

Effectiveness of Practicum Program of Tourism Students in Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the socio – demographic profile of Tourism students who have undergone international and domestic training and the advantages and disadvantages of undergoing training abroad. The researchers also intended to establish a program that will aid the academe to resolve possible existing common problems. The researchers used the descriptive method of research in conducting the study. Most of the respondents were female, single, their age ranging to 20-24 years old. There are more domestic practicumers than international and most of them having a family income of 10,000 – 30,000. South Carolina is the most frequent state in America where students were sent. Several advantages such as having of US visa, receiving salary and better opportunities for future career were obtained by International practicumers. On the other hand, there are also disadvantages that had been encountered by international practicumers like culture shocked, homesickness; cost of living is high and social discrimination. In terms of communication skills, practicumers in some way couldn't express their thoughts and opinions. To broaden the knowledge and develop the skills of students, more seminars and workshops about international practicum should be given.

Keywords: Practicum Program, Tourism Students, LPU, Tourism Education, Internship Program

I. INTRODUCTION

“Education is a continuing process, a process that must, if it is to be effective and socially beneficial, seek to develop all the God-given faculties and the talents of the individual to their highest unfolding in order to make of him asset to his country and to the world community of which he is a part.” – Former President J.P. Laurel. True to the

ideals and philosophy of Dr. Jose P. Laurel, Lyceum of the Philippines (LPU) boasts of quality education and service that transcends the boundaries of traditional universities. The students can delve into their academic interests; prepare them for their career objectives and to ascertain their full potentials in working towards the fulfillment of their professional goals.

As mentioned by David (2011), in this world of instantaneous communication and state-of-the-art technology, education still holds a prominent place in the lives of every individual. This is because education is both a factor and product of globalization. Latest discoveries in the scientific field and advanced medical breakthrough are just by-products of an educated society. According to the survey of Lee (2007), one of the most positive responses of the entire survey came when exchange students were asked to rate whether the exchange program had been a good learning experience for them so far. About 98.6% of respondents stated either "Excellent" or "Good", with 76.4% stating "Excellent" (up almost 4%). From the responses, only 0.1% chose "Poor", an improvement when compared to 0.4% last year.

LPU places prime importance on education in the lives of each of its students by offering a curriculum that would best suit ones interest and enhance their talents. LPU is aware of the society's need for a better education and so, it incorporates new programs for students and continually improves its facilities and curriculum. Through the collaborative partnership of the university administration and its professors, LPU stands as an institution ready to meet the ever increasing needs of a university geared toward internationalization.

According to the study of Celis and Magno (2005), job requirements for different careers abroad are commonly based on the following aspects: demographic profile, educational attainment, work experiences, and personal background. However, there are still such problems that arise upon applying for a work abroad. That is why the organizations that provide work and travel programs strictly require the participants to comply with the things that they need on them. Celis and Felicen (2009) made mention in their study that being in the local or international exposure may encounter problems with regards to practicum. Some of which may be rooted from their adaptation to new workplace or cultural differences or cross cultural adjustments.

Lyceum of the Philippines University has shown this irresistible push as it takes the lead toward globalization. This has been the trend of LPU as it provides the highest quality of education and service to compete on a global basis. LPU continues to nurture its vision by unlocking new heights of knowledge. The quality of education and service is internationalized through the process of developing the curriculum in order to pass the requirements of internationalization. Developing the curriculum internationally and competitively, will create a distinguished reputation and make the institution in a high profile ranking. Not only on the development of international curriculum we are focusing

but also on the level of teaching qualities of the faculties which we believe will attract more students. LPU's sophisticated and innovative environment for learning is a plus factor to achieve the internationalization requirements also and that there is an entrenched proof that LPU is on this track because of the achievements that we have reached so far and the locally and internationally, and the products that it produced in the lives of the students. After 45 years of existence, LPU has much to look back with pride. It has cultivated and fostered so many lives of men and women and saturated their minds with knowledge, enhanced their skills and talents, and ingrained in their hearts the values of life.

Today, LPU has emerged as a respected institution here and abroad and as it continues to take the lead in quality education and service. It will continue to face the challenges that lie before us in educating the millions.

