Internship in vocational education and training: stakeholders' perceptions of its organisation

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Polytechnic education in Ghana is an offshoot of technical and vocational education and training, which makes internship a sine qua non for its students. The implementation of internships in the departments of hotel catering and institutional management in Ghanaian polytechnics is examined in this study. The perceptions of the stakeholders suggest weak links between the educational institution and the hospitality industry leading to ineffective implementation, which culminates in a myriad of challenges faced by interns. Finally, suggestions from stakeholders for improvement to subsequent internships included preparedness to collaborate, internship time to be extended, and industry's and teachers' active participation in internship.

Keywords: technical and vocational education and training; internship; stakeholders' perceptions; hospitality industry

Introduction

Internship as a form of workplace learning is a vital component of many professional programmes in vocational education (Levesque et al. 2000). It can assist students to bridge the gap between the academic learning process and the practical reality (Lam and Ching 2006) by exposing them to real-life experience. The meaning of an internship and its operational definition can be different around the globe. As various types of training in the work environment have developed differently, the terminology in the field varies as well (Busby and Gibson 2010). Definition of internship is dependent on the cohort of students (interns) participating, its duration, type of employment, its ultimate objectives as well as the context within which it is organised (Crnković-Pozaić 2006). For example in the UK, the most frequently used term for the period of internship is 'sandwich placement' (Busby 2003), which can be defined as 'a temporary period of student employment as part of a student's course which is effectively planned and managed and takes in the negotiated requisites of the student, employer and HEI [higher education institution]' (Keynote Project 2002, 5). Internships in the UK are effectively regulated by the code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Quality Assurance Agency 2007). They are generally supported by the ASET (2009) guidelines regarding the duties of the academic institution, student and industry before, during and after internships. UK HEIs vary dramatically in their use of internships.

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The differences can be broken down between the pre-1992 universities, which offer a very traditional style of research-based higher education with limited opportunities for internships, and the post-1992 universities, which were originally polytechnics and offer internships in many of their courses (ASET 2009).

In Ghana, the context of this study, the term 'industrial attachment' is often used to mean internship, to be considered an educational strategy where learning in the classroom alternates with learning in the workplace and allows for the competencies of students to be developed and nurtured by the mentors before students graduate (Effah 2005). It offers interns in almost all fields an opportunity to gain professional experience in their area. It is predominantly unpaid, unregulated and domestically oriented (Effah 2005). Working in a professional environment, interns develop a sense of responsibility as they interact with a wide range of age groups, meet potential role models and get feedback through performance assessment. However, in Ghana this form of linkage between theory and practice is still minimal and there are no established criteria for screening prospective interns (Effah 2005). Usually internship is organised by educational institutions and students are supposed to comply with the start date and duration.

This study is aimed at identifying by means of a needs analysis the effective key components of internship as perceived by the relevant stakeholders from polytechnic students to hospitality industry personnel. The needs identified are assumed to be the building blocks of a curriculum for internship.

Conceptual framework

In general, internship programmes are valuable ways to acquire broad competencies where practical knowledge obtained supports and complements the theoretical studies learned in the educational institutions (Mihail 2006). This study is aimed at identifying the effective key components of internship as perceived by the relevant stakeholders from polytechnic students to hospitality industry personnel. Research identified relevant conditions that contribute to the benefits derived from internships and, when well managed, could create an authentic learning environment in the workplace for students. These conditions are: *collaboration* between school and industry (Divine et al. 2007), *placement* procedures (University of Pittsburgh 2009), *duration* and time (Divine et al. 2007; Mihail 2006) and *assessment* procedures (Walo 2001) which will culminate in the manner in which implementation is carried out (Lam and Ching 2006; McManus and Feinstein 2008). In this study we try to inventory the perceptions of stakeholders concerning to what extent these conditions are present in the internship practice in Ghana and how they can be improved.

Research has shown that effective collaboration between educational institutions and industry promotes successful internship (Divine et al. 2007) which emphasises interns' placement as being relevant to their academic programme (Christou 1999). This is an effective way of interns transferring newly acquired competencies to a real-life setting and becoming more appreciative of their future career (Christou 1999). There is no literature or empirical evidence on a specific duration for internship. However, duration for internships depends on objectives (Busby and Gibson 2010), and nature of and arrangements for the industrial training (Divine et al. 2007). Thus for every internship, there is an effective time period. Studies indicate that assessment by both industry and academic institution provides an effective monitoring of interns (Lam and Ching 2006; Walo 2001; Waryszak 2000).

