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## Students' Insights and Experiences of On-the-Job-Training in the Workplace

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### *Abstract*

This study looked into the students' on-the-job training insights and experiences in the workplace. It attempted to identify the learning skills that the students gained in the workplace and determined how the workplace helped in developing the students' learning skills. The study also determined the most important learning skill needed to be developed by the OJTs as identified by the agencies and to design a program for internship based on the recommendations from the agencies. This qualitative research utilized data from the students' narrative reports and journals every second semesters from 2007-2009. An interview was conducted with the head of office to verify and confirm the students' reports. There were a total of 43 OJT students in 2007, 136 OJTs in 2008 and 122 OJTs in 2009. These OJTs were assigned to 10 agencies in Malaybalay City and the 13 municipalities of the province of Bukidnon.

The findings revealed that the students have gained learnings from their on-the-job-training which are categorized into (1) affective skills, (2) cognitive skills, and (3) psychomotor skills. This study showed that the workplace has helped developed the students' skills through the programs and activities provided for them. Communication skills (Cognitive Skills) are found to be very important in the workplace. A crash course on ICT, Personality Development, Individual and Group Management and Community Organization were identified as activities/action plan for the improvement of the OJT program.

*Keywords:* On-the-job-training, insights and experiences, workplace, learning skills, internships

### *Introduction*

Internships are on-the-job work or research experiences that provide hands-on learning opportunities for students in which they apply knowledge in real workplace settings. Internship experience is a key component in the preparation of college students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. It is a highly effective means of developing competent job skills. It is where students are provided opportunities to develop

and utilize skills learned throughout their academic curriculum such as communication, interpersonal, analytical and research skills; thus, students have the opportunity to apply classroom learning in a workplace environment. Internships are engaged learning in places where students get hands-on training with professionals in their field of interest.

Internship can be counted as a valuable experience if one gains insights and learns how to articulate the skills that should be developed. Participating in the everyday activities of a profession provides insights that students may not gain in the classroom setting. For example, the students may have the opportunity to provide assistance to individuals in crisis and even assist in the organization of the out-of-school-youth. These experiences widen the students' academic learning, enhance professional skills and prepare them when they enter the job market. Further, it paves the way for future employment opportunities.

In the workplace, employers place great emphasis on the employees' skills. In the workplace today, competition among budding professionals is very stiff, hence the skills needed will be of great use. It is considered as one of the very important qualities of every employee because these skills contribute to excellent public service and provide satisfaction to clients and people in general.

According to a 2001 Internship Program Survey and 2008 Annual College Graduate Career Survey, 81 percent of employers believe that new hires who have held relevant internships are better prepared than those without similar experiences. Fifty one (51) percent of employers also cite internships as a very effective hiring resource with conversions to full-time hires ranging from 10 percent to 100 percent.

Bukidnon State University specifically the Social Sciences Department of the College of Arts and Sciences provides for its graduating students the venue for learning that utilizes resources outside the classroom known as the On-the-Job-Training. This program is designed with clear educational objectives and on-site work which is accompanied with supplemental readings and writing assignments appropriate to college-level coursework.

The On-the-Job-Training (OJT) is open to all graduating Sociology and Social Sciences major students. This is when the students have completed and passed all the subjects offered under a specific degree course. Every course provides internship for college credit which is offered within the second semester in the fourth academic year.

The On-the-Job-Training which is popularly referred to as practicum provides students with an opportunity to apply classroom learning in a workplace environment. This is when students have completed and passed all the subjects offered under a specific degree course. The students are then given an opportunity to bring and apply classroom learning to new methods and theories current in the field.

In line with the preceding goals and objectives for the On-the-Job-Training Program of the Social Sciences Department, College of Arts and Sciences, we, as researchers, wanted to find if these goals and objectives were properly carried out and achieved. We wanted to assess the relevance of the OJT Program and find what particular areas need to be strengthened for the improvement of the program. This study also aimed to identify the most important learning skills of OJT students that need to be developed and improved. Knowing the areas that need to be strengthened and improved could be a basis for recommendation for a revised OJT Program to strengthen the said program. Thus, this study was undertaken.