The competitive academic program and service that LPU offers proves that indeed it is at the frontier of internationalization. LPU has much to look forward to, of both opportunity and challenge. We have the opportunity because our school has a great access to the world of knowledge and technology to match our educational and service aspirations.

As part of its internationalization, LPU-Batangas offers Bachelor of Science of International Travel and Tourism Management that provides in- depth knowledge in Tour and Travel operations, managing the interdependency among the various segments of tourism, travel, airlines, food service and accommodations. For better acquisition of knowledge regarding these fields, students under this program are required to undergo different types of practicum for them to practice professionalism and to obtain more knowledge regarding their future career. Through internships, students will be equipped with experiences that would help them to be more educated and effective professionals in the future.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the student's internship experience and determine the effectiveness of their practicum whether it helped to enhance the ability to achieve the intended learning goals of the internship programs in Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study, "The Effectiveness of Practicum Program to Tourism Students of LPU Batangas" aimed to identify the socio – demographic profile of Tourism students who have undergone international and domestic training and the advantages and disadvantages of undergoing training abroad. Lastly, the researchers also intend to establish a program that will aid the academe to resolve possible existing common problems.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers used the descriptive method of research in conducting the study. This method is intended to find existing facts that shall serve as an information process in the study. According to Calmorin (2007), descriptive research are valuable in providing facts on which scientific judgment maybe based; providing practices, behaviour, methods and procedures; playing a large part in the development of instruments for the measurement of many things; and formulating policies in the local, national or international level.

This study was confined to 100 randomly chosen students of Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management under the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management, currently enrolled for academic year 2012-2013. The major instrument used to gather data was the survey – questionnaire and unstructured group interview. Observation will also be utilized to supplement information. The survey – questionnaire was designed to seek information in order to assess the factors affecting on – the – job training of the students. The researchers also employed unstructured group interviews to gather first – hand data and information that were be relevant in the study. There were be no outline to follow nor fixed questions asked. Selected respondents were interviewed in casual conversation and their answers would be delivered directly in the form of comments, opinions and suggestions based on their actual observations and experiences. Descriptive Statistics generated by SPSS V-18 was used to organized and interpret the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Food and Lodging of the Practicum Students

Majority of the respondents agreed that their accommodation was not provided although the school offered a list of their possible lodging. Some students prefer to look for other accommodations for their own convenience when it comes to distance of their practicum site. It was followed by their choice of where to live. The students have the choice as to where they want to stay. It depends significantly upon their corresponding cases. Several students look for an accommodation which is near on their assigned establishment. In some cases, some students prefer to live with their relatives who are residing near their practicum site which is somehow economical and cost effective.

Trainees were given their choice of where they would want to eat. They were not required to eat in their place of training. In view of the fact that the international practicumers were given allowance and incentives, they could purchase their own food and eat wherever they want. Moreover, it should be noted that the availability of food and accommodation for the students considerably affects their decision of where to take their

practicum.

Factors that Affect On the Job Training Of the Students

Students can learn to work under minimal supervision once they have learned the proper thing to do regarding the task assigned to them. As seen from the acquired composite mean of 3.54, the respondents showed a very high extent in their working attitude. Being involved in this industry, courtesy is one of the most important values a professional worker must possess. And in line with this, Deal with supervisor and others with courtesy rank first with 3.56. It was followed by work harmoniously with the officemates with 3.54. The ability to mould yourself to be part of the team when you join an organization is considered to be a very important requirement. And interest and enthusiasm in performing the task assigned fell on the 3rd rank containing 3.49 weighted mean.

Work Habit of the Respondents

The respondents proved that their working habit is of very high extent. To exemplify more, observing the proper break time period and performing the assigned task within the assigned time tied up in rank number 1.5 and in rank number 2 is utilizing office hours having a weighted mean of 3.51. With this, they just verified that they are subsequently abiding the regulation of the establishment there are in to. Since, it is important for employees to have good working habits it gives them the drive to succeed in their careers. Establishing these habits not only improve the quality of work you put in but also it allows one to have more time for their personal life since time management is also developed. Developing good work habits provides you with the chance of being more productive and well-appreciated at work. According to www.wisegeek.org, OJT generally gives the trainee the opportunity to work in the same place and with the same equipment that will be used regularly which can make it an efficient approach to learning new things. It can also be a useful tool to helping unemployed people develop new job skills. Poor OJT, however, can result in the trainee developing poor work habits.

