

**GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM (GIJ)**

**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSaR)**

**SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER ENHANCEMENT THROUGH INTERNSHIP  
PROGRAMMES: A STUDY OF THE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,  
LEGON**

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**A DISSERTATION PROPOSAL PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE  
STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUISITES FOR  
A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

**OCTOBER, 2020**



## CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation proposal is my original research and no part has been presented for a degree in this state or any other.

CANDIDATE: .....

DATE: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020

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**SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation proposal was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of dissertation proposals laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

SUPERVISOR:..... DATE: .....

(DR. LAWRENCIA AGYEPONG)

## **DEDICATION**

To the team at Role Model Africa and Everyday Intern for your immeasurable contribution to training and placing students and graduates through your work readiness programmes into various companies for in-person and or virtual internships.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I appreciate all my lecturers for such priceless and pragmatic insights in facilitating our learning. Each lecturer's input has been immeasurable to improve my learning, my understanding of the entire programme and for this material.

Very importantly, gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. Lawrencia Agyepong for such guidance to unleash relevant information to contribute to the body of knowledge.

To my team at **Role Model Africa** and **Everyday Intern**, your consistent investment in training and placing students and graduates into companies for internships has really shaped this work.

Massive appreciation to all my course representatives, colleagues and group members for your collective knowledge in our study.

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## ABSTRACT

Internship programmes have been instituted in almost all tertiary institutions. A major premise advanced in favor of this position is that these programmes help in bridging the gap between the theories taught in the classroom and the realities in the world of work. Several studies have been conducted to evaluate the importance and efficacy of these programmes. Among the theoretical debates, internships have been argued to contribute significantly to skills development as well as developing the prospects of employability of students. The purpose of this study is to examine the prospects of these internship programmes on student skills development and employability in Ghana, using the University of Ghana, Legon as a point of reference. Using a quantitative survey where 200 students will be sampled for the study, the study aims to evaluate the nature of these programmes, its alignment with skills development prospects as well as enhancing employability, and finally, assessing the challenges of the internship programmes. This will contribute significantly to scores of literature surrounding the subject, and bring to the fore perspectives from the Ghanaian situation. Findings from this study will help improve the nature of these programmes and influence policy directions to abate the challenges that besmirch the relevance of these programmes.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

There has been a proliferated debate with regards to the effectiveness of undergraduate academic programmes to sufficiently prepare students for their place of work. There have also been concerns of exploring how internship opportunities and programmes enhance the skills and employability prospects of student's post-graduation. Conversations on skills development have also gained more attention where scholarship debates are concerned.

Internships have become increasingly popular in a lot of universities as a critical component of higher education as agreed upon by Beard and Wilson (2013), Gaut et al. (2000) and Santiago (2009). Although there are no standard definitions of internships, it is a general consensus that internships are short term practical work experience in which students receive training and gain experience in a specific field or career area of their interests (Zopiatis, 2007). The rationale for the incorporation of an internship programme as part of a University's curriculum as a credit-based course is based on the idea that learning should be grounded not only based on pedagogies in the classrooms, but learning should also be predicated on hands-on experience in a real work setting (Zopiatis, 2007). The student is mandated to acquire new knowledge through lived experiences and reflective practice. Kolb (1984) advances that this is created through a simultaneous process of grasping and transforming the lived experience.

One of the key objectives of internships, as intimated by Coco (2000), is to ensure a smooth transition from the classroom to the workplace. Therefore, internship programmes are supposed to provide students with the opportunity to put to test their abilities, beliefs and attitudes

pertaining to specific work tasks or career pathways. This, Zopiatis (2007) believes will allow the students to close the gap between the abstract classroom theory and practical work reality. It further gives the students the opportunity to apply what they have been taught in the traditional classroom settings to the real workplace, thus acquiring a pragmatic view of the challenges of the envisioned career ahead.

Skills development according to the International Labor Force (2010) is the process of equipping graduates from various institutions of higher learning with skills that will help them to be more competitive at work in the near future. That being said, every graduate or student will be fortunate to get the opportunity to turn the theoretical knowledge acquired from the classroom to the practical world. To make this a reality, most universities in Ghana, and especially the University of Ghana, Legon have adopted internship programmes as a skills development and career enhancement methodology.

More students aspire to obtain internship positions. Oehlert et al. (1998) advance observations that buttress this that, given the increased competitiveness for internship positions and the volatility of the marketplace, more attention on internship is warranted. For a number of reasons many students on the undergraduate level are becoming involved in internship programs, such as their desire to get work experience while obtaining academic credits (Oldman and Hameden, 2000).

It is against this backdrop that this study draws its inspiration from. Contrasting to the observations made about the significance of internship programmes in the career paths of students, it is worth investigating, the impact of internship programmes on skills development, knowing how dissatisfied some interns are with the nature of the duties they are expected to

perform during work hours, particularly in public institutions as noted by Mabeba (2019). Among other issues such as interns being asked to make photocopies and making teas, Madeba (2019) further posits that some interns see the internship programmes as something that does not add value to their professionalism and self-improvement, hence their apathy towards it.

