

INTERNSHIP IN INDIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTION: A CASE OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract

The latest National Education Policy of India (NEP-2020) underlined the significance of internship opportunities for students pursuing vocational degree programmes to make them job-ready for the industry. Internships have always been the most effective tool for empirical learning, as they allow students to experience hands-on learning and the practical applications of theoretical coursework. Current research examines the role and importance of internships in tourism and hospitality education. Given the significance of internships in developing students' skill competencies, the findings of the current study can help identify students' overall perceptions of their skill competencies during the pre-internship and post-internship periods. This research aims to identify the gap between the pre- and post-on-the-job training (OJT) experiences of tourism and hospitality undergraduates regarding the competencies required to enter the industry. The paper is empirical in nature and employs both primary and secondary data, which were analyzed using mean scores and t-test. The study's significant implication is to assess the role of the internship in developing industry-relevant competencies among students.

Keywords: Tourism; Hospitality; Skills and Competencies; Vocational Education; Internship.

ESTÁGIO EM EDUCAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL INDIANA E PERCEPÇÃO DOS ALUNOS: UM CASO DE ESTUDANTES DE GRADUAÇÃO EM TURISMO E HOTELARIA

Resumo

A mais recente política educacional nacional da Índia (NEP-2020) sublinhou a importância das oportunidades de estágio para estudantes que buscam programas de graduação vocacional, visando prepará-los para o trabalho na indústria. O estágio sempre foi a ferramenta mais eficaz para o aprendizado empírico, pois permite aos alunos vivenciar o aprendizado prático e os aspectos práticos dos cursos teóricos. A pesquisa atual examina o papel e a importância do estágio na educação em turismo e hotelaria. Ponderando a importância dos estágios no desenvolvimento de competências entre os alunos, os resultados do presente estudo podem ser eficazes na identificação da percepção geral dos estudantes de hotelaria ao avaliarem suas competências nos períodos pré-estágio e pós-estágio. Esta pesquisa busca identificar a lacuna entre a experiência pré- e pós-formação no trabalho (OJT) de estudantes de graduação em turismo e hotelaria, em termos das competências necessárias para ingressar na indústria. O artigo é de natureza empírica e emprega dados primários e secundários que foram analisados por meio de pontuações médias e teste t. A principal implicação do estudo é avaliar a importância do estágio no desenvolvimento de competências relevantes para a indústria entre os alunos.

Palavras-chave: Turismo; hospitalidade; Competências e habilidades; Educação vocacional; Estágio.

PASANTÍA EN EDUCACIÓN VOCACIONAL INDIA Y PERCEPCIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES: UN CASO DE ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS DE TURISMO Y HOTELERÍA

Resumen

La última política educativa nacional de la India (NEP-2020) subrayó la importancia de las oportunidades de pasantías para los estudiantes que cursan programas de grado profesional, con el fin de prepararlos para trabajar en la industria. Las pasantías siempre han sido la herramienta más eficaz para el aprendizaje empírico, ya que permiten a los estudiantes experimentar el aprendizaje práctico así como los aspectos prácticos de los cursos teóricos. La investigación actual examina el papel y la importancia de las pasantías en la educación en turismo y hotelaria. Al reflexionar sobre la importancia de las pasantías en el desarrollo de competencias y habilidades en los estudiantes, los hallazgos del estudio actual pueden ser útiles para identificar la percepción general de los estudiantes de hotelaria al evaluar sus competencias y habilidades durante los períodos previo y posterior a las prácticas. Esta investigación busca identificar la brecha entre la experiencia previa y la posterior a la formación en el puesto de trabajo (OJT) de los estudiantes universitarios de turismo y hotelaria, en términos de las competencias necesarias para poner un pie en la industria. El artículo es de naturaleza empírica y emplea datos tanto primarios como secundarios, que se analizaron mediante puntuaciones medias y la prueba t. La principal implicación del estudio es evaluar la importancia de las prácticas en el desarrollo de competencias relevantes para la industria en los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Turismo; Hospitalidad; Competencias y habilidades; Educación vocacional; Pasantía.

