



Short Paper

# Assessing the Online Practicum of Library and Information Science Students: Basis for Blended Internship

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## Abstract

Internships provide students in higher education institutions with a way to get real-world experience and business skills relevant to their field of study. The internship has caught the attention of higher education programs as a significant component of contemporary pedagogy because it is an experiential learning activity. The study aimed to assess the online practicum of library and information science students to serve as a basis for offering a blended internship. The study utilized a concurrent mixed-methods type of research which provided an integrated, thorough grasp of the topic under inquiry by using the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches while addressing their flaws. The study's respondents are the 138 Library and Information Science (LIS) students who graduated from S.Y. 2020-2021 to 2021-2022. It adopted a validated instrument that assesses the internship program. The results of the quantitative data showed that the internship program inspired their personal aspects (4.41), interpersonal-



social (4.49), academic (4.40), employment-specific (4.18), and civic (4.20). It indicates that the student-interns found the online internship compelling. However, the qualitative data results came up with the following themes: (1) poor internet connection and communication issues were their most challenging experienced while doing their online internship. (2) patience and time management for the best solution to their problem. They likewise advised future interns to listen to their superiors and constantly focus during their training. Furthermore, most respondents approved and recommended the offering of blending learning. Thus, the researchers crafted a revised internship program for the Library and Information Science students.

*Keywords* – Blended Internship, Library and Information Science, Online Practicum, Internship

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## **INTRODUCTION**

All across the world, people and organizations have taken several steps to prevent COVID-19 from spreading. Besides public health and the economy, education is one of the most impacted areas in the Philippines (Buenrostro-Cabbab & Santos, 2020). Even in areas like Luzon, the government has instituted a life-threatening quarantine. People's movements have been limited, and work has been halted due to the crisis (Pastor, 2020). Schools, colleges, and universities worldwide were forced to close their doors to allow students to practice social seclusion due to the Pandemic (Toquero, 2020). As cited by Natividad-Franco (2022), those enormous problems have hampered the Philippines' educational system. The Higher Education institutions reacted to this problem by offering online courses. Bulacan State University (BulSU) in Malolos, Province of Bulacan, is one of the institutions that has kept faithful to the advances. Hence, the Library and Information Science (LIS) internship program for the College of Information and Communications Technology students was also implemented online. The LIS internship program is a unique chance for LIS students to learn about company culture and obtain professional experience by working in a natural work setting. It's a way to bridge the gap between academia and the workplace, allowing trainees to experience the challenging and grueling professional environment (Gupta, 2014).

In the early stages of one's professional career, internships are critical for assisting Library, and Information Science (LIS) students in obtaining hands-on experience. Today's work market necessitates not just a technical degree, expertise, and other credentials but also the capacity to put what one has learned in the classroom into practice. The gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application in performing ordinary tasks is usually significant. In addition, different obstacles arise owing to each customer's unique circumstances (Maxey-Harris et al., 2010). In addition to their official education, college and university students commonly participate in internships to broaden their

horizons and get a taste of the working world while still in their undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, comparable to an apprenticeship.

Workers of today who wish to succeed in the global economy must have 21st-century skills, including cooperation, critical thinking, and successful communication. Employers aren't satisfied with hiring graduates who have simply a bachelor's degree in a related field, according to Velez (2012, as cited in Plaza II & Sual, 2017). Instead, the job market seeks graduates with a strong academic foundation and the fundamental abilities and skills necessary for success in the workplace (Lowden et al., 2011). It is widely accepted that students, particularly LIS students, may learn these abilities and skills through industrial training (Ibegbulam et al., 2017). Likewise, Karunaratne and Perera (2015) believe that industrial training offers students considerable advantages in job preparation and income and enhances their self-confidence and self-satisfaction during the lifetime learning process. Thus, library internships, community immersion, and collaborative group work with different individuals can help LIS students acquire cultural competency via personal experience (Maestro et al., 2018). Moreso, experiential learning, if done well, brings benefits, claim To and Lung (2020). According to their research, students gain knowledge of practical situations, interpersonal skills, better self-awareness, a comprehension of work conditions in their chosen fields, and opportunities to explore potential career paths through internships.

