



A Review of Internship Opportunities in Online Learning: Building a New Conceptual Framework for a Self-Regulated Internship in Hospitality

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Abstract: The primary purpose of the article was to build a framework for an innovative approach to online internships after examining best practices in hospitality internships. Learning the ins and outs of an industry virtually, using contemporary internship methods strengthens the student's expertise and better prepares them for future workplace environments. Researchers find value in the virtual component of the internship experience, yet, none of them connect the use of the virtual experience to one that is conducted on the ground as well. Existing self-regulated learning models and virtual internship models do not integrate a ground-based component. Existing hospitality internship frameworks do not incorporate a distance learning component. The increase of virtual internships is beneficial to developing student confidence, building relationships, and mirroring their real-life experience in the workplace. Furthermore, real-world experiences can be more important for online students when they graduate and go into the workforce. Thus, a new framework had to be created to integrate distance learning with ground-based internships in the hospitality industry. Schools using this model will enable students to gain valuable experience and interviewing skills, build confidence and professionalism to seek and find an internship that is germane to their passion.

Keywords: virtual internship, hospitality management, online university, online learning, distance learning, self-regulated internship, hospitality teaching.

Résumé : Le but premier de l'article était de construire un cadre favorable à une approche innovante des stages en ligne après avoir examiné les meilleures pratiques dans les stages d'hôtellerie. Apprendre à connaître virtuellement les moindres détails d'une industrie en utilisant des méthodes contemporaines de stage renforce l'expertise des étudiants et favorise leur préparation à leurs futurs environnements de travail. Des chercheurs ont ressorti l'intérêt de la composante virtuelle de l'expérience de stage, pourtant, aucun d'entre eux n'a établi de lien entre l'expérience réalisée en ligne et celle conduite sur le terrain. Les modèles traitant de l'apprentissage autorégulé comme ceux existants à propos des stages virtuels n'intègrent pas de composante prenant en compte le terrain. Les cadres existant sur les stages dans l'hôtellerie n'intègrent pas d'éléments en formation à distance. L'accroissement des stages virtuels est propice au développement de la confiance des étudiants ainsi qu'à l'établissement de relations et de liens avec leur expérience réelle sur leur lieu de travail. De plus, les expériences sur le terrain peuvent être plus importantes pour les étudiants en ligne lorsqu'ils sont diplômés et prennent part à la population active. Ainsi, un nouveau cadre devait être créé pour associer la formation à distance avec les stages sur le terrain dans l'industrie hôtelière. Les écoles utilisant ce modèle offriront aux étudiants une expérience précieuse et leur permettront de développer différentes compétences et de gagner en confiance et professionnalisme pour chercher et trouver un stage qui corresponde à leur passion.



Mots-clés : stage virtuel, gestion hôtelière, université en ligne, apprentissage en ligne, formation à distance, stage autorégulé, enseignement hôtelier

Introduction

The primary purpose of the study is to design an innovative framework for virtual university hospitality program internships based on current best practices in hospitality and virtual internships. In recent years, the literature is increasingly more focused on online internships and their value to students in different disciplines (Bayerlein, 2015, DeWitt & Rogers, 2009, Goldsmith & Martin, 2009, Kruse, Harlos, Callahan, & Herring, 2013, Pike, 2015, Weible & McClure, 2015). However, those internships took place online and had little in the way of a brick and mortar component of practice. While there are models for hospitality internships, a review of the literature shows a lack of models that can be applied to an internship that is conducted on the ground yet supervised at a distance.

The general consensus is that learning the ins and outs of an industry virtually, using contemporary internship methods, strengthens the students' expertise and better prepares them for future workplace environments. Institutions of higher learning continuously search for ways to improve the overall experience of an education that does not have a face-to-face component. An effective internship will teach students to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings and thus increase their employment opportunities after graduation. The literature on the benefits students gain after a real-life experience, whether it was called an internship, an externship, community project, or field experience, shows it gave them an advantage (Daugherty, 2011, Knouse & Fontenot, 2008, Weible & McClure, 2015). One challenge for an internship that is conducted on the ground and integrated with a virtual academic program is the need to connect the student with the employer organization. Thus, this paper further examines the application of current (2010-2016) research to the development of a conceptual framework for a self-regulated internship model applicable to an online hospitality curriculum.

