

CULTURAL BARRIERS FACED BY CITHM STUDENTS OF THE LYCEUM OF THE PHILIPPINES UNIVERSITY– LAGUNA DURING THEIR U.S. INTERNSHIP

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Abstract

Most programs in the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management include curriculum and internship that help the students to be competitive enough in global world employment. Internship, with an emphasis on the on-the-job training, serves as a critical process that helps the students gain an invaluable real-life experience and achieve a better understanding of their chosen profession. This study aimed to determine the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students of the Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna during their U.S. internship. Furthermore, it focused on the effects of cultural barriers encountered and the students' coping mechanisms. The researchers used a descriptive method and a self-made questionnaire to gather the information needed in the study including the demographic profile in terms of: gender, age, state of internship, length of internship, specialization, and nature of work, to know the cultural barriers faced by the students and their effects, and how the students coped up with them. It involved thirty-three (33) respondents from the whole population of the CITHM students who had internship in the U.S. Percentage and weighted mean were used to present the result gathered. The study concluded that the internship in the U.S. gave significant hands-on experience for CITHM students. The researchers recommended the CITHM department to be aware of the cultural barriers that the students might experience during their U.S. Internship to help address the concern.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the competition in the global economy continues to increase. A person must be more qualified not just with the person next to them but more than the countless people all around the world, who look for a job the same as them. In the past, most universities have been slow to react to the effects of globalization and to integrate international education and internship as a critical part of their expectations for undergraduate learning.

In the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management of Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna, most programs are four-year degree programs that cover the procedures of improving the various aspects of tourism and hospitality operations. The curricula with the internship programs provided help the students to be ready for the said field and demand a more competency-based education and training; hence, the students should be well prepared in order for them to be competitive enough in the opportunities to be given by the global world employment.

Many consider internship as an opportunity to integrate career-related involvement into an education by participating in planned and managed work. Internship works in a short-term position with an emphasis on the on-the-job training, usually for a fixed period of time. According to Bakar (2011), internship program is one of the methods which will expose students to a chance to gain a deeper understanding of the knowledge that they have learned in the classrooms through actual work experience in the industry. It is a requirement for the said valuable experience markedly increases the chances for a student to find an employment after graduation. It helps people gain a better understanding of their likes, dislikes, and wants in the future.

In line with the research of Vance (2011), he cited that international internship is frequently used and a highly recommended strategy for individuals in developing their international careers. According to Bird (2011), internship serves as a critical process through which students can gain an invaluable real-life experience, achieve a better understanding of the profession, link theory and practices, and apply skills to real-life problems to produce sound solutions.

One aspect of human being that is mostly affected by others is the culture. Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and arts. Thus, it can be seen as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group. Having an internship abroad will influence a student by the attitudes, customs and practices of the people around within the country one is going to. When a student finally encounters the beliefs and resulting actions of another culture, there may be a possible clash.

Being immersed in another culture can give a student learnings that will add value to one's personality and overall skills. It also offers unique opportunity experience to adapt to foreign communication and culture setting. Making the obligation to move and work in another country can make a great deal of anxiety for most, particularly for the novices. Fear of the unknown is what makes them wonder on how they will be able to cope with and adapt in another country, and move in places thousands of miles away from their friends and families.

Given the advent of international internship, the researchers aim to identify the different cultural barriers faced by the local students during their international internship, to gauge the effect of these cultural barriers to them, and to know how they will be able to cope with such barriers.

Objectives of the study

The study aimed to determine the demographic profile of the respondents, such as name, age, gender, state of internship, length of internship, specialization, and nature of work; more specifically, to identify the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students during their internship in the U.S.; to determine the effects of the cultural barriers to the CITHM students, and to know how the CITHM students coped with the cultural barriers during their U.S. internship; moreover, to determine

whether there is a significant relationship between the demographic profile and the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students during their US internship; and lastly, to propose revisions on the curriculum based on the results gathered.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, descriptive research was used. Descriptive research was used to gather the views about the cultural barriers faced by CITHM students of the Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna during their U.S. internship through the use of a questionnaire that is answerable by “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Survey questionnaires were distributed to the respondents.

The respondents of the study were the CITHM students in Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna, who participated in the U.S. internship in the year 2015. With the total number of 33 students, wherein accurate data were collected from the Palaestra Consortio, the respondents willingly participated to answer the questionnaire that the researchers made regarding this study.