Hence, the study aimed to (1) assess the online practicum of the Library and Information Science students, (2) identify the problems and issues encountered in their online internship, and (3) determine possible solutions to resolve the issues and problems. Furthermore, the paper expects to contribute to the literature on the advantage of having an online internship which may serve as a basis for crafting and offering a blended internship in the college.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Online Internship/ Practicum***

Maela et al. (2014) quoted that the internship is a transition between the classroom and the job. Students view internships as a way to gain employment, develop soft skills like teamwork and problem-solving, and earn worthwhile experience and income. An internship is a form of experiential learning that lets students put their newly learned concepts into real-world circumstances. Internships supplement and facilitate students' professional education (Ruhanen et al., 2013). The objectives of skill-based learning are focused on the assimilation of the practical procedures and activities necessary in a particular workplace since skill-based learning is concerned with developing practical workplace skills. Computer-mediated internships can mimic conventional internships' advantages while resolving many shortcomings (Bayerlein & Jeske, 2017). The study's results by Park and Jones (2021) offered various insights regarding virtual internships. In general, just like traditional fieldwork, well-planned and organized virtual internships could be a liberating learning opportunity that enables

students to draw on their practical skills while applying what students learn in class to actual managing situations. AlKhaibary et al. (2021) found that the interactive learning exercise of nursing interns in Saudi revealed improved attitudes among the responders toward showing respect for and attention to the needs and well-being of their patients. It was also demonstrated that these interns were passionate and interested in new experiences. Additionally, they worked independently and with greater assurance. They exhibited greater self-assurance, responsibility, flexibility, conscientiousness, and functionality when exposed to new initiatives. They likewise improved their knowledge of evidence-based nursing practice and interventions. Similarly, students who were given more challenging assignments and chances to take the initiative were especially likely to experience a range of positive effects on their personal, professional, and civic lives. Furthermore, they stated that individuals who felt their internship improved their employment prospects, increased their college experience, and helped a vital cause indicated the highest happiness levels. (Wolinsky-Nahmias & Auerbach, 2022). By gaining practical skills through hands-on experience and building relationships at work, students who engage in internship programs can get a decent feel of working for firms in the field (Kim & Park, 2013). Likewise, Ivana (2019) found that students discovered that business internships helped them develop academic and personal values. Furthermore, numerous studies show that internship programs provide advantages for people other than only students. Internship programs benefit employers and universities. The institution gains by enhancing the relevance of its curricula to modern businesses and prospective students, as well as by locating possible research collaborators and putting new curriculum changes into place.

### ***Blended Internship***

Experiential learning theory has a strong foundation for the notion that the workplace can offer an appropriate context for learning. As McCarthy (2010) mentioned, experience-based education, sometimes referred to as active learning, interactive learning, or "learning by doing," has had positive outcomes. Most experts agree that knowledge is improved when pupils actively engage in the process. Similarly, Heckman et al. (2015) reported that one of the most popular types of experiential learning, the typical internship for college students, had some widely recognized advantages. Studies show that due to impracticality, student teachers' internships at teacher education institutions present a challenge (Cho & Clark-Gareca, 2020). Despite not, a few key papers are relevant to the current investigation among the many research that documents training during the outbreak. Student interns often have to cross the line dividing employment and study, but all too often, these crossings are infrequent, short, and unmanaged (Heckman et al., 2015). According to Karunaratne & Perera (2015), industrial training helps students prepare for careers and earn money while boosting their self-esteem and fulfillment in pursuing lifelong learning. Traditional internships produce significant learning effects partly because of the interns' deep integration into a real company. Being confined to one place encourages the growth of knowledge and abilities in interpersonal/communication (Taylor, 1988).