Literature Review

Researchers posit that an internship, externship, community based project or residency is beneficial to the success of students preparing to enter the workforce. Even in earlier studies, George Posner (1994), a leading researcher in curriculum design, and Powers & Riegel (1993), leaders in hospitality education, believed internships add value to students' total experience and aid in connecting the dots to their industry. These theories are consistent with current educators who incorporate virtual internships into their curriculum. Way (2006) posits that the hospitality curriculum could benefit from a virtual component. In another study by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), Hart (2008) reported that "employers believe that completion of a supervised and evaluated internship or community-based project would be very or fairly effective in ensuring that recent college graduates possess the skills and knowledge needed for success at their company" (p. 2).

These theories have sparked an interest in how to incorporate virtual internship opportunities into the curriculum. In the 2009 Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) membership survey, "62 percent of AAC&U member institutions report placing an increased emphasis on internships during the past five years" (p. 6). This increase in virtual internships develops student confidence, builds relationships, and mirrors their real-life experience in the workplace. Furthermore, the study noted that real-world experiences can be more important for online students when they graduate and go into the workforce. Online educators are taking notice

and responding to the need for inclusion of virtual internship experiences. Indeed, internships were considered as critical by hospitality professionals as they value college placement services (Chi & Gursoy, 2008).

Hence, more disciplines have incorporated an online internship component. For example, Low (2008) determined that students who struggled due to unfamiliarity with the work place in the field of physical therapy, experienced an overall positive outcome through an integrated WebCT-based internship. This theory is consistent with an exploratory study on the benefits derived from internships for marketing majors, where Weible & McClure (2011) found students had “more confidence, improved class discussions and better opportunities for employment upon graduation” (p. 234). Kruse et al. (2013) explored the use of technology in a study of music majors, finding that use of online media narrowed the gap and provided actual face-to-face virtual internship encounters that engaged the students. Additionally, Bayerlein (2015) used virtual instruction as a curriculum motivator to inspire accounting students, and Pike (2015) found that virtual internships for teachers helped them to develop greater pedagogical skills that greatly enhanced their classroom experience. Smith (2015) evaluated a blended internship for communications interns that tested for high levels of satisfaction. Yet, while all of these researchers found value in the virtual component of the internship experience, none of them connected the use of the virtual experience to one that is conducted on the ground as well.

Best Practices in Hospitality Internships

With the rise in global tourism, the need for highly skilled and well-trained employees has never been greater. Global tourism constitutes about 10% of the world’s total Gross Domestic Products and accounts for 1 in 11 jobs worldwide. It is expected to rise approximately 2% annually (WTTC, 2016). With this need for qualified workers, universities that focus on travel and tourism programs often provide internships as a way to introduce students to the workforce. The internships are designed to integrate theoretical learning with hands-on practical experience (Baltescu, 2016, Kosli & Ilban, 2013, Rahim & Tazijan, 2011, Frazier, 2010). However, it appears that the internship experience is uneven for the employer and the student. Therefore, it is up to universities to make modifications to incorporate consistent and positive learning experiences into their curriculums to guide the internship process whether on the ground or online.

As to those learning experiences, Baltescu, (2016) believes the “content, venue, organization, and methods of evaluation are key elements” (p. 65) in shaping professionals in a way that includes practical training. When examining the amount of time that a student must perform an internship, Baltescu (2016) looked at 90-hour programs during the second year in entry-level positions. Other researchers examined third- and fourth-year students (Kasli & Ilban, 2013) who worked between three and six months (the official period was four months). Researchers discovered similar problems and related benefits in the internship process. Generally, researchers found that internship programs have similar aims to the educational point of view, that an internship is a valuable learning experience (Baltescu, 2016, Frazier, 2010, Kosli & Ilban, 2013, Lee, Chao, Chen, 2015, Rahim & Tazijan, 2011). Comparable gains are noted when students practice in a professionally evaluated, on-the-job experience, which involves full-fledged decision-making.

