

THE INTERNSHIPS HELD THROUGH EUROPEAN PROJECTS – A POSSIBLE FIRST STEP IN MANAGING THE YOUTHS' OWN CAREER

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Abstract: This article illustrates how internships performed by young students during their studies can represent the foundation of their future career's management. Applicative elements that can be found in a SOP HRD project focused on the internship/practical training of students are mentioned; the views of some students who have completed an internship carried out through an European funded project, which gave them the chance to get in contact with the labor market are also given. The paper contains data regarding the role of this kind of practical training/internship in the management process of personal development and the active life.

Key words: management, human resources, career, labor market;

Introduction

The career is the dynamic framework in which a person lives his/hers professional life, a movement along a path - in time-. In order to "navigate" on this path, a person needs certain knowledge and skills that can be acquired by conducting an internship. Through "professional career" a developmental sequence of professional activities and positions held in an organization is meant, which are achieved by a person, as well as his/hers skills, knowledge and abilities that are developed over time.

The practical training represents an important step in each ambitious student's academic life, which is decided and determined to create their own path in a life which includes a successful career. The practical training represents a valuable experience for any student; it is –also- a process of non-formal education which is vital in today's highly competitive market.

In recent years, the importance of practical training has increased both for teachers and educational institutions, regarded as formers of the future professionals in various fields, but especially for the students and companies as employers and prospective employees. The importance given to practical trainings developed by students is given an increasing degree of importance, if we analyze the multitude of existing European projects that give to young people the chance to get in contact with the practical part of their studies and to learn what their future profession/job involves.

The general framework for discussion

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We will analyze in the present paper work several factual elements and actions taken within the SOP HRD project entitled „*Convergența pregătirii universitare cu viața activă în domeniul economic*” (*The convergence of university studies with the active life in the economic field*) in order to illustrate the undeniable importance that these kind of projects can have on young people when they are intended to support the transition from school to work.

The convergence of university studies with the active life in the economic field is a project implemented by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MECTS) -as beneficiary-, together with its regional partners, "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, "Constantin Brâncuși" University of Târgu Jiu, together with Novensys Corporation and Media One companies. The project was launched in 2012 and covers a period of three years. The major beneficiaries of this project are the students, considering the fact that they are going to acquire significant competencies through several simulated activities required by the labor market within certain laboratories of guidance for building a career in the economic field [1].

Since it has been launched, this project supported students from the economic specializations and facilitated their transition from the student status to the active person status.

General and specific objectives of the project

The overall objective of the project is to improve the competencies, skills and abilities of students that attend classes at economic specializations and who are in the position of transition from school to labor market.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- promotion and development of partnerships between universities and companies with an economic profile in order to facilitate the transition from school to active life;
- developing innovative actions in order to improve the transition from school to active life by implementing an ICT tool for simulation of business processes that develop within a company with an economic profile;
- training of companies personnel with the role of tutors for instruction and orientation of students in the process of transition to the active life;
- promoting the innovative activities from the universities among the interested entities (academia and business environment);
- developing and providing guidance, advice and counseling to students through training based on the simulation of several specific practices to the economic field;
- to increase the competitiveness of graduates on the labor market by learning through internships.

A successful career in the economic field implies a series of components, based on a strong theoretical training and up to a success-oriented attitude, to a dynamic personality, according to the changing environment of business.

Using a specific software for the economic domain, the students of the "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia could simulate the real activities of the companies that activate on the market, being closely supervised by both the University tutors and the tutors from the real companies, firms from Alba County. The current project provided to the students of the "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia a concrete chance to operate with specific tools that can be found in the software that was used. The merge of knowledge taught during the specialized courses with the simulation activities granted to each student involved in the program the opportunity to manage activities that take place in the economic establishments.

The presence of professionals from companies, as tutors, during the simulated activities, who were always ready to explain and help the young at every step during the development of the activities -and not only- was an incentive for each member of the involved target group.

Familiarizing, since university classes, with the elements of such a complex program that is operated in the economic sphere among several large companies, has been an extremely benefic fact for students; they have been excited to have had the chance of being selected as participants in the project.

Nowadays, one of the most important aspects required for employment is represented by the previous experience gained within a firm, so -for many students- it is hard to get employed because, although other conditions required for the employment dossier are met, work experience constitutes a problem. Therefore, these internships are designed to initiate the student, to help him in prospect of a future employment - because, as long as this internship was successfully carried out, it can be put down in students' CV.

For some of the students it is even more advantageous, because some of the companies intend to hire the ones who have demonstrated high skills-that is why the internship needs to be treated with great responsibility.