While e-internships may not be able to replicate all of the learning outcomes that are associated with traditional internships, it was found that they were very successful (3 out of 3) and successful (2 out of 3) at addressing the location-boundedness and placement number issues of traditional internships, respectively. Due to the computer-mediated nature of e-internships, employers and interns can live almost anywhere in the world. Previously underrepresented student groups now have better placement possibilities because of this e-internship option. Moreover, all types of internships have the potential to strengthen the connection between higher education and the working world, according to earlier research, but their use in current degree programs is still insufficient (as cited in Bayerlein & Jeske, 2017).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

Concurrent mixed-methods research was used in the study, which gave a comprehensive understanding of the subject by combining the advantages of qualitative and quantitative approaches while resolving their limitations. A single inquiry that simultaneously collects qualitative and quantitative data is called concurrent triangulation. By utilizing the evidence generated by the other technique, this type of research seeks to confirm the findings of the first (Kroll & Neri, 2009).

### ***Quantitative***

According to Molla (2019), studies in quantitative research focus on particular questions or hypotheses that hold throughout the study. The analysis is carried out using standardized statistical methods.

### ***Population***

The subject of the study is the 138 Library, and Information Science (LIS) students who graduated from S.Y. 2020–2021 to 2021–2022 from Bulacan State University's College of Information and Communications Technology in the Philippines were randomly selected.

### ***Instrument***

It adopted a validated instrument from the study of Jackel (2011), entitled Evaluating Effectiveness of an Internship Program. All five of the parts were subjected to a factor analysis. All indices were evaluated for internal consistency using Cronbach Alpha. For the Personal Aspect, it garnered a Cronbach Alpha of .954. The Social

Aspect= .910; Academic-Learning Aspect= .897; Employment Aspect= .908 and Civic Aspect= .889.

### **Data Gathering and Analysis**

The questionnaire was sent via messenger, assessing the internship program in the different aspects of the life of the interns. The researchers sent a letter to the respective alums attached to the survey questionnaire asking permission to participate in the study voluntarily. The accomplished survey instruments were checked, classified, tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and processed based on the research design earlier stated. The data were tabulated using Microsoft excel. The following descriptive statistics were utilized: frequency, percentage, and mean.

### **Qualitative**

The qualitative approach gathers in-depth information about a certain subject. This method relies on the idea that one person can speak for an individual's group sentiments, which the quantitative method disregards (Rahi, 2017). Thematic analysis was used, however, to examine the qualitative data. First, interview transcripts were read, and key phrases were extracted and categorized to form the initial codes. Lastly, the final themes were presented.

## **RESULTS**

### **Online Practicum/Internship of LIS Students**

Ivana (2019) noted that internships had been established in many colleges across the globe due to the widespread belief that they would assist students in preparing for the workforce. According to Cheong et al. (2014), internships offer businesses access to future hires since interns and students are the program's primary beneficiaries. Their feedback ensures that the entire program lives up to expectations

Table 1. Assessment of Online Practicum on the Personal Aspect

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Descriptive Rating</b>
I have a sense of satisfaction in doing something worthwhile.	4.34	Strongly Agree
I believe in my ability to make a difference.	4.38	Strongly Agree
I am open to new experiences.	4.74	Strongly Agree
I have gained the capacity to be more productive.	4.43	Strongly Agree
I can recognize my strengths.	4.37	Strongly Agree
I can recognize my weaknesses.	4.28	Strongly Agree
I have a sense of personal achievement.	4.42	Strongly Agree
I can persevere in difficult tasks.	4.33	Strongly Agree
My site supervisor was available to meet when I needed.	4.39	Strongly Agree
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

SA 4-.21 – 5.00, A 3.41 – 4.20, N 2.61-3.40, D 1.81-2.60, SD 1.00-1.81

Table 2. Assessment of Online Practicum on the Social Aspect

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
I demonstrate concern for the welfare of others.	4.30	Strongly Agree
I can be understanding and appreciative of people with diverse backgrounds.	4.55	Strongly Agree
I can work cooperatively with others.	4.66	Strongly Agree
I can communicate effectively (listen and articulate ideas).	4.55	Strongly Agree
I feel more connected to my community	4.34	Strongly Agree
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.48</b>	Strongly Agree