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1 INTRODUCTION

India faces significant challenges in its skill development efforts, particularly in ensuring that trained individuals find jobs that align with their skills. Many people who complete skill development programs struggle to secure employment that effectively utilizes the skills they have acquired (Panth, 2014). This issue is not unique to India or the Global South; it is a widespread challenge even in developed countries, where skill underutilization remains a persistent problem. Recognizing this, the National Education Policy (2020) of India has emphasized promoting vocational education at the university level and has offered students flexibility in choosing various vocational programmes (NEP, 2020).

As part of providing holistic education, the new educational policy emphasizes industry-relevant internships to prepare students for future jobs and meet industry requirements. The relationship between vocational education and training (VET) and the demand for skilled workers across various industries has become a key focus for researchers and policymakers (McGrath & Yamada, 2023). The present study is focused primarily on Indian tourism and hospitality undergraduates pursuing vocational courses.

The rapid growth of travel and tourism has proliferated the demand for well-qualified and skilled manpower in India (Gangotia et al., 2021). Tourism policies can serve as strategic tools for national development and international positioning" (Pimentel, 2022). The travel and tourism sector is expected to create 126 million new jobs by 2023, and India's share in these new jobs was estimated at 20.4% (WTTC, 2022). With the increase in employment opportunities, there would arise an incremental need for skilled professionals.

Given the emerging trends and demands in the hospitality sector, hospitality professionals need to be well-equipped with essential skills and knowledge. Internships systematically address skill deficiencies by offering hands-on experience that aligns academic expertise with industry needs, helping students develop relevant and practical skills (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). This aligns with experiential learning theory that bridges the gap between education and professional requirements, enhancing employability.

The need for skill-oriented training for graduates is evident in the initiative taken by the Government of India to launch its national skill development mission in 2015. Presently, under the flagship program of the Indian Government, different types of vocational courses, including tourism and hospitality, are offered at both school and college levels (Gangotia et al., 2021).

Additional skill transformations can positively affect a company by helping it achieve its goals, improving employee performance and satisfaction, and enhancing its reputation as a good employer (Behera & Gaur, 2022). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of industry-relevant skills among graduates (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2023), which can be addressed by providing effective training/internship opportunities to students.

There has been a discussion on the skills required for both the tourism and hospitality sectors. Both sectors share common competencies such as leadership, communication

and human resource management. Also, to make a successful career, an individual needs generic, transferable skills. There has been limited research-based evidence on skill competencies due to a lack of time and funding.

However, pre- and post-internship changes can be determined by the interaction between the researcher and the industry supervisor. If they share their observation, it can help evaluate the academic value of internship programs. Besides this, self-assessment is another reliable indicator of assessment.

Vocationalisation of education is the upcoming trend in India and lots of initiatives in this direction have already been taken by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. The major aim of the current study is to determine the importance of internship in developing the various competencies required in the industry.

Based on the Demand for Tertiary Education in NCT Area of Delhi and as per the industry needs, Ambedkar University, Delhi has introduced vocational courses in 2017. One of the courses was Bachelor's of Vocation in Tourism and Hospitality. It is a 6-semester course that includes 2 months of On-the-Job Training in each semester. Unique features of this programme include entry and exit points in every semester for students, placement assistance from the university, paid internships, and continuous assessment by industry and academic professionals.

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives: 1. To analyse the difference between student expectations and student perception vis a vis internship of the students. 2. To identify the internship structure of the study area and its relevance with the industry in terms of competencies. The paper is empirical in nature and employs both primary and secondary data, which were analyzed using mean scores and t-test. The study's significant implication is to assess the role of the internship in developing industry-relevant competencies among students.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Role of Internship in Vocational Education

Internships are curriculum-related work experience that students obtain during their academic careers to prepare them for the future workforce (Karunaratne et al., 2019). It is regularly recognized as an essential pillar for filling the skills gap between school and the world of work (Gonçalves, 2022). An internship is a way to strengthen business contacts and help students better understand what businesses and industries expect from them (Malhotra et al., 2022). Thus, internships may be seen as a win-win event for both prospective employee and organisation (Maertz Jr et al., 2014). While, the success of the internship depends upon the joint efforts of the industry professionals, the university and the trainees (Niman et al., 2021).

Many developing countries have observed the relevance of classroom teaching vis-à-vis the world of work. Higher education institutions have begun providing students with greater familiarity with industry environments, making them better prepared for their roles in industry (Yeravdekar & Tiwari, 2014). India being the youngest population globally

has already started giving emphasis on providing skill-based or practice-based learning experience to the students.

