

Research on the Impact of Internship Models on Student Employment

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Abstract: In recent years, the employment prospects for students in higher vocational colleges have become increasingly challenging. Enhancing the quality of student internships has emerged as a critical priority for these institutions. To address this, vocational colleges should adhere to an employment-oriented approach by establishing diversified internship models, refining internship management systems, and aligning student majors with internship roles. Efforts should include strengthening the supervision of students' independent practice, with instructors closely monitoring and guiding them to ensure the completion of internship tasks. Innovative blended internship methods should be explored to expand students' employment opportunities. Additionally, career planning education must be reinforced to help students develop a correct perspective on employment. Improving the internship management framework is also essential to protect students' legitimate rights and interests during their internships. By enhancing the quality of internship guidance, higher vocational colleges can better prepare students for the workforce and improve their employability.

Keywords: Higher vocational colleges; Internship model; Student employment

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1. Introduction

Internships are a critical component of higher vocational education and serve as a stepping stone for college students to launch their careers. They enable students to familiarize themselves with job-related skills, enhance their practical abilities and employment competitiveness, and help them plan their careers effectively. Considering the unique characteristics of vocational education, colleges should enrich internship models by adopting unified, student-led, and blended internship approaches. Simultaneously, institutions must establish comprehensive internship management systems, refine career planning courses, guide students toward a proper understanding of internships, and develop robust mechanisms for evaluating internship outcomes^[1]. Linking internship performance to student credits, evaluations, and other academic requirements can stimulate students' enthusiasm during internships and improve the quality of vocational talent training.

2. The impact of internship models on the employment of students in higher vocational colleges

2.1. Improving professional skills

The academic duration for higher vocational colleges is typically three years. While students gain theoretical knowledge of their chosen fields during their coursework, they also need to consolidate this knowledge and develop practical skills through workplace experience. Although on-campus training programs are offered, they often differ significantly from real-world corporate environments. Vocational colleges, therefore, organize internships during the final semester or academic year, creating an integrated teaching model. This allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge in practical settings, bridge any gaps in their understanding, and enhance their professional competencies. These experiences lay a solid foundation for future employment ^[2,3].

2.2. Enhancing social adaptability

Internships act as a vital bridge between academic life and the professional world, marking students' first step into society. They offer college students opportunities to engage in job-related practices, help them develop a professional attitude, adapt to workplace rhythms, and gain insights into industry demands and employment conditions. Additionally, internships prepare students for workplace life by teaching them how to handle interpersonal relationships, foster teamwork, and cultivate effective communication skills. These experiences significantly improve students' adaptability and set a strong foundation for their professional lives post-graduation ^[4].

2.3. Cultivating a strong work ethic

Internships play a crucial role in fostering a spirit of diligence and resilience among students. By participating in workplace activities, students gain first-hand experience of the demands of the professional world, develop a greater appreciation for labor, and enhance their work capabilities. Such experiences instill values of hard work, dedication, and perseverance. Furthermore, rotational internships provided by schools help students better align their employment and career perspectives, ultimately strengthening their professional ethics.

2.4. Strengthening employment competitiveness

Internships offer students opportunities to learn directly from experienced professionals, equipping them with job-specific skills that boost their employability and enable them to stand out in a competitive job market. Through the social practice platforms created by internships, students can explore different roles, refine their career choices, and identify positions that best match their aspirations. This process not only helps them seize employment opportunities but also improves their employment quality and lays the groundwork for effective career planning ^[5].

3. Challenges in internship guidance in higher vocational colleges

3.1. Lack of student enthusiasm for unified internships

Many students exhibit low enthusiasm for participating in unified internships due to limited familiarity with societal norms, insufficient understanding of industry roles, and a lack of social experience ^[6]. Variations in students' acceptance of basic internship positions provided by enterprises are common, with some perceiving a poor alignment between their roles and academic majors. In some cases, internship placements arranged

by vocational colleges are unrelated to students' fields of study, leading to disinterest and even aversion toward such internships. This lack of enthusiasm manifests in passive participation, negatively impacting the effectiveness of school-organized internships and diminishing enterprises' satisfaction with vocational students. Additionally, some students lack perseverance and fail to integrate professional knowledge into practical work, missing opportunities to learn critical job skills, adopt new industry technologies, and enhance their practical capabilities. These issues undermine the intended benefits of unified internships and the schools' efforts to provide them ^[7].