### *Conceptual Framework*

This study is anchored on the philosophy and methodology of the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) in which educators purposefully engage learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify

values (Smith & Knapp, 2007). Experiential education can take many forms including internships, cooperative education, practicum, service learning, apprenticeships and other activities. All of these experiences can then be used to build a strong resume.

In most schools, experiential education takes the form of on-the-job-training. One of the goals of on-the-job training is to acquire additional and new skills and knowledge in the field where the students are deployed. Usually a professional trainer (or sometimes an experienced employee) serves as the course instructor and employs the principles of learning (participation, repetition, relevance, transference and feedback) often supported by formal classroom training (Smith & Knapp, 2007).

OJT involves the acquisition of specific skills and employment competencies through exposure in an actual work setting to the processes, work tasks, tools and methods of a specific job or group of jobs (On-the-Job-Training, n.d.). The OJT students apply and test the abstract theoretical material they grapple with in the classroom to real life experience in order to learn what works in some settings and not in others. Students are expected to gain insights in their field of work.

It is a known fact that effective learning is not only theoretical but actual. Learning is effective when put to use. In the case of the OJT students, this is best measured in their ability to effectively perform their assigned tasks in the real world of the workplace. Studies proved that effective learning, especially in organizations where training is to be converted into organizational results- should arguably cover all the levels of each of the domains that are relevant to the situation and the learner. These domains as classified by Bloom in 1956, include *Cognitive domain* which is knowledge or *mind* based, *Affective domain* which is based upon behavioral aspects and may be

labelled as beliefs and *Psychomotor domain* which is skill based.

The *cognitive domain* includes content knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts and concepts that develop intellectual abilities and skills. The *affective domain* includes feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes. The *psychomotor domain* includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill areas. Development of these skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, procedures, or techniques in execution. The learner should benefit from *development and intellect (Cognitive Domain)*; *attitudes and beliefs (Affective Domain)*; and the *ability to put physical and bodily skills into effect- to act (Psychomotor Domain)* (Educational domains, n.d.).

On-the-job training is one way to take advantage of enhancing skills and knowledge for a current position or a promotional opportunity. OJT is formal learning while working and involves actual instruction in how to do a job either through demonstration of a specific job or through job rotation where a trainee moves through a series of positions to gain a wide breadth of experience and skills (On-the-Job-Training, n.d.). In the macro perspective, students are able to see themselves in relation to the organization of the agency where they are a part of. As part of the total system, they should be able to contribute to the mission-vision of the agency. This could then be used as a measure on how effective and relevant the OJT is for the students.

### *Objectives of the Study*

The purpose of this paper was to look into the students' insights and experiences of their on-the-job-training. At the more specific level, it aimed to:

1. Identify the learning skills that the students gained in relation to the work that they are engaged in;
2. Determine how the workplace helped develop the students' learning skills;
3. Determine the most important learning skill needed to be developed by the OJTs in the workplace as identified by the agencies; and
4. Propose a program for internship based on the recommendations from the different agencies.

of 43 OJT students in 2007, 136 OJTs in 2008 and 122 OJTs in 2009. These OJTs were assigned to the different agencies both in Malaybalay City and in the Province of Bukidnon. There were 13 municipalities and 10 agencies in Malaybalay City where these OJT students were deployed and those who were deployed in the municipalities were residents of the said municipality. The agencies include: (1) Municipal Social Welfare and Development (MSWD); (2) City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR); (3) Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC); (4) Sangguniang Panlalawigan; (5) Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); (6) Community Environment and Natural Resources (CENRO); (7) Provincial Environment and Natural Resources (PENRO); (8) Provincial Social Welfare and

### *Methodology*

This qualitative research involved the graduating students of the College of Arts and Sciences who are major in Sociology and Social Science in the second semester of the school years 2007-2009. There were a total