The researchers made a questionnaire as the main instrument in gathering the data. The questionnaire consisted of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from the said respondents. Respondents simply answered the questions by putting a check mark on the boxes provided. The questionnaire was constructed after extensive readings and after consultations with the thesis adviser for review and content validation.

Percentage was used to present the description of the subjects regarding demographic profile. Weighted Mean was used to present the result gathered for the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students, the effects of the cultural barriers and how the students cope up with the cultural barriers during their US internship. To interpret the results of the survey, the researchers used the Likert Scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Majority, 20 or 61 percent of the respondents are 20 to 21 years old. Ten or 30 percent are 18 to 19 years old, two or six percent are 22 to 23 years old, and one or three percent is 24 to 25 years old.

Most of the respondents were female with a scale of 30 or 91 percent. Hence, only three or nine percent of the respondents were male.

Sixteen or 49 percent of the respondents took their internship in Virginia, followed by four or 12 percent of the respondents who had theirs in Montana, while the other four or 12 percent had theirs in South Carolina. The other three or nine percent of the respondents took their internship in Vermont. Lastly, two or percent of the respondents had theirs in Maine, while the other two or three percent in Connecticut, and another two or three percent in Colorado.

The whole population of the respondents which is 33 has the scale of 100 percent, who have completed their internship the U.S. in three to four months.

Seventeen or 52 percent of the respondents were taking up ITTM, followed by eight or 24 percent of the respondents who were taking up CLOCA, while six or 18 percent of the respondents were taking up CLOHS. Lastly, HRA program had a scale of one or three percent of the respondents, while the other one or three percent were taking up CAKO.

Fifteen or 46 percent of the respondents were in the field of tourist attraction. Twelve or 36 percent of the respondents were participants in the field of accommodation, while six or 18 percent of the respondents were prepared in the field of food and beverages, and none or zero percent of the respondents were in the field of transportation.

Age, gender, state of internship, length of internship, and specialization have no significant relationship with the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students during their U.S. internship.

There is no significant relationship between the age and the cultural barriers. According to Baraya et al. (2011), as a learner matures, learning styles that engage students to acquire skills and knowledge are desired. However, learning maturity does not always correspond to the age of the learner. Maturity relates to a learner's level of experience and motivation to acquire new knowledge.

There is also no significant relationship between the gender and the cultural barriers. This is because possible cultural barriers that may be faced depend on how the person interacts and mingle with others and not because of the gender he or she has.

The state of internship and specialization shows no significant relationship with the cultural barriers, as well as with the length of internship, since this may help them not to face any long-term barrier that may occur during their internship since they will stay at a specific location only for a short period of time.

When it comes to the nature of work, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' nature of work and the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students during their U.S. internship. This means that the respondents' nature of work contributes to the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students during their U.S. internship. However, other variables such as age, gender, state of internship, length of internship, and specialization do not contribute to the cultural barriers faced by the CITHM students during their U.S. internship.

The concept of diversity includes acceptance and respect. Each individual is unique and can recognize individual differences. It is also the exploration of the differences in a safe, positive, and fostering environment.

For the cultural barriers faced by the respondents, with a mean of 2.21, the respondents agreed that they believed they have different religious beliefs/sects. According to Schreiner (2015), different countries, with their own local, regional or national context have different approaches to religious education.

Followed by the mean of 2.42, again, the respondents agreed that they longed for the traditional Filipino food since they are not that used to the taste of

the food there. But then, they disagreed that they experienced hardships while joining some of their traditional practices, like festivals (2.91); difficulties in communicating with others because of language differences (3.21); and most especially they disagreed that they experienced discrimination based on their race.

With that, with the composite mean of 2.85, the result was “Disagree.” This is a good thing since the result gathered provides that the respondents did not face any major cultural barriers that might have a negative impact on them during the internship in U.S. The result also shows that the CITHM students were able to stand still while having their internship abroad since no particular situation affected them.

With the mean of 1.09, the respondents rated Social Effect with “Strongly Agree” as they became more willing to work with or live with other people, even those with other nationalities.

According to Bakar (2011), internship is a work-related professional learning experience that provides students with the actual working environment by placing them to work in organizations outside the university. In relation, the students who took up their internship abroad were placed in an environment wherein they could actually experience what an actual environment for them is. More nationalities are also working in the same location, and so, the students were able to interact with them. It helped the students, especially those who had their internship abroad, to be ready enough in facing their own real world soon.