Table 1. Benefits and Challenges

Benefits of Practice	Challenges
On-task training	Expectations of industry and student
Gain industry experience	Rigor and relevance
Build self-confidence	Autonomy
Recognize and solve problems	Solving real world problems in 4 weeks
Insight into management	Student not prepared for scope of work
Employment opportunity	Little or no pay
Maturity level	Unable to locate the opportunity

Challenges in Hospitality Internships

Yet, a number of researchers have identified failings in reaching those aims. Baltescu (2016) argues that students do not understand the types of work or employment conditions in the hospitality industry. McKnight (2013) found disconnects between the students' experiences in the field and academic learning. Singh and Dutta (2010) affirm the distance between the expectations of the interns and their actual experiences, concluding that both instruction and supervisor support are important to providing the student with a positive experience. Baltescu (2016) found some specific shortcomings expressed by frustrated students: inconsistent experiences, the banality of received information, internships being too intense and exhausting, and interns being treated like employees but without pay or benefits. These same findings are echoed time and again by studies that look at the negative perceptions of the internship experience by interns (Singh & Dutta, 2010; Lee, Chao, Chen, 2015; McKnight, 2013; Kasli & Ilban, 2013; Malik, 2015).

One issue pointed out by interns was the unfairness of the reward system. While discussing the issue of compensation on a global level for student hospitality interns falls outside the scope of this paper, the discussion of other rewards and benefits is pertinent. For example, common practices for employees include sharing tips, receiving recognition, attending company parties, free employee meals, or employee discounts but these are not readily presented to interns. The literature identified a lack of consistency in internship programs and internship practices. According to Lee, Chao, & Chen (2015) hotels rarely provide these employee perks to interns. They suggest implementing changes, working with HRM to include interns in the hotel's total quality management (TQM) strategies. Their premise is it makes for overall employee satisfaction, which ultimately affects the product and the guest experience. The common factor mentioned in the literature is the need for a more consistent process in creating student internships so that all of the stakeholders receive positive benefits. Thus, the goal of this new framework is to incorporate best practices in hospitality internships, add the element of self-regulated learning within the distance environment and to design the program in such a way as to overcome the challenges noted by other researchers.

Framework for a Self-Regulated, Virtual Hospitality Internship Program

The idea that an internship is self-regulated may be innovative, yet, in a virtual university, the student is already self-regulated (SRL) or self-directed (SDL). While the theoretical backgrounds of SRL and SDL may be a bit different, the outcomes mean that the learner is ultimately responsible for much of the learning process (Saks & Leijen, 2014). In SRL, the task is set by the instructor and in SDL the task is initiated by the learner (Saks & Leijen, 2014). In the case of hospitality internships at a distance university, the student would be responsible for finding the organization at which to conduct the activity — this constitutes the self-direction. However, the internship will then comport with all the other requirements of the academic program and be facilitated by faculty while the student remains responsible for learning tasks, and that is the self-regulated component. This portion of the new framework is reflected in Table 6 below.

In exploring frameworks for self-regulated online learning, none of them appeared to consider a ground-based internship component. However, Zhao & Johnson's model (2012) includes the following essential elements, "instructional strategies, digital technologies, and delivery methods" (p. 167) based on planning, strategizing, evaluating, and comprehending. The proposed model modifies and extends these concepts but applies them to a ground-based hospitality internship where the academic portion is completed online. However, there are also other considerations in devising a framework for this learning situation. Zhao & Johnson (2012) point out that the learner characteristics of self-efficacy, task-value beliefs, motivation and goal orientation are important to the SRL framework. These characteristics are also important to hospitality organizations and are considered by the Human Resources departments.

There are strong advocates for recruiting interns who fit the TQM philosophy of the hotel in their knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and needs (KSAAN). In fact, Lee, et al. (2015) suggest that HR plays a pivotal role and must decide upon the skills and training that need to be taught to interns and how they will implement them. Hayes, Ninemeier, & Miller (2017) argue that on-going training for interns fosters additional job-related knowledge and skills leading to more responsibility. Thus, lodging organizations are learning new ways to connect with students. Interstate Hotels and Resorts commits itself to the internship experience exemplifying best practices (Interstate hotels & resort, 2015). Interns gain access to every facet of the hotel or they may choose a specific track that appeals to them. A team of professionals guides the interns and they receive feedback and access to resources and tools. The program provides regular and consistent performance feedback and has scheduled check-in meetings. Both the host hotel and the corporation's main office are involved in providing interns with an "Intern Mentor, Department Head, and Corporate Office Representative" (Interstate hotels & resorts, 2015). These are some of the same practices recommended by Lee, et al. (2015) when they examined the role of HRM practices in the internship experience. Clear, concise instruction and documentation in the new framework is critical for all stakeholders (student, university and organization) with explicit expectations, goals and objectives.

