



Situational Analysis of the Willingness to Accept Interns, Benefits and Challenges of Academic Internship Programmes to Host Organisations: Empirical Evidence from Ghana

**Eric Kwadwo Amissah^a, Frank B. K. Twenefour^{b*},
Kwabena Nduro^a and Emmanuel Asare Ayim^b**

^a *Department of Graphic Design and Technology, Faculty of Applied Arts and Technology, Takoradi Technical University, Post Office Box-256, Takoradi, Ghana.*

^b *Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Science, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Takoradi Technical University, Post Office Box-256, Takoradi, Ghana.*

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This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Most technical universities in Ghana have recently begun paying much-needed attention to industrial attachment programs or exercises. This follows from their primary goal of educating students to develop the practical skills and pertinent competencies required for entering the workforce or starting their businesses. Most studies on the subject have emphasized the advantages of the exercise for students, host organizations, and academic institutions. The current

*Corresponding author: Email: frank.twenefour@ttu.edu.gh;

study concentrated on observing participating organizations' attitudes in continuing the internship program and the advantages and difficulties these businesses have while taking on students on attachment. The article employed the descriptive-exploratory research survey design to execute the research. The findings from the paper revealed that participating organisations face four major challenges in accepting students on internship; inadequate space, health insurance cover for interns, poor attitude towards training and outmoded curricula.

Keywords: Higher educational institutions (HEIs); internship programs; participating or host organizations; students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Most organisations, particularly higher education institutions (HEIs), have realised the need of providing their students with practical skills and other necessary abilities for the job market [1]. These colleges have created big and imposing internship programmes for their students in partnership with the industry to maintain the industry's trending requirements. Institutions require their products, in addition to their being a requirement of the industry, to partially fulfil the requirements for the award of a degree. These requirements include assigning interns to various organisations to gain a deeper understanding of the practical works that are provided to them in school. Cheong et al. [2] presented a broad observation and the experiences of Malaysian business school interns, which strongly suggested that the culture of knowledge acquisition has expanded beyond the confines of the lecture hall or classroom. A sign that the emphasis on an internship or practical training for the tertiary levels of learning has changed in the global learning environment. Cheong et al. [2] emphasised again that the ideal way for interns to develop the necessary skills is to complete an internship at a reputable, sizable company. They were certain that by observing the activity, the trainees would be inspired to participate in the daily activities of the business. Finally, they were adamant that these possibilities would expose interns to practical learning and linked classroom notions.

Internship programmes are ingrained in the curricula of Technical Universities (TUs) in Ghana and elsewhere. All parties agreed that the programme technically organises and adequately prepares students for the labour market. Probably a result of the main mission of technical universities, which encourages students to gain the practical skills, technical knowledge, and field preparedness needed for employment in a certain field and job generation. The three "Hs" theory put forth by the United Nations

Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is closely tied to this premise. It refers to the hand, heart, and head, suggesting that the development of a cadre of intelligent and competent workers depends greatly on the head, that shaping the workforce into good citizens depends greatly on the heart, and that the goal of most industrial training programmes is to create a workforce that is highly skilled in everything they do [3, 4]. These three "Hs" proposed by UNESCO are in line with Takoradi Technical University's (TTU) slogan, which succinctly states that "head, heart, and hand" enable development to materialise.

It's interesting that the industrial training programmes of the TUs have been given ten (10) credit hours and are, as previously mentioned, a necessary course pursued by all interns to provide substance to the programme and attach importance to it. One may participate in an industrial attachment at Takoradi Technical University depending on the nature of the programme of study. For example, Bachelor of Technology (B-Tech) students may participate in an industrial attachment at the coafter00, 200, and 300 and an industrial attachment in the last semester of top-up B-Tech, 4-Year B-Tech, and Master of Technology (M-Tech) programmes. From the first week of June to the first week of August, first- and second-year students take the Higher National Diploma (HND). That equates to 10 to 12 weeks in absolute terms. The majority of writers on the topic of industrial training, or internship as it is more commonly known, advanced a lot of favourable arguments in favour of the advantages of industrial training, and interestingly the legatees have been the notable key players in the program's centre; the parent institutions, students (interns), and Industry (the organisation where the practice take place) [1, 5]. Mgaya and Mbekomize [1] and Bennett [5] welcomed the internship as a powerful tool for assimilating theory with hands-on practical involvement that will ultimately help students to enhance their expertise, improve their social

