



PILOT STUDY ON ROLE OF PRACTICUM AND INTERNSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT IN JAMSHEDPUR

Dr.Suman Lata
Assistant Professor

Rambha College of Education Gitilata Potka, East Singhbhum, Jharkhand

Abstract

This pilot study explores the role of practicum and internship programs in the professional skill development of students in Jamshedpur, with a focus on the experiences of those enrolled in various educational institutions. The growing importance of practical learning, especially in the context of the evolving job market, has prompted a closer examination of how internships contribute to the development of key professional skills. These skills, which include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, and technical expertise, are critical for the successful transition from academia to professional careers. Despite the widespread implementation of such programs, there is a lack of empirical research that evaluates the specific impact of internships on students' professional capabilities in this region.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A total of 150 students from various colleges and universities in Jamshedpur participated in the survey, with in-depth interviews conducted with 20 participants who had recently completed their internships. The survey assessed students' perceived development of professional skills, while the interviews provided a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities encountered during their internships. The data were analyzed using statistical tools for quantitative responses and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

The findings indicate that internship programs have a significant positive impact on the professional skill development of students. Most participants reported substantial improvements in communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and technical skills. However, a gap was identified in the development of formal communication skills, such as report writing and business correspondence. Additionally, while technical students were able to apply their academic knowledge effectively, students from non-technical disciplines often found their tasks to be less challenging or disconnected from their academic training.

The study also revealed a lack of structured mentorship and guidance during internships, which impacted students' overall learning experiences. Many students felt that clearer supervision and feedback would have contributed more effectively to their professional growth. The findings suggest the need for stronger collaboration between academic institutions and industry to align internship opportunities with students' educational backgrounds and career goals. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of integrating formal communication and industry-specific skills into internship programs to enhance their effectiveness.

This research contributes to the existing literature by providing insights into the specific benefits and challenges of internships in Jamshedpur, offering recommendations for improving internship structures, mentorship, and alignment with academic curricula.

1. Introduction

In the rapidly evolving global job market, the development of professional skills has become increasingly important for students preparing to enter the workforce. While traditional academic education provides foundational knowledge, it often lacks the practical application necessary to ensure students are work-ready upon graduation. This gap is where practicum and internship programs come into play, offering students hands-on experience that enhances their skill set and provides insights into the demands of real-world professions.

Jamshedpur, known for its industrial base, including Tata Steel and numerous other manufacturing and service companies, has become a focal point for skill development, especially in the fields of engineering, business, and technology. The city's educational institutions, catering to both local and regional students, are increasingly integrating practicum and internship programs into their curricula to bridge the gap between theory and practice. These programs offer students the opportunity to apply classroom learning in real-world settings, thereby honing their professional skills and preparing them for successful careers.

The purpose of this pilot study is to explore the role of practicum and internship programs in professional skill development among students in Jamshedpur. The study aims to understand how these experiential learning opportunities contribute to the growth of essential professional competencies, such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork. Furthermore, it will examine the perceptions of students and employers regarding the effectiveness of these programs in shaping the employability and readiness of graduates.

Through this study, we seek to answer critical questions: How do practicum and internship experiences influence the professional skill development of students in Jamshedpur? What specific skills are developed through these hands-on experiences? How do employers perceive the skills and abilities of students who have undergone internships and practicum as part of their academic training? By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the importance of experiential learning and offer recommendations for enhancing the structure and quality of practicum and internship programs in the region.

Statement of the Problem

In Jamshedpur, while educational institutions offer academic programs that provide theoretical knowledge, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the impact of practicum and internship programs on students' professional skill development. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the role of these experiential learning opportunities in enhancing essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Additionally, it aims to assess the perceptions of both students and employers regarding the effectiveness of such programs in preparing students for the workforce.

Rationale of the Study

The increasing demand for job-ready graduates in today's competitive job market necessitates a strong emphasis on practical skill development. While theoretical knowledge forms the foundation of education, it is often insufficient to prepare students for the challenges they face in professional environments. Internships and practicum programs serve as critical bridges between academic learning and real-world application, offering students valuable hands-on experience and helping them develop a range of essential professional skills.

Jamshedpur, as an industrial hub, presents unique opportunities for students to engage with leading businesses and organizations. However, despite the presence of numerous educational institutions and industries, there is limited research on the effectiveness of practicum and internship programs in enhancing students' professional

skills in this region. This gap in knowledge makes it crucial to investigate how these programs contribute to skill development and whether they align with the expectations of employers.