"For me, the period of practice carried out within the project "The convergence of university studies with the active life in the economic field" represented an initiation into the mysteries of a company, being the first time in my life when I took part -for such a long time- in the activities developed within a firm. I managed to see how difficult is to run a company and how important communication and relationships that occur within an organization are; especially, I have noticed that a calm approach to problems can have a much more favorable result than an aggressive one."

(C.P., student who participated in an internship within the project)

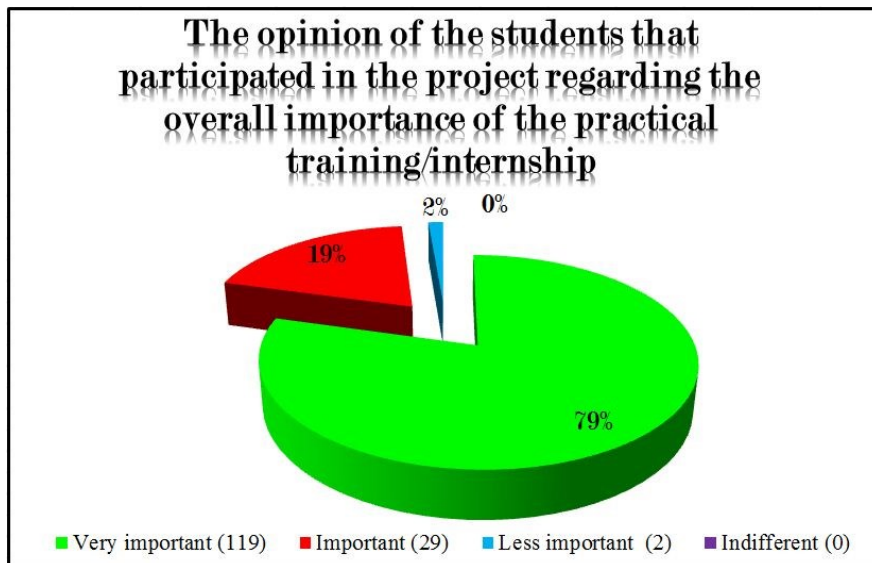


Figure 1. The opinion of the students that participated in the project regarding the overall importance of the practical training/internship

Source: conceived by the authors based on the internal data of the „1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, Romania

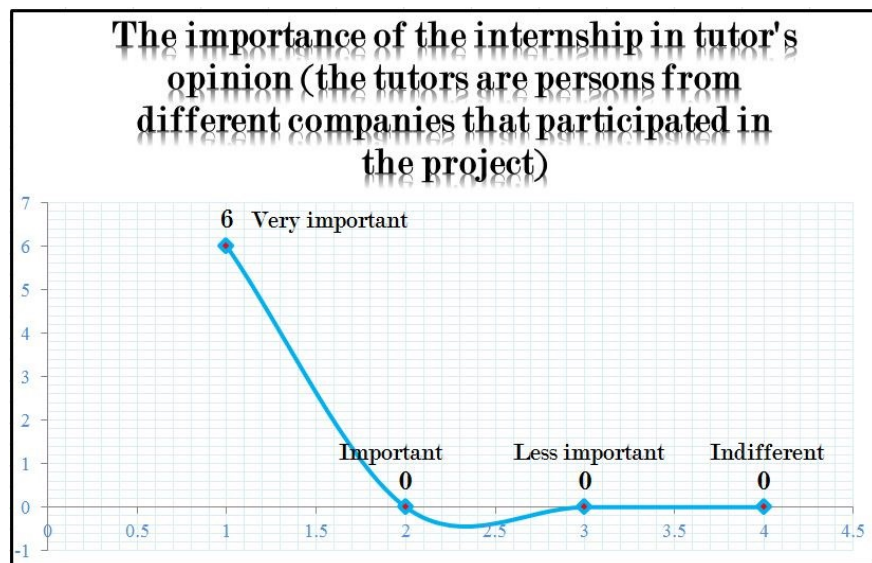


Figure 2. The importance of the internship in tutor's opinion

Source: conceived by the authors based on the internal data of the „1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, Romania