This current study further enriches the stream of literature and contributes to the body of knowledge that assesses the value of the internship experience through the lenses of “work readiness” concept. It also discusses the relationship between participation in internship programmes and the prospects of skills development as well as career enhancement, and employability.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Bridgestock (2009) argues that enhancing graduate employability skills encompasses the explicit incorporation of career management skills into higher education in the form of internship programmes. Barrie (2012) adds to the depth and complexity of the desired graduate capability by proposing that universities develop “qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future” (p. 80). These two studies aver that research relating to the employability skills expectations of graduate employers is particularly crucial for universities. However, an examination of western universities by Smith (2014) who integrate Work Integrated Learning (WIL) or internship programmes concludes that supervisors are generally satisfied with intern performance on employability skills measures and propose that further research be conducted to recommend relevant internship programmes to Universities. These programmes, Smith (2014) further portends, should aim at incorporating richer communication and

involvement with the company representatives or frontline supervisors in order to understand the relevant factors considered by the industry and build closer connections with the industry.

A lot of researches establish the utilitarian purpose of internship programmes, arguing that internships create a viable environment for students to acquire skills, which cannot be learned in the classroom environment, while employers obtain access to low-cost labor and reduced recruitment costs (Galloway, Marks, & Chillias, 2014; Holyoak, 2013; Maertz, Stoeberl, & Marks, 2014). Saniter & Siedler, (2014) agree with the above studies where they established that interns develop interpersonal skills, team-working skills, professionalism and customer management experience. Students also improve their communication, confidence and self-efficacy. Saniter & Siedler, (2014) advance that, those with internship experience are more likely to find jobs and earn more.

Ojomo (2015) touches on training infrastructure and attributes the huge gap between theory and practice to the absence of appropriate and modern infrastructure, which has been a bane to Nigerian journalism practice, resulting in the production of graduates with a lot of theoretical knowledge to the detriment of practical ones. He recommends a more credible accreditation process that is impromptu, to help withdraw the accreditation of institutions that do not possess the needed training infrastructure, and more importantly, that universities should be made to run five-year degree programmes, with a one-year internship in the fourth year. Bukaliya's 2012 study also brought to the fore some internship challenges militating against the students such as the reluctance of full-time employees to disclose information to the students, insufficient duration of the attachments and some employees regarding interns as a threat to their position especially in instances where interns possess better qualifications than their supervisors.

There happens to be a deficit in literature with respect to the examination of internship programmes organized by Ghanaian Universities and the perceived prospects of skills development and career enhancement. Existing literature such as Ojomo (2015) target how internships have the ability of aiding tertiary students in developing career skills that has helped them to apply theoretical classroom lectures to the real workplace settings. There appears to be a deficit in the examination of the employability of students who participate in these internship programmes in Ghana. This study seeks to help fill that gap by examining the internship programmes in the University of Ghana, Legon and engaging the students to find out if perceived advantages such as skills development and career enhancement opportunities are being realized as advanced by many pro-internship scholars.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The analysis of the various literature on internships raises the following objectives for this paper. The main objective is to ascertain whether internship programmes develop the skills of students and enhance their career prospects. But taken apart, the following are the specific objectives

1. To understand the nature of internship programmes run by the University of Ghana, Legon
2. To understand the ability of internship programmes to develop the skills of students by examining the roles assigned to them by companies and organizations.
3. To ascertain if internship programmes enhance the career prospects and employability of students

## **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the objectives articulated above, the following questions will guide the study;

1. What is the nature of internship programmes run by the University of Ghana, Legon?
2. How are the roles assigned to student interns helpful in the development of their skills?
3. How do internship programmes enhance the career prospect and employability of students?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Internships have received a lot of attention among scholars. However, a careful and thorough examination of the internship programmes advanced by Ghanaian universities and how these programmes develops the skills of students and enhances both their career competencies and employability will be a strong contribution to scores of literature on the topic. The study will offer a fresh African perspective to the examination of internships and will serve as a reference material in prospective studies in the area.

More importantly, the findings will be important to the Coordinators of internship programmes across universities in Ghana, as findings will be very relevant to how these programmes are structured and pursued. It will also be very helpful to corporate organizations who hitherto, doubted the efficacy of allowing student interns. Finally, to those organizations that allow students interns to serve, this study will enable them to examine the responsibilities given the interns as they are crucial to the growth and development of the student's employability prospects.

## **1.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter was an introductory one that discussed the background that forms the premise for this study. It was established that there is a need to examine the skills enhancement prospects, as well as the employability of students who participate in internship programmes. The chapter explains the problem statement and stipulates research objectives and questions that will guard the navigation of this study. The chapter concludes by outlining how significant a study of this nature is.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to find the relationship between internship programmes and the skills development as well as career enhancement prospects of tertiary students. This chapter discusses the various concepts such as internships and its relationship with skills development and career enhancement prospects. It also discusses empirical studies done with respect with the various themes of the study as captured in the research objectives.