relationships, inspire future learning, improve social personality, develop job interests, provide potential recruits, effective networking amongst interns, and entrepreneurial skills [6, 7, 8, 9]. Neill & Mulholland [10] attributed it to the fact that the majority of these countries have significantly large industrial bases and comprehensive national policies and programmes on internships, which is why most of the benefits of internships as described by these eminent writers apply to developed nations. They added that there is a strong relationship between the parent institutions and the host organisation that keeps the programme functioning well. It was mentioned that in Australia, most host businesses are heavily active in managing and securing interns to complete internships [11]. What we have in Ghana, and for that matter, technical universities is the exact reverse; interns are given letters and told to hunt for organisations that would accept them. Strangely enough, some students struggle to get accepted, wasting a significant portion of the industrial training period, in my experience. Honestly, it would benefit student growth if colleges in Africa, and specifically Ghana, could build strong relationships with organisations and engage them actively in the internship programme by selecting or requesting students to train with them. Once more, the conclusions of the majority of these studies on industrial attachment have been dominated by the business schools, engineering, and information and communications technology (ICT) sectors [1, 2, 4, 12]. Few studies that focused on the difficulties of industrial attachment only considered them from the perspective of students and their failure to find a place of attachment [12].

1.1 Industrial Training Programme at Takoradi Technical University

Since the advent of polytechnic education, Takoradi Technical University has been one of the few Technical Universities in Ghana to implement comprehensive institutional policies on industry training. As a result, the institution has been able to forge important connections with the relevant industry. This policy's goal is to place students from different specialisations in related and reputable organisations for ten (10) to twelve (12) weeks throughout the first and second years of the Higher National Diploma (HND) extended vacation. According to their course of study, 4-Year Bachelor of Technology students participate in industrial training at levels 100, 200, and 300. In contrast, as previously

mentioned, both Bachelor of Technology Top-Up and Master of Technology students participate in a semester-long industrial attachment during their second year of study. The Faculty of Business Studies, Applied Arts and Technology, Applied Sciences, Engineering, Built and Natural Environment, and the Centre for Languages and Liberal Studies are among the five faculties and a centre that make up Takoradi Technical University. The normal and evening streams are available at Takoradi Technical University.

According to the requirements of the industrial training policy, it is mandatory for students from all five of these faculties and is the only Center that requires industrial training. The Directorate of Industrial Liaison clearly outlines the rules governing Takoradi Technical University's industrial training programme during an orientation for the students on a scheduled day and for the academic supervisors who participate in the programme. The overarching objective of the internship is to familiarise interns with the hands-on, practical, and competency aspects of the theoretical foundations they have learned in class. The precise goals may include, among other things, preparing students for the workforce, fostering strong relationships with industry, developing their teamwork abilities, and maybe providing the university with a powerful platform to evaluate their offerings. The Directorate of Industrial Liaison thoroughly sets the calendar of events, obligations, and duties of interns, host organisations, and the school-based supervisor during such events. During the training, there is a full discussion of issues including working hours and dress code [4].

Takoradi Technical University students are duly assigned school-based supervisors, who routinely visit students' training locations like students at other institutions. I'm happy and confident to state that Takoradi Technical University takes this seriously, with supervisors requiring that they only observe students at work. The purpose of these sometimes-unannounced visits is to double-check that interns are at the job, actually doing something worthwhile, and related to what they learned in class. Interns are given log books to record all work-related activities. The log books are structured so that trainees meticulously fill required pages weekly as proof of activities carried out within a certain week. As a kind of checks and balances, the industry-based supervisor is expected to validate it by signing and stamping his share of it, indicating agreement and compliance with the

specified rules and regulations. At the halfway point of the training period, the industry-based supervisor completes another section of the log book to evaluate the student's performance for the whole training time. The intern is present when this is being done. Students must write a report outlining their work with photographic proof as proof that they have completed the training and submit it to the parent institution to be added to the supervisor's assessment from the industry for final evaluation.