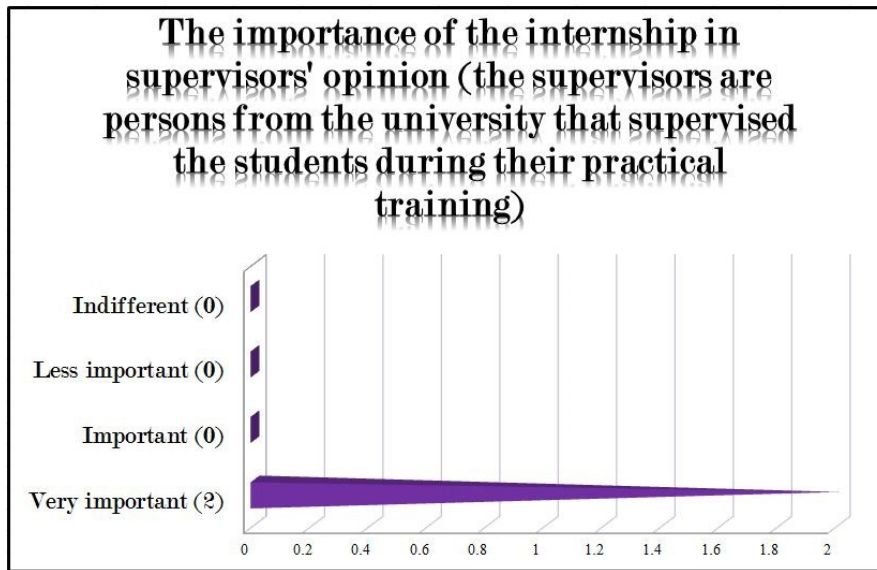


Figure 3. The importance of the internship in supervisor's opinion
Source: conceived by the authors based on the internal data of the „1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, Romania

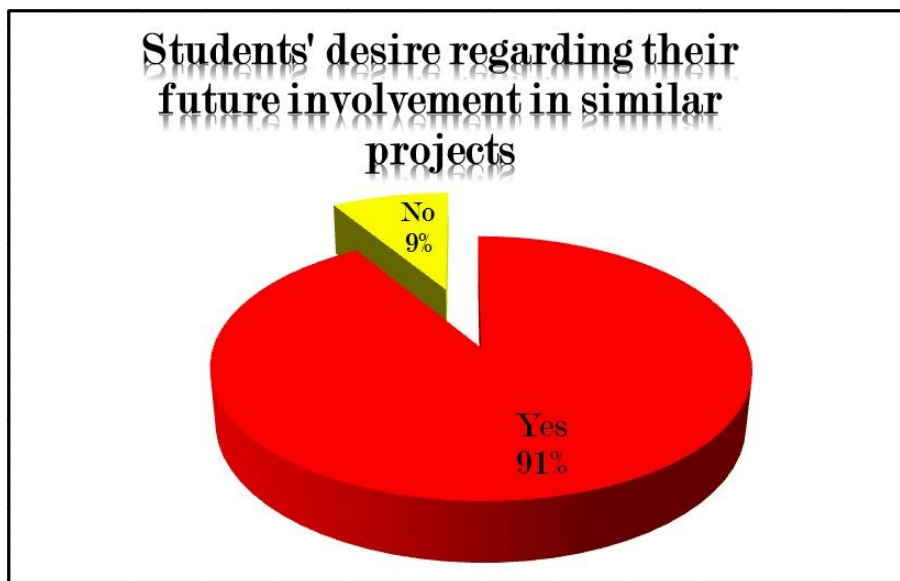


Figure 4. Student's desire regarding their future involvement in similar projects
Source: conceived by the authors based on the internal data of the „1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Elements studied by students within The Economic Centers

Within the classes of practice carried out in the laboratories of the Economic Centers, under the guidance of tutors from the companies with which the University has signed a protocol of collaboration, and assisted by supervising teachers, students have been given the following information by the implementation team:

- Information concerning the clients of the companies and issues related to the customers' relations management (CRM). Customers' relations management: techniques, documents, information flows, their number for the last 5 years; their structure based on their social characteristics (age, sex, income, training, residence, etc.), their structure based on the purchase path they use and based on their purchase frequency etc.; the presentation of the technical tools used in managing relationships with customers (qualification process for prospect customers, life cycle – opportunities, contracting process and orders, incidents complaint process);
- Information regarding company's resources and resources' management (ERP). Entity's resource management: stating the main resources available to the entity (inventories, fixed assets, cash availability, etc.), the presentation of the technical tools used in entity's resource management (Procurement process: Required - Command Supply – Reception, operational reporting, extraction and analysis of the data from the system, the introduction and approval process regarding the invoices from vendors, travel orders' process and expenses' settlement; the process of preparing clients' invoices, of creating the Records and Registers –Bank Diary (receipts and payments)-; the reception and registration of assets' process, the process of fixed assets' depreciation and operations using the fixed assets of the company; general accounting, financial operational reporting, extraction and analysis of data from the system, management reporting.