SA 4.-21 – 5.00, A 3.41 – 4.20, N 2.61-3.40, D 1.81-2.60, SD 1.00-1.81

Table 3. Assessment of Online Practicum on the Academic-Learning Aspect

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
I have acquired knowledge from the job duties I performed	4.48	Strongly Agree
I have broadened my critical thinking skills (reasoning, problem-solving)	4.29	Strongly Agree
I desired to complete my degree.	4.52	Strongly Agree
I can work and learn independently	4.50	Strongly Agree
I felt my classroom learning was enriched.	4.29	Strongly Agree
I can connect academic subject matter to the real world	4.32	Strongly Agree
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.40</b>	Strongly Agree

SA 4.-21 – 5.00, A 3.41 – 4.20, N 2.61-3.40, D 1.81-2.60, SD 1.00-1.81

Table 4. Assessment of Online Practicum on the Employment Aspect

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
I developed specialized technical skills for specific job function(s).	4.20	Agree
I feel my vocational development was enhanced.	4.18	Agree
I broadened my future employment possibilities.	4.22	Strongly Agree
I received an opportunity to explore a specific career	4.14	Agree
I developed realistic ideas about the work world.	4.22	Strongly Agree
I narrowed my future possible career choices.	4.12	Agree
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.18</b>	Agree

SA 4.-21 – 5.00, A 3.41 – 4.20, N 2.61-3.40, D 1.81-2.60, SD 1.00-1.81

Table 5. Assessment of Online Practicum on the Civic Aspect

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
I developed a belief in becoming a better citizen.	4.28	Strongly Agree
I developed an awareness of community problems or social concerns.	4.18	Agree
I developed a commitment to making a difference in my community	4.22	Strongly Agree
I have gained the capacity to contribute to society	4.14	Agree
I have the intention to work on behalf of social justice.		
I dedicate more time to volunteer work.	4.22	Strongly Agree
I stay current with local political news.	4.12	Agree
<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.41</b>	Strongly Agree

SA 4.-21 – 5.00, A 3.41 – 4.20, N 2.61-3.40, D 1.81-2.60, SD 1.00-1.81

## DISCUSSION

### *Online Practicum/Internship of LIS Students*

As can be gleaned from table 1, the students assessed their online practicum based on their personal aspects. The students strongly agreed that they could be more productive (4.74) and got the highest mean, and student-interns strongly agreed that they knew their weaknesses (4.28). This personal aspect of their internships got a weighted mean of (4.41). Similarly, AlKhaibary et al. (2021) found that the interactive learning exercise of interns revealed improved attitudes among the responders toward showing respect for and attention to the needs and well-being of their patients. It was also demonstrated that interns were passionate and interested in new experiences. Additionally, the student interns worked independently and with greater assurance. They exhibited greater self-assurance, responsibility, flexibility, conscientiousness, and functionality when exposed to new initiatives. The interns who participated in interactive learning exercises improved their knowledge of evidence-based nursing practice and interventions.

The highest indicator in the social aspect states that the interns can work cooperatively with others (4.66), while the lowest indicates that they can demonstrate concern for the welfare of others (4.30). The weighted mean was recorded at 4.48, which states that they strongly agreed regarding their social aspect. Similarly, Maelah et al. (2012) cited numerous studies that show internship programs provide advantages for people other than only students. Internship programs benefit employers and universities. The university benefits by making its courses more relevant to contemporary businesses and potential students, as well as by finding potential research collaborators and implementing new curriculum revisions.

As regards their academic-learning aspect, the student-interns strongly agreed that they desired to complete their college (4.52); hence they are doing well with their online practicum. The minor indicators on their academic-learning aspect state that the student-interns strongly agreed that online apprenticeship had broadened their critical thinking skills(4.29), and they felt that learning classroom learning was enriched (4.29). Similarly, Ivana (2019) found that students discovered that business internships helped them develop academic and personal values. In essence, an internship is a form of experiential learning that allows students to put their newly learned concepts into real-world circumstances. Its main objective is to support and improve students' professional education experiences (Ruhanen et al., 2013). By gaining practical skills through hands-on experience and building relationships at work, students who engage in internship programs can get a decent feel of working for firms in the field (Kim & Park, 2013).