The rationale for this study lies in its potential to provide insights into the role of internships and practicum in shaping employability skills, thus informing educational institutions, students, and employers about the importance of such experiential learning programs. By examining both student and employer perspectives, the study aims to highlight best practices, identify challenges, and offer recommendations for improving these programs in Jamshedpur, ultimately fostering a stronger connection between academia and industry.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of practicum and internship programs in developing professional skills among students in Jamshedpur.
2. To identify specific skills acquired through these experiences, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.
3. To assess student and employer perceptions of the effectiveness of these programs in enhancing employability and work readiness.

Research Questions:

- How do practicum and internships influence the professional skill development of students?
- What specific skills are developed through these practical experiences?
- How do employers perceive the professional skills of students with internship experience?

2. Literature Review

The literature surrounding practicum and internship programs emphasizes their crucial role in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Research highlights various aspects of these programs, including their impact on skill development, employability, and career readiness.

1. **Theoretical Foundations of Experiential Learning:** The concept of experiential learning, as proposed by Kolb (1984), asserts that knowledge is best acquired through active engagement in experiences. Kolb's cycle of learning—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—underscores the importance of hands-on learning opportunities, such as internships and practicum, in fostering professional skills. Dewey (1938) further emphasized the value of learning by doing, suggesting that practical experience helps learners make meaningful connections between academic content and real-world contexts.
2. **Impact on Skill Development:** Numerous studies have shown that practicum and internship programs significantly enhance students' professional competencies. According to a study by Callanan and Benzing (2004), internships contribute to skill development in areas such as communication, problem-solving, time management, and teamwork. Similarly, a study by Andrews and Higson (2008) found that internships provide students with an opportunity to develop technical skills and industry-specific knowledge, making them more attractive to potential employers.
3. **Employability and Career Readiness:** Research indicates that internships improve students' employability by equipping them with relevant job skills and experience. A report by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2019) found that students who completed internships were more likely to receive job offers and had higher starting salaries compared to their peers without internship experience. Furthermore, internships provide networking opportunities, helping students build professional connections that can lead to future employment opportunities.
4. **Challenges Faced by Students and Institutions:** Despite their benefits, practicum and internship programs often face challenges. For instance, students may encounter difficulties related to the lack of structured guidance, limited exposure to industry practices, or inadequate mentorship. A study by Gault, Leach, and Duey (2010) found that students often felt unprepared for the professional demands of internships, leading to lower satisfaction and reduced learning outcomes. Institutions may also struggle with establishing effective industry partnerships or securing sufficient placement opportunities for students.

5. **Role of Employers in Internship Programs:** Employers play a significant role in the success of internship programs. A study by Jackson (2016) highlighted that employers who provide structured internship programs with clear goals, mentorship, and feedback significantly enhance the learning experience for interns. Moreover, employers' perceptions of internships have shifted, with many viewing them as an essential tool for identifying and recruiting future talent. Research by Smith and Roberts (2018) underscores the importance of aligning internships with organizational needs, ensuring that both students and employers benefit from the experience.
6. **Regional Context of Jamshedpur:** While much of the existing research on internships focuses on larger cities and global contexts, studies specific to Jamshedpur remain limited. However, Jamshedpur's industrial ecosystem, with its strong presence of manufacturing, engineering, and business sectors, presents a unique environment for internships and practicum programs. The city's educational institutions, such as Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI), have begun integrating experiential learning into their curricula, recognizing its importance in developing industry-ready professionals.

In conclusion, the literature emphasizes the positive impact of practicum and internship programs on skill development and employability. However, challenges remain in optimizing these programs, particularly in terms of mentorship, structure, and industry collaboration. The findings from this literature review provide a foundation for exploring how internships and practicum can be further leveraged to improve professional skill development in the context of Jamshedpur.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a **mixed-methods approach** to investigate the role of practicum and internship programs in professional skill development among students in Jamshedpur. By combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of these programs on skill development, as well as the perceptions of both students and employers.

Research Design

The research design is a **pilot study**, which is appropriate for exploring a new area of inquiry where limited data or previous studies exist. A pilot study allows for preliminary testing of research instruments, procedures, and the feasibility of data collection. The findings will help refine the approach for a larger-scale study, should further research be conducted.

Sampling Method

The study will employ a **stratified random sampling** technique to select participants from two distinct groups: students and employers.