Tutors from the partner companies involved in the project held lectures and presentations and provided data streams to students; they also exemplified through case studies the activities carried out within their company. Thus, students had the opportunity to know the way of organizing and functioning of the processes and activities developed within the firm, the customer category to whom they need to address, the resources available and how these are managed within the company, the role and functions of various components of the organizational structure and, also, they were able to gain skills regarding the evaluation analysis and synthesis of the resource management activity and of the customer relationship management.

Topics addressed within the internship conducted at companies

The topics approached within the practical stage carried out by students at different companies participating in the project have covered the following:

- A. The economic business' description; brief history of the entity (establishment, ownership, owners, social capital, development); contact information (address, phone no., website); director, contact person; field of activity; equipment, office equipment, buildings and machines, transportation, space to provide services, depository etc. - brief presentation;
- B. The organization and functioning of the company, its organizational structure (number of employees, level of education, positions, age) and how duties are performed in different departments/ compartments (with emphasis on the management - marketing ones); staffing; the legislative framework under which the company is organized and where the activities are developed; the evolution of the annual turnover for the last 5 years.
- C. Information about the company's customers and about relationship management (CRM); customer relationship management; techniques, documents, information flows; their numbers for the last 5 years (a suggestive graphic in this regard); personnel's structure by social characteristics (age, sex, income, training, residence etc.), by way of purchase, by the frequency of purchases etc.; the presentation of the technical tools used in customer relationship management (qualification process for prospective clients, OPPORTUNITIES lifecycle, contracting and orders process, INCIDENTAL COMPLAINT process).
- D. Information regarding company's resources and resources' management (ERP). Entity's resource management: stating the main resources available to the entity (inventories, fixed assets, cash availability, etc.), the presentation of the technical tools used in entity's resource management (procurement process: Required - Command Supply – Reception, operational reporting, extraction and analysis of the data from the system, the introduction and approval process regarding the invoices from vendors, travel orders' process and expenses' settlement; the process of preparing clients' invoices, of creating the Records and Registers – Bank Diary (receipts and payments)-; the reception and registration of assets' process, the process of fixed assets' depreciation and operations using the fixed assets of the company; general accounting, financial operational reporting, extraction and analysis of data from the system, management reporting.
- E. Additional information. Means of promoting the offer (exemplification with leaflets, flyers and other materials, sales promotion, special offers and more); performance indicators' evolution, company's future projects.

Any idea, any program, any project that improves the student and gives him an added value -whether he/she is a future economist, doctor or engineer- is a valuable thing and represents a positive experience for him/her both as an individual and as a future professional; also, it has an influence on the ones around him/her and, ultimately, on society and its future - all these because the student of today represents the driving force of tomorrow's society; if students are given all the tools

needed for his growth as a vertical, rational and intelligent individual, the society - as a whole- has everything to gain.,

Practice represents a small step, but it has a big influence both in present and in the future, creating -firstly- a mentality and, secondly, a successful CV.

For planning and further development of a lasting career, we successfully can apply the model used in quality management, respectively the SIX SIGMA IMPROVEMENT methods.

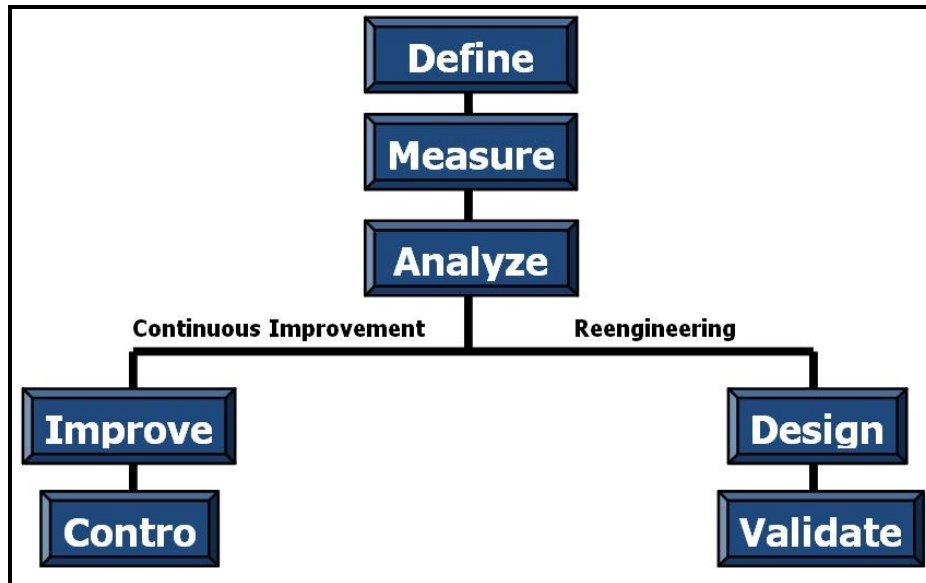


Figure 5. Six SIGMA improvement

Source: conceived by the author

According to Six Sigma principles, the first step is "DEFINE". Transposing in the domain of each persons' career, this means establishing several clear objectives and ideals that every young person has in connection with his/hers own career management.