Followed by Item 2, which has a mean of 1.36, wherein the respondents strongly agreed that in Mental Effect, they gained higher level of intelligence towards the culture of others; a mean of 1.42 for the Physical Effect, wherein it improved the way they present their self and the way they look; and 1.45 for Spiritual effect, because the respondents became open and willing to accept other people religious beliefs. The respondents agreed that in Emotional Effect, they tried to imbibe the virtues of the nationalities that they have worked/lived with, given a mean of 1.55.

In all, the composite mean result is 1.38 which is “Strongly Agree.” This shows that the effects of the cultural barriers to them are looked in the positive side. It did not harm nor affect them, but more importantly, the barriers helped them to be better.

There are some coping mechanisms that the respondents used during their internship in U.S. to be able to cope with such situations. The respondents rated Spiritual effect with “Strongly Agree”; they respected other cultures’ religious beliefs (1.18). We all have different religious beliefs. What we need to do is just simply respect each other sects for conflict not to occur. According to Schreiner (2015), different countries, with their own local, regional or national context have different approaches to religious education.

In many cultures, religion dominates life in a way that is often difficult to understand. It is also given that it is now a significant cultural influence in modern day’s behavior. As cited by Cornish and Wade (2010), spirituality and religion have been increasingly viewed as important components of people’s lives that can be

successfully attended to in mental health treatment. Shariff and Norenzayan (2011) stated the conditions under which religion plays the role as a facilitator of cooperative behavior among large groups of anonymous individuals.

Followed by Mental Effect, they accepted the opinion of others for them to be able to understand and learn (1.24); and Social Effect, wherein they tried to get along with others and understand their culture to blend in (1.33). While they simply agreed on Emotional Effect, wherein they observed and learned from other culture's moral behavior for them to apply it in their personal perspective (1.52); and Physical Effect, they tried to adopt the way other cultures look for them to fit in.

For the result of composite mean, it shows that it has a mean of 1.42. The respondents strongly agreed that the following items helped them to cope with the experienced cultural barriers that may surely affect them during their internship in the U.S.

Action plan

KEY AREAS	STRATEGIES
Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna has partnerships with other universities, community, business, and other organizations that support and encourage diversity.	Lyceum of the Philippines University–Laguna will provide ongoing training, education, and mentoring for students that will take an international internship to gain skills about diversity. Develop diversity meetings/interactive events that engage on a regular basis for students.
Cultural diversity in the academe that provides more and widely advanced knowledge and skills in descriptive and holistic view but lack of upright industry skills.	Creating a multicultural awareness and diversity training that is available in formal coursework across the curriculum and in informal workshops.

CONCLUSIONS

Majority of the respondents are 20 to 22 years old. The greater maturity, the greater is the chance in setting opportunity in U.S. internship. Most of the respondents were female, but these did not affect their performance. The state of internship is not a big deal on having cultural barriers. The students completed their training with the length of 300 to 400 hours or 1.5 to 2 months. They said they have experienced cultural barriers because the more they get involved in the environment, the more they will know what their cultures are. Being a CITHM student, one can encounter different types of training in the U.S. It could be transportation, accommodation, food and beverages, or tourist attraction, but it can also be the edge of being involved in this industry because the student is open to know more and gain more knowledge that he or she can use in the near future.

The existence of a cultural barrier is difficult to face in the U.S. Many of the students experienced and encountered different cultural barriers while they are having an internship abroad. Facing cultural barriers may have a discrimination based from races, difficulties in communicating with others because of language and pronunciation differences, different perspectives in religion, taste of food, and hardships while joining some of their practices. Based on the results, the students faced few cultural barriers during their internship in the U.S.

The effects of cultural barriers on the students can improve the way how they present themselves, how they imbibe the virtues of the nationalities that they have worked/lived with, how they become more open and willing to accept other people's religious beliefs, how they gain higher level of intelligence toward the culture of others, and became more willing to work with other people even with other personalities. These results are positively affecting the students who encountered cultural barriers.

Cultural barriers are experienced mostly by students in U.S. internship. They tried to adopt the different cultures. They also learned moral behaviors of others, respected other culture beliefs, accepted the opinions of others to be able to understand and gain more knowledge. Lastly, they tried to get along with others and understand their culture. The results show that they agree on having different coping mechanisms for them not to experience cultural barriers.

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