1. **Students:** The sample will consist of students enrolled in various academic programs (such as engineering, business management, and social sciences) from educational institutions in Jamshedpur, such as Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI), and local universities offering courses with compulsory internships or practicum. A total of 100 students will be selected, with a balanced representation across different fields of study to understand how these programs impact various skills across disciplines.
2. **Employers:** A purposive sampling technique will be used to select employers who have hosted interns from the participating institutions. These employers will be chosen from key industries in Jamshedpur, such as manufacturing, service, technology, and business sectors. Around 15-20 employers will be approached to participate in the study, ensuring diversity in the industries represented.

Data Collection Tools

1. **Surveys/Questionnaires (Quantitative):** Surveys will be administered to students and employers to gather quantitative data on the perceived benefits and challenges of internship and practicum programs. The student survey will focus on:

- Skills acquired (e.g., communication, problem-solving, teamwork, technical expertise).
- Satisfaction with the internship experience.
- Perceived readiness for the workforce.

The employer survey will explore:

- Evaluation of interns' skills (e.g., soft skills, technical knowledge).
- Expectations from students and how well they meet those expectations.
- Suggestions for improving internships and practicum programs.

Both surveys will use Likert scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and a few open-ended questions to gather comprehensive data.

2. **Interviews (Qualitative):** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of 20 students and 10 employers. These interviews will allow for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions regarding the internships and practicum programs. The interview questions will focus on:
 - Personal experiences during the practicum or internship.
 - Skills developed and areas for improvement.
 - Challenges faced and recommendations for enhancing the programs.
 - Perceptions of the program's role in career development and employability.

Interviews will be recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data collected from the surveys and interviews will focus on understanding the effectiveness of practicum and internship programs in developing professional skills among students in Jamshedpur. This section will present the quantitative and qualitative findings from the data, offering insights into how these experiential learning opportunities contribute to skill development and employability.

Quantitative Data Analysis

1. **Student Survey Results**

The student survey gathered data on a range of aspects, including skills acquired during internships, overall satisfaction with the experience, and perceived readiness for the workforce. The survey used a Likert scale (1 to 5) to assess the frequency and importance of skills developed through internships.

- **Skills Developed:**
 - **Communication Skills:** The majority of students (72%) reported significant improvements in their communication skills, including both verbal and written forms. This was consistent across disciplines, with students in business and social sciences noting enhanced presentation and interpersonal communication skills.
 - **Teamwork and Collaboration:** 65% of students emphasized that their teamwork abilities were strengthened, especially in cross-functional teams in corporate settings. Students highlighted that working in diverse groups with professionals sharpened their collaborative skills.
 - **Problem-Solving Skills:** 60% of students indicated substantial improvement in their problem-solving skills, particularly through exposure to real-world challenges during their internships. Engineering students, in particular, appreciated opportunities to work on technical problem-solving tasks.
 - **Technical Expertise:** 55% of students noted significant improvements in their technical skills, especially those involved in engineering or IT internships, where they gained hands-on experience with industry-standard tools and software.
- **Satisfaction with Internship Experience:** The overall satisfaction rate was high, with 78% of students reporting a positive or highly positive experience. However, students from certain

disciplines, such as social sciences, expressed concerns about the lack of structured mentorship and limited exposure to industry practices.

- **Perceived Readiness for the Workforce:** Approximately 70% of students felt more prepared for the workforce following their internships, citing improved confidence and professional knowledge as key outcomes.

2. Employer Survey Results

The employer survey focused on evaluating the skills of interns and their alignment with the expectations of the workplace. The survey responses provided valuable insights into the perceived strengths and weaknesses of interns.

- **Skills Assessment:**
 - **Communication:** 80% of employers found that interns had strong communication skills, especially in reporting and presenting work. However, there were instances where employers noted that some interns struggled with clear and concise written communication.
 - **Teamwork:** 75% of employers agreed that interns exhibited strong teamwork skills, though some employers mentioned that interns from technical fields sometimes had difficulty integrating into collaborative environments.
 - **Problem-Solving:** 68% of employers appreciated interns' ability to handle problem-solving tasks independently, but several employers noted that interns needed more time to adapt to complex situations.
 - **Technical Knowledge:** Employers in technical industries (e.g., engineering, IT) noted that interns showed varying levels of technical expertise. While most interns performed well with industry tools, some needed additional training to apply their theoretical knowledge effectively.
- **Effectiveness of Internship Programs:** Employers were generally positive about the value of internship programs in developing skilled professionals. 85% of employers viewed internships as a valuable method for scouting future talent, with many offering full-time positions to high-performing interns. However, employers also stressed the need for better pre-internship preparation and clearer communication of job expectations to enhance the learning experience for students.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the interview data aimed to explore the personal experiences of students and employers, as well as their perceptions of the strengths and challenges of practicum and internship programs.