3.2. Ineffectiveness of independent internships

A number of students prefer to secure internships independently rather than rely on school arrangements. However, due to their limited work and social experience, they often encounter labor disputes during their internships, leaving their legal rights and interests unprotected. Such challenges negatively affect the development of their employability. Moreover, since schools typically lack formal cooperative relationships with enterprises hosting independent internships, their ability to supervise students and provide effective guidance is significantly diminished. This leads to complacency among many students, who focus solely on obtaining internship certificates without proactively learning new industry technologies, engaging in research projects, or pursuing innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities. Consequently, these students fail to develop essential career skills, hindering their professional growth ^[8].

3.3. Incomplete mixed internship management system

A mixed internship model arises when students switch between unified and independent internships due to personal preferences or internship-related issues. Managing such transitions poses significant challenges for schools and internship supervisors, complicating efforts to support students' career development. Some higher vocational colleges do not adequately address the complexities of mixed internships, leaving gaps in the management framework. For instance, when students encounter labor disputes during independent internships, their placements may terminate prematurely, requiring schools to reassign them to new roles. This increases the administrative workload and places higher demands on internship management. The absence of a robust management system for mixed internships further exacerbates these issues.

3.4. Gaps in career education

While many higher vocational colleges offer courses on innovation, entrepreneurship, and career planning, these courses are often disconnected from internship guidance. This disconnect limits the effectiveness of career support during internships, creating challenges for students when seeking employment post-graduation ^[9]. Some schools prioritize evaluating students' performance during internships and gathering feedback from enterprises but neglect to leverage online teaching platforms for delivering legal and career education. As a result, students often lack knowledge of labor laws and remain unaware of their legal rights and protections. Additionally, internship instructors may focus on ensuring students complete their graduation theses and remain physically safe, but they frequently overlook students' mental health and career planning needs. This lack of comprehensive guidance can inadvertently hinder students' long-term employment prospects ^[10].

4. Effective strategies for vocational colleges to optimize students' internship models

4.1. Expanding internship partnerships and standardizing internship models

First, vocational colleges should align their programs with their unique institutional characteristics and specialty offerings by actively establishing cooperative relationships with enterprises nationwide. They should seek high-quality internship opportunities tailored to the specific majors of their students, ensuring a close alignment between internship positions and academic specializations. This approach can enhance students' motivation to participate in unified internships coordinated by the school. For example, leveraging the development opportunity of “cultural and tourism integration,” schools can expand the scope of their partnerships beyond traditional sectors like travel agencies, museums, and tourist attractions^[11]. By incorporating cultural and artistic enterprises, they can offer internship positions tailored to students majoring in tourism management, digital media, and art. Students might be placed in roles such as tour guides, assistants, village dormitory administrators, hotel receptionists, short video producers, or artistic performers at tourist sites. Such experiences can help students gain insights into professional employment landscapes, refine their career planning, and ultimately improve the quality of unified internships. Additionally, schools can maximize the utility of school-enterprise platforms to facilitate seamless alignment between enterprise needs and student internships. Schools should invite enterprises to engage in on-campus teaching, participate in the construction of practical training bases, and contribute to the design of talent training programs [12]. Aligning industrial developments with professional curriculum teaching can help secure more internship opportunities for students. For instance, schools could establish partnerships with enterprises in neighboring provinces to host online internship job fairs. Enterprises can present their internship recruitment needs, fostering direct communication between businesses and students. This approach can reduce students' reluctance to participate in unified internships, encourage active engagement, and improve internship quality, ultimately helping students secure desirable employment^[13].

4.2. Strengthening supervision of independent internships to improve quality

Vocational colleges should conduct regular follow-ups with students engaged in independent internships through internship supervisors and counselors. This ensures students are actively participating in meaningful internship activities and gaining practical vocational skills. First, colleges must provide comprehensive guidance before the start of independent internships. By organizing preparatory lectures, schools can educate students about common fraud tactics in online and offline recruitment processes. They should also introduce new methods of fraud prevention, assist students in verifying corporate credentials, and provide reliable internship information. Such measures enhance students' self-protection awareness and reduce the risk of deception during their independent internships. This preparation helps students secure internships that align with their career interests and improves the quality of internship guidance. Second, career education and legal awareness should be integrated into the independent internship process. Schools can use their online teaching platforms to conduct labor law seminars, covering topics such as worker rights, social security, and related legal protections. This knowledge empowers students to safeguard their rights and seek legal consultation when necessary, further enhancing the quality of their internship experiences. In addition, trainee instructors can share career-related resources with students via platforms like WeChat groups. These resources might include information on innovation and entrepreneurship policies or vocational skill level examinations. By encouraging students to adopt lifelong learning habits and actively learn from enterprise mentors, schools can help them improve their career planning abilities and employability.