The current study examines the difficulties that host organisations face when accepting Graphic Design students on industrial attachment from the Department of Graphic Design Technology, Faculty of Applied Arts and Technology, TTU. However, this cannot be done in isolation; as a result, issues concerning the benefits they derive from participating in the exercise were also investigated. The second goal was to determine whether or not TTU graphic design technology students were willing to continue their internship.

2. BACKGROUND LITERATURE

According to Nduro et al. [4] and Moghaddam [13], industrial training programmes, in the opinion of writers on the subject, play a unique role in students' prospects. Expounding further, they believe it is an important platform for adequately preparing undergraduate and master students for entry-level jobs and, in the long run, reveals their projections for future employment. As part of their core mandate to equip their products with the necessary hands-on skills, technical universities have used internships as a great and formidable tool to expose students to practical experience. The benefits have been enormous. Interestingly, the host organisations (industry) that seek to engage or hire these interns (students) that seek these opportunities/chances; and finally, their parent institutions (universities) that expedite the realisation of the programme and its development reap the majority of the benefits [4, 14]. This creates a win-win situation for industrial training programmes. At this stage, the current paper would like to consider certain definitions in the literature to place the work in the context of other works. According to McMahan & Quinn [15], an internship "is a supervised work experience in which students receive special attention during the internship rather than working alone in the industry." This definition sounds more academic because it accurately depicts what happens in industrial attachment

programmes at universities and other higher education institutions. Pauze, Johnson & Miller [16] defined the internship as "fieldwork, field experience, practicum, Co-op, or experiential learning." This definition depicts the same idea as the previous definition, but only mentions areas that share industrial training norms. According to McGowan [17], industrial training is "a chance for students to incorporate their on-the-job work experience and knowledge into their university education by being in a supervised and planned real-world professional work environment."

2.1 Benefits of Internship to Students

There is a lot of literature about the benefits that students get from participating or getting involved in internship programmes. The majority are exciting discoveries made by students in the engineering, information and communications technology (ICT), and business faculties of the researchers' universities, either during their semester-out programme or during long vacation training [1, 12, 18, 19, 20]. Higher educational institutions encourage their students to become actively engaged or involved in internship programmes in the hope that they will derive massive benefits, particularly working in related industries under the special supervision of an industrial-based supervisor, where they will have numerous opportunities to put what they have learned in class into practice. Mgaya and Mbekomize [1], Bukaliya [12], and Cheong et al. [2] agree that the benefits are enormous, but what they discovered was that the majority of the benefits attempt to determine a relationship between students who actively participate in internship programmes and academic performance.

There appears to be a positive correlation between the two variables, as studies have shown beyond reasonable doubt that students who actively participate in industrial training outperform those who do not [21, 22]. In response to this prediction, Cord, Bowrey, & Clements [11] asserted that there was little or no evidence or confirmation of a correlation between the two variables internship programmes and academic performance. Aside from the perceived improvement in academic performance, internships help students learn from practitioners or experts faster [23]. According to Hurst & Good [24], internship exercises provide learners with the opportunity to learn what it takes to work in a company environment, as well as the associated

ethics, norms, and cultural practices. Shu-Tai & Cheng-Chung [25], sounding more academic and likely an academician, such programmes complement course work by adding hands-on skills and competencies to knowledge acquired, Toncar & Cudmore [26] apart from adding to course work it has the potential to give learners who actively participated in the programme some sort of competitive edge, labour value in the market place, and above all a potent means of securing better jobs. Riding on the backs of economics, Cord et al. [11] and Bandow [27] argue that in the aftermath of the economic downturn, the internship is used by many students to detach themselves from colleagues who have never been involved in attachment. This provides them with the opportunity to gain extensive or all-encompassing knowledge in their chosen career paths and make informed decisions.