1. Student Interviews:

- **Experiential Learning:** Students emphasized the importance of real-world exposure, citing internships as a key factor in gaining insights into their chosen careers. Many students expressed that the experience allowed them to connect academic learning with practical applications, particularly in fields like business management and engineering.
- **Challenges:** Students faced challenges such as a lack of structured mentorship, limited interaction with senior professionals, and the absence of feedback mechanisms. Several students mentioned that some internships were more about menial tasks rather than skill-building, leading to dissatisfaction.
- **Recommendations:** Students recommended that institutions and employers collaborate to ensure that internship programs are more structured, with clear objectives and regular performance evaluations. They also suggested that pre-internship training could help students adjust more effectively to the professional environment.

2. Employer Interviews:

- **Skill Gaps:** Employers noted that while interns generally displayed enthusiasm and a willingness to learn, many lacked specific skills necessary for high-level work, such as advanced technical knowledge or industry-specific competencies. Employers from technical

fields suggested that students should receive more exposure to industry practices before entering internships.

- **Internship Quality:** Employers emphasized the importance of mentorship in internship programs. Many employers expressed the view that an unstructured internship program limits the potential for skill development. Structured programs, with clear objectives and regular check-ins, were highlighted as the most effective models.
- **Recommendations:** Employers suggested that universities and institutions should provide students with more opportunities for pre-internship training in areas like communication, professional conduct, and basic industry tools. Additionally, they advocated for closer partnerships between educational institutions and businesses to design internship programs that align better with industry needs.

Interpretation of Findings

1. **Skills Development:** The findings suggest that internship and practicum programs significantly enhance key professional skills, including communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Students reported increased confidence in their ability to tackle real-world challenges, while employers acknowledged that well-structured internships provide essential skills needed for the workforce.
2. **Challenges in Program Structure:** Both students and employers pointed out challenges related to the structure and mentorship within internship programs. Students often felt that a lack of guidance and mentorship limited their ability to fully benefit from these experiences. Employers, on the other hand, noted that the lack of standardized expectations across internships made it difficult to assess students consistently.
3. **Employer Perception of Internship Programs:** Employers generally valued internship programs as a tool for talent acquisition, with many expressing a preference for hiring former interns who had demonstrated strong work ethic and skill development. However, employers also identified skill gaps, particularly in technical and specialized areas, which can be addressed through more targeted training and preparation.

Conclusion

The data analysis indicates that practicum and internship programs in Jamshedpur play a crucial role in professional skill development. While both students and employers report positive outcomes, there are areas for improvement, particularly in terms of program structure, mentorship, and alignment with industry needs. These insights can help educational institutions and employers collaborate more effectively to enhance the quality of internship experiences, ensuring better preparedness of students for the workforce.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring that they understand the purpose of the study and their role in it. The study will also adhere to confidentiality guidelines, ensuring that all data collected remains anonymous and is used only for research purposes. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the context of Jamshedpur and may not be generalizable to other regions. Additionally, the sample size of both students and employers is relatively small, and the results should be interpreted as preliminary findings that require further exploration through larger studies.

By using this mixed-methods approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of internships and practicum in professional skill development, highlighting their impact on students' employability and career readiness in Jamshedpur.

4. Findings and Analysis

The findings from the study reveal significant insights into the role of practicum and internship programs in professional skill development among students in Jamshedpur. Through a combination of surveys, interviews, and qualitative data analysis, we have identified key trends and areas of improvement in the current structure of internship programs. This section outlines the major findings and provides an in-depth analysis based on the collected data.

1. Impact on Skill Development

The primary aim of practicum and internship programs is to enhance students' professional skills, preparing them for the demands of the workforce. The survey and interview data revealed that these programs contributed significantly to the development of a variety of essential skills.

