational setting, this experiential learning technique involves a separate but complementary learning process. While an internship program has apparent benefits for students, it

also has significant advantages for the company's shareholders, the educational institution, and the nation's workforce readiness in general (Schambach, T. P., Dirks, J., 2002). Internships typically involve paid, unpaid, full-time, temporary employment in an organized setting in which the student does tasks relating to their degree specialization. The Commission on Higher Education Department Memorandum Order No.104 series of 2017 entitled Revised Guidelines for Student Internship Programs in the Philippines states that the internship program is intended to provide students with an opportunity to supplement their formal learning with practical knowledge, skills, and desirable attitudes while gaining hands-on experience. One of the methods used by higher education to build the needed capabilities of its graduates has been on-the-job training (OJT). OJT's aims and objectives aided in the development of necessary skills for obtaining a specific job and converting training into a beneficial working experience. (Ylagan, 2013). In university, particularly at Polytechnic University of the Philippines, every student is required to participate in OJT as part of their coursework. The objective is to establish the roles and duties of all students involved, as well as processes for dealing with various circumstances that may emerge during the OJT. Encourage additional institutions to engage in the OJT program by establishing standardized processes that are uniform, manageable, and practical. Students must exhibit certain abilities related to their field of expertise throughout their OJT, which may be viewed as a crucial application to their future work environment. (Bernardo, Landicho, & Laguador, 2014).

Presently, the Bachelor in Advertising and Public Relations (BAPR) is a program under the PUP College of Communication, whose curriculum aims to produce dedicated, expertly trained, technology-proficient, socially responsible, values-oriented, and globally competitive future advertising practitioners and entrepreneurs. However, in this study, the informants' program was still using the 2008 business-based curriculum under the College of Business Administration. The purpose of this study is to explore the internship learning acquired by the Polytechnic University of the Philippines' Advertising and Public Relations Alumni Batch 2016-2019.

Thus, this paper aimed to understand and explore the learning and skills acquired by Advertising and Public Relations Alumni during their internship. Specifically, the researchers will provide information to the following questions: (1) How do informants explore the experiential learning in their internship program in terms of their Concrete Experience?, (2) How do informants explore the experiential learning in their internship program in terms of their Reflective Observation?, (3) How do informants explore the experiential learning in their internship program in terms of their Abstract Conceptualization?, (4) How do informants explore the experiential learning in their internship program in terms of their Active Experimentation?

2. METHODS

The research design used in this study is qualitative since the study looks into the learnings acquired by the Alumni of Advertising and Public Relations from PUP and aims to be able to gain insights and analyze significant data for better interpretation (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008), whereas the rich and thick data generated from interviews are analyzed in a systematically laid out process (Chandra & Shang 2019). To effectively use the data, engaging a small group of people in an informal group conversation centered on a certain topic is needed by the researchers (Wilkinson, 2004).

The tradition of inquiry used in this research was a narrative inquiry, which is a qualitative research approach for answering process-related research questions in which the stories themselves become the raw data. The present study used narrative inquiry methodology to examine the roles and learning acquired by Alumni during their internship. The focus group discussion data-generation method was utilized as a technique to select a group of people to discuss a given topic with a moderator. The discussion guide was directed at the informants' learnings and experiences acquired from their internship.

The research consisted of 10 informants who were able to meet the basic profiles of the study: aged 23–25, male or female, Advertising and Public Relations Alumni from batch 2016–2019, currently working in the Advertising and PR industry, and who had experienced OJT in the Advertising and PR industry. Using purposive sampling, each informant was selected based on the above-mentioned qualities. Accordingly, the sampling method

used was a type of non-probability sampling technique and was based solely on the judgment of the researcher, so as long as the selected informants were able to meet the minimum requirements of the research.

To obtain data for this study, this study used a focus group discussion that was designed specifically for the research informants from the different approaches accessible in qualitative research.

Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation were the categories used in the discussion guide, which were based on Kolb's paradigm. The major themes that emerged throughout the research, which looked at the internship learnings of Advertising and Public relations Alumni Batch 2016-2019, were included under each area.