Regarding the employment aspect, most students strongly agreed that the online practicum broadened their future employment possibilities (4.22). Likewise, they



developed a practical understanding of the working world (4.22). Conversely, the statement with the lowest mean shows that they limited the range of potential future careers (4.12). Similarly, Kapareliotis et al. (2019) found that students who participated in internship programs scored highly across the board on the work preparedness construct. They understood what their bosses expected of them in the workplace. Companies need fundamental academic competencies, higher-order competencies, and professional competencies. Also, undergraduate students can develop their professional communication, time management, teamwork, and networking skills through a work placement, also known as an internship or professional placement (Shoenfelt, Stone, & Kottke, 2013).

As to the Civic aspect of the students' online practicum, they firmly believed they had formed a desire to improve their communities (4.22). The lowest indicator states that they stay current with the local political news (4.12). Nevertheless, this aspect got an average of (4.41), where student-interns strongly agreed that online practicum helped them enhance their community service. Additionally, pupils who were given more challenging tasks and opportunities to take the initiative were especially likely to experience a variety of advantageous effects on their personal, professional, and civic life (Wolinsky-Nahmias & Auerbach, 2022).

### ***Problems, Issues Encountered, and the Interns Solutions.***

#### ***Poor Internet Connection***

With the use of technology and the internet, lessons are taught in online classes (Mallinlin et al., 2020). Similarly, online practicum among LIS students used the internet. Their findings include problems with internet connection issues and devices. Likewise, the interns experienced slow and unstable internet connections, resulting in unfinished work time for the students' online practicum.

#### ***Communication Issues***

Kaeshk et al. (2018) found a robust favorable correlation between communication, security, and safety and interns. Because they occasionally misread directions, the LIS interns had communication issues with their co-interns and supervisors. The majority of the time, when interns have communication issues, the productive output is ruined. It is, therefore, preferable to create effective communication in any organization.

#### ***Time Management***

The LIS interns learned to manage their time to finish their tasks. They do their jobs one at a time until it's adequately done. Internships can assist students in building a foundation of global market competencies that are now expected, including communication and time management skills. It likewise improved self-confidence and

self-motivation while they were still in college (Gill & Lachine, 2003, as cited in Matamande et al., 2013).

### ***Patience at work***

As the saying goes, patience is a virtue. Hardship at work is natural; however, if interns manage patience, nothing is impossible. The student-interns can finish their tasks despite the internet interruption and can positively attain their goals.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The LIS internship program offers students an exceptional opportunity to gain professional experience while learning about a company's culture by working in a real-world workplace. The student interns firmly believed that their online practicum brought them new experiences, increased their productivity in their field, and enhanced their capability to work collaboratively and independently. Likewise, their online internship widened their horizon and found employment possibilities. Additionally, the intern student's sense of civic duty was enhanced. However, they experienced difficulties while having online internships, which brought them tremendous challenges. Hence, a blended internship is being proposed.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Students benefit from internship programs by gaining practical experience, applying academic knowledge to real-world business issues, and surviving today's competitive job market. Meeting new people and establishing contacts in the business world is a great learning experience for these intern students. The knowledge and skills they acquired during the actual internship and the online practicum provided a holistic understanding and transformed the student interns' learning experience. As a result, the blended internship is an excellent opportunity for Library and Information Science students to broaden their job search horizons while improving their educational practice.

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## DECLARATIONS

### ***Conflict of Interest***

There are no aspects of the author's interests that could be seen as a conflict and alter the article's substance.

### ***Informed Consent***

All participants in the study gave their informed consent before participating.

### ***Ethics Approval***

The College of Information and Communications Technology dean approved the study's being conducted for the specified time.

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### Author's Biography

**Virginia D. Natividad-Franco, Ph.D.**, is an Associate Professor at Bulacan State University, Philippines. She graduated Bachelor of Science in Computer Science at Regina Carmeli College (now LCUP) and completed her Master of Arts in Education and Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Management at Bulacan State University. She is currently taking a Master of Science in Information Technology at La Consolacion University-Philippines. She is teaching thesis writing for BLIS students and a capstone project for BSIT students at the College of Information and Communications Technology.

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