#### **2.1 The Nature of Internship Programmes**

According to Griesel & Parker (2009), graduate internship programmes are optional as one of the job training opportunities. The intention is to afford them opportunities to transform the theoretical knowledge gained from the institutions of higher learning, into practical experience acquired in the dynamic world of work (Harms & Crede, 2010). They are assigned mentors to supervise their work, assess their competency levels and work performance as well as provide periodic evidence of their progress (Department of Labour, 2005).

The purpose of internship is to address lack of practical work experience and exposure to the realities of the world of work as well as reduce youth unemployment, although on temporal basis (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012). Internships are practiced in a wide array of careers such as nursing, social services such as teaching, public administration and psychology, law, engineering as well as finance related careers. Internship or placement programs provide students the chance to combine theory and practice in a subject, apply

theoretical concepts to a work environment, and induce new knowledge from practical activities (Garcia, 2008). During the internship, interns are given administrative activities such as preparing formal reports (Chambers, 2015).

The world has demonstrated different views on the relationship between internship programme and skills development, as well as career or employability enhancement (Mabeba, 2019). Nevertheless, the idea of obtaining a higher (tertiary) qualification has been viewed by many as a stepping stone for locating or improving job opportunities (Lowden et al., 2011, p.7). Mabeba (2019) advances that, to gain added advantage in a world of work which is highly competitive, tertiary education is sought by many who use it as an added advantage in the labor market. Employers, graduates and Higher Education Institution (HEI) representatives, value work-based learning (such as placements and internships programme) which has been identified as a particularly effective approach to promoting the employability of graduates (Lowden, et al., 2011, p. 10).

Opportunities such as, placements and internships do not only appear to offer an effective applied method to instilling appropriate awareness, skills and abilities in graduates, but it can also enhance partnerships and resultant collaboration between HEIs and employers (Lowden et al., 2011, p.10). It is therefore the view of Mabeba (2019) that throughout the journey, interns can acquire valuable professional skills such as self-management, problem solving skills, verbal communication skills, conflict management skills, develop desirable work habits and attitudes and develop skills to use modern information communication technology and office work equipment.

## **2.2 The Concept of Skills Development**

Skills development is the process of empowering graduates with skills as a way of preparing them for work environment (Mabeba, 2019). Skills development can also be explained as the process of developing a graduate or intern so that they can be able to execute tasks assigned to them in the work environment, through training and mentorship programme (Hirschsohn, 2008). Practical skills development is the core activity of any given profession (public administration, education, health) is crucial for the survival, growth and sustainability of that particular profession.

However, universities sometimes face the criticism that their graduates go to the workplaces unable to perform (Okello-Obura and Kigongo-Bukenya, 2011). It is as result of this that such graduates must be granted an opportunity to go through internships as part of skills development programme in order to capacitate and prepare them for future work environment. Nevertheless, the discourse on skills development must be introspected on broadly (Mabeba, 2019). Skills development programme could add a positive impact not only on the intern but also on the institution, industries, economy and the neighboring countries in the long run. Therefore, lack of skills can have a negative impact on the economy in terms of production, service delivery and innovation (Abrahams, 2018).

Similar problems arise in South Africa where through strategic initiatives such as Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), there is an official acknowledgement by government that skills shortage constitute or pose a huge threat to economic growth and development, and that the benefits of skills development are not only limited to the individual alone but also encompass public institutions, private organizations, households and all other sectors and emerging and established industries of the South African economy (Levine & Guy, 2007; Mabeba, 2019).

Therefore, skills development remains a major weapon in the effort by the South African public institutions in order to create employability and encourage sustainable development. However, skills development programmes are intended to maximize the productive, capable and competitive potential individual through acquisition of different skills (Legoabe, 2010).

### **2.3 Internships and Work Readiness**

The concept of work readiness has mostly been used as a conceptual framework in a lot of studies, and more akin to the concept of “consumer readiness” used in marketing literature (Meuter et al., 2005). There are scores of scholars that are suggestive of the idea that an employee’s behavior is contingent on their understanding of how they are expected to perform, their ability to perform as expected, and the existence of value rewards that have been put in place to ensure that they are motivated to perform as expected (Vroom, 1964, cited in Meuter et al., 2005). Internships allow students to develop their skills whether generic or specific, while simultaneously gaining work experience.