The following procedures were followed under the stated research design and technique to correctly obtain the results for this study. The study's informants were chosen using a purposive sampling approach. To avoid any biases, each informant was first given a broad summary of the research and asked for permission to participate in the study. The researcher requested permission to record the FGD for documentation reasons while assuring the informants' privacy. The informants have agreed, the researcher introduced himself and established a rapport with them. The FGD followed the format in the Instrumentation/ discussion guide and the informants have developed a rapport with the interviewer. During the FGD, the researcher asked follow-up questions to see if any further responses support the discussion. The focus group discussion has concluded, the researcher thanked the informants and presented a token.

Thematic analysis is used to examine the data from the interview. After obtaining the necessary information, the researchers closely analyzed the data to identify common themes that would expand the discussion on the Internship Learnings Acquired by Advertising and Public Relations Alumni Batch 2016- 2019. The researcher concluded and made suggestions based on these findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the results and discussions in the Internship Learnings Acquired by Advertising and Public Relations Alumni Batch 2016-2019.

1. Internship Concrete Experience

a. Deployed to ADPR-Related Tasks in Training Stations

According to the informants' responses, their entire internship experience is relevant to the advertising industry. Informants are assigned to different roles inside the advertising agency, such as accounts, creatives, production, and so on. They are assigned from one department to another to have a thorough understanding of how things work in each department within the agency.

Franz, Zed, and Paul were assigned to accounts with the primary role of linking the agency with the clients. Franz oversees the team and collaborates with creatives and other agencies on a regular basis. Zed, as an account, created a report (competitive analysis) that he distributed and presented to the clients. While Paul worked as a presenter of TVCs or campaign materials to clients, he was also involved in creatives and presented ideas to the media agency. Kenji, Sei, and Ivy were transferred from one department to another in the advertising agency. Kenji was assigned to the admin team initially, then to accounts, then to creatives, and finally to committee management. Sei worked for the Strategy team for two weeks and in the Creatives team for three weeks to develop campaign pitches for the real client. And Ivy was assigned to a variety of personalities in the industry, including publishing, branding, and another side of the firm.

Because of their internship program, Josh and Huck were assigned to work as a team. Huck experienced each week's presentation, and each week, they had seven tasks to deliver. Say and Moja's experiences differed from those of the other informants. While Moja worked on the Production side, Say

assisted her supervisor with emails and other agency activities.

With regards to that, in a dissertation conducted by Zehr (2016), students were less likely to believe they had control over their work, which is to be expected given their lack of experience. They felt that their experiences allowed them to learn how to interact in a professional setting. The study indicated that the workplace provided a positive learning environment.

b. Handled different brands in their Internship Program

Furthermore, the informants experienced handling different brands; they managed several campaigns for a specific brand. They had the experience of working with the team internally, with creatives, and in all departments of agencies. They are involved in brainstorming to come up with a certain campaign idea.

Zed, Joshua, Say and Ivy learned to develop during internship their field of expertise and it gave them an idea on what to pursue in the future. As for Zed and Ivy, the teachings in school are so broad that it's hard for them to choose what field they should focus on. However, in the industry, they were tasked to different areas and it enabled them to realize the field they really want.

Franz, Zed, and Kenji handled brands in their internship. Franz handled specifically car brands, Zed handled big brands such as healthy beverages and clothing apparel. He has also been involved in brainstorming handling the brand of Oral Gel. While Kenji handled many brands including a shampoo brand. All of them are involved in making a campaign for specific brands.

With regards to that, according to Zehr and Korte (2020), the result of internships has the students reporting varying levels of learning about how a company operates and how to collaborate with others in a professional setting. The researchers discovered that students did not look for links between the classroom and the workplace, making it difficult to transfer skills from one setting to the other.

c. Involvement in the Agency's Typical Work

The informants intended to do things that typical agency employees did, including engaging with specific brand competitors and preparing a report that would serve as a competitive analysis for the client. Agencies provide them with hands-on experience in the workplace. Some of them realized that their internship taught them more than they had learned in school.

Zed and Paul were involved in the typical brainstorming of creatives in the agency. The agency let Zed input ideas while Paul gathered digital efforts and other campaigns made by competitors that are related to Josh who created competitive scans/analysis for creatives.

Ivy and Huck experienced how the industry actually worked on a daily basis with pressure and exhaustion.