As per the recent 4-year undergraduate framework issued by the University Grants Commission, it is essential for skill-based undergraduate programs to offer internships each year to make students job-ready for industry (UGC, 2020). There are several benefits of internships to the students such as providing them the kind of skills as needed by the industry, better career opportunities and confidence building, and enhancing the human resource capacity.

As such, both academia and industry benefit from proper internship exposure for students (Mohammed et al., 2020). In hospitality programs, on-the-job training enhances students' understanding of organizational functions, develops realistic career expectations, and expands professional networks (Huang & Jao, 2016). This practical experience fosters initiative, adaptability, leadership, and financial management skills, complementing classroom learning.

Additionally, educational and industrial internships provide insights into enterprise operations, management, and planning, supporting students' future professional growth (Otcheskiy et al., 2022). The combination of theoretical and practical learning maximizes educational benefits and effectively prepares students for industry demands.

In vocational education, internships play an essential role in overall development, in preparing students for industry, and in enhancing their competencies. Vocational education encompasses the training and educational programs designed to equip individuals with the essential skills and knowledge needed for specific careers or trades. This form of education aims to prepare students for various professions, emphasizing practical, hands-on experiences that facilitate the development of particular technical competencies (Kaushik, 2014).

Competence is defined as the ability to apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes effectively to specific tasks or roles within a given context (Lenth, 2001). Vocational courses such as retail management, tourism, and hospitality require practical on-the-job training (OJT) to keep students up to date with the latest industry trends and requirements (Levesque et al. 2000).

To achieve the goals of primary stakeholders vis-à-vis students, educators need to fulfil future requirements for skilled manpower, which requires establishing collaboration and discussion with industry professionals (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2023). At this juncture, an internship is an essential component of all Tourism and Hospitality courses worldwide. Previous research has found that most recruiters prefer graduates who have completed an internship during their degree in Tourism and Hospitality.

Usually, an employer places a lot of emphasis on internships, as they provide them with a pool of students with theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. It also helps employers to save time and money on freshers' training. Institutions also benefit from the internship as it serves as a link with industry.

And lastly, students are the ones who benefit the most from training because it provides practical industry experience in the field they wish to be part of. It takes their knowledge to a different level (Petrillose & Montgomery,

1997). The Internship helps in connecting the theory taught by the teachers with the actual practical inputs given to the students which are extremely important for the students to survive in the industry (Akomaning, 2019).

The key advantage of internships or on-the-job training (OJT) is that they help build synergy between classroom teaching and industry requirements in terms of various competencies (Das & Barman, 2021). As the service sector is dynamic and market trends are constantly changing, vocational education must take these demands into account (Lam and Ching, 2007).

It is crucial for the trainers to effectively collaborate with the industry and establish solid industry-academia relations to systematize internships in a planned manner (Kim et al. 2017). Additionally, continuous evaluation and guidance from the industry should also be considered (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2019). Indeed, internships contribute to the development of students' skill competencies (Anjum, 2020).

The development of numerous competencies, such as leadership abilities, personnel management, effective communication, problem-solving aptitude, teamwork, preparedness, and decision-making, is greatly aided by internships (Schreck et al., 2020). Kapareliotis et al. (2019), stressed on the importance of empirical research to enable students develop skill competencies during the internship. However, this issue still needs to be addressed. There exists a need for international scholarship to determine the real-time significance of internships.

2.2 Need for Skill Training

Skill education plays an imperative role in making students fit for the industry. Still there exists a massive gap in terms of the role of skill education for the acceptability of a student in the industry. The true meaning of an internship differs throughout the world. To some extent, industry requirements and the country's demographics determine whether an internship or on-the-job training (OJT) is required (Blankson, 2014).

In addition to the fundamental course requirements and learning objectives, the actual meaning of training depends on a variety of factors and one of them is the cohort size (Madani, 2019). With the ever-increasing demand for skilled manpower and the intensifying competition in the industry, it has become evident that there is a strong need for quality internships at the university level.

Busuttill (2022) underlined the importance of vocational training as it helps students develop the necessary competencies and prepares them for the workforce. The knowledge imparted in the classroom also plays a vital role in meeting workplace requirements. The study also highlighted several strategies to keep students up to date with the demanding expectations of the workforce such as, learning excursions, workshops, internships, and train-the-trainer programs.

