

Evaluation of National Internship Program in Education

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Abstract

This study intended to analyze the opinions of interns and their supervisors regarding the success of National Internship Program in Education in terms of its role in the provision of financial relief, enhancing employability, exploring youth talent and capabilities. Fourteen (14) government educational institutions of Islamabad were identified depending upon the availability of interns. The population of this study comprised of 950 interns and 746 teachers designated as supervisors, out of which 342 interns along with 150 supervisors were randomly selected as the sample. Two separate questionnaires on 5-point Likert type Scale were developed, for obtaining opinions of interns and their concerned supervisors/ mentors. For pilot testing of the questionnaires, these were administered to a small sample of 40 respondents who were selected from the whole population and were not included in the target sample. The data were analyzed using mean scores and t-test to find out the significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors at 0.05 level of significance. The major findings included that NIP has played vital role in enhancing employability; it proved as the best opportunity for exploring youth talent and capabilities; Interns attained valuable on-the-job training, extensive and experiential learning; NIP proved the best strategy for transforming theory into practice. The study recommended that NIP should continue in future for strengthening youth potential.

Key words: Internship, employability and on-the-job training

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Introduction

The youth of Pakistan constitutes the largest portion of entire population i.e. 25 million but a very small percentage is able to contribute in national economy by applying their training and education (Government of Pakistan, 2010-2011). Mostly their abilities and talent is wasted due to many problems. On the other hand, the high performance is not possible by only achieving education, the practical work environment is also necessary. Therefore, connecting academic theories with practical experience is compulsory for human resource development. While the proper utilization of youth resources can bring the socio-economic revolution in any developing country especially in Pakistan (Noor, 2009).

Annual Plan (2011-2012) indicates that the total labor force comprises of 45.1 million (77%) males and 13.3 million (23%) females, out of which 52.2 million are employed while remaining 3.2 million (5.6%), are unemployed. Furthermore, out of total unemployed persons males are 2 million (61%) while females are (39%) 1.2 million (Kakakhel, 2011). Explaining this according to Official statistical data, over 50,000 youth complete sixteen years of education every year from recognized universities / degree awarding institutions in a wide range of disciplines. A wide gap between the completion of education and employment in most of the cases is wastage of potential energy of educated youth while various public organizations also suffer from critical shortage of work force. These circumstances create the need of such short term placement of unemployed and educated youth in relevant organizations to acquire the work experience necessary for employment.

National Internship Program (NIP)

Government of Pakistan launched a National Internship Program (NIP) in March 2007. According to Littke (2004) internships constitute integrated interdisciplinary learning and are a form of learner centered education. The major purpose of this initiative was to provide one year on-the-job training to the unemployed graduates by keeping them involved in attaining practical experiences and to develop human resource for economic growth. Ultimately this program fulfilled shortage of staff in various public organizations (Government of Pakistan, 2007).

Program Structure

Keeping in view the number of unemployed youth, the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA) expanded the structure of National Internship Program into four sub-programs;

NIP General Program. This program is offered for master level students from all over country with an age limit to 25 years.

NIP Special Program. The special NIP program was designed for displaced persons with the age limit to 28 years and fulfilling condition of graduation; for Malakand Division, Baluchistan and rural Sindh with the same conditions are offered for displaced persons (Government of Pakistan, 2007).

Goals and Objectives of NIP

The key goal of National Internship Program is to harness the energy and motivation of educated youth. This program includes following objectives:

- a. Provision of financial relief to the unemployed graduates;
- b. Improvement in the performance of public sector through internship of young, educated and motivated youth;
- c. Enhanced employability and capacity of fresh graduates for a better professional future (Government of Pakistan, 2007).

Program Features

Salient features of the programme are as follows: -

- a. The interns are placed in various Ministries, Divisions, Attached Departments, Autonomous Bodies and Corporation of the Federal, Provincial and District Government conveniently located near to their hometown.
- b. The placement is based upon the matching of academic qualifications and disciplines with broader functional categorization of jobs within the government.
- c. The interns are required to join the programme on full time basis and follow prescribed rules and regulations of the concerned organizations including observance of office working time and confidentiality requirements etc.

- d. The interns are entitled to a monthly stipend of Rupees ten thousand (all inclusive) as financial relief.
- e. The interns are also awarded experience certificates on the successful completion of one year internship (Government of Pakistan, 2007).

Eligibility Criteria for Interns

Fresh Pakistani unemployed graduates of age 25 years or less who have completed 16 years of formal education in all disciplines from HEC recognized Universities/Degree Awarding Institutions including external candidates and have not availed the internship under NIP before. Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided funds to the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MOYA) for The National Internship Program. Before being handed over to the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the Establishment Division was managing this project with the staff of 35 members that was later reduced to 19. Interested eligible candidates can apply "on-line" or by post against the advertisement published in the newspapers. The application forms remained available on website *www.nip.gov.pk* of NIP office.