Moja and Say were involved in the work of the production side where Say was involved in the recording of voice talent and created a vector for animation while Moja was involved in the preparation of the booths in a specific event of his agency.

This goes hand in hand with the study that internship programs provide students with the opportunity to gain experience in a real-world work environment, which they believe is the most credible way of learning about the realities of the workplace (Fonner & Roloff, 2006).

2. Internship Reflective Observation

a. Realizations in the Internship Experience

As a result of the researchers' discussion with the informants, internship experience is vital in recognizing the student's field of proficiency or the department where they excel. The informants were able to explore the other fields, which assisted them in determining which track they belonged

to. Based on the informants' experiences after completing their internships, they realized the students' realizations during their internship may have an impact on their post-graduation plans.

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Sei learned the different sides of agency where she discovered that there are more things to do in the industry that she never encountered in school such as the modern way of doing work digitally.

It reflected on Chen, Hu, Wang, and Chen (2011) as they discussed the importance of hands-on training. Through it, students learn about the nature of jobs and acquire specific skills. Internships help students acquire important self-reflection skills and explore possible career possibilities.

b. The Gap between learning at school and learning in the training stations

As the informants encounter a fast-paced environment and the industry's modern approach to work, they realize that what they learn in school is greatly different from what they do in their job.

Huck, Paul, and Moja learned that there's a huge difference in the knowledge they gained in the learning environment of school and industry. According to Moja and Paul, they were able to experience the actual process in the field such as the fast-paced work and different approaches to brands and clients. For Huck, he gained a lot of useful tips and insight that could help them in class.

Say and Ivy learned that there are some learnings in school that can be applied in the internship but they learned more applicable tips in the industry. For Say, it somehow gave her a glimpse of the real world. For Ivy, they should deliver what the actual client expects them to deliver and it gives them much more pressure than in school.

Kenji learned that the digital way of doing work is very important in the internship. It was never taught in school, instead, the school was only focused on traditional ways of teaching.

With regards to that, González-Marcos, Alba-Elas, Navaridas-Nalda, and OrdieresMeré (2016) proved that project-based learning was employed in a real-world setting to assist students learning more successfully, and it was proven to be more effective than standard teaching techniques.

c. Learned ADPR-Related Soft Skills

The informants have gained similar and different knowledge and skills during their internship programs. These are a combination of both soft and hard skills. These soft skills include communication skills on how to properly craft messages when communicating with clients, employees, and co-interns.

Franz, Zed, and Ivy learned how to manage their time properly. As an accounts person, Franz is handling different brands and has a lot of work including brainstorming, communicating with clients all the time, checking the creative assets, checking the turnaround time of the materials and meetings. In terms of time management, he managed his time by knowing his priorities first. As for Zed, he honed his time management skills by being punctual. He adjusted his body clock by waking up early and being on time. The same goes for Ivy who practiced her time management skills by being earlier than call time whenever she had shootings during her internship.

Franz, Paul, Zed, and Kenji also learned how to adapt to their work environment. Franz worked with different kinds of people so he must know how to adapt to his environment. Adapting for him is knowing his place when to be serious when to be fun, and when to be stern. For Zed, looking professional by dressing up properly is one of the adjustments he made upon coming into the real world. He adapted to his work environment by learning how to brainstorm professionally and not emotionally as well. Kenji on the other hand adapted to the fast-paced deadlines and

requirements of clients.

Franz and Kenji also enhanced their communication skill or business communication skills. Being an accounts person, communication is a very powerful tool for Franz. He learned by communicating properly with clients especially if there were problems or delays encountered on their materials. While Kenji learned business communication in terms of proper and formal ways of sending and answering emails.

In fact, according to Gale et al. (2017), internships expose students to discipline-specific knowledge. An internship can help a student develop professionalism, communication, and interpersonal skills. Additional soft skills, such as attitude and work ethic, along with the technical hard skills necessary for a profession, are in demand today (Gale et al., 2017).

d. Acquired ADPR-Related Hard Skills

Aside from soft skills, the informants also acquired technical skills during their internship that broadened their knowledge in their chosen field or department, such as video editing, layout, the correct way of writing, and proper flow of creating campaigns.