There are several categorizations regarding the work or employability skills that can be found in literature. The analysis of O’Neil (1997) serves a great reference point in discussing the various skills that interns can imbibe through the duration of internship programmes. (O’Neil 1997) classifies these skills into four; basic academic skills mostly in speaking and listening); higher thinking skills (reasoning, problem solving and creativity); interpersonal and teamwork skills; and personal characteristics and attitudes (self-esteem, motivation and responsibility). Gaut et al (2000) in reviewing the literature on the important skills among the hiring criteria used to select graduates highlights communication skills (an embodiment of oral presentations, proposal

writing and written communication), academic skills ( which encompasses analytical skills, computer applications, creative thinking, information search and problem solving), leadership skills (leadership/teamwork and relationship building) and job acquisition skills (resume writing, job interviewing and job networking).

Contemporary studies have been done in examining the most sought-after skills by organizations. The findings from Chhinzer and Russo (2018) illustrate that generic skills, which include time management, team work, attention to detail, general mental ability, subject-specific knowledge, willingness to work, attitudes, behaviors and responses to feedback are the key criteria that are considered by organizations and companies in their quest to hire graduates and the examination of candidates employability prospects. Other studies like Finch et al (2013) highlights the importance of soft skills even to the detriment of academic credentials such as academic reputation. Varghese (2012) advance that, through their participation in an internship programme, students acquire a new understanding of their fit in a business sector or job profile. In addition, internships further enhance and solidify the interest of students in working in a specific sector. The genuine interest of students about a domain or sector may be considered as an intrinsic reward given by internships offered, that fuels their performance and improves their overall experience in the work setting.

Thomos (2016) along with Velez and Giner (2015), discussed in Mabeba (2019) claimed that internship programme develops teamwork skills in the sense that when interns perform in teams, they learn a number of things that could not be taught in a formal classroom session. They learn how to adjust, compromise and cooperate with others. During internship, they learn how to generate ideas, share thoughts and perform collectively, which becomes the foundation of their future employment (Mabeba, 2019). These scholars' further stands with the fact that; interns are

required to be goal-oriented throughout the internship period. They have to develop time management skills, where tasks are scheduled in sessions of activity-based learning

Cho (2006), suggest that positive feelings of satisfaction with coworkers, supervisors and even the job itself is experienced by interns. Knouse and Fontenot (2008) further entrench this position by intimating that, these are rewards that strongly motivate them to make the most of their time during the internship programmes. They further insist that, the effectiveness of internships is expected to be enhanced when there are clear expectations of tasks, responsibilities, and outcomes for interns defined. The expectations can also be enhanced if there are clear and explicit expectations of employers as far as the obligations of the interns are concerned; and the excellence of their performance is also dependent on the guidance, support and feedback of their supervisors and mentors (Hurst et al., 2012).

#### **2.4 Internships and the Prospect of Employability**

Knouse and Fontenot (2008) in their review of the benefits of internships identified various benefits enjoyed by students who participate in internships including increasing their chances to find jobs and being given an offer for full time job positions by companies who once engaged them as interns, having acquired such experiences which may motivate them to choose a career path which were not known to them before the internship. This, the authors advance, will help students get a realistic view of the career and the various requirements needed, with an added advantage of becoming clear on what they want to do in a given career trajectory (Knouse and Fontenot, 2008).

In line with the findings of the above studies, a review by Velez and Giner (2015) identified three benefits that internships will have for graduates and students. They advance that, the benefits include ones that related to the enhancement of their employment opportunities, those related to the improvement of their skills and competencies, and those related to the effects on career exploration. In the same token, other studies on the subject provide evidence that students are increasingly seeing internships as a practical tool which will give them the greenlight to employment (Cannon and Arnold, 1998). According to Zhao and Liden (2011), young graduates who have participated in internship programmes are more likely to get an extended offer for a continuation of their employment in the internship provider company and receive an average higher compensation and more job offers, an observation alluded to by several other studies.

Gallanan and Benzing (2004) opine that graduates rolled in internship programmes mostly succeed at their quest to find jobs much easier, enhance their career prospects as well as future career prospects. Wan et al. (2013) aver that internship programmes solidify or clarify the interest of students in a specific work setting, a position agreed to by Varghese et al (2012) in a much earlier study.

However, Chen et al (2011) posits that, a serious concern is the extent to which prospective employees have the necessary skills and expertise to meet the challenges of the ever-changing workplace. Wang (2002) buttresses this observation by advancing that it is mostly daunting and common for young graduates to be unable to cope with the pressures of the workplace and other work-related challenges. University students who have participated in internship programmes prior to some job interviews in a study by Divine (2007), have seen more results juxtaposing to students who either did not participate in, or even completed their internships.

## **2.5 The Pitfalls of Internship Programmes**

Internship programmes were introduced to provide interns with the necessary knowledge and work experience by bridging the gap between theory with practice (Mabeba, 2019). However, there are so many challenges and opportunities that play around these internship programmes. On that note, scholars such as Amoako (2011), pointed that the inexperience of interns as well as poor writing skills in English is a huge challenge for the programme. This is so because when interns are still new in the workplace find it difficult to undertake tasks assigned them such as the preparation of weekly reports. As a result, mentors, managers and supervisors are burdened with the responsibility to nurture and groom them.