Respondent's Competency during their practicum

The practicumers established strength and stability as being in rank number 1 with the mean of 3.62 which means a very high extent. Strength means capital, knowledge, skill, or other advantage that a firm has or can acquire over its competitors in meeting the needs of its customers. Next is, cooperate with all other members with the weighted mean of 3.57. Followed by, readily understands instructions having a mean of 3.53. Last is being resourceful with a 3.41 weighted mean.

Competencies are identified behaviours, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and organizations. Competencies can be objectively measured, enhanced, and improved through coaching and learning opportunities. Through this, practicumers know that competence indicates sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enable someone to act in a wide variety of situations.

Because each level of responsibility has its own requirements, and also competence can occur in any period of a person's life or at any stage of his or her career. Those employees often have to be able to think on their feet and come up from having sound knowledge and skills related to products and service procedure.

Personality and Appearance of the Respondents

Students really showed a very high regard with their personal looks gaining a 3.52 composite mean. Experience and academic research has shown that an individual's personality has a strong influence on how they work within an organization. One's image in the eyes of other people is important. If one is to represent a company and indeed one's self, an image of orderliness is vital, to win confidence. Report to office neatly and well-groomed possessed 3.67 that makes it as the first rank. Students make sure that they will report in the office well and neat. And possessing emotional maturity at all times received 3.50 weighted mean. Having emotional maturity is one of the requirements a worker must possess. OJTs must be matured enough to handle problems for them to solve it the right way. While showing self-confidence and having knowledge of the job assigned got the same weighted mean of 3.47. If students have knowledge of the job assigned to them they can do it with full of confidence and it can boost their self- esteem.

Linkage between the School and the Establishment

There is a strong linkage between the school and the establishment as reflected in its composite mean which is 3.49. Linkage refers to the collaboration made between the school and the cooperating firm in the on the job training program. As shown above, the respondents agreed that there is an orientation of the practicumers to the establishment as revealed in its mean 3.60. Practicum orientation is really important for the students for them to be fully aware of what it would be like to be working in that certain site. It also informed the students of the company's guidelines, standard operating procedures, rules and regulations ahead of time. It was a great advantage for them for in this way, their readiness and promptness were tested.

The OJT program of the school is open to the industry or company gives a weighted mean of 3.55 which is verbally interpreted as Very High Extent. Meaning to say, the respondents believed that the school is open to every establishment's concerns or prob-

lems that may arise with regards in the training process. They are accountable for the student's stance when it comes to their attitude towards work. Meanwhile, having OJT coordinators to serve the link between the school and the establishments got a weighted mean of 3.46 which means at a high extent, there are OJT coordinators that acted as liaison between the trainees and the establishment proper. Having coordinators for OJT would be a big help for the students.

Assessment with the Establishments

Students really benefited from the establishments as shown in its composite mean of 3.29 the practicumers is free to ask questions to the trainer whenever it is necessary got the first rank with 3.58 weighted mean. Trainers are the primary source of knowledge of every practicumer. And as shown on the table above, most of the respondents agreed that each of their questions are given equal attention and provided with an answer. And the facilities and equipment used in the place of OJT are modernized got the second rank. Our respondents believed that they undergo training on a place with modern facilities and equipment. It is significant to have an updated establishment to have a better progress. Establishments must also go with the flow of modernization for them to offer better services. While in the other hand, respondents agreed that the training method is efficient as its weighted mean got 3.29. And for OJTs they must be provided with an efficient training program for them to learn accurately. Required to render over time at the expense of the academic responsibilities got 3.19 weighted mean and fell on the fourth rank. Overtime is the amount of time someone works beyond normal working hours. Students must have their own choice to render over time or not. And lastly, tasks that are not related to the course were not given, got the last rank with the 3.04 weighted mean. It's not avoidable to have tasks which are not directly related with the course but still it can be limited. However, the main purpose of undergoing practicum is to gain knowledge and skills on the course students are pursuing.