School–industry *collaboration* has far-reaching effects. The impact of collaboration can generate new knowledge which can contribute to an industry's improved performance (Pertuzé et al. 2010) during internship. Internship can promote learning alliances between industry and academia which can facilitate both flexibility and speeded-up innovation. The greater ability to identify and bring in external ideas and technologies enhances an industry's flexibility to respond to changing customer needs. Close collaboration gives rise to joint interest, ambition and purpose towards a shared vision (Kliknaite 2009) in any well-organised internship. Internship is often viewed as being mutually beneficial to the intern, the educational institution and the industry (Borkowski 2008; Divine et al. 2007). The mutual benefits, nevertheless, cannot be guaranteed because its success or failure depends largely on the way in which the various stakeholders collaborate in its implementation process. Thus effective collaboration between the institution and industry regarding student internship is a necessary condition to ensure success. For the institution, internship can strengthen links with industry and enable a better understanding of what business and industry expect from students, while for industry internships can be an avenue for producing qualified candidates for that industry (Johnston 2008). The success of internship depends on collaboration between representatives of the industry, the school and the student (Clark 2003; Schappert 2005). These three parties need to agree on the conditions of the internship, the responsibilities of each party, and the reporting requirements. The reverse is true when the links between school and industry are episodic; this may lead to students performing menial tasks (Johnston 2008), resulting in interns becoming quickly demoralised and learning nothing about applying their expertise to a business environment. Therefore school, industry and student need to specify their distinctive roles during the student internship (Rothman 2007). It stands to reason that formalisation of links between industry and school will foster collaboration. Christou (1999) indicates interns in the hospitality industry acquired skills which enabled them to be quite confident in their first employment after graduation although they encountered a few hitches. Collaboration therefore plays a vital role in student learning in industry. Thus, a well-organised internship will help students to transit smoothly from school to industry (Carlin and Manson 2007).

Internship *placements* for interns can be categorised into two: managed, and unmanaged or unstructured (Divine et al. 2007; Effah 2005), haphazardly planned (McManus and Feinstein 2008). The former is where students have no freedom of choice but the school arranges the placement by assigning students to different industries (Christou 1999). In the latter case, students are allowed on their own to look for companies for themselves. Divine et al. (2007) argue that the unmanaged option has the advantage of students having firsthand knowledge about the labour market which becomes a source of information for future employment. They were however quick to state that a student who fails in the attempt may not get the chance of having internship experience. The ease with which students get access to industries to enrol will lessen delays and frustrations they need to go through when searching for vacancies in industries for an internship. Moreover, the relevance of the industry to students' major area of study will go a long way to advancing their training (Walo 2001). From the curriculum perspective, the managed option is preferable because the school makes sure students are placed in industries relevant to their field of study (League of Oregon Cities 2009) and ensures coherence between what is taught in school and outside school (Walo 2001).

The *duration* as well as the *time* of the year in which internships are organised vary across countries. A six-month period for internship is quite usual with academic institutions around the globe (Lam and Xiao 2000; Mihail 2006; Walo 2001). Generally, internship programmes in the USA provide internship periods lasting from 2 to 18 months in relevant study programmes (Internship USA 2008) whilst in most European countries programmes last from 3 to 12 months (Aston University Careers and Employability Centre 2009). In both geographical blocs placements are available all year round which is similar to the situation in Singapore (Republic Polytechnic 2008). Internship periods can be classified as full time and part time (Divine et al. 2007). The full-time option is where students do not engage in class work (lectures) and internship concurrently, unlike the part-time option. The full-time option appears to be better than the part-time option because the latter is restrictive. In the full-time option, students have the freedom to have their internship in a wider geographical area because they break away from campus work, hence there is no need to shuttle between classes and the internship (Divine et al. 2007).