To that end, the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction (ibstpi®) provides guidelines for the competencies that all online learners need to exhibit. In the Learning Domain, competencies include being an active, resourceful, reflective and self-monitoring learner who applies the learning. In the Interaction Domain, students engage in effective, productive and collaborative communication and interaction. The Users Community of ibstpi® provides standards that the board has set. These help set the standards for virtual hospitality internship programs and

can be used to formulate checklists. For instance, Sanofi University has adopted the following standards that may be helpful to this program (Users Community, n.d.):

1. Provide a benchmark for individual professional growth and development.
2. Provide a basis for employers to hire professionals with the specific knowledge and skill required to satisfy organizational demands.
3. Provide a clear criterion for supervisors to assess work performance of established practitioners and to assist in upgrading their knowledge and skill..
4. Provide organizations with elements to judge the quality of the training services they contract.
5. Establish a sound basis for educational institutions to select and educate new professionals.
6. Allow educational institutions a set of validated performance expectations on which to base the design of their educational offerings.

These competencies and guidelines are helpful in a general sense for internship programs. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration worked with industry leaders to outline specific competencies and standards for the hospitality industry, with worksheets to analyze the curriculum, the employee, and the workplace, which will be used to create the checklists for the internship. Without delving into the subtopics, the model addresses the following:

- Personal effectiveness competencies: personal effectiveness, integrity, professionalism, initiative, dependability and reliability, adaptability and flexibility, and lifelong learning.
- Academic competencies: Reading, writing, mathematics, science and technology, communication, critical and analytic thinking, and basic computer skills.
- Workplace competencies: Teamwork, customer focus, planning and organizing, creative thinking, and problem solving and decision-making.

Furthermore, there are industry wide competencies as well as industry specific competencies. For instance, the lodging industry provides a checklist of expected competencies in guest safety, lodging policies and procedures, guest satisfaction, information (providing guidance to guests), laws and regulations, and lodging departments (knowledge thereof).

The Letter of Commitment signed by the school and the host organization should outline the job specific competencies that will be assessed. With such excellent guidance from the industry in the form of checklists, the internship program will reflect industry standards in accordance with the recommendations of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration and the ibstpi®. Most critical of these is ensuring that the supervisor understands the role of the intern and provides appropriate supervision and feedback about the workplace learning experience. Students are in touch with the human resources department of the host organization as well as their faculty supervisor.

Existing Framework

Zopiatis & Constanti's (2012) conceptual framework for best practices in a hospitality internship have been modified into a table format and then extended to a proposed model for the virtual environment. The Kolb (1984) model that they based their framework on is a continuous improvement (or continuous learning) model. The proposed model rearranges Zopiatis & Constanti's (2012) framework so that it begins with the planning stage. Setting objectives within the curriculum that meets the ever changing needs of the hospitality industry is a challenge for hospitality programs yet will help graduates secure better jobs (Chi & Gursoy, 2008). The success of any internship program depends on collaboration, cooperation and communication and the self-regulated, virtual internship is no different.

The proposed self-regulated model encourages students to negotiate, build self-confidence, utilize critical thinking and develop personal goal setting as they acquire an internship or externship opportunity in their final year of academic study. It also structures the experience to meet academic quality standards and employer needs. The tables below summarize the Zopiatis & Constanti's (2012) framework and modify the existing framework for application to a distance education hospitality program as explained in more detail in the next section. Furthermore, the student has responsibilities (as shown in Table 6) within the new self-regulated framework unlike the Zopiatis & Constanti (2012) model.

Table 2. [D] Plan

Zopiatis & Constanti (2012) Model	Virtual Model (Roy & Sykes, 2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Purpose and Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Letter of Commitment signed by school and host organization • Clarify Roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job description specific to internship • Quality Assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effectiveness measures of the work-experience ○ Evaluation mechanisms (host organization and academic) ○ Set standards of performance • Academic Criteria • Norms, Policies, and Procedures • Pre-Internship Seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Purpose and Learning Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Letter of Commitment signed by school and host organization • Clarify Roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job description specific to internship ○ Virtual introduction of student, internship coordinator, and host organization supervisor • Quality Assurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effectiveness measures of the work-experience ○ Evaluation mechanisms (host organization and academic) (will be virtual evaluation) ○ Set standards of performance • Academic Criteria • Norms, Policies, and Procedures • Pre-Internship Seminar - via webinar on the school's learning management system (LMS) • Benchmark student & host organization and program in accordance with academic and ibstpi® standards