The second stage, "MEASURE", -transposed in this field- can mean analyzing our own intellectual capacities or any other of our abilities in order to integrate in the area we want.

The third stage, of ANALYSIS, involves the careful analysis of all components of the field that is intended to be transposed in youth's own career, to realize a brief SWOT analysis - focusing on strengths and weaknesses. Under the conditions of detecting a large number of weaknesses, the suggestion of the specialists is to try to identify several other appropriate fields, the original field -the first that has been subjected for analysis not being the best. Furthermore, the four-step model supports the user of the model until the decision's validation.

The practical training/ internship represents the first step in any student's career because, for many of the students, the period of internship means the first contact

with the environment in which he/she will work after graduation. Thus, an internship introduces us to a business' life, so that any student can see and perceive the atmosphere from there, the existing relationships within the company, the rules that every employee must follow and many other things without which a company could not exist.

The practical training/internship helps students in accumulating work experience-which is so necessary for hiring perspectives. Most students enter the university after graduating high school, so it is unlikely that they have worked in a company by that time.

Summary

The project carried out by "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, in partnership with "Constantin Brâncuși" University of Târgu Jiu, "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău, Media One and Novensys Corporation companies – beneficiary: the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MECTS) aims at promoting the innovative activities from the universities among the interested entities (academia and business environment); developing and providing guidance, advice and counseling to students through training based on the simulation of several specific practices to the economic field; improving the competencies, skills and abilities of students that attend classes at *Marketing*, *Management* and *The economy of tourism, trade and services* specializations and the increase of the competitiveness of graduates on the labor market by learning through internships.

The practical training/internship represent, primarily, an important component of the educational plan - it is credited, has learning objectives and forms several certain competencies. It converges towards the achievement of the core competencies of the profession of economist or economics graduate and, from this point of view, referring to the learning outcomes, to the formation of competences and -not just to the accumulation of knowledge, we can certainly say that the role of the internship is even more important than the role of an ordinary discipline-because, during the practice, students have the chance to pilot what they have previously learned, to apply -in a specific context- what they will be doing after graduation, they get an idea about how their work would be within their profession as economists. The practical training/ internship helps students not only to form competencies, but also to form a set of expectations about what will be after graduation, to develop distinct attitude towards their profession, to internalize certain values related to ethics, professional conduct, teamwork, integration in a team and, overall, in a company.

The practical training/internship is essential in terms of future activities that will be developed by students after graduation, in terms of acquiring competencies, attitudes and professional socialization; in addition, students have the opportunity to carry out their internships -during the years of study- in different places and to form expectations about various kinds of activities - whether they are connected to

research, documentation, operative or administrative field or if they belong to private companies.

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PRAKTYKI ORGANIZOWANE PRZEZ PROJEKTY EUROPEJSKIE – PIERWSZY MOŻLIWY KROK W ZARZĄDZANIU KARIERĄ WŚRÓD MŁODYCH

Streszczenie: W artykule przedstawiono sposób jak korzystanie z praktyk przez studentów w trakcie trwania ich studiów może stanowić podstawę ich przyszłej kariery zawodowej. Elementy aplikacyjne, jakie znajdują się w programie SOP HRD, koncentrują się na stażu/szkoleniu praktycznym studentów, opinie studentów którzy zakończyli praktyki zawodowe organizowanego przez projekty europejskie, które dały im możliwość kontaktu z rynkiem pracy. Artykuł zawiera dane dotyczące roli tego rodzaju prakty/staży w procesie zarządzania karierą zawodową i aktywnego życia.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie, zasoby ludzkie, kariera, rynek pracy

透過歐洲項目持有的實習 – 可能青年管理自己的職業生涯的第一步

摘要：本文介紹了如何由年輕的學生在學習期間進行實習，可以代表他們的未來職業生涯的管理基礎。應用元素，可以發現在SOP人力資源開發項目，專注於學生實習/實務培訓中提到的意見，一些學生已經完成了實習通過歐盟資助的項目，這讓他們

有機會取得聯繫與勞動力市場。本文件包含的數據，這種實訓/實習在管理過程中的個人發展和積極的生活方面的作用。