Bradley (2014) in analyzing the reasons or disincentives for the participation in internship programmes by students, postulated that interns are tormented by the amount of stipend they receive and the fact that internship does guarantee them permanent employment. Therefore, some interns find it fit to resign before the internship can even come to an end

A number of studies have shown a disconnection between internship programmes and the idea of preparedness of interns for the real workplace, was an advantage of internships. Kruss (2004), for instance, in a South African study on employability and higher education concluded that although employers and recent graduates agree that the undergraduate experience is enormously beneficial in terms both of personal development and workplace effectiveness, they are generally of the view that a degree course does not prepare students for work (Cited in Mabeda, 2019). The findings of this study show that there is a serious mismatch between intern's aspirations and the reality of the labour market and that interns are insufficiently prepared for the world of work. It is therefore understandable that employers are dissatisfied with the skills and attributes of interns

after completing their internship period as such concerns are raised about their lack of soft skills such as problem solving.

Additionally, Mabeba (2019) recounts that too many instructions from different mentors can be confusing at times. In a study that highlights challenges of internships in South Africa, the findings show some interns who highlighted that they find dissatisfaction when their supervisors delegate unnecessary duties such as making tea for them or running menial errands, while in principle interns should be learning the actual work. As a result, such duties could make interns to resign and results in an increased disinterestedness in internships in future (Mabeba, 2019).

Hay (2002) found that skills and capacity building for talent proved to be the most significant factor that pertains to employee well-being and retention. However, the paper is of the opinion that the nature of activities in public institutions should be designed in a manner that interns can be able to acquire and attain the required skills. Therefore, the author fully discourages public institutions to refrain from assigning interns, certain tasks that will be of little or no benefit to them elsewhere in the near future.

Bradley (2014) avers that public institutions were criticized because they do not offer adequate soft skills such as problem solving, communication, managerial skills, leadership skills that one needs to learn across any walk of life. In a bid to curtail this, Kruss (2004) espoused a direct link between internship programme and the job market, expecting public institutions to directly prepare graduates with skills to make them employable.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

The Social Learning Theory will be the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

### **2.6.1 Social Learning Theory**

Bandura's 1997 theory of social learning (and further revised in 2006) provides a useful framework to consider how students learn through observation and modelling. For Bandura, learning occurs through a cognitive process where students internalize and make sense of what they see in a social setting through observation. This theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others in a social context. Nabavi (2012) argues that, this can be achieved by observing the behaviors of others, people develop similar behaviors. Gibson (2006) argues that this involves 'the psychological matching of cognitive skills and pattern of behavior between a person and an observing individual.

Bandura (1997 and 2006) proposed that the process of learning in this regard, occurs through four stages namely attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. In the first stage which is the attention stage, Bandura argues that learners need to attend to the behavior. In this case, they see the behavior they want to reproduce or that others want them to reproduce and internalize them. The second stage which is retention is based on the learner's ability to retain what they have already seen and internalized. This is a cognitive process where the learner mentally rehearses the behavior or actions that are to be reproduced. The third stage requires the opportunity to reproduce the behaviors that have been retained and mentally rehearsed. Banduras argues that the learners convert information from the attention and retention stages into action. Finally, the learners need to be motivated to either enact or imitate that behavior. Bandura (2006) again notes that this occurs through reinforcement, a way of rewarding the actions of the learner in a positive or enabling way.

Banduras' Social learning theory was extended by scholars Lave and Wenger (1991), who see social learning as a cognitive process that is set on the notion of beliefs, concepts and knowledge, and improves the professional and personal learning through participation in real life work environments.

Ippolito and Horsburgh (2018) in an attempt to assess how students learn from role models in a clinical setting resorted to social learning as a theoretical framework in their analysis. They argue that role modelling is one of the most highly regarded and influential learning methods. They are of the view that, it is indeed an active, dynamic process involving observational learning and includes processes and strategies developed that are used by both teachers and learners. Their study revealed that students could identify the ways in which they learnt from role models although these processes they admitted, were complex and haphazard. Among the processes used were selectively and consciously paying attention to supervisors, teachers or role models, using retention strategies, reproducing the observed behavior in opportunities given them, and being motivated to imitate these behaviors. The clinical teachers, who are the role model in this setting were reported to have used strategies to help the students learn such as direct and vicarious reinforcements. The study shows the significance of Banduras' model of social learning for understanding processes and making recommendations to make learning from role modelling systematic and effective (Ippolito and Horsburgh, 2018).

Anjum (2020) in her study to evaluate the impact of internship programmes on the professional as well as the personal development and skills of business students in Pakistan saw the use of the Social Learning framework, where it helped to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the business internships in Pakistan. The internships programmes were all on encouraging their students to gain experience and better equip them for the job world as companies prefer interns

as their future employees. However, due to the lack of coordination between the company and academic supervisors, only selected assignments were given to the students by the companies with not much of an encouraging environment to ask students what they want. The implication is that, there is lack of proper feedback provided by the firms to their interns. This shows how important Banduras' assertion of a cognitive process, is towards the learning of skills in a learning environment (Bandura, 2006). This affected the ability of the student intern to properly observe, learn, retain and reproduce the behaviors, as reinforcement in the form of feedback from company supervisors were absent.