There is a pressing need for up-to-date skills and competencies in the higher education sector to bridge the gap between academia and industry (Gangotia & Bhatt, 2023), including critical thinking, ethical reasoning, collaboration skills, and ICT skills (Friedman et al., 2023). Moreover, 21st Century major employability skills are must to

assist the human talent, hence creating the higher education curriculum to enhance the overall employability skills of the current talent pool pursuing higher education is global need of the hour (Rakowska et al., 2021).

COVID-19 severely affected the global tourism industry, reducing income and employment (Seabra & Bhatt, 2022). Mahajan et al. (2022) clearly reflected the need of digital skills such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality and technological skills amongst the students in order to enhance their acceptability in the industry, even during crises.

According to data from the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2015), India has a surplus young population. Further, around 109.73 million skilled manpower will be required for various sectors. In fact, 62% of India's population falls in the 15-59 age group, and 54% is below the age of 24, indicating an urgent need for skilled manpower in the near future, which can be met by offering skill- or internship-based vocational courses.

At each education level, practical skills should be mandatorily provided to the students and each student must undergo an internship of significant duration to better equip themselves for their role in industry. Internship as a type of professional learning is a substantial segment of numerous projects in professional instruction (Hsu et al., 2019).

It can help students bridge the gap between instructional learning measures and real-world reality (Cho et al., 2021). The significance of an internship depends on the co-activity in which students take an interest, its term, the type of business, its ultimate goals, and the setting in which it is conducted (Crnković-Pozaić, 2006).

Furthermore, students' success in obtaining a job after graduation depends on the quality of training they have gained during the internship, thereby making them job-ready (Aqli et al., 2019). Proper harmonization between industry and vocational school and the various placement procedures for the students plays a very exceptional role for proficient growth of students (Hong, 2021). One crucial aspect is the duration of the training and the internal evaluation structure, which support students' overall progress and the development of life skills (Alajmi, 2019).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Instrument Development

The questionnaire used in our study included 12 items adopted from (Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997; Seymour et al., 2017) to understand the role and importance of internships in tourism and hospitality education, focusing on intern perceptions and expectations for OJT.

The questionnaire was structured into three sections: the first collected demographic information, the second determined whether respondents were students enrolled in vocational courses, and the third included questions on specific items of interest. Responses were noted on a five-point Likert scale, with items measured from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being Strong Agree.

3.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data were collected quantitatively using a self-

structured questionnaire titled "Role of Internship in Vocational Education for Developing Skill Competencies among Indian Hospitality Students." Simple random sampling was used to ensure that each respondent had an equal and independent chance of being selected for the study (Cochran, 1977). The sample was taken from the 1st year students of B.Voc. Tourism and Hospitality programme of Ambedkar University Delhi, India.

The data were collected from January to July 2024 in two phases: before the internship (pre-OJT) and after the internship (post-OJT). The survey was conducted among 115 students who underwent a 40-day OJT. Of the 107 questionnaires, 107 were found valid after outlier checks, yielding a response rate of 93.04 %. The minimum sample size of 30 participants per group is often considered sufficient, thereby ensuring generalizability (Lenth, 2001).

The questionnaire was validated based on recommendations from three hospitality academicians and one industry expert. Further, internal consistency or reliability for the questionnaire with 12 items (five -Likert point) was checked by Cronbach's alpha and the value was 0.783 (See table 1). The Normality test was conducted for the items by using the Shapiro-Wilk test; the values of all items were calculated to be greater than 0.05, which depicted that the data was normally distributed.

For data analysis, SPSS software was used to perform a paired sample t-test to compare the mean and the t-value (Okoye & Hosseini, 2024). The following null hypothesis (H_0) has been formulated: There is no significant difference between student expectation and perception in the pre-OJT and post-OJT phases.

Table 1. Data Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.783	12

Source: own elaboration.

The questionnaire consisted of various student demography's vis-à-vis age, gender, and education level. The average age of the respondents or students was 18 years with 40% Female and 60 % males. The level of education of all students before joining the programme was secondary school.

