Aspects of the Internships Importance in Human Resource Training

Mircea Liviu Negrut*, Ana-Andreea Mihartescu, Marian Liviu Mocan

Abstract

The labor market in Romania is characterized by a strong contradiction: the population complains that there are not enough jobs, and the firms have problems with the recruitment of employees. The companies problems are related to the quality of human resources as well of economic and social factors that influence the recruitment process. This paper presents the results of a quantitative research on the internships importance in human resource training. To conduct this research the authors used the survey as research method and the research instrument was the questionnaire. In the first part of the paper the authors present the research methodology and the context in which it was conducted. In the second part of the paper, the research results are presented. In the end of the paper are presented conclusions and suggestions for increasing the quality of human resources.

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1. Introduction

Human resource is the most important resource of a company. For a company to have quality human resource, it takes time for it to be professionally trained and also financial expenses for training and motivation. A professional internship can be an important professional experience if the applicant aspires to a career in that profession. The internship programs provide a complex practical experience required to deal within the real-world workplace. It also serves as excellent training ground for developing the necessary “professional skills”, which are necessary for the future job.

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The labor market in Romania is characterized by a strong contradiction: the population complains that there are not enough jobs, and some of the firms have problems with the recruitment of the employees.

According to the census of 2011 it resulted that Romania has a stable population of 20,121,641 people (http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/), being the 7th country after the number of inhabitants in the European Union. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_European_Union_member_states_by_population)

Romania has only 5.1 million people employed (about 25% of the resident population).

According to official statistics, in November 2013, the unemployment rate in Romania was 5.6% (507,607 people) (http://www.anofm.ro/files/Situatia somajului nov 2013.PDF).

Based on these data it can be concluded that about 70% of the resident population from Romania is represented by retirees, people in lifelong learning (schoolchildren, students) and unemployed persons.

Unemployed people claim they can’t find a job in Romania.

The contradiction that appears on the labor market is related by those 474,000 employers who have problems with recruitment of human resources, especially the specialized and qualified one.

The main causes that led to this contradiction are: the dissolution of professional schools, which professionally trained the human resource (skilled workers), lack of internships or their faulty organization, closure of some companies which were an important partner for training institutions; low public interest for some specializations, especially technical ones, etc.

In these circumstances the employers are seeking solutions to recruit and train human resources in conjunction with the industry specific needs. Starting from this situation on the labor market from Romania, it is necessary to find solutions to remedy the situation.

The purpose of this paper is to identify the importance of internships in human resource training, from the perspective of both parties involved: students and employers.

In this paper the authors present the results of a quantitative research on the importance of internship in human resource training, from the perspective of both parties: on the one hand the prospective employees (current students) and the employers.

2. The research methodology

The conducted study is based on data from:

- Secondary Sources: National Institute of Statistics (2011 census results), National Agency for Employment (unemployment rate, the occupancy rate of workplaces), etc.;
- Primary sources: students and HR managers.

To identify the importance of the internships in human resource training from the standpoint of the students and companies, have been used as methods for gathering information:

- The investigation, utilized for interviewing students. To achieve the survey was used as a research tool the questionnaire applied to a sample of 116 students in the third year, from a technical specialization. The questionnaire contains 20 questions of which 14 are closed and 6 are open.
- Collective Interview was used to investigate the companies' representatives. Collective interview was conducted in a workshop entitled "From the Theory to Practice" which was attended by human resource managers and representatives from 15 companies, in areas such as: automotive (6), logistics (2), chemical (2), construction (3), etc.
3. The case study

3.1. The deployment framework of the internship

Starting from the contradiction that the population say that are not enough jobs and the companies haven't from where to recruit qualified employees, our faculty organized internships for the students in the third year of study from a technical specialization as follows:

- Have been contacted companies in the field of faculty specialization to provide internships programs for students;
- The firms had a positive response and have provided internships programs according to their training capacity (7-18 people), with different durations of 3 to 6 weeks;
- To materialize the cooperation with these companies have been signed partnerships between university and companies;
- The professional internship program was carried out according to fig. 1 stages:

- To pass the discipline "practice" provided in the curricula, the students were evaluated on the basis of the internship report and of a oral assessment made by the supervisor professor and taking into account the assessment given by the tutor from the company;
- After perform the assessment, students have participated in a study on "Assessment of internship conducted in the 3rd year of study, to the specialization Engineering and Management". Some questions about the internships importance in human resource training are listed below:

Q10. Evaluate to what extent you have coped in terms of professional to the requirements and tasks received from the tutor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limited</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Largely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q11. How do you assess your integration, from professional and collegial point of view, within the company from employees and the management of the company?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In very small part</th>
<th>In small part</th>
<th>Average part</th>
<th>Fairly good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q12. How do you assess the tasks received from the tutor? [Choose one answer]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I did not receive tasks</th>
<th>Very simple and few</th>
<th>Average complexity and well proportioned</th>
<th>Complex and difficult to achieve</th>
<th>I could not fulfill the set tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q15. How useful do you consider is the internship in 3rd year of study in a specialized company in terms of the acquired knowledge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Pretty much</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3.2. The study results

Following the questionnaire on a sample of 116 students were obtained the following results:

- The traineeships were made in companies with Romanian capital - 42% and 58% in companies with majority foreign capital.
- These firms have private capital in a proportion of 93% and 7% of them have state capital.
- The faculty effort to make partnerships with prestigious companies is considered to be beneficial for student career: 62% of the subjects investigated considers that collaboration with prestigious companies will help them very much in their careers.
- 80% of respondents consider that the internship conducted in the 3rd year of study in a specialized company in terms of knowledge gained, is useful, as is shown in fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Usefulness of the internship in 3rd year of study in a specialized company in terms of knowledge gained

- 98% of students have considered that the tasks received have been useful, from professional point of view, helping them to acquire practical skills.
- Only 1.7% of study participants have stated that they have not received tasks, which shows that tutors have involved actively the students in companies, making them to feel part of it as is shown in fig. 3. Some of the students, after a period of adjustment in the firm, have received specific projects to the department in which they were part and that they had to solve them by the end of the internship.
81% of the investigated subjects consider that the tasks received from the tutor have been well proportionate and with average complexity.

According to the data presented above, the majority of students consider the internship extremely useful for developing of skills and practical competences, but also for the future professional activity. The most important role played by the internship in human resource training is the fact that students were integrated professional within companies departments. From the study attended by students were revealed some specific results such as:

- Some of the students have found that they would not like in the future to work in certain departments, to carry out certain activities (static or dynamic). And from this point of view the internship can be considered extremely important in human resource training.
- Have been students who have completed 2 internships: some have doubled internship period established in the agreement and conducted the internship in the same company and in the same department, while others opted for two internships in different companies and departments. This attitude shows the willingness of students to acquire practical knowledge in order to develop him from professional point of view.
- Some of the students were highly motivated by the fact that they got work equipment, customized with the company logo considering himself integral part of the firm.

The collective interview was conducted in the workshop "From the Theory to Practice", which was attended human resource managers and representatives from 15 companies from various industries. The purpose of this workshop was to obtain a feedback about the internship and the level of training of the students. Another objective of the workshop was to establish future collaborations.

Out of the 15 partner companies for internships, 12 of them have offered 105 places for internships lasting up to 3-6 weeks. By offering these internships the companies have expressed the interest for human resource training early as the initial training, in correlation with the company policy.

Many of the companies have appreciated the initiative of the representatives of Engineering and Management specialization, to find industrial partners for internships. Some of the companies were at the first collaboration of its kind in Romania. In their home countries, the collaboration between the university and the business environment is a common practice.

The collective interview was conducted around of 5 general questions and the synthesis of responses is provided in Table 1.
Table 1. The collective interview results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you assess the organizing and conducting of the internship?</td>
<td>All participants appreciated that the organization and progress of the internship is good and to continue in the future in the same way, following the steps shown in fig. 1. 80% of the participating companies are very satisfied with the cooperation, stakeholders’ communication and the activity performed. The representatives of 3 companies did not answer this question because they have not been involved in carrying out of the internships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the current collaboration between the university and the company?</td>
<td>The vast majority of students have been appreciated. Some of them have continued working with the company: as part-time employment (e.g. a company that had 14 students in internship, hired 10 students in part-time), or research for elaboration of Bachelor thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you assess the performance of students who have completed the internship in your company?</td>
<td>The main recommendations that have been made: the internships to have a longer duration, creating a mechanism to consult partners regarding courses content, create a group (a community) to facilitate communication, exchange of opinions and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What suggestions or recommendations you can make to improve the future collaboration?</td>
<td>The vast majority of students have been appreciated. Some of them have continued working with the company: as part-time employment (e.g. a company that had 14 students in internship, hired 10 students in part-time), or research for elaboration of Bachelor thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want to continue the collaboration agreement with the university in the future?</td>
<td>All the participants expressed their intention to continue the collaboration in the future. For example, a company has requested the collaboration with students from the Masters Degree, offering in this sense 7 internships throughout of six months, accompanied by private scholarships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the interview group have been identified main causes invoked when employees gives up to a job or when it refuses: lack of motivation (especially financial), internal rules "too harsh", in some cases big distance between home and work (40-70km), working in shifts, the work in the production department (not at the office).

4. Conclusions

Following the completion of this study it was found that both parts students and the companies considers that the internships are extremely important for human resource training. Developing practical internships present overriding advantages for both sides:

- The students have the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in order to acquire practical skills. The students also have the opportunity to experience the recruiting process, extremely important for the future graduates;
- The companies have the opportunity to assess, monitor and to train a potential employee in correlation with personnel policy. The students can help the companies in the case of staff shortages (occasioned by the holidays), or overloading of the staff in certain periods. The proposals made by the students and the companies for the future is listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Proposals and recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longer period for the internships.</td>
<td>Longer period for the internships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The possibility of achieving the traineeship in several companies or departments.</td>
<td>Rotating of the students on various posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the number of companies involved in internships.</td>
<td>Drawing of clear objectives by the university, in terms of the skills acquired by the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To continue the collaboration after the end of placement: Bachelor thesis, employment.</td>
<td>Research projects funded for students who want to become actively involved in research and product development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration of the internships.</td>
<td>Frequent meetings between the academic staff and company representatives to discuss and find solutions related to career development and motivation of the students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The internship provides the transition from the initial training stage to working life, from the student status to the one of human resource, extremely important for any organization.

References


http://www.recensamantromania.ro/erezultate-2; Accessed on: January 9, 2014