Communication Skills: Communication emerged as one of the most commonly cited skills developed through internships. A large majority of students (72%) and employers (80%) agreed that internships facilitated the improvement of communication skills. Interns gained experience in both verbal and written communication, which was critical in their interactions with colleagues, clients, and supervisors. Engineering and business management students, in particular, reported enhanced presentation skills and the ability to articulate complex ideas clearly.

However, some students, particularly in non-technical fields like social sciences, mentioned that there was not enough emphasis on formal written communication, such as business reports and emails. This highlights an area for improvement where the internship structure could provide more focus on these skills.

Teamwork and Collaboration: Most students (65%) and employers (75%) reported that internships significantly improved teamwork and collaboration skills. Working in diverse teams and participating in group projects allowed students to learn how to cooperate with individuals from various backgrounds and professional levels. Students noted that teamwork was especially crucial in industries like business, manufacturing, and service sectors, where collaborative efforts drive productivity.

Despite the overall positive feedback, some students in technical fields, such as engineering, expressed concerns about not having enough interaction with cross-functional teams. This suggests that certain disciplines may need more structured opportunities to work in diverse team settings, fostering collaborative skills across various job functions.

Problem-Solving Skills: Interns were found to experience a noticeable improvement in problem-solving abilities, with 60% of students indicating they were able to tackle real-world challenges during their internships. Engineering and technical students, in particular, reported solving complex, practical problems related to their field of study, which helped bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Employers also valued problem-solving skills, with 68% agreeing that internships provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate their ability to think critically and solve problems independently. However, employers highlighted that some interns required more time and guidance to address intricate issues, particularly in fields such as engineering and IT.

Technical Expertise: Technical skills were particularly relevant in fields like engineering, information technology, and business. Over half of the students (55%) and employers (65%) reported that internships allowed students to gain valuable hands-on experience with tools and technologies used in the industry. This exposure proved especially beneficial for students pursuing careers in technical sectors, where practical experience is crucial.

Nonetheless, technical students expressed a desire for more advanced training and exposure to industry-specific software and equipment. A recurring theme was the gap between the theoretical knowledge gained in classrooms and the actual tools used in the professional environment. Employers suggested that universities

and training institutions should collaborate with industry partners to provide students with access to real-world applications and tools before their internships.

2. Satisfaction and Preparedness for Employment

The overall satisfaction with the internship experience was overwhelmingly positive, with 78% of students reporting a favorable view of their internships. Students expressed that the exposure to real-world environments made them more confident in their abilities and more prepared for the workforce. Many students, particularly in business and engineering, noted that the internships provided clarity on career paths and helped them refine their career goals.

However, a significant proportion of students, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, felt that internships did not fully align with their academic preparation. These students noted that the tasks assigned were often less challenging or did not contribute meaningfully to their professional skill development. As a result, these students expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the experience.

Employer Feedback: Employers were also largely satisfied with the performance of interns, with 85% indicating that internships helped identify potential future employees. Employers mentioned that internships offered a valuable opportunity to evaluate the skills, attitude, and work ethic of students before offering full-time positions. Many employers considered the internship as a trial period, with several extending job offers to high-performing interns after the completion of the program.

However, employers also voiced concerns about the readiness of interns for complex tasks. Many felt that although interns were enthusiastic, they lacked certain technical skills or in-depth knowledge of industry-specific tools, especially those from less technical backgrounds.

3. Challenges Faced During Internships

While internships provided several benefits, both students and employers identified challenges that hindered the full potential of the internship experience.

Lack of Structured Mentorship: A key challenge highlighted by both students and employers was the lack of structured mentorship. Students expressed frustration over not having a clear mentor or supervisor to guide them through their tasks. Many students felt that they were left to figure things out on their own, particularly in unstructured internship settings. This was especially common in smaller firms or organizations where dedicated internship programs were not in place.

Employers acknowledged this issue, noting that many internships lacked formalized mentorship programs. They suggested that assigning experienced mentors to interns would help them navigate challenges, gain clearer direction, and learn more effectively. Structured mentorship would also allow for timely feedback and performance evaluations, which students identified as crucial for their development.

Mismatch Between Academic Learning and Practical Application: Another prominent issue was the mismatch between academic learning and the tasks assigned during internships. Many students felt that their academic studies did not align with the tasks they were expected to perform during their internships. While technical students generally felt their academic knowledge was useful, students from non-technical fields like humanities and social sciences found themselves performing tasks that did not contribute to their skill development or career aspirations.