Based on motivation, and internship, Ching-Sung & Chen Wei [28] were optimistic that the exercise helps participants or students secure a sense of belonging while gaining recognition amongst employers and employees alike, drawing inspiration from Maslow's motivational theory. This is one finding that may be of interest to many students: undertaking industrial training aids in the smooth transition from academia or school to the workplace by removing the "cloud of fear" surrounding a first job. This was referred to as "reality shock" [14, 29], who were convinced that active participation in internship programmes subdued the "monster."

2.2 Benefits of Internship to Host Organisations

In general, studies on internship programmes that focus on the benefits that industry derives from students who come for industrial training share the notion or impression that interns are a rich and deserving cradle for cheap or low-cost labour [30]. Galloway & Marks [31] recounting an unusual trend in the industry where interns are not allowed to participate in value-added projects or what they refer to as "back burner," shared a different viewpoint, arguing that the industry should involve them in such projects to give meaning to the training and development provided to them. organisation. Maertz, Stoeberl, & Marks [32] bolstered this point by indicating that, in addition to giving meaning to the exercise, the industry can use it as an assessment tool for the prospects of an apt between potential employees and the

organisation. According to Hoyle & Goffnett [33], if the industry can fulfil this obligation, it provides interns with valuable real-world experience and eventually eases what they call the "adjustment period," which is a critical demand for employment. They clarified themselves better by indicating that, as a result of the assessment, interns or soon-to-be employees may not require as much time to mingle with others, train, develop, and spend valuable time fine-tuning recruits. Mgaya and Mbekomize [1] and Cheong et al. [2], sounding more marketing-oriented, advanced the argument that an internship is a powerful tool for marketing and serious branding of the host organisation, as well as a catalyst for labour to meet its social and corporate responsibility.

Technical universities, like their students, are interested in internships for the same mutual benefits; practice in theory application, job readiness, or improved employment prospects [34]. It provides an opportunity to enhance the university's reputation while also attracting massive funding from corporate bodies, non-governmental organisations, and foreign technical corporations [34, 35]. Sekeran and Bougie [36] discovered that in the European Union, the excellence or eminence of higher education is dependent on the ability of students from these higher institutions to secure employment and that this trend or status can only be determined or appraised by using the internship as an appraisal tool. Again, universities can benefit significantly from internship exercises when their employees (both teaching and administrative) undergo periodic industrial training as a result of their work and collaboration with the industry.

Looking at the world order today, almost everything needed and done is spearheaded by technological and entrepreneurial developments, making it extremely difficult for technical universities to comprehend the speed and magnitude of change occurring in the industrial environment. The good news is that by participating or engaging in regular industrial training by students in the world of work, active interns or learners can discover how short they are of certain hands-on skills and competencies, and capitalise on the opportunity to learn new and cutting-edge technologies and rules that regulate the design processes. The interesting part is that after the internship, these students transfer their knowledge to their respective technical universities. The benefits are not

immediately apparent, but they are reflected in assignments, class exercises, discussions, mini-projects (final year project/thesis writing), and industrial attachment report writing after successful training [4, 37].

3. METHODS

Descriptive-exploratory research survey design was used in this study [38]. The study's population was 1500 organisations. The sample size was determined using the following formulas as reported [39].

For an infinite population:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$= 384$$

Adjusted sample size according to the population

$$n = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{(n-1)}{N}}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{(384-1)}{1500}}$$

$$= \frac{384}{1.2}$$

$$= 320$$

Where;

N' = Sample size for infinite population

n = Sample size for finite population [adjusted]

Z = 1.96 (95% confidence level)

p = Desired attribute = 0.5

q = (1 - p) = 0.5

N = population of the study = 1500,

e =

Desired researcher's error parameter (5%)

The actual sample size used was 320 respondents. The survey includes 29 variables divided into four sections. The study's participants were chosen on purpose. A stratified sampling allocation based on strata size was used. The study used a primary source of data that was collected at random in each stratum using piloted questionnaires beginning in August 2021 to September 2022. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions [39] (IBM SPSS) version 25 was used to analyse the data. Inferential

statistics used chi-square analysis and the p-value in addition to frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation were applied.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Reliability/Validity Test

A reliability/Validity test using Cronbach Alpha; resulting in a reliability co-efficient of 0.968 which is above the recommended minimum of 0.7 [40, 41] was conducted on all 29 variables used in the study (see Table 1).