### **2.6.2 Relevance of the Theory to this Study**

Nabavi (2012) admits that the social learning theory has become perhaps the most influential theory of learning and development due to the fact that it is rooted in many of the basic concepts of traditional learning theory. Social learning theory is increasingly cited as an essential component of sustainable natural resource management and the promotion of desirable behavioral change. (Muro & Jeffrey 2008).

As this study seeks to evaluate the skills development potential, as well as the career enhancement prospects of internship programmes - this framework will help in understanding whether student interns consciously make efforts to learn skills or behaviors in line with the internship programmes, and the cognitive process that they go through as prescribed by Bandura even though the students are unlikely to be aware of his model. Practically, the theory will help the researcher to examine what the processes are in internship settings that support learning from role models in the organizations or companies that the students intern in, as well as the approaches taken by the students to analyze, evaluate, adopt or reject what they learn through observation of role models and their engagements with them. The framework of social learning

will also help to establish the strategies used by supervisors at workplaces or role models of student interns to encourage the students to learn specific skills that are relevant to their career choice.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter examined literature that are related to the issue of internships, skills development and career enhancement or employability skills. The review showed that on paper, there was a direct and somewhat positive relationship between internship programmes, skills development of student interns and the enhancement of the careers and employability. The chapter also reviewed related studies, discussed and critiqued their results, methodological processes and how they contribute to the area under study. Importantly, the reviewed literature buttressed the need for more of such studies in Ghana. Drawing from the literature, the study settled on the Social Learning theory by Bandura, as the theoretical framework to underpin the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, the procedures and methods proposed by the researcher to collect data from sources and population are discussed. The chapter also elaborates on the research design to be adopted and the target population for the study. It discusses sample size and sampling procedure, data collection methods, procedures and analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A research design is a systematic plan to study a scientific problem. The design of a study defines the study type (descriptive, correlational, semi-experiment, experimental, review, meta-analytic) and sub-type (e.g. descriptive-longitudinal case study), research questions, hypotheses, independent and dependent variables, experimental design, and if applicable, data collection methods and a statistical analysis plan. Rahi (2017)

According to Creswell (2009), research design denotes the plan and procedures for a research spanning from broad decisions of problem identification to detailed assumptions of data collection and analysis. Thus, a research design seeks to provide the guiding principles and the framework within which all research activities are undertaken (Kothari, 2004). This makes it necessary for any study or research such as this to have a well-established research design.

It is based on this argument that this study will be an exploratory one. Although internship programmes have merited attention from the research fraternity both in Ghana and abroad, little research has been done in order to thoroughly understand the propensity of these programmes in

terms of skills enhancement and employability potentials of students that have either already participated, or are currently involved in the process. The results will be used to make up for the limitations of other studies and potentially provide a fresh African and for that matter, Ghanaian perspectives that will contribute extensively to the debates surrounding the ability of internship programmes to develop the skills and enhance the employment potential of students in the workplace. The research will identify issues that affect the ability of internship programmes instituted as part of the University's curriculum to develop the skills and enhance the career prospects of the students who participate in them.

### **3.3. Research Method**

The study proposes the adoption of the quantitative research method. Quantitative research refers to the numerical representation and manipulation of observation which are described and explained in numeric terms (Yin, 1993). Yin (1993) indicates that quantitative research is used to measure external realities in a way that the variables can be quantified and analysed using statistical means. Quantitative is also proposed because it gives more room for generalizations to be made about the findings since larger samples can be used for the study.

### **3.4 Population of the Study**

Wimmer and Dominick (2011) assert that research populations refers to all subjects and variables in the study area. The target population from which data is collected will be students from the University of Ghana, Legon. First, the populations selected are likely to satisfy the theoretical considerations of the study which are that, they are students of the University. The

second consideration is that the population envisioned for the study are either actively involved in internships programmes run by the school or have completed the programme. Therefore, they will be in the best position to rate the ability of the University's internship programmes to develop the skills of the students and enhance their career potential.

### **3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

The concept of sampling is derived from some deficiencies in the conduction of studies. Due to the inability of the researchers to test all individuals in a given population, it is required that, a sample must be used (Yin, 1993). However, the sample must have the characteristic of being representative of the population from which it was drawn. The sample must also be sizeable enough to warrant statistical analysis. The process of sampling has its main rational as allowing the researcher(s) to conduct the study to individuals from the population so that the results of the conclusion can be used to derive conclusions that will apply to the whole population (Yin, 1993). It is in this regard that this study proposes the use of a sample of 200 respondents from the University of Ghana, Legon, to conduct the study.