Table 1

*Number of On-the-Job-Training Students for the Second Semesters of 2007-2009 by Municipality*

Municipality	Number of OJT students in 2007	Number of OJT students in 2008	Number of OJT students in 2009
Lantapan		3	2
Don Carlos		1	2
Pangantucan		1	1
Cabanglasan			1
Valencia City		8	6
Damulog			1
Kitaotao		2	1
Kadingilan			1
Manolo Fortich			1
Sumilao			1
Maramag		2	4
Kibawe			1
Quezon		6	4
TOTAL		23	26

Development (PSWD); (9) Parole and Probation; and (10) National Commission on Indigenous People (NCIP).

The respondents of this study also included the head of office or agency where the students were assigned or deployed. The heads carry the title either as unit or department head, all were females and in their early fifties. The respondents of this study are shown in Table 1 below. It is revealed that there were no OJT students deployed in the municipalities during the second semester of 2007. This is because all the OJT students have subjects other than OJT, hence they were deployed in the different agencies in the City of Malaybalay. There was a total of 23 OJT students in 2008 and 26 OJT students in 2009 in the different municipalities of Bukidnon.

The Social Sciences Department requested the different municipalities for the approval of

the OJT students' training through the office of the municipal mayor. After which, an assistance from the respective offices in terms of the number of OJT students to be deployed was provided. Hence, the OJT students were assigned to different offices in the different municipalities. Preferences, however, were on units and agencies where students are given opportunities for fieldwork and community exposure. As shown in Table 2 below, OJT students were deployed in 10 agencies in Malaybalay City during the second semesters of 2007-2009. Most of these OJT students deployed in these agencies have subjects other than their OJT or practicum. This is one of the reasons why they were not allowed to have their training outside Malaybalay City so as not to disrupt their attendance in their academic classes/subjects.

Table 2

*Number of On-the-Job-Training Students for the Second Semesters of 2007-2009 by Agency*

Agency	Number of OJT students in 2007	Number of OJT students in 2008	Number of OJT students in 2009
DARAB	4	7	6
DILG		4	4
CSWD		25	12
RED CROSS	10	15	15
NCIP	12	12	12
PAROLE	4	6	8
DAR	3	4	4
PROVINCIAL CAPITOL		40	35
BSU	10		
TOTAL	43	113	96

This study utilized data from the students' narrative reports and journals every second semester from 2007-2009. The students' narrative report is one of the college's requirements as they complete the training. The detailed narrative report of the students include a logbook on their daily routine in the office, the office activities (including seminars and programs) they were involved in, their achievements and learning experiences. Primary records of the agencies in the different municipalities were also utilized. The records include the OJT students' evaluation on their performance in the workplace which includes their working attitude.

An interview was also conducted to the head of office to verify and confirm the students' reports using prompts for in-depth insights. Some of the questions asked during the interview were: a) What is the program of activities for OJT that this office provides? b) What particular skill/s of the OJT student that is/are considered important in this office? c) What are the common problems that this office encountered concerning the trainee? and d) What suggestions can this office provide for the improvement of the OJT program?

### *Results and Discussions*

The data gathered from the journals and narrative reports of OJT students as to the learning skills that they have developed were categorized according to: *Affective Skills*, *Cognitive Skills* and *Psychomotor Skills*. The reports were analyzed based on the skills/qualities developed by the OJTs while in the workplace. The skills were categorized according to the most important learning gained as expressed by the OJT students. It also included the programs and activities for the OJT and the proposed program for internship based on the recommendations from the agencies.