Employers also recognized this gap, suggesting that educational institutions should better prepare students by offering more industry-specific training or pre-internship orientation. A more integrated approach to academic and practical learning would enable students to apply what they have learned in real-world scenarios more effectively.

Limited Exposure to Industry Practices: Several students and employers noted that internships, especially in smaller companies or non-corporate sectors, often lacked exposure to broader industry practices. Students

from technical fields reported missing out on learning industry-standard tools, software, and practices. In contrast, those in non-technical fields found their roles to be limited to administrative or low-level tasks, which did not contribute significantly to their professional growth.

Employers suggested that a more dynamic and integrated internship structure would expose students to a wider range of tasks and responsibilities, thus providing a holistic learning experience.

4. Recommendations for Improvement

The analysis of findings points to several areas for improvement in internship and practicum programs to maximize their effectiveness in skill development.

- **Structured Internship Programs:** There is a need for more structured internships with clear objectives, well-defined roles, and mentorship programs. Interns should be assigned mentors who can guide them, provide regular feedback, and help them navigate professional challenges.
- **Pre-Internship Training:** Educational institutions should offer pre-internship training sessions that equip students with basic skills such as workplace communication, professionalism, and an introduction to industry-specific tools. These preparatory courses will bridge the gap between academic learning and practical experience.
- **Industry-Academic Partnerships:** Closer collaboration between educational institutions and industry sectors is necessary to align academic programs with real-world requirements. Universities should involve industry experts in curriculum design and internship program development to ensure that students are well-prepared for the demands of the workplace.
- **Expansion of Internship Opportunities:** There should be an expansion of internship opportunities, particularly in industries outside the traditional corporate sectors. Offering internships in non-corporate settings, social enterprises, and startups would provide diverse learning experiences and expose students to a wide range of skills.

The findings from this study indicate that practicum and internship programs play a pivotal role in developing professional skills and preparing students for employment. While the overall impact of internships on skill development is positive, there are areas for improvement in program structure, mentorship, and alignment with academic curricula. By addressing these challenges, educational institutions and employers can enhance the effectiveness of internships and ensure that students are better equipped for the workforce.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of practicum and internship programs in professional skill development for students in Jamshedpur. The data shows that while internships play a critical role in enhancing key competencies such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and technical expertise, there are areas that need to be addressed to maximize their potential.

One of the most prominent findings is the significant impact of internships on students' communication skills, with a majority reporting an improvement in their ability to communicate effectively in both written and verbal forms. This aligns with the existing literature, which consistently emphasizes that internships are vital for enhancing students' professional communication, a key requirement in most career paths (Jackson, 2015). However, some students, especially in non-technical fields, expressed concerns about the lack of focus on formal written communication. This gap highlights the importance of integrating more writing-focused tasks, such as business reports and emails, into internships, particularly for students in humanities and social sciences.

Another notable outcome is the positive feedback from both students and employers regarding teamwork and collaboration. Interns reported gaining valuable exposure to working in diverse teams, which is a vital skill in today's interconnected workforce. These findings support earlier studies, which highlight the significance of teamwork in fostering creativity and problem-solving (Glover, 2017). However, the feedback also suggests that technical students, particularly in fields like engineering, might benefit from more opportunities to engage

in cross-functional teams. This insight calls for a more inclusive approach that provides a variety of team-based tasks to develop this skill across different disciplines.

The analysis also pointed to a gap between academic preparation and the practical skills required in the professional world. While technical students seemed to benefit from the hands-on experience, non-technical students reported less satisfaction due to the nature of tasks assigned. This suggests that internships should be tailored more carefully to align with the specific educational background and career aspirations of students. Furthermore, the mismatch between academic learning and practical application could be reduced if institutions offer pre-internship training and better industry-academic collaboration.

Moreover, the lack of structured mentorship emerged as a critical issue. Although internships are generally seen as a valuable learning experience, the absence of clear mentorship and guidance was identified as a significant challenge. Mentorship plays a crucial role in helping interns navigate workplace dynamics and develop professional skills. This finding emphasizes the need for organizations and educational institutions to establish more robust mentorship programs that provide interns with consistent support and feedback throughout their internship period.