4 Findings

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 2 presents the mean scores, t-values, and p-values for all items. The mean difference for the statements viz. "Training objectives should be clearly defined" and "Instructor/Mentor should be skilful and knowledgeable towards practicals" were calculated 0.07 and -0.3, which reflects that there is a need for slight improvement in defining the training objectives during the OJT, as well as Mentors should be more skilful and knowledgeable.

The mean difference for other values such as 'Encouragement should be given to participation and interaction during OJT', 'There should be a relevancy of the theory taught in classroom with OJT', 'The practical exposure during OJT should impact my professional growth', 'Proper

time should be allocated for the OJT', 'Complete orientation should be organised before going for the OJT', 'Training staff in hotels should be helpful and polite', 'Maximum shift timings per day should not exceed 9 hours', 'OJT should make me more skilful', 'Communication should be improved during OJT', 'The industry should organise proper training orientations' were calculated as 0.4,0.3,0.2,0.36,0.09, 0.18,

0.49, 0.14,0.29 and 0.58 respectively, which reflects that all these competencies are positive in nature. Post OJT, students perceived that they were satisfied in terms of encouragement, relevancy of the theory, practical exposure, proper time, orientation, trainings, shift timings, skills, communication and orientation during OJT.

Table 2. T-test analysis

Items/Statements/Skill Competencies	Pre OJT & Post OJT	Mean Scores	Mean difference	t value	Sig. level
Training objectives should be clearly defined	Pre OJT Post OJT	5.67 5.60	-0.07	0.948	0.35
Encouragement should be given to participation and interaction during OJT	Pre OJT Post OJT	5.36 5.76	0.4	2.563	.015*
There should be relevancy of theory taught in the classroom with OJT	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.98 5.28	0.3	2.061	.048*
The practical exposure during OJT should impact my professional growth	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.72 4.92	0.2	1.663	0.106
Instructor/Mentor should be skilful and knowledgeable towards practicals.	Pre OJT Post OJT	5.11 4.81	-0.3	-1.213	0.234
Proper time should be allocated for the OJT	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.77 5.13	0.36	2.678	.012*
Complete orientation should be organised before going for the OJT	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.90 4.99	0.09	0.752	0.458
Training staff in hotels should be helpful and polite	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.69 4.87	0.18	1.741	0.092
Maximum shift timings per day should not exceed 9 hours	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.47 4.96	0.49	3.773	.001 *
OJT should make me more skilful	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.80 4.94	0.14	1.3	0.203
Communication should be improved during OJT	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.84 5.13	0.29	2.613	.014*
Proper training orientations should be organised by the industry	Pre OJT Post OJT	4.11 4.69	0.58	3.415	.002**

Source: own elaboration. Notes: * Significance ($p < .05$ level).

Furthermore, the p-value for the competencies viz. 'Encouragement should be given to participation and interaction during OJT', 'There should be the relevancy of the theory taught in the classroom with OJT', 'Instructor/Mentor should be skilful and knowledgeable towards practicals', 'Proper time should be allocated for the OJT', 'Maximum shift timings per day should not exceed 9 hours', 'Communication should be improved during OJT', and 'Proper training orientations should be organised by the industry' were found to be significant at 0.05 level which rejects our null hypothesis. This means students' perceptions and expectations are significantly influenced by the internship.

As per the industry experts, these competencies will enhance the leadership quality, problem-solving skills and customer management skills of the students which would undoubtedly help them for their career building. The faculty or experts in the field of tourism and hospitality explained the significance of practical training for skill development (Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997) and emphasized the importance of OJT on the overall skill development (Baum, 2002; Airey, 2010).

Hands-on training, or OJT, will also help students make a significant mark in the industry and sustain themselves at the highest level (Williams, 2008). Proper OJT or training would certainly help students develop all the competencies required in the industry (Chiu et al., 2016).

This study employed a comprehensive data analysis framework to interpret students' perceptions of skill development during vocational internships in tourism and

hospitality. Drawing on theoretical categories of skill acquisition such as soft skills, cognitive skills, and technical skills, the analysis systematically categorizes and synthesizes these dimensions with empirical data collected through student feedback. The approach aligns with Experiential Learning Theory, emphasizing how students develop competencies through hands-on experiences.