To elicit what students have learned during their internship clear *assessment* requirements and procedures need to be in place. Students are assessed by supervisors both from the academic institution and the industry (Republic Polytechnic 2008; Walo 2001). Sometimes students have options to choose the type of assessments from the curriculum to carry out during the internship (Clark 2003). However, research on internship programmes has shown significant gaps in the expectations of students' job performance among students, school and industry (Lam and Ching 2006; Waryszak 2000). Such chasms could be narrowed or bridged if there are shared curriculum materials, including a description of assessment criteria and procedures.

Conditions for successful implementation of internship are characterised by strong *collaboration* between school and industry, a reasonable *duration* of the internship, and clear *placement* and *assessment* procedures. A successful implementation of internship may be threatened by challenges students face during their internship: non-payment of interns, lack of communication between employees and interns, an uncomfortable and hectic work environment, negative attitude on the part of supervisors, lack of responsibility and limited opportunities (Collins 2001). Such challenges were most probable in haphazardly planned internships (McManus and Feinstein 2008).

VET and higher education in Ghana

Polytechnics are part of the higher education system in Ghana and are primarily responsible for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at the tertiary level. Polytechnic education in Ghana started as second-cycle institutions in the 1960s under the Ghana Education Service (Agodzo 2007; Nsiah-Gyabaah 2005). But in 1993 their status was changed from second cycle to tertiary cycle through the promulgation of the Polytechnic Law in 1992 (PNDC Law 321). It should be noted that the change in status did not change the facilities nor were the staff upgraded commensurately with the new status. Currently, Ghana has 10 polytechnics offering different academic programmes of both second and tertiary courses. All are state owned and are vocational in orientation, offering applied pro-

grammes in the sciences, technology and business management leading to the award of the Higher National Diploma (HND).

The polytechnic system in Ghana has not received the requisite attention it deserves to enable the sector to contribute effectively to national human development, which is so vital for establishing a productive and skilled workforce for Ghana's development (OXIA Ghana Limited 2004). The TVET curriculum is institution based, supply driven and regarded as being out of date and not responsive to the demands of the labour market (Akyeampong 2010). The mismatch between institutional training and the needs of industry has serious implications for Ghana's economy and the employability of graduates from the TVET institutions especially the polytechnics. Research from Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong (2002) revealed that industries were enthusiastic about contributing to student internship. In spite of the enthusiasm demonstrated by Ghanaian industries toward polytechnic internships, the collaboration between both entities lacks joint interest, ambition and vision (Kliknaite 2009) to drive forward effective industrial training of students. Internships in the polytechnics are restrictive in the sense of placements and time, and beset with challenges because they are haphazardly planned (McManus and Feinstein 2008).

Context of the study

Polytechnics have been the responsive institution of choice by the government to meet the middle-level manpower needs of commerce and industry, and public demand for access to tertiary education has increased in response to this need. To better prepare students for the labour market in Ghana, a six-month mandatory internship forms an integral part of a three-year polytechnic education (Effah 2005). Industries are under no obligation to draw up a training programme for potential interns. Moreover, there is no policy on industries being compelled to give feedback on interns to polytechnics which runs counter to the requirements of structured internships (McManus and Feinstein 2008). Internship activities in the polytechnics come under the auspices of the Industrial Liaison Unit (ILU) in each polytechnic. The nature of the internship is described as unstructured by Effah (2005).

The Department of Hotel Catering and Institutional Management (HCIM) is responsible for training students to assume managerial or supervisory roles in the hospitality industry in Ghana and beyond. Four of these departments in Ho, Kumasi, Takoradi and Tamale Polytechnics form part of the study. The HCIM programme is a three-year tertiary programme which commenced in 1993. Entrants into the programme are predominantly those who have successfully completed the Home Economics programme at senior secondary school. Successful students graduate with the award of the HND Certificate in Hospitality Management.

Teaching and learning are supposed to be a blend of theoretical and practical lessons. In order to fulfil this mandate, internship programmes are organised for students where they apply to industries of their choice. Internship programmes are carried out in two sessions throughout the three-year programme. Each session spans a period of three months at the end of every academic year. So, in all students are supposed to spend at least six months throughout the entire study period of three years as interns. These internship periods are supposed to be supervised by both polytechnic educators and industry representatives. In order to facilitate the intern-

ship programmes, each polytechnic has the ILU, whose primary responsibility is to ensure that students have places to carry out their internships.