### *Affective Skills Students Gained in the Workplace*

The reports made by the students revealed the importance of OJT in the improvement of skills needed in the workplace. The results showed that the students gained learning that developed their *affective skills*. In Bloom's taxonomy, it includes the manner in which a person deals with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations, and attitudes. The students have learned the value of cooperation and teamwork, patience, hard work and dedication to their work. This has been expressed by them saying "*I learned the essence of cooperation and teamwork*", "*I have learned how to manage many things and be much responsible in all that I do*", "*Practicum experience helped me grow and mature as a responsible person*", and "*I learned how to be aware of the community and the people around me*". With these realizations, it is believed that through the on-the-job-training, the students become aware of the problems and have developed concern towards the community. The students had the opportunity to visit some far-flung barangays and assisted in the evaluation and conducted activities such as feeding malnourished preschoolers. The OJT students were thus exposed to the harsh realities of life.

The OJT students have also assisted some social workers in the distribution of relief goods to indigent families. Through this, the OJT students were confronted with the reality of life in terms of the barangay's poor nutrition. They have developed responsible behavior seeing other people in other communities with such misfortune. Their learning in school were made meaningful through their experiences in the field. There was a total of 252 OJTs from 2007-2009 and at least 9.5% had expressed similar learning, "*I have learned that the barangay*

faces many problems and tries to solve the problems of the people". These OJTs were deployed/assigned to different barangays in Malaybalay City. Their exposure to the community made them aware of the problems concerning the youth which helped them developed their sense of maturity and responsibility. The OJT students have become aware of the existing facts on the problems of the community where normally it is discussed only within the confines of the classroom.

Some of the learnings were also gained as they deal with different people both in the workplace and the people who are considered as their walk-in clients. They claimed that they have learned how to adjust to high ranking officials, saying that, "*I have learned how to adjust and to deal with my bosses*". It is also in this internship that the students establish better relationship and show courtesy and respect towards their co-workers. As stated by some of the OJT students, "*The way I was treated by my boss and other employees in the unit where I was assigned made me feel that I am a part of the agency and not just an OJT*". These skills are considered as very important in the office which is also communicated in one of the agencies, "*establishing rapport and partnership, and enhancing interaction is necessary.*"

The students also had a first-hand experience in the conduct of "intake" interview during their community service and profiling. Through this activity, the OJT students developed their *affective skills* as they deal with the different people in the community stating, "*I learned how to deal with people, I know how to respect people around me even in the community*". Further, they have developed self-confidence saying, "*We have learned a lot. We developed our self-confidence through talking to people and mingling with them*". Most of the OJT

students' experiences in the field reinforced the knowledge that they have gained in college.

The routinary functions such as receiving calls and receiving walk-in clients have taught the OJT students the value of patience and understanding the needs of the clients. For them, it may be a routinary function. However, it has taught them the value of hard work and dedication. These students expressed such values when they reported that "*I learned how to manage things and be much responsible in all that I do*". It is also revealed that most of the agencies appreciated and admired the OJT students' punctual report in the office and some continued to work even after completing the required number of hours for the training. However, when the agencies were asked about common problems that they have encountered with the OJT students, it was suggested that honesty in "*timing in and out*" should be practiced.

### *Cognitive Skills Students Gained in the Workplace*

It is also evident that the students have developed their *cognitive skills*. Bloom's cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities.

The OJT students' communication skills were enhanced through interacting with their walk-in clientele. Many of them said, "*I learned how to communicate with different people like asking them on their needs and I always listen when she/he talks about their problems.*" The students have conducted intake assessment, prepared case summary facilitated and followed-up releases of assistance to individuals. The skills identified by a certain agency that are most needed in

the office include “*identifying, prioritizing, analyzing and interpreting data*”. Some of the students were tapped to help facilitate seminars on drugs and its ill-effects. All these activities contributed to the improvement of the communication skills of the students.

Fieldworks, attendance to seminars and leadership training conducted by Department of Social Work and Development (DILG) and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) have given the students knowledge and much awareness on real problems of the different people on poverty, child-rearing practices and many others. Through the actual observation and hands-on learning, the students have enhanced their knowledge on these problems saying that “*We learned important information about health that is very useful and can be disseminated into our own community and in other communities*”.