Evaluation about the Benefits and Incentives

They gained a lot of benefits and incentives in a knowledgeable way. Developing common knowledge and shared experience are essential for effective growth of learning. As seen from the obtained composite mean of 1.97, majority of the OJT's have strongly disagreed that their establishments are not providing them allowance. Offering them part time job ranked first with a mean value of 2.04 and practicumers deserves it a lot. It was followed by helping the OJT's to work more impressively and strengthen them every time they will work. As having a mean value of 2.01 they are satisfied on the provided free snacks and meal of their establishment. And it really helps them to be more conscious on how they will spend less on their needs. Being ranked on the third spot gaining 2.00, extra service pay by the practicumers showed that it has a low extent. In an effort to ac-

commodate the need for income while in school, the establishments programs must create and maintain paid practicum opportunities for students. Practicumers can get extra income if they showed better performance. The first item got the lowest mean of 1.86 which implies that the students were not given allowance during their practicum.

Table 1. Assessment of the Overall Experience of the Students

Overall Experience	WM	VI	Rank
1. Develop camaraderie among workmates	3.49	High Extent	1
2. Time management consciousness	3.32	High Extent	5
3. Flexibility and adaptability to various situations	3.36	High Extent	3
4. Development of communication skills	3.43	High Extent	2
5. Acquired learning of diverse cultural practices	3.34	High Extent	4

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Very High Extent; 2.50 – 3.49 = High Extent;
1.50 – 2.49 = Low Extent; 1.00 – 1.49 = Very Low Extent*

Table 1 presents the overall experience of the practicumers during their course of training. Their experience during their OJT will determine how effective the program is. As presented above, the overall experience of the students resulted to a high extent. Therefore, their familiarity and skills regarding their work was effective and valuable for them in their future career. As seen in the obtained mean of 3.49, camaraderie is profoundly developed among the students, staffs, and other workmates. Camaraderie in the office boosts morale and productivity. It makes sense that they perform better when they enjoy being around each other. Employees tend to function with less overview and intervention from management when they like each other. With the increasingly relaxed culture of Hospitality Industry, people should be encouraged to forge friendships at work. Communication skills improvement ranks the second having the mean of 3.43. As stated in the website [wikihow.com](http://www.wikihow.com), developing advanced communication skills begins with simple interactions.

Communication skills can be practiced every day in settings that range from the social to the professional. New skills take time to refine, but each time you use your communication skills, you open yourself to opportunities and future partnerships. Flexibility and adaptability to various situations got a weighted mean of 3.36 followed by the acquisition of learning of diverse cultural practices with the mean of 3.34. And last but not the least, time management consciousness which attained a weighted mean of 3.32. As a newbie in the workforce, time management in the workplace is an important skill that you must possess. It can determine the not just your career success but your work life balance. Being new in the workforce, sometimes it can get quite stressful especially when you are learning new roles and responsibilities. You need to juggle a few things at the same time and you also seek to have a life out of the office.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Most of the respondents were female, single, their age ranging to 20-24 years old. There are more domestic practicumers than international and most of them having a family income of 10 000 – 30 000. South Carolina is the most frequent state in America where students were sent. Several advantages such as having of US visa, receiving salary and better opportunities for future career were obtained by International practicumers. On the other hand, there are also disadvantages that had been encountered by international practicumers like culture shocked, homesickness; cost of living is high and social discrimination. In terms of communication skills, practicumers in some way couldn't express their thoughts and opinions. While, when it comes to social skills, they had a hard time dealing and working with different personalities and races. Problems may be solved by the following program: to broaden the knowledge and develop the skills of students, more seminars and workshops about international practicum should be given; and to help practicumers to build and enhance their characters and skills, it is suggested they resort to practical examinations and activities.

The CITHM Department should conduct a culture sensitivity training for student's preparation for their practicum. This could help the students to diminish culture shock and homesickness. Incorporate the results of the present study in the future revisions of tourism curriculum. Strengthen the current Internship Office process for a better transaction of students' travel documents and for their faster deployment.

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