In this study, teachers, alumni and students of the HCIM department, management representatives of the polytechnics and hospitality industry personnel were questioned about their perceptions of student internship. Stakeholders' views on collaboration, placement (access and relevance to the workplace), duration of internship, assessment procedures, the overall student internship implementation, the challenges students face during internship and suggestions for improvement in subsequent internships were elicited from respondents. The main research question is: What are the perceptions and suggestions among the various key stakeholders of HCIM education regarding student internships? The study is guided by the following sub-questions:

(1) To what extent do the perceptions of stakeholders differ regarding collaboration, placement, duration and assessment of internship for HCIM students?
(2) What are the implementation challenges student internship faces?
(3) What are the suggestions to improve internship for HCIM students?

Method

Respondents

The departments of HCIM in four polytechnics were involved in the study. From each polytechnic second and third year HND students were randomly selected to participate: Ho, $N = 40$; Kumasi, $N = 30$; Takoradi, $N = 60$ and Tamale, $N = 30$. Respondents include 40 alumni (selected using the snowball approach) comprising 10 each from the respective departments. In addition, 20 hospitality industry representatives (five per polytechnic) were purposively selected based on where students carry out their internships and on accessibility. Deans of the Schools of Applied Science ($N = 4$), members of the academic board ($N = 4$) and industrial liaison officers ($N = 4$) (hereafter referred to as management representatives) from the polytechnics were also part of the study. Finally, all the teachers ($N = 45$: Ho, $N = 12$; Kumasi, $N = 10$; Takoradi, $N = 15$; Tamale, $N = 8$) in the respective HCIM departments constituted part of the study. Teachers, students and management representatives were all given questionnaires and the response rates were 73%, 100% and 92% respectively. Alumni and hospitality industry representatives were each given a questionnaire. The response rate in each case was 100%.

Instrumentation

Sets of questionnaires were administered to all the respondents. Question items were predominantly given using a 5-point Likert scale using responses graded 5: *strongly agree*, 4: *agree*, 3: *neutral*, 2: *disagree* and 1: *strongly disagree* to determine the level of agreement to statements. A few questions were open-ended and respondents were asked to respond to them appropriately. The open-ended and close-ended questions aimed at gathering information about the four effective conditions: collaboration, placements, duration, and assessment, plus the characteristics of implementation challenges and suggestions for improvement of internships (see Table 1).

Table 1.   Overview of the constructs and example questions/statements.

Construct/concept	Question/statement
Collaboration	The hospitality industry collaborates with teachers of the Department of HCIM in the training of the students; There should be closer collaboration between all key stakeholders of HCIM education in the polytechnics.
Placement	HCIM students find placement in organisations which are related to their course areas of study during internship; Where did you do your first internship?
Duration	For how long was the internship period?
Assessment	Students are made to write reports on their experience on internship; Employers are generally satisfied with the job performance of HCIM students on internship.
Implementation	Internship programme for HCIM students is well implemented.
Challenges	What challenges did you face during internship?
Suggestions	The hospitality industry should redouble their support in the training of HCIM students; The time for the internship programme for HCIM students should be extended.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent do the perceptions of stakeholders differ regarding internship for HCIM students?

Perspectives of stakeholders: collaboration

The stakeholders' views on involvement in internship in the departments of HCIM are presented in Table 2. Regarding the links between hospitality industry representatives and teachers in the training of students, the means ranged from 2.72 to 3.64 (F = 2.007, p = 0.09, ns). Apparently stakeholders did not differ in their views concerning collaboration. The highest mean went to management representatives with a standard deviation of .81 and alumni had the lowest mean. The relatively low means perceived from students, alumni and teachers could imply weak links between the department and industry which might stem from roles of the stakeholders not clearly specified; a probable characteristic of haphazardly planned internships (McManus and Feinstein 2008). The response from industry is quite refreshing, which confirms the extent of preparedness on the part of Ghanaian industries towards student industrial training (Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong 2002). Formalisation of links between industry and polytechnic will foster joint interest and vision (Kliknaite 2009) that will create a congenial platform for ensuring that students are well trained.