Their experiences in the fieldwork helped develop their *cognitive skill*. An OJT student said, “*my work in the barangay was so important because I realized about the mistakes I committed while working and I tried to minimize them and I did get my lesson and learn from it*”. The OJT students’ ability to distinguish what is right or wrong involves development of intellectual skills. In the same comment the students showed signs of interest to improve and follow instruction. Recording and inventory of properties and reporting case summaries to the agency gave the students’ opportunity to further hone their *cognitive skills*. In the same comment these students showed signs of interest that is revealed in their statement which says, “*I served my superiors with enthusiasm and in return they appreciated my accomplishments and corrected my inaccuracies which made me strive to do better as I continue to learn while serving the office*”.

### *Psychomotor Skills Students Gained in the Workplace*

The OJT students use frequently the office computers. In some instances where the staff of the agencies were not very comfortable with the use of computer, the OJT students were requested to encode the important reports and other office data. However, despite the advancement of technology, the students found themselves encoding documents where the use of typewriter was preferable. It is also revealed that students were not quite familiar with the use of typewriter and it was only through the training that they had on the actual use of the machine as stated in their journal that, “*I learned how to use the typewriter faster*”, and “*learning mastery in using typewriter*”.

OJT students thus, were able to improve and add new skills in the *psychomotor aspect* of learning. The psychomotor domain based on Bloom’s taxonomy includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill. Development of these skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, procedures, or techniques in execution.

There were at least 8% of the OJT students who claimed that they have improved their computer skill saying, “*I have learned more and gained knowledge on how to operate the fax machine*”, “*I learned to improve my skill in encoding using Microsoft Word, Excel and Power Point*”. They have been exposed to the use of computers in the office because they were asked to encode and receive messages through the fax machines. They have displayed good attitude towards work by performing certain tasks, following instructions and practicing them. The knowledge on the use of computer machines and the like is limited in school, however, they have enhanced their skill through the actual use of computers in the workplace.

### *Programs and Activities that Helped Develop the Students' Learning Skills*

The agencies have provided the OJT students opportunities to gain and learn from their training. These activities have provided the OJT students the opportunity to enhance their skills. These include (1) *Community fieldwork*; (2) *Assist the agency in the conduct of seminars in the barangay*; (3) *Assist in the program that promotes health awareness among poverty-stricken barangays*; (4) *Assist in the program that prevents drug addiction in selected barangays*; and (5) *Assist in the program for women and child abuse*. Through this, the OJT students have deepened their knowledge and understanding on critical issues concerning the members of the community in some barangays.

More often, these OJT students were requested to do the encoding of data, make a summary report on their community activities in the barangay, some of the OJT students were asked to construct a resolution under the supervision of their head, while others were given the opportunity to host the program of the unit/office.

### *Most Important Skill Needed to be Developed by the OJT as Identified by the Agencies*

According to the agencies, the most important skill that needs to be developed by the OJT students is *cognitive skill*. The cognitive skill that the agencies found the OJT students to be wanting include *interviewing and listening, identifying, prioritizing, analyzing and interpreting of data*.

To enhance their interaction and communication ability is important in dealing with people in the community and workplace. This is found to be very important because the

students are required to assist the agency in the monthly activities intended for the clients for their treatment plans (for those assigned to the City Health Office). The OJT students are also expected to retain instructions in office-related tasks and the willingness to learn is also deemed necessary. In one instance as the OJT student relates, she was made to type and retype the address on three envelopes because it was typed with spelling errors and improper address. According to her, that was the only time she was aware that there are rules to be followed even in writing the name of a person in the envelope.

### *Program for Internship Based on the Recommendations from the Different Agencies*

The table below shows the proposed OJT Program based on the recommendations of the agencies that were made for the improvement of the program. The recommendations were all based from the observations of the different agencies and offices of the on-the-job-trainees. These were mentioned and raised during the conduct of the actual interview on October 2010. It is with the help of the agencies to make significant contributions for the improvement of the OJT program since these agencies also see the importance of on-the-job-trainees in their respective offices.