The analysis reveals clear trends in students' self-reported growth across core skill domains. Technical skills, essential for operational efficiency in tourism and hospitality, were consistently highlighted as significantly improved through practical exposure. Interpersonal skills, which are critical for effective client interaction and teamwork, also demonstrated notable enhancement. Furthermore, cognitive skills emerged as essential competencies shaped by the challenges encountered in real-world settings.

To ensure a holistic evaluation, the synthesis framework integrates theoretical insights into experiential learning outcomes with these observed trends, thereby validating the research objective of assessing the efficacy of skill development within vocational internships.

The findings underscore the positive impact of internships on student skill acquisition, confirming the study's hypothesis that practical exposure in tourism and hospitality environments fosters comprehensive skill development. This integration of theory and data not only reflects the main trends but also supports the article's conclusions on the efficacy of vocational internships as essential elements of skill-based education.

4.2 Implications for Academia

The study's findings emphasize the importance of integrating practical training with academic curricula to equip students with relevant skills for the hospitality sector. Academic institutions should collaborate closely with industry partners to design internship programs that are aligned with both educational goals and industry needs. This collaboration can ensure that the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom is effectively applied in real-world settings.

Additionally, the significant impact of internships on skill development suggests that universities should place a stronger emphasis on experiential learning, incorporating regular industry interactions, workshops, and on-the-job training into their programs. By doing so, institutions can enhance their graduates' employability, making them more competitive in the job market.

Furthermore, continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms should be established to monitor students' progress during their internships, ensuring that learning objectives are met and that areas for improvement are identified and addressed promptly.

4.3 Implications for Industry

The study highlights the critical role of structured internships in bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements. The findings suggest that students perceive a significant improvement in listed competencies post-internship. For the hospitality industry, this underscores the value of well-designed internship programs that not only enhance practical skills but also align with the sector's dynamic needs. Industry stakeholders should invest in mentorship programs to ensure experienced professionals guide interns effectively.

Moreover, defining clear training objectives and providing consistent feedback can enhance the internship experience, resulting in a workforce better prepared to meet industry standards. By integrating these elements, the industry can develop a pipeline of skilled professionals ready to contribute from day one, thereby reducing the time and resources spent on training new hires and improving overall service quality.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was undertaken with the prime aim to understand the importance of internship in developing various competencies required in the industry. The main findings revealed that an internship plays a significant role in equipping students with the skills industry needs and making them job-ready. It has been noted that students acquire different skills during their internships.

Nevertheless, an internship provides the required number of skills to the students, especially in tourism and hospitality, to meet the requirements of the industry recruiters. At this juncture, an internship emerges as an effective tool for vocational students to relate classroom concepts to real-world industrial practices. Essentially, the significant difference in students' perceptions pre- and post-internship reveals the importance of the internship in shaping

pupils' views of their role in industry, thereby making them job-ready. Skill transformations through internships positively impact students by helping them achieve career goals, improving their performance and motivation, and enhancing overall satisfaction (Behera & Gaur, 2022).

Consistent with prior research, our study highlights how internships build students' confidence and enhance workplace adaptability, enabling them to meet industry demands effectively (Alp et al., 2023; Rochmayanti et al., 2021). Additionally, internships shall be accepted as an integral part of the vocational education system to bridge the gap between academic deliverables and industry expectations.

The study showed the need for doing this empirical research to further ascertain the importance of skill courses and internships. This research has also identified linkages between internships and the development of skill attributes among students; however, a continued emphasis should still be placed on research on skill competencies and internships in the field of hospitality and tourism. However, gaps in specific competencies, such as adaptive problem-solving, persist in current frameworks, pointing to areas where further research and development could enhance vocational training programs globally.

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Final Table. CRediT author statement.

Term	Definition	Author 1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
Conceptualization	Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims	x	x	x	x	x	
Methodology	Development or design of methodology; creation of models	x					
Software	Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components	x					
Validation	Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/ reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs	x	x				
Formal analysis	Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data	x		x			
Investigation	Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection	x	x	x			x
Resources	Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools	x					
Data Curation	Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later reuse	x	x	x			
Writing - Original Draft	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)		x	x			
Writing - Review & Editing	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or post-publication stages		x	x	x	x	
Visualization	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/ data presentation						
Supervision	Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team			x	x	x	
Project administration	Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution	x	x	x	x	x	x
Funding acquisition	Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication						

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