Table 3. [A] Engage - The Actual Hospitality Internship

Zopiatis & Constanti (2012) Model	Virtual Model (Roy & Sykes, 2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Log books - diaries • Orient, train, supervise, mentor • On-site faculty visitations • Assessment • On-site meetings • Intern's status (duties/tasks of job, employment status) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual components of log books/diaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Add private log book area in virtual environment for host organization supervisor to track daily or weekly activities of the intern • Virtual instructor facilitated discussion board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Virtual blog for students to record experiences in public forum ○ Virtual diary and logbook that are private between student and instructor ○ Virtual logbook that are private between supervisor and instructor • On site orientation, training, supervision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Virtual mentor (previous students) • Assessment (conducted virtually) using rubrics (both supervisor and instructor complete) • Virtual meetings with student and with supervisor both private and as group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timely instructor feedback on diary and log book postings dealing with any issues that arise • Intern's status (duties/tasks of job, employment status) tracked virtually

Table 4. [C] Assimilate

Zopiatis & Constanti (2012) Model	Virtual Model (Roy & Sykes, 2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect practice to theory • In-class exercises • Simulations • Role play • Design appropriate curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect practice to theory using weekly presentations on LMS guiding students in a particular theory each week • Using class blog and discussions, instructor makes connections between theory and practice and asks students for more examples from their experiences • Include simulations from the online learning environment • Provide opportunities for role-play between students on dedicated discussion boards with guided questions • Work with curriculum designers to improve course based on feedback from all stakeholders using data collected • Assist students in applying for an outside opportunity

Table 5. [B] Review and Reflect

Zopiatis & Constanti (2012) Model	Virtual Model (Roy & Sykes, 2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post internship seminar • Formal reflection • Informal reflection • Evaluation • Self-assessment • Group discussion • Reflection checklist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post internship seminar conducted virtually via webinar (both as class group and one-to-one) • Formal reflection - reflective paper required submitted via the LMS • Informal reflection - virtual blog entry and also private diary reflection submitted to instructor • Evaluation - rubric submitted online by supervisor and evaluated by instructor • Self-assessment - students also complete an evaluation rubric online • Discussion board for all students to share their reflections and recommendations • Reflection checklist - provide rubrics • Disseminate summary of data online to all stakeholders • Ask students to build a virtual “wisdom wall (Smith, 2015)” of recommendations to future students (can use Padlet or similar application) • Survey students and employers to collect data

Table 6. Student’s Self-Regulated Component of the Hospitality Internship Learning Process

<p>The proposed model for students to obtain an internship/externship opportunity.</p> <p>As part of the final project, students will seek their own opportunity by actively applying for a paid or non-paid opportunity.</p> <p>Send Request for Project Proposal (RPP)</p>	<p>Students secure opportunities with host organization for a 4 or 6-week internship (paid or unpaid)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask a hospitality organization if you can do a summer project for a class. 2. Be specific about the topic or department you want to study. 3. Volunteer at a professional association conference. 4. Conduct Internet search for internships. 5. Maintain relationship with career services. 6. Attend career fairs. 7. Peruse Industry journals. 8. Create a project for an organization through innovative ideas. 9. Establish a one-year post graduation timeline to complete the project. 10. Offer to work part-time for 4 weeks free. 11. Demonstrate undeniable work ethic, drive, motivation, initiative, and commitment. 12. Write a college-level report on KSAAN.
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While it is clear that there is a growing interest in online internship, much of the research has focused on internships that are completed exclusively within the virtual environment. This paper proposes a blended experience whereby the student completes academic work online but practices the internship at a host organization.

Proposed Model

This structure is designed to complement a virtual teaching experience and intersect with applied industry experience. The hospitality organization, the school and the student will need the necessary training and resources for an optimal experience. The experience and corresponding academic components must be rigorous to obtain college credit. This can be an issue with any internship, however, since the online faculty member is not likely to be physically overseeing the internship experience, the self-regulated model has to address these issues by establishing minimum criteria for oversight and monitoring the results carefully. Furthermore, the student that secures an internship for credit must provide the overseeing faculty member documentation to ensure that regular communication occurs and the student’s objectives are met. Additionally, the university’s curriculum design department must administer and regulate the program. Each distinctive component of the framework for a hospitality internship at a virtual or distance university is explained here in further detail. Each stage will be considered separately.