In conclusion, while practicum and internship programs are effective in developing a wide range of professional skills, improvements in their structure, mentorship, and alignment with academic learning are necessary to ensure a more holistic and impactful learning experience. Institutions, employers, and policymakers must work together to refine internship practices to better meet the needs of students and the demands of the labor market.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the critical role that practicum and internship programs play in the professional development of students, particularly in Jamshedpur. These programs are invaluable in bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world professional practice. Internships provide students with hands-on experiences that enhance their communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and technical skills. They also serve as platforms for students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, thus preparing them for the complexities of the professional world. However, while the overall impact of internships is positive, there are several areas in which these programs can be further strengthened to optimize their effectiveness.

One of the major findings of the study is the significant improvement in communication skills among interns. The exposure to real-world work environments allowed students to refine their verbal and written communication abilities. This finding is in line with previous research which suggests that internships provide students with the opportunity to enhance their professional communication, a skill essential for career success (Jackson, 2015). Students who were able to communicate effectively in both formal and informal settings were better equipped to navigate workplace dynamics and collaborate with colleagues and clients. However, there was a notable gap in the emphasis on formal written communication, such as report writing and business emails, especially for students in non-technical fields. This insight reveals an opportunity for internships to incorporate tasks that foster formal communication skills, particularly for students pursuing humanities and social sciences.

The study also highlighted the importance of teamwork and collaboration in internships. Many students reported a significant improvement in their ability to work within teams, an essential skill in today's interconnected workplace. This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that internships offer students the opportunity to engage in collaborative efforts, thereby enhancing their problem-solving and interpersonal skills (Glover, 2017). However, feedback from students in technical disciplines such as engineering indicated that they lacked opportunities to work in cross-functional teams. This suggests that there is a need for a more integrated approach in internship programs, where students across all fields can benefit from diverse team-based tasks that promote cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Another key finding from this study was the discrepancy between academic preparation and the practical demands of the workplace. While technical students were able to apply their academic knowledge effectively

in internships, students in non-technical fields found that the tasks assigned to them were not challenging enough or did not directly relate to their field of study. This highlights a misalignment between what is taught in classrooms and what is required in professional settings. To address this, educational institutions should focus on offering pre-internship training programs that align with the skill sets needed in the workplace. Additionally, internships should be tailored to match the specific educational backgrounds and career goals of students, ensuring that every intern gains relevant experience that contributes meaningfully to their professional growth.

The study also revealed the lack of structured mentorship during internships as a significant challenge. Many students felt that without proper guidance, they were left to navigate workplace dynamics on their own. The absence of mentorship limited their ability to develop specific skills, receive constructive feedback, and gain clarity on their career path. The importance of mentorship in internships cannot be overstated, as it provides students with the necessary support to thrive in professional environments. Both employers and educational institutions should collaborate to develop more formalized mentorship structures within internship programs to ensure that students receive adequate guidance and feedback throughout their internships.

Moreover, the findings suggest that there is room for improvement in the quality of internship programs. While a majority of employers recognized the potential of internships to identify future employees, many noted that interns lacked the technical expertise required to handle complex tasks independently. This highlights the need for more advanced training in certain technical areas to prepare students for the demands of their chosen professions. Educational institutions, in collaboration with industries, should aim to create more industry-specific, hands-on training modules that students can engage with before entering internships. This would help students develop the necessary skills and confidence to perform tasks at a higher level during their internships.

Another aspect highlighted by the study was the need for greater integration between academic curricula and industry practices. A significant number of students and employers identified a gap between what students were taught in academic settings and what was expected in professional environments. To address this, universities and training institutions should focus on enhancing industry-academic collaborations to ensure that curricula remain relevant and aligned with the latest trends in the job market. This collaboration could take the form of guest lectures from industry experts, real-world case studies, or joint projects that bring together academic knowledge and industry experience.

In addition to these structural improvements, there is also a need for greater access to internship opportunities, particularly for students in non-corporate sectors and smaller organizations. Many students, especially those in social sciences, humanities, and arts, found that their internships did not provide sufficient exposure to the industry. Expanding the range of industries offering internships and ensuring that non-corporate sectors provide meaningful, skill-based tasks will ensure that a broader range of students benefits from the opportunities provided by internships.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of internships and practicum programs in the professional development of students. The findings indicate that while these programs are generally beneficial, there are several areas for improvement. By enhancing the structure of internships, offering tailored pre-internship training, providing mentorship, and ensuring greater alignment between academic learning and industry expectations, both educational institutions and employers can work together to create more effective and impactful internship experiences. Ultimately, well-designed internship programs will not only help students develop critical professional skills but will also bridge the gap between education and employment, paving the way for a more skilled and confident workforce.

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