The increase number of hours of training from 300 hours to 460 hours as revealed in the table was suggested by the agencies so that the OJT students will have a maximum output in terms of the learning skills. It has been a practice for the OJT students to be deployed on the third or last week of November. As observed by the offices and agencies, it has been found that there was not much work given to these OJT students except preparation for Christmas activities, thus, to increase the number of hours is necessary.

Some agencies and offices have also requested to limit the number of OJT students to be deployed. Based on the curriculum of the Sociology and Social Science, OJT is offered only to fourth year students in their second semester. This would mean that there would be a big number of OJT students to be deployed. Based on the observation and experience of the agencies and offices, there should only be an adequate number of OJT students so that the actual learning will be

properly monitored. To resolve such concern, it is recommended that OJT should be offered during summer, first and second semesters on the fourth year.

A crash course on the use of computer particularly on Microsoft Office Excel is also deemed necessary. Although most of the students claimed that they have enhanced their skills in the use of computer, some offices require their trainees to improve their knowledge using Microsoft Office Excel. Thus,

**Table 3**  
*Proposed OJT Program Based on the Recommendations of the Agencies*

Time frame	Activities	Persons/institution involved
Summer, 1 <sup>st</sup> Semester, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	OJT is offered to graduating students  Increase number of hours from 300 hrs.-460 hrs.	OJT Advisers, Chairperson, Dean, Different Agencies
Summer (80 hrs)	Crash course on ICT specifically on word processing and spread sheet (EXCEL) application	ICT Trainers/BSU
Summer (80 hrs)	Crash course on Personality Development (Interpersonal and group communication, human relations and developing coping mechanism)	Language and Letters Department and Social Sciences Department Faculty/BSU
Summer (80 hrs)	Crash course on individual and group management and community organization	Social Sciences Department Faculty/BSU
8 hours ( every summer/Semester)	Orientation Program (Prior to the assigning of the OJT to the different agencies and municipalities)	OJT Advisers, Chairperson, Dean

it is suggested that OJT students should undergo crash course with the aid of ICT trainers or instructors who are experts in Microsoft Office Excel programming.

Crash course on Personality Development, Individual and Group Management, and Community, and Community Organization should also be conducted. It has been mentioned based on the interview that, “*there should be a seminar on personality development and how students must handle pressures*”. It can be inferred that there may be some OJT students who were observed to have a poor interpersonal relationship. In the workplace, maintaining a good relationship is very important, students are expected to socialize and interact with one another. These crash courses should be spearheaded by the faculty of the Social Sciences Department.

Normally, the OJT students undergo an orientation before they are deployed. The orientation includes topics such as Office Etiquette, Time Management, Personality and Success, Human Relations and Career, Sexual Harassment, and many others. It is recommended that an orientation should be continued and should be considered as a requirement before any OJT student will go to his/her assigned workplace.

The table also shows that close monitoring is most advisable where the OJT students should be visited by their respective OJT advisers at least twice a month. This will ensure the students’ performance is effective because they are not only left to the agency/office’s responsibility but is also the school’s responsibility to make sure that their OJT students are performing well.

### Conclusions

On-the-job-training is found to be very relevant in the development of the affective, cognitive and psychomotor skills of the

graduating students that could be a plus factor in seeking future employment.

Assigning the OJT students to units of agencies where they are provided enough opportunities that would enable them to do their tasks in line with their field of specialization is helpful and effective way of developing learning skills.

The supervisors of the OJT students observed that the students have difficulty in the office skills specifically oral and written communication and soft skills.

### Recommendations

1. On-the-job-training must be further strengthened because it is most helpful for the development of graduating students’ learning skills as they prepare themselves for employment.
2. The OJT students must be assigned to an agency where they are expected to gain and learn important skills.
3. The OJT students must work on their oral and written skills (*Cognitive domain*), thus it is recommended to have a crash course or a seminar-training on oral and written communication and soft skills.
4. The proposed OJT program be considered by the college administration for implementation.

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