Sei, Say, and Huck as creatives was able to practice their editing skills during their internship. Sei wasn't proficient enough when she started but she was able to exercise her photoshop skills on her internship days. Say was able to use a good computer to practice her skills in adobe photoshop and illustrator. Huck also learned how to edit videos, adobe software, and music even though he's not knowledgeable about it.

Josh learned the proper flow and easy way of creating campaigns which he struggled doing back when he was still not an intern.

In fact, this is reflected in the study of Chen, Hu, Wang, and Chen (2011), where internships help students develop important self-reflection skills as well as explore a variety of career options.

Moja, on the other hand, didn't acquire knowledge and skills during his internship.

3. Internship Abstract Conceptualization

a. Lessons and Conclusions Drawn from Internship

Based on the researchers' discussion with the informants, the internship was extremely important and beneficial in terms of improving one's character, knowledge, professionalism, and competence as they were given an opportunity to gain in-depth experience of what working in the advertising industry is like. Informants also advise students to pursue their interests and engage in company activities to further develop their potential.

The informants also stated that they have improved their sense of teamwork, time management, flexibility when it comes to working with different departments, and adaptability to a fast-paced environment despite having inadequate knowledge and skills for their roles when they entered the company.

According to the statements from Franz, Josh, and Moja, they concluded that their internship experience has helped them discover their interests and the career they want to pursue after graduation. Franz discovered that he was good at accounts, and so he involved himself in brainstorming, strategic planning, and presentation. Josh and Moja learned that it is important to pursue their interests in order to grow in the field that they want to excel in.

Meanwhile, according to Zed, Paul, Huck, and Say, exploring different roles is important to gain knowledge and skills that will help them become well-rounded employees in the agency. While Zed and Paul discovered that while they were good at accounts, they also wanted to know how people in the creative and strategy departments worked, and so they observed and tried out tasks from different departments. Huck and Say, however, learned that their decisions as to what

field they wanted to pursue were ever-changing, and so it is fine to not know what they want even after the internship, and maximizing their time to explore different roles and companies would mean a better perception of what they want to do or where they want to work after graduation.

On the other hand, their expectations prior to the internship have not been as accurate as they had envisioned. The informants believed they had all of the necessary knowledge and skills for the internship, but later on, discovered what they lacked during the training.

According to Sei, Kenji, and Ivy, internships are important in order to know what knowledge and skills they lack and how they will be able to adapt to their work environment. Sei concluded that her internship experience was different from school because she had to help herself learn how to adapt to her work environment on her own. Meanwhile, Kenji said that he noticed how he and his classmates gained professional skills and became more organized when doing campaigns because of the internship. Lastly, Ivy focused on learning technical skills such as editing because these are the skills that the curriculum lacks. She learned that she needed to be resourceful and have a sense of teamwork with her co-interns and colleagues.

The findings are reflected in a study by Korsakova & Zenina (2015), where it says that professional competence is the ultimate result of a graduate's growth, which may be attained by gaining experience in the chosen profession and honing particular personal attributes and intellectual capabilities.

b. Accuracy of OJT Supervisor's Training Evaluation

Also, according to their statements, the informants believed their OJT supervisors' assessments and evaluations of their performance were accurate and satisfactory. They also received feedback, which helped them determine their areas for improvement. Thus, evaluation and assessment of students' OJT performance are important in monitoring their progress during their internship. The findings can be supported by O'Neill (2010), in which the study suggests that all three parties (student, institution, and employer) meet for progress meetings to ensure that academic goals are met and the working relationship remains collaborative.

4. Internship Active Experimentation

a. ADPR-related Goals and Considerations from the Internship

According to the informants, internships in the industry, even short ones and unpaid ones are a form of employment and are not just a training ground for the interns; they provide essential experience and should be included on the resume. Moreover, informants are all prepared and equipped with knowledge of where they wanted to intern as well as where they wanted to get a job after graduating from college.

Franz, Huck, Josh, Paul, and Say have envisioned themselves working in an advertising agency. Say said that she'll continue to work at her assigned internship agency as a creative and so did Paul and Josh who started working in an ad agency. Franz also considered the internship he had experienced to focus on being an accounts person while Huck wanted to settle his school problems first then will immediately work at an ad agency.