The study will adopt the use of convenience sampling in selecting the respondents. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Yin, 2003). The samples are selected because they are easier to recruit for the study. A study such as this makes it impossible to include the entire population considering the large size. That is why the study will rely on non-probability sampling techniques like convenience sampling because it is fast, inexpensive, easy and the subjects are readily available.

### **3.6. Data Collection Method**

There are various quantitative methodologies available but for the purpose of this study, surveys will be used. Survey in research is defined as “the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions (Check & Schutt, 2012, p.160). This type of research method allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. It can use either quantitative and qualitative research strategies or both. As it is often used to describe and explore human behavior, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research (Singleton & Straits, 2009).

A survey is a method of collecting data from people about who they are about who they are such as educational background, sex and age (demographics), how they think (motivations, beliefs, etc.), and what they do (behavior) (Yin, 1993). Surveys usually take the form of a questionnaire that a person fills out alone or by interview schedule in person or by telephone. The result of a survey is a variable by case data matrix (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). The method will improve the understanding of the problem by serving as a source of data with regards to the efficacy of internships in terms of skill development and employability of students.

### **3.7. Data Collection Instrument**

The study will employ the use of questionnaires as an instrument of data collection. The instrument will be a blend of open-ended questions as well as close ended questions. The close-ended questions typically ask the respondent to choose from a distinct set of responses such as yes or no or from a multiple-choice list and so on. They are used to gather facts about the

respondents, in a typical scenario such as this explorative study (Baxter & Babbie, 2003; Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Open ended questions are questions which do not have a predetermined set of answers for the respondents to choose from. They allow for freedom of thought and expression and do not limit the respondents to a narrow range of answers (Baxter & Babbie, 2003; Bhattacharjee, 2012). The instrument will be a blend of open-ended questions as well as close ended questions. The questionnaires were first piloted and tested for reliability and validity.

### **3.8. Data Analysis Method**

The data collected will be analyzed using a software called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a software that helps with the coding, analysis and presentation of data. Data is categorized according to codes captured in the questionnaire and the information will be put into the software. Out of the software, tables, charts and other statistical representations which help give a better understanding about the research results will be developed.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary**

The chapter outlined the specific methods that will be used to gather and interpret data from the field. It also detailed the population, sampling technique and sample size of the study, data collection method, data collection instrument as well as the method of da

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the summary of the paper as well as conclusions where the basic premise of the paper will be articulated, and a defense will be given in response to the originality of the work and its relevance.

#### **4.1 Summary**

The paper sought to determine the skills development and employability prospects of internship programmes organized by third cycle institutions in Ghana as part of their curriculum, in a bid to help bridge the gap between the theoretical aspects taught in the classrooms and the actual demands of the work environment. The researcher sought to achieve this aim by laying emphasis on the University of Ghana, Legon. The paper was organized into four chapters which are discussed as follows.

The first chapter was the introductory chapter which set the tone for the paper. Here, the background of the study was discussed which helped to put the phenomena under study in perspective. It was realized that, there is a perceived need that internship programmes are designed to meet and this has been a major area that scholars and academics have focused on over the years. This chapter also discussed the problem statement which put the premise of the study in context with other studies. It was discovered that although the relationship between internship programmes, skills development and career enhancement prospect has been examined in different countries, the relationship has not been fully explored in the Ghanaian context. It is with the hopes of satisfying this deficiency and contributing to literature that the objectives of the

study were fashioned, narrowing in on the University of Ghana as a point of reference. The objectives were discussed and research questions formulated in that regard. Most importantly, the study sought to understand the nature of these programmes, to understand the ability of the programmes to develop the skills of students through an examination of the roles that are assigned to the students and finally, to ascertain if these programmes enhance the career prospects.

The second chapter was the literature review, which served as the backbone of the paper. The chapter examined literature that were related to the issue of internships, skills development and career enhancement or employability skills. The review showed that on paper, there was a direct and somewhat positive relationship between internship programmes, skills development of student interns and the enhancement of the careers and employability. This was based on the idea that students have the chance of acquiring valuable professional skills such as self-management, problem solving, verbal or communication skills, conflict management, in addition to developing desirable work habits and attitudes. This conclusion was drawn out of concerns by corporate bodies due to the inability of graduates to perform in workplaces and as part of due diligence, therefore, graduates must be given the opportunity to go through internships as part of skills development programmes. The chapter also reviewed related studies, discussed and critiqued their results, methodological processes and how they contribute to the area under study. Importantly, the reviewed literature buttressed the need for more of such studies in Ghana. Drawing from the literature, the study settled on the Social Learning theory by Bandura, as the theoretical framework to underpin the study.

The third chapter focused on the proposed methodology deemed the right approach to navigating an area like this. The study adopted the explorative design where the quantitative approach will

be applied for the purposes of generalizability. Survey research was proposed where the medium of data collection will be the administration of structured questionnaires organized to help answer the various formulated research questions. The sampling techniques proposed was convenience sampling for the purposes of inexpensiveness and availability of research subjects who happen to be the students of the University of Ghana, Legon. The chapter also discussed the analysis and treatment of the data.