Perspectives of stakeholders: placement

As seen in Table 2, stakeholders generally agreed with the statement that students largely found internships in industries which were related to their study programme; means ranged from 3.62 to 4.05 (F = 0.901, p = 0.46, ns). Industry representatives recorded the highest mean of 4.05, indicating that they agreed with the statement that students find placements in appropriate industries which relate to their study programme. In a related issue concerning where students did their previous year's internship, the majority of the students (about 78%) took up internships in the hospitality industry and about 20% found placements in health centres. It is important to note that

Table 2. Views of stakeholders on involvement of internship.

Statement	Students (n = 160)	Alumni (n = 40)	Teachers (n = 33)	Management representatives (n = 11)	Industry (n = 20)
The hospitality industry collaborates with teachers of the Department of HCIM in the training of the students.	3.02 (1.3)	2.72 (1.2)	2.85 (1.2)	3.64 (.81)	3.45 (1.1)
HCIM students find placements in organisations which are related to their course areas of study during internship.	3.73 (1.2)	3.62 (1.2)	3.97 (.85)	4.00 (.88)	4.05 (.89)
The time earmarked for the internship programme is sufficient for HCIM students to realise the goals and objectives in the national HCIM curriculum.	3.01 (1.3)	3.15 (1.2)	2.64 (1.3)	3.10 (1.3)	3.10 (1.1)
Students are made to write reports on their experience of internship.	4.49 (.87)	4.18 (1.0)	4.39 (.83)	4.09 (.94)	4.25 (.85)
Student internship reports form part of students' assessment.	4.01 (1.1)	4.12 (1.1)	4.06 (1.1)	3.82 (1.2)	–
Employers are generally satisfied with the job performance of HCIM students on internship.	–	3.85 (.92)	3.82 (.85)	–	3.40 (.94)

Note: Figures in parentheses are standard deviations; figures not in parentheses are means; *n* is sample size; rating scale: 1 *strongly disagree*; 2 *disagree*; 3 *neutral*; 4 *agree*; 5 *strongly agree* (applies to Tables 2, 3, 5 and 8).

interns practise in the appropriate industries which relate to their study programme. The interns' ability to blend theory with practice better prepares them for their careers. In spite of this result, it should be noted that there is still room for improvement. In some instances, students fail to proceed onto internship because of limited numbers of vacancies. Students were asked where they had their first internship. The responses were as follows: 61.3% (98) indicated hotels, guesthouses and restaurants whilst 16.9% (27) stated health centres and 1.3% other companies. However, 20.6% (33) did not participate in internship because of limited access to industries, which could characterise an unstructured internship (Effah 2005).

Perspectives of stakeholders: duration

Officially, it was expected that each student embarks on at least six months' internship throughout the three-year HCIM programme (two periods of three months), which is in accordance with other studies (Christou 1999; Lam and Xiao 2000). The majority of the students in both the first (47.2%) and second (50.7%) internship periods spent four weeks on internship. About 13% of the students in each period spent six weeks whereas 28.3% and 15.9% of the respondents spent eight weeks for the first and second periods of internship respectively. Some interns (6.3 to 8.4%) spent periods of between two and three weeks. Only 2.4% of the second-year students and 10.1% of the third-year students could satisfy the mandatory period of three months for the first and second periods of internship. If about 6% of the students on average could satisfy the mandatory period, then there is cause for concern. So, most students spent less time in internship than was planned in the curriculum. Bottlenecks associated with internship were the limited number of places for internship, students' lack of information regarding available places (in the absence of search engines and websites), and students' preparations toward internship which eat into the already relatively short summer break. Stakeholders did not differ in their perception of time spent on internship – 2.64 to 3.15 (F = 0.899, p = 0.47, ns), but the means were relatively low. Students were neutral regarding the time that was earmarked for the internship programme (mean = 3.01). Alumni were ranked the highest, slightly above students, with a mean of 3.15. Management and industry representatives had the same mean of 3.10. Teachers were least on the agreement scale with a mean of 2.64 (Table 2).

Perspectives of stakeholders: assessment

With respect to students writing reports on their experience while on internship, all the stakeholders unanimously agreed with the statement (Table 2). The means ranged from 4.09 to 4.49 (F = 1.489, p = 0.21, ns). Stakeholders were very certain about students writing reports on their industrial experience during internship (means ranging from 4.09 to 4.49 and standard deviations between .83 and 1.0). A follow-up statement was 'student internship reports form part of students' assessment'. In response to this statement, all stakeholders (does not apply to industry) responded in