It can be inferred from Table 2 that the items (variables) assigned for the study were about 97% valid and reliable to be used for a descriptive-exploratory study [41].

Table 2 depicts the demographic features of the respondents. The first part presents the gender of the respondents that participated in the study. The result shows that respondents were skewed towards the male population. This accounted for 53% of the total participants whereas the remaining 47% were females. The academic qualification of the respondents produced diploma/first degree (39.7%), master (40.6%), doctorate (14.4%), and others (5.3%). In relation to the position of the respondents, 48.8% of the respondents were immediate supervisors, followed by training officers (20.0%), heads of department or sections (15.9%), and others (15.3%).

The fourth variable shows a summary of the number of years served in the current position by the respondents. Most of the respondents (57.8%) posited they have served in their current position 1-5 years, followed by 6-10 years (25.6%), 11-19 years (9.4%), and above 20 years (7.2%). Also, the variable; years of service at the organisation produced 1-5 years (52.8%), 6-10 years (25%), 11-15 years (3.8%), 16-20 years (4.7), and least above 20 years was 3.8%. The last part of Table 2 summarises the nature of the organisation that participated in the study. Most of the respondents are from the local or central government sector. This accounted for 55% of the total participant, followed by private firms (34.4%), parastatal and others contributed to 7.5 and 3.1%, respectively.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

N	%	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
320	100	0.968	29

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents of the Survey

Variable	N	Freq.	%
Gender	320		
Male		170	53.1
Female		150	46.9
Academic Qualification	320		
Diploma/1 st Degree		127	39.7
Masters		130	40.6
Doctorate		46	14.4
Others		17	5.3
Position of Respondents	320		
Training officer		64	20.0
Head of department/section		51	15.9
Immediate supervisor		156	48.8
Others		49	15.3
Number of Years Served in Current Position	320		
1-5		185	57.8
6-10		82	25.6
11-19		30	9.4
Above 20 years		23	7.2
Nature of Organisation	320		
The local or central government		176	55.0
Parastatal organisation		24	7.5
Private firm		110	34.4
Others		10	3.1

Table 3. Location of firm * Gender of respondents Cross-tabulation

Variable	Characteristics		Gender of respondents		Total
			Male	Female	
Location of firm	Western	Count	39	27	66
		% within gender of respondents	22.9%	18.0%	20.6%
	Greater Accra	Count	110	110	220
		% within gender of respondents	64.7%	73.3%	68.8%
	Ashanti	Count	7	9	16
		% within gender of respondents	4.1%	6.0%	5.0%
	Eastern	Count	6	2	8
		% within gender of respondents	3.5%	1.3%	2.5%
	Central	Count	8	2	10
		% within gender of respondents	4.7%	1.3%	3.1%
Total		Count	170	150	320
		% within gender of respondents	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4. Willingness of Organisations to Continue with the Internship Program

Variable	% Scaling					χ^2	$P > \chi^2$
	SW	W	UN	UW	SU		
Local or Central government	52.2	33.8	12.8	1.2	0.0	164	<0.001
Parastatal Organisation	54.5	27.5	9.0	6.0	3.0	143	<0.001
Private Firm	35.6	31.6	28.8	3.1	0.9	125	<0.001
Others	57.2	28.7	10.1	2.8	1.2	159	<0.001

Key: SW-Strongly Willing, W-Willing, UN-Unaware, UW-Unwilling, SU-Strongly Unwilling

Table 3 presents a cross-tabulation of the location of the firms and gender of respondents. The data shows that questionnaires were mostly answered by firms located in the Western, Greater Accra, Ashanti, Eastern, and Central Regions of the country (Ghana) respectively. The

results indicates that respondents were skewed towards Greater Accra (the regional capital of Ghana), this accounted for 68.8%, followed by Western, Ashanti, Eastern, and Central with assigned percentages of; 20.6, 5.0, 3.1, and 2.5, correspondingly.