This final chapter, which happens to be the conclusion, discusses the summary of the paper, major conclusions drawn and argues out the originality of the paper.

## **4.2 Conclusions**

The conclusions drawn from the literature reviewed are discussed in the themes that follow;

### **4.2.1 Nature of Internship Programmes**

The literature showed that, the utilitarian purpose of internship programmes is to afford students with opportunities to transform the theoretical knowledge gained from their institutions of higher learning into practical ones which may come in handy in the work field. It serves to address the inadequacy of practical work experience and the exposure to realities of the work world or lack thereof. It helps to reduce youth unemployment although it is not an everlasting solution to the plaguing issues of unemployment.

### **4.2.2 Relationship between Internships and Skills Development**

There are several views with regards to the relationship between internship programmes and skills development. Skills development is the process of empowering graduate students or student interns with requisite skills as a way of ensuring their preparedness for the work environment. It is a way of enabling the students with the ability to execute tasks assigned them in the work environment either through training or mentorship programmes. Skills development

has been argued to add a positive impact on the institution, industry, economy, neighboring countries as well as the student in the long run, and as such, the lack of it poses demerits on all these aspects. The studies examined show that some generic skills such as time management, team work, attention to detail, general mental ability, subject-specific knowledge, willingness to work, attitudes, behaviors and responses to feedback are the key criteria that are considered by organizations and companies in their quest to hire graduates which are satisfied through student participation in internship programmes. Students, through participation in internship programmes also acquire a new understanding of their fit in a business sector or job opportunity or profile. They also have the added advantage of solidifying the interest and passion of students in a specific domain or sector, which is an intrinsic reward given by internships.

#### **4.2.3 Internships and the Prospect of Employability**

The review drew the realization that there are various benefits enjoyed by students who participate in internships including an enhancement of the prospects of employability. It is argued that students are sometimes able to find jobs and are offered full time positions by companies who once engaged them as interns, having been able to acquire experiences and skills that would motivate them to choose paths that were not known to them prior to the internships. Internships afford students with a realistic view of the career and the various requirements needed. Other studies on the subject provide evidence that students are increasingly seeing internships as a practical tool which will give them the greenlight to employment as the process serves an additional advantage of helping students to become clear on what they want to do, given a career trajectory. In the same token, other studies provide empirical evidence that indicated that students who participated in internship programmes were more likely to get an extended offer for the continuation of their employment in the organization where they offered

their internship. Students also stand a chance to receive an average or higher compensation in addition to the job offers.

#### **4.2.4 Challenges of Internship Programmes**

Although internship programmes are instituted to provide student interns with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience they need to bridge the gap between theory and practice, the process is fraught with challenges that makes the realization of these objectives relatively difficult. Among others, scholars highlight the inability of students to get the necessary skills needed as they are new to the work environment, poor writing skills, and inability to perform tasks assigned to them as the bane of the process. These inability become burdens that are shouldered by the mentors, managers and supervisors whose onerous responsibilities are to train, nurture and groom them. Some scholars recounted some challenges on the part of the student's motivation to be part of the process, listing the low incentives and stipends they receive, and the added issues of non-permanency of jobs in an economically turbulent era, makes student either rethink the process or stop abruptly while in the process. Others highlighted the disconnection between internships and job preparedness or readiness, arguing that internships are enormously beneficial when measured in terms variables such as personal development and workplace effectiveness but are generally of the assertion that it does not prepare students for work. The mismatch between the aspirations of interns and the realities of the labor market underscores the dissatisfaction of employers with the skills and attributes of interns after the completion of their internship stay. Again, there is also the issue of too many instructions from different instructors which makes the process of learning on the part of interns confusing, especially in instances where their supervisors delegate unnecessary duties such as making tea or running menial

errands, while in principle interns should be learning the actual work. This could be a rationale for interns to resign and results in an increased disinterestedness in internships in future.

#### **4.3 Recommendation and Research Proposition**

Taken together, the literature and discussions made in this paper show how important internship programmes are, and most importantly, how inalienable they are to the skills development and the career enhancement prospects of students in terms of general employability. Although there are some challenges found in the process, it is important to note that these challenges are situation specific. Additionally, the ability for students to harness the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences from their internships is incumbent on the jurisdiction and society within which the institution operates.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher proposes that a study in that regard be done in Ghana to measure the perceived advantages of internship programmes run by some key universities especially in the areas of skills development and employability. This stems from the deficiency in literature that speak to the Ghanaian situation. A robust, objective and scientific analysis and assessment of the internship programmes will contribute significantly to improving the standards when the challenges are brought to the fore. A study of this nature will influence discussions among major stakeholders in the education and corporate sectors to help maximize the benefits of internship programmes. It may also influence policy and serve as an incentive for students to participate.

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