The procedure for scrutiny and selection is given below:-

- a. All applications received either on-line or by post are sent to HEC for verification of degree. HEC is responsible for carrying out the verification in close coordination with all recognized Universities and degree awarding institutions then to NADRA for CNIC verification.
- b. After the two verifications by HEC and NADRA, applications are sorted out on the basis of preference for placement. These applicants are included in the first batch of successful applicants. The same process was carried out for other applications (Government of Pakistan, NIP).

Terms & Conditions of Internship

The terms and conditions given by the MOYA are as under;

- a. The internship is neither an offer of employment on a formal job nor does it confer any right of interns on future employment in the host organization. The programme simply aims to provide an opportunity for on-the-job training to enhance capacity and employability of interns for a better professional future.
- b. The interns are entitled for a monthly stipend of Rupees 10,000 (all inclusive) during one year term of the internship. They are not entitled

for government accommodation or travelling expenses during the term of their internship. They may however, be entitled for OPD medical facilities in government hospitals in case of any major surgery, prolonged hospitalization and reimbursement of medical bills.

- c. The interns will be required to join the programme on full time basis and follow relevant rules and regulations of the government organizations including observance of office working hours, confidentiality requirements and disciplinary rules applicable to government employees.
- d. The interns will be entitled to only 20 days casual leave during the term of their internship.
- e. The interns will be required to attend a three days "orientation programme" to be organized by the respective host organization.
- f. The interns will be issued internship completion certificates by the Government of Pakistan, Establishment Division on successful completion of the programme based on a formal performance rating mechanism. The evaluation mechanism will include appropriate weightage for attendance, performance on the job and other assignments, which may be allocated from time to time by the host organization.
- g. The internship duration is one year. However, the Government reserves the right to terminate the internship of an intern at any stage.
- h. The interns would be at liberty to leave the programme at any stage on 15 days advance notice. However, such interns will neither be entitled for internship completion certificate nor will they have any right to receive monthly stipend for remaining period of the internship.

Since at present Pakistan has the largest number of youth so this is the golden time to invest in youth and focus their potential and talent for the economic and social development of the country. It is evident from the world's history that those countries which have heavily invested in their youth are now having the highest level of economic growth (Abro, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The study was conducted to evaluate the success of National Internship Program in Education in terms of its role in the provision of financial relief, in enhancing employability and exploring youth talent and capabilities.

Data were collected to test the following hypotheses;

- a. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors regarding in time provision of financial relief/ stipend to the unemployed graduates by NIP.
- b. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors regarding vital role of NIP in enhancing employability.
- c. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors regarding NIP as the best opportunity for exploring youth talent and capabilities.
- d. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors regarding development of professional attitude through NIP.
- e. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors regarding attainment of valuable on-the-job training, extensive and experiential learning through internship.
- f. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors about strengthening of self-confidence through internship practice.
- g. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors regarding NIP as the best strategy for transforming theory into practice.
- h. There is no significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors regarding continuation of NIP in future for strengthening youth potential.

Research study was delimited to National Internship Program (2010-2011) and sample was selected from educational institutions located in Islamabad city only.

Method

There were two populations of the study, the first comprised of all the interns i.e. 950, which were enrolled in National Internship Program (2010-2011) for gaining on-the-job training in educational institutions of Islamabad and, second population included 746 teachers as their supervisors. To select a representative sample using simple random sampling technique 342 interns (30% of the total) and 150 supervisors (20%) from the lists obtained from MOYA were selected randomly by random number table. These interns were selected from 14 educational institutions of Islamabad.

Two questionnaires each comprising of 25 items to be responded on 5-point Likert type Scale were used in order to collect the opinions of interns and their supervisors. Items selected were about the role of NIP in the provision of financial

relief, in enhancing employability, exploring youth talent and capabilities, development of professional attitude, on-the-job training, extensive and experiential learning, strengthening of self-confidence of interns and continuation of NIP in future.

Research instruments were reviewed by the experts (Professor of International Islamic University Islamabad) and then pilot tested. A group of 40 individuals consisting of 20 interns and 20 supervisors were randomly selected for the pilot testing and not included in the actual sample. To estimate the reliability Cronbach's alpha was calculated. Its value for the questionnaire of interns was 0.816 and for supervisors' it was 0.762. Data were collected by the researchers through self-approach. The response rate was 80%.

Results

Data collected on each item of the questionnaires were analyzed by calculating mean scores and t-test was applied to find the significant difference between the opinions of interns and supervisors.