Table 5. Benefits Host Organisations get from Internship Programmes

Variable	N	μ	x^2	$P > x^2$
Low cost of labour for clearing backlogs	320	4.33	163.6	<0.001
Development of products and services by interns, e.g., website, application	320	4.32	146.5	<0.001
Creating the appropriate climate for change due to the infusion of new ideas	320	4.29	159	<0.001
The platform for evaluating new employees	320	4.29	143	<.0001
Absorbing new concepts and ideas that may be used to boost competitiveness	320	4.28	161	<0.001
An opportunity to fulfil social corporate responsibility	320	4.25	160.3	<0.001
Transfer of university experience and knowledge to the organisation	320	4.21	148.3	<0.001
Recruitment of new employees	320	4.12	156	<0.001

Table 6. Challenges to Host Organisations for participating in Internship Programmes

Variable	N	μ	σ	R_x
Cost of training materials and logistics	320	3.97	0.74	5
Attitude of students towards the training	320	4.01	0.57	3
Cost of protective clothing	320	3.97	0.74	5
Payment of health insurance fees	320	4.2	0.56	2
No partnership with TTU in the development of curricula for students	320	3.86	0.79	7
Relevance of curricula to industry	317	4.0	0.57	4
Inadequate state of the art machine and equipment for training	320	3.86	0.79	7
Quality of trainers	320	3.71		9
Inadequate space to accommodate interns	320	4.67	0.41	1

Table 4 displayed the willingness of organisations or firms to continue with the internship program or host organisations willing to receive students for internship programs in their facilities. The findings displayed indicated that all the firms are very willing to continue receiving interns as at least 66% of the respondents responded significantly with the local or central government ($x^2 = 164; P < 0.001$), Parastatal organisation ($x^2 = 143; P < 0.001$), private firms ($x^2 = 125; P < 0.001$), and other analogous institutions ($x^2 = 159; P < 0.001$).

4.2 Benefits Organisations or Firms derive from participating in Internship Programmes

The objective of the study sought to identify the structure or type of benefits that these host organisations or institutions derived from participating or accepting students in their facilities. To understand these benefits, an exploratory study was conducted on a multiple-response variable.

Table 5 hypothesizes the benefits host organisations get from internship programmes. The findings in the Table show a high mean

score of at least 4.12 out of 5 for all 8 variables. The variable; low cost of labour for clearing backlogs recorded the highest mean response value (μ) of 4.33 with a chi-square value (x^2) of 163.6, followed by the variable; development of products and services by interns in relation to website, application and more with $\mu = 4.32$ and a $x^2 = 146.5$ correspondingly. Creating the appropriate climate for change due to the infusion of new ideas recorded $\mu = 4.29$ and a $x^2 = 159$. The platform for evaluating new employees; absorbing new concepts and ideas that may be used to boost competitiveness; an opportunity to fulfill social corporate responsibility; transfer of university experience and knowledge to organisation and recruitment of new employees documented (μ) MRV's of 4.29; 4.28; 4.25; 4.21 and 4.12 respectively. The results are considered statistically significant based on the recorded p-values (See Table 5).

4.3 Challenges to Host Organisations for participating in Internship Programmes

This objective sought to determine the challenge that host organisations faces in participating in internship programmes across.

Statistical analysis displayed in Table 6 disclosed that respondents agreed that inadequate space to accommodate interns (ranked 1) was the most challenging variable for host organisations for participating in internship programmes with a mean response value (μ) of 4.67 and associated standard deviation (σ) of 0.41 and ranked 1st. This was closely followed by payment of health insurance fees ($\mu = 4.2, \sigma = 0.56$), the attitude of students towards the training ($\mu = 4.01, \sigma = 0.57$), the relevance of curricula to industry ($\mu = 4.0, \sigma = 0.57$). The cost of training materials and logistics and the cost of protective clothing all produced $\mu = 3.97$ and $\sigma = 0.74$, respectively. The least challenging was the quality of trainers ($\mu = 3.71, \sigma = 0.57$). Analysis of the results shows the overall summary in relation to challenges to host organisations for participating in internship programmes