In fact, the informants are considering pursuing their first job in the agencies where they intern because they enjoy the environment and the people they work with. The informants have analyzed the skills that they've gained and have their goals in mind after the internship. They aim high and with pride in order to work or collaborate with the team and the clients. Furthermore, what they have learned during their internship has influenced them in areas such as decision-making and opportunities to work for larger organizations.

On the other hand, Sei wanted to improve herself first and will consider working in an ad

agency just like Zed who wanted to grab all the opportunities. Kenji worries less because even if he falls under an ad agency, corporate, or with the client-side, he said that it's all good as long as it contributes to career growth. Only Moja never envisioned herself pursuing work in an ad agency at first but after working in a digital agency she then realized that she didn't fit in the strategy, accounts, and creative side.

b. Post-graduation Plans Influenced by Internship

With regards to this, in terms of the informants' post-graduation plans, all of them really want to pursue advertising agencies. One of the informants, Zed, said that after graduation, you can't easily get a job. That's why it's best to take opportunities and possible options while studying and while having an internship. According to Nick Crouse, an assistant account executive at a PR firm, internships that are open to graduates often don't pay much—or anything at all. That doesn't mean you can't or shouldn't pursue them. This is why a lot of graduates want to have jobs already.

In fact, an internship may not be their first choice for post-college work. However, it may be the best way for them to gain the experience and make the personal connections they need to finally land the position they want, according to an informant. Likewise, having a goal and future plans is the best choice now to be able to take the step. They have also shown career development and have already grown their resumes or curriculum vitae. What the agencies have provided them is actually helping, developing, and still gaining experience.

Zed, on the other hand, said that an internship was a gateway to the job and it won't decide for the future but it will just open possibilities. This is why Ivy said to always be careful when committing to the work, thus, Kenji said that post-graduation plans were like enrolling in a university which was seconded by Franz, Huck, and Josh who decided to continue what they have started; Franz as accounts, Josh as an Art Director and Huck as a Copywriter. Their post-graduation plans and decision-making helped them land a job.

The study showed how the informants knew the things they lacked and how they solved them during and after their internship, which affected their decision-making or plans from being an intern to having a stable job. Good learning is the result of active experimentation, which is all about applying what you've learned, discovered, and experienced in life.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and its analysis, the following conclusions were drawn: (1) The ADPR Internship Concrete Experience is linked to the ADPR Internship Reflective Observation. (2) The ADPR Internship Reflective Observation is linked to the ADPR Internship Abstract Conceptualization. (3) The ADPR Internship Abstract Conceptualization is linked to the ADPR Internship Active Experimentation. (4) The ADPR Internship Active Experimentation is linked to the ADPR Internship Concrete Experience.

Researchers have found that an internship is already the student's initial training job and is worthwhile to take as a course requirement since it gives more than just learning but also remarkable experiences. Digital advertising plays an important part in the industry, however, some lessons were not taught in school, so informants had to take extra lessons and self-taught sessions in order to adapt to that work environment. The informants had positive experiences during their internships since they were treated like regular employees rather than interns.

There is a difference between what is taught in school and what is taught in the field, where informants have gained a far broader grasp of the industry. But there is a significant influence on the learning at school that has helped them move spaces into the agencies. In fact, many interns were identified and made connections. Furthermore, internship experience is critical in determining a student's area of expertise or the department where their abilities stand out. An excellent intern has excellent presentation skills, communication skills, and creative

juices. Thus, a student's discipline and willingness to complete a task or activity provided to them has a significant influence on their progress.

The researchers concluded that the knowledge gained by informants through internships is more likely to be retained since it would benefit future plans, particularly the very first job they want to pursue. Adaptability is also a good basis when they transition from student to intern in a real-world setting. Also, internships assisted them in establishing the attitude and approach required for corporate culture. Furthermore, the OJT supervisors' assessments and evaluations of their performance assisted them in recognizing their industry's strengths and areas for improvement.

Lastly, the internship of PUP's BAPR graduates has helped them determine whether or not to pursue their field of work. Moreover, the informants' entire internship experience also had an effect on their decision-making, particularly on the job they wanted to pursue after graduation. In the end, the informants' goals were to work in an advertising agency and continue in the program where they excel and earn a living since, they have recognized all the possibilities and opportunities in the internship as a course requirement.

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