4.3. Improving the mixed internship model to enhance students' employment competitiveness

With the continuous expansion of college and university enrollments in recent years, higher vocational colleges face significant challenges in student employment. The adoption of a mixed internship model has emerged as a developmental trend, offering a pathway to enhance students' employment competitiveness and overall job quality. Schools should embrace modern practices, move beyond traditional internship models, and establish a unified approach that combines structured and independent internships. By tailoring internship guidance to the unique characteristics of different majors, schools can provide students with more diverse internship options, sparking enthusiasm and genuinely improving the quality of internships. For instance, in tourism management and hotel management majors, schools can collaborate with local hotels, travel agencies, and tourist destinations to offer well-suited internship positions. Students might work as tour guide assistants at travel agencies during their studies, gaining familiarity with domestic travel routes, enhancing communication skills with tourists, and improving their ability to explain scenic spots and lead tour groups. Schools can further strengthen these efforts by introducing enterprises into the academic environment, selecting high-quality companies to provide targeted, industry-specific courses before internships. This helps students gain deeper insights into industry roles and positions and allows them to apply for internships with a clear understanding of professional expectations. Offering students the autonomy to choose their preferred internship methods encourages engagement, while properly implementing employment policies helps further develop their employability. Additionally, short-term internships during holidays can expand opportunities, providing students with mixed internship experiences that align with their career planning. This approach not only broadens internship channels but also enhances students' employment and entrepreneurial capabilities ^[14].

4.4. Strengthening career education to shape students' employment perspectives

Internships serve as a bridge for students to accumulate work and social experience, improve practical and communication skills, and cultivate professional ethics, which are vital for refining their employment outlook. To achieve this, schools should integrate career education with internship arrangements, emphasizing the unique aspects of vocational education. Career education should address emerging industries such as rural revitalization, cultural-tourism integration, and new media, promoting the alignment of job skills with internship and employment guidance. Schools should also analyze regional and industry-specific employment trends, discouraging an overreliance on first-tier city internships and encouraging active participation in rural revitalization initiatives. This not only enhances students' sense of social responsibility but also provides valuable talent for rural development. Career education should extend into the internship period through collaborative efforts between departments. A tripartite team comprising career planning teachers, internship instructors, and counselors can guide students on issues like salary negotiation, labor rights protection, and vocational skill assessments. Digital platforms such as WeChat public accounts, groups, and Weibo can facilitate internship services, helping students resolve challenges encountered during internships. By ensuring that students remain focused and confident in their roles, schools can help them gain enterprise recognition, leading to better job opportunities and improved employment outcomes.

4.5. Enhancing internship management systems to improve employment quality

To improve student employment outcomes, higher vocational colleges must establish a comprehensive internship management system. This involves clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of student

organizations, party organizations, counselors, and internship instructors in the guidance process. Effective top-level planning and implementation of internship guidance will better serve students and support them in securing ideal jobs. For example, schools can adopt a detailed internship management system by dividing students into smaller internship groups and assigning professional internship instructors to each group. This structure facilitates timely resolution of challenges in the professional field, ensuring students complete their internships successfully. By earning enterprise recognition and leaving a positive impression on their internship organizations, students can lay a strong foundation for future employment^[15]. Additionally, schools should conduct regular internship visits, involving staff from party branches, league branches, and various professional leaders. These visits should include research at both school-assigned and independently chosen internship enterprises to assess students' working conditions, remuneration, and job performance. Schools must promptly address challenges faced by students during internships and safeguard their legal rights, ensuring compliance with relevant laws. Such efforts demonstrate care from the school and teachers, fostering students' enthusiasm and enhancing their sense of social belonging. Higher vocational colleges should continuously refine their student internship management systems, progressing toward a "one-stop internship and employment" model. This includes regular follow-up visits to internship enterprises to ensure the protection of students' rights, advocating for better working conditions and securing formal job offers for students. These measures will ultimately improve the employment quality of graduates.

5. Conclusion

In short, internships play a vital role in enhancing vocational skills, employment competitiveness, and professional ethics among higher vocational students. They enable students to make a positive impression on enterprises, stand out among applicants, and secure ideal jobs. Strengthening the quality of internship and employment guidance in higher vocational colleges is essential. Schools should continuously optimize internship models, including unified internships, student-led internships, and mixed internship approaches. By rigorously implementing relevant policies and regulations, colleges can refine their internship management systems and provide students with more professional internship opportunities. Offering choices aligned with students' interests stimulates their enthusiasm, ultimately improving the overall employment quality of vocational students.

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