5. DISCUSSION

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, a greater number of respondents have a diploma, bachelor, and master's degrees in graphic design technology. This a trend that the researchers find very refreshing, implying that our interns are in good and qualified hands, with in-depth theoretical knowledge and hands-on skills to impart to the trainees. In terms of trainee supervision and oversight responsibilities (Industry Based Supervisor), most respondents agreed that it was entirely the responsibility of the immediate supervisor who oversees the day-to-day training schedule, assignment of related duties, and finally, the evaluation of the training after the internship period has expired [1, 2] confirmed this finding in their study on the benefits of industrial training to host organisations in Botswana.

According to the analysis, the majority of the participating or hosting organisations of the industrial training programme are from the government sector of the economy. A true reflection of reality based on my observations as a school-based supervisor for the programme over the years, this was in stark contrast to [4,2]'s observation that the majority of participating or hosting organisations are from the private sector. They are thought to be more vibrant, propelling Botswana's economy toward development and growth. In relation to that, was the location of these firms, and once again, the majority of participating organisations were located in the greater Accra region, which doubles as Ghana's capital town, and

undoubtedly where economic activity is very brisk and most government establishments are located.

When asked about their continuous readiness to accept interns from the graphic design technology department, the majority of the participating organisations agreed to their readiness by expressing a high level of assurance to continue with the exercise with the intention of increasing the number of interns they bring on board annually, but they had some reservations to express, particularly to the universities, by requesting six months prior notification to enable them to prepare adequately. On the contrary, research shows that, while most organisations were enthusiastic about the internship programmes, they were unwilling to increase the number of interns due to insufficient space, truancy, and a negative attitude toward the programme [1,4,37]. Overall, participants agreed on four key factors that represented the benefits host organisations derived from participating in internship programmes: low labour costs for clearing backlogs, intern product and service development, creating an appropriate climate for change due to the infusion of new ideas, and finally a platform for evaluating new employees.

In discussing the major challenges that participating organisations face annually as a result of taking students on internships, most expressed concerns, particularly the issue of insufficient space to accommodate these interns during the period of the exercise. Aside from the few government institutions, others operate in makeshift structures, making it extremely difficult even for the few that take on board. However, this expression, as well as the earlier assertion of host organizations' willingness to increase the number of interns who come on attachment, do not sit well with the researchers. If there isn't enough space to work, increasing the number of interns will be a disaster; more specifically, where will the interns sit to learn and train? The issue of paying for health insurance for interns was also high on the list of factors. Although they are probably not well known, graphic design technology students who go on internship training are first insured by the school against any calamity, accident, or injury that occurs at the workplace, so it does not have to be a burden at all. According to host institutions, graphic design technology students' attitudes toward internship training leave much to be desired; no wonder interns were cited for lack of commitment

and truancy. Finally, the issue of curriculum relevant to the industry was raised. The industry has repeatedly demonstrated that the curriculum is out of date and appears to be at odds with the world of practice. They believe that this makes training extremely difficult and places interns in situations where they know next to nothing.

6. CONCLUSION

The academic internship exercise has proven beyond all reasonable doubts to be very important and critical to the development of hands-on-skills to graphic design technology students, Takoradi Technical University, and, to a greater extent, the significant stakeholders (interns, participating organisations, and Academic institutions) who have consistently participated in the internship exercise. Despite the numerous challenges encountered by host organisations in accepting interns on attachment, the majority of participating organisations expressed their complete willingness to continue with the internship exercise and promised to increase the number of interns who come on attachment, but only expressed a genuine concern of prompting academic institutions to serve them ample notice ahead of the exercise. In terms of the benefits derived from the exercise, participating organisations stated that it assists them in obtaining low-cost labour, developing products and services, creating a conducive climate for change that facilitates the infusion of new ideas, and evaluating potential employees. Most participating organisations cited inadequate space, intern insurance, a poor attitude toward training, and outdated curricula as challenges.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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