Planning

In the planning stage, a distance learning process must begin with the curriculum design. Without delving into the academic constructs of accreditation, assessment and curriculum design, every program has outcomes with specific learning objectives. The faculty in charge of the program will work with the curriculum designer to promulgate the internship course, its specific outcomes, and the documentation and assessments that will occur during the program. In addition to the internship experience, students will also have assigned reading to do, discussions, blogs, and other learning elements in their course. This design will form the basis of the letter of commitment that will be signed between the school and the host organization. The letter will clarify the roles that each stakeholder will fulfill. The student will be the worker and both the school and the organization will supervise the student. A faculty member will oversee the practice.

In order to address some of the challenges highlighted in this paper, the letter of commitment needs to address the type and amount of managerial oversight that the intern will receive and the role of the student within the organization. The student should have a clear job description. The internship experience for each student will necessarily be unique depending on the location that they select. However, the quality of the experience should be the same for all students. The organization's policies and procedures will be disseminated to the student prior to initial contact among all parties. At the onset of the internship and prior to the student's first day at work, the host organization supervisor, the student and the internship coordinator need to have a live meeting. This can be conducted by telephone, Skype, or a virtual conference system. The important part of this introduction is to ensure that there is a live touch-point at the beginning of the relationship.

For quality assurance, the host organization will implement their own performance evaluations which students need to understand. But the school also needs its own forms and checklists for the student's performance. Those forms and checklists will be based on the ibstpi® and Department of Labor guidelines. Furthermore, the student will evaluate the experience. Thus, checklists will be created for each stakeholder — the host organization, the internship coordinator and the student — to rank the effectiveness and quality of the experience. The checklists will be hosted online and completed online as well. They could be structured with a tool such as SurveyMonkey.

Self-Regulation Component

After the program has been planned, the student needs to seek the internship opportunity. The self-regulation component has been incorporated in all the stages of the program — planning, engaging, assimilating, and review and reflection. These stages for the hospitality internship are reflective of the planning, strategizing, comprehending, and evaluating elements of the scaffolding suggested in the SRL model developed by Zhao & Johnson (2012). The student also bears responsibility for completing all the academic components of the course and the task components of the internship.

Engage

During the engagement stage, all the stakeholders will maintain a journal or log of activities. The student should also keep a reflective journal of their thoughts and experiences. Some of the documents will be shared among all parties and some will not. All the documentation will be hosted online. The student and instructor can keep their logs within the LMS of the school. The organization will need access to a log book so that they can record the student's daily or weekly work. But the

organization also needs to be able to communicate with the faculty member in private and that may be done via email.

The students will be able to have a private place to record their thoughts and experiences, but it is very valuable for them to participate in the class and share in the experiences of their classmates as well. The student will participate on the discussion board of the LMS and on a virtual blog of the LMS, which will be promulgated with prompts that align to the content of the readings and the course content. It may also be helpful to students to be assigned a mentor who is a student who has previously completed the internship. If this resource is not available, one way to achieve a similar effect would be to ask students to share on a blog what they would like to share with future students and make this accessible to future classes.

The host organization will be responsible for conducting an on-site orientation, training and supervision. The organization will also conduct regular assessments of the student's work and progress. Rubrics will be created via an online survey that will allow the supervisor and instructor to complete the assessments. For the instructor, the LMS is one appropriate venue for this feedback. However, feedback may also be by phone, Skype, or email.

Periodically, the student and their supervisor (together and individually) will need to meet with the instructor. These meetings should be set up in the initial contact session. The instructor also has to complete timely feedback on the assignments, reflections, and discussions of the student. This allows the instructor to guide the student into improved performance or help them overcome any challenges they may face. Because this internship is self-regulated and conducted at a distance from the school, it is critical to ensure that both the student and the organization have an outlet to express challenges or difficulties. For instance, if a student were sexually harassed on the job, the instructor would have to immediately inform authorities at the school and follow up with the organization, as well as counsel the student. While this is a dire example, others such as being bullied by a coworker may require instructor involvement.

To the more mundane daily duties, the engagement section of the plan will be a virtual component so that the student and the manager can easily insert the activities of the student. This should be structured with the typical duties that would occur in the workplace. For instance, housekeeping would include cleaning rooms, making beds, restocking rooms, and doing laundry, etc. Restaurant duties would differ from administrative duties or night clerk duties or the duties at an amusement park. These are the daily and weekly tasks. Furthermore, with an understanding of how important the workplace competencies and the personal effectiveness factors in the hospitality industry are, another checklist would be devised for those. The ranking would be on a Likert scale and conducted via an electronic survey. This data could be easily analyzed and the results provided to the student for self-improvement.