Table 1
Role of NIP in the views of interns and supervisors

S.No.	Statement	Mean 1	Mean 2	t-value	P value
1	Provision of my stipend is made in time.	2.03	2.46	0.09	0.46
2	NIP is playing vital role in enhancing employability.	2.9	2.64	0.03	0.48
3	NIP is the best opportunity for exploring youth talent and capabilities.	3.37	4.28	0.18	0.42
4	NIP is developing professional attitude among interns.	1.95	2.61	0.22	0.41
5	I am attaining valuable on-the-job training through this internship.	2.82	3.22	0.03	0.48
6	I am allowed to participate in departmental tasks for extensive learning.	3.2	3.6	0.17	0.43
7	NIP is imparting experiential learning.	2.42	2.84	0.11	0.45
8	Internship practice builds self-confidence among interns.	3.78	4.11	0.14	0.44
9	NIP is the best strategy for transforming theory into practice.	2.95	2.69	0.02	0.48
10	NIP should continue in future for strengthening youth potential.	4.55	1.0	0.12	0.45

Both the interns and supervisors (with mean scores 2.03 & 2.46 respectively) were agreed that the payment of stipend was in time while t-value 0.09 and p-value 0.46 (greater than $\alpha=0.05$) results in the acceptance of null hypothesis No. 1.

The interns and supervisors both (with mean scores 2.9 & 2.64 respectively) have the opinion that NIP is playing vital role in enhancing employability. The t-value 0.03 and p-value 0.48 greater than $\alpha=0.05$ reveals no difference between the opinions of both the interns and supervisors. Hence the null hypothesis No. 2 is accepted.

The interns and supervisors (with greater mean scores 3.37 & 4.28 respectively) agreed that NIP is the best opportunity for exploring youth talent and capabilities. The null hypothesis No. 3 is accepted as t-value is 0.18 and p-value 0.42 is greater than $\alpha=0.05$.

The interns and supervisors both (with mean scores 1.95 & 2.61 respectively) have the opinion that NIP is developing professional attitude among interns. The null hypothesis No. 4 is accepted as t-value is 0.22 and p-value 0.41 is greater than $\alpha=0.05$.

The interns and supervisors both (with mean scores 2.82 & 3.22 respectively) have the opinion that interns were attaining valuable on-the-job training through this internship. On the other hand about the participation in departmental tasks for extensive learning the interns and supervisors both agreed with mean scores 3.2 & 3.6. Same is the case of agreement of interns and supervisors for the statement (No. 8) of experiential learning (with mean scores 2.42 & 2.84) while t-values for statement No. 6, 7 and 8 were 0.03, 0.17 and 0.11 with p-values 0.48, 0.43 and 0.45 (greater than $\alpha=0.05$) results in acceptance of null hypothesis No. 5.

The interns and supervisors (with greater mean scores 3.78 & 4.11 respectively) agreed that internship practice builds self-confidence among interns. The null hypothesis No. 6 is accepted as t-value is 0.14 and p-value 0.44 is greater than $\alpha=0.05$.

The interns and supervisors (with greater mean scores 2.95 & 2.69 respectively) agreed that NIP is the best strategy for transforming theory into practice. The null hypothesis No. 7 is accepted as t-value is 0.02 and p-value 0.48 is greater than $\alpha=0.05$. Both the interns and supervisors (with mean scores 4.55 & 1.0 respectively) were agreed that NIP should continue in future for strengthening youth potential. The t-value 0.12 and p-value 0.45 greater than $\alpha=0.05$ reveals no difference between the opinions of both the interns and supervisors. Hence the null hypothesis No. 8 is accepted.

Discussion

NIP has played vital role in the provision of financial relief and enhancing employability. It confirms the findings of Richards, (1984) that internship improves greater employability in the career. Gault, Redington, and Schlager, (2000) conducted empirical investigation and found direct relationship between internship participation and student employability.

NIP is the best opportunity for exploring youth talent and capabilities, and developing professional attitude among interns. The same result is drawn by Jamil, Kareem, Atta, Rehman, Khan, and Jan, (2012) that internship enables the intern to learn new skills, attitudes, and behavioral patterns that can prove helpful for him in future.

Interns have attained valuable on-the-job training, extensive and experiential learning through this internship. This conclusion confirms the findings of Jamil *et al.*, (2012) that internship programmes can be a source of professional growth.

Internship practice builds self-confidence among interns and the payment of stipend was in time. Dodge and Mckeough (2003) found that internship programs proved to be successful and potential interns were employed in public, private and non-profit organizations. In Pakistan, Jamil *et al.*, (2012) conducted a study and reported that National Internship Programme has been successful in terms of providing professional knowledge, hands on experience, financial support, exposure to the main stream job market as well as employment opportunities to the interns. The results of this study confirmed these findings that NIP proved as the best strategy for transforming theory into practice.

Recommendations

It is recommended that as the National Internship Program (NIP) is proved very useful so it should be continued in future for; providing financial support to the unemployed graduates, enhancing employability, exploring and strengthening youth potential. The successful interns should be employed on regular basis to reduce the burden of unemployment.

With respect to human resource development, the government may expand National Internship Program (NIP) in the private sector too and assist youth to acquire skills, professional attitude and work experience for their better future career.

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