Assimilate

During this phase of the internship process, the student will interact with the learning experience in both the virtual learning and ground environments and connect theory to the actual practices at a hospitality organization. The classroom will focus on different theoretical aspects of hospitality and students will participate in the discussion board, a classroom blog, and write assignments that demonstrate assimilation of the learning.

Students may be given the opportunity to engage in role-play or interact with simulations as they are also gaining real world experience. The faculty member's involvement and feedback is a critical component to guide the learning experience. They can also help the student apply for outside opportunities and work with the curriculum designers to keep improving the course based on observations in the classroom. The instructor and the curriculum designer will also collect data during the review process that will further the aims of the program.

Review and Reflect

Reviewing and reflecting on the learning experience is effective in improving outcomes (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010) and thus, prompts for explanation, self-monitoring, and reflection are included in the framework. Some elements will allow for free-form reflection, such as a journal or blog, and other elements will be more structured with written prompts and deadlines for the student to complete. Some of the reflection will take place concurrently with the internship experience by way of the discussion board, assignments, and virtual seminars. Other reflective and evaluative processes will take place at the end of the internship or program.

The program will include a post-internship seminar as a classroom activity and also on a one-to-one basis. The students will be asked to evaluate the hospitality organization and also the experience. An essential part of the evaluation process is the instructor feedback and the internship supervisor feedback, so both of those will be incorporated into the program. Rubrics will be provided to the internship supervisor in advance. That feedback will be provided to each student individually. A summary of the data will be provided to all the stakeholders.

Additionally, students will be asked to share their thoughts and experiences with fellow and future students by building a virtual wall of wisdom by way of an online application such as Padlet. And finally, the stakeholders will be surveyed so that the program can be continuously improved.

Limitations

While this internship model is student driven and somewhat self-regulated, the hospitality organization that hires an intern has to be committed to the process and provide a positive work encounter for this experiential learning experiment. The researchers recommend that this model be implemented as a pilot program. Thus, any potential problems can be identified and addressed prior to implementing it school-wide.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper provides a review of the literature for developing internships in an online environment, examines a hospitality internship framework for traditional education, and develops a new model for a hospitality internship that is specific to distance education. The literature provides an array of information on the value of internships that round out the student's academic experience (Bayerlein, 2015; Kasli & Ilban, 2013; Kruse, et al., 2013; Larkin & Beatson, 2014; Lee, et al., 2015; McKnight, 2013; Singh & Dutta, 2010; Wan, Yang, Cheng, Su, 2013) and confirm the pros of adding a virtual component to their curriculum. These theorists believe strongly in the value of virtual internships to enhance the curriculum. After analyzing hospitality needs and challenges related to hospitality internships in general, the connection of human resource activities to internship models (Hayes, et al., 2017; Lee, et al., 2015) is highlighted. In addition to knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and needs

(KSAAN) indicators point to a need for more research to ensure a cohesive internship experience for interns educated in a virtual hospitality program.

There were no frameworks or proposed curriculum models for online or distance education programs to conduct a brick and mortar based internship while completing the academic portion of the internship virtually. Thus, this research proposes a conceptual framework using best practices for a hospitality internship and a self-regulated learning framework for web-based learning, and extended it to create a virtual internship model for an online hospitality program. This framework was designed to complement a virtual teaching experience at the intersection of practical experience. The model uses best practices for a hospitality internship, combined within a virtual environment to propose a self-regulated, synchronized model.

The proposed model seeks to overcome some of the challenges faced by the student, the virtual institution, and the hospitality organization. The communication model in the framework can be accomplished at a distance yet provides sufficient supervision to the student and oversight of the internship experience. Furthermore, by including the curriculum designer in the process and also ensuring that the model meets benchmarks in the industry, the model is academically sound. This framework can be incorporated into any distance education hospitality program. The model could also be adapted to other learning programs that would benefit from on the ground internships.

This model must be somewhat self-directed by the student because each must locate a local organization at which they can intern. However, the school can aid the student in overcoming apprehension on the part of the organization by communicating with them and implementing the model as a best practice. Although there are challenges for students using this model, students will gain valuable interviewing skills, build confidence and professionalism to seek and find an internship that is germane to their passion. That achieves the goals of both the student and the educational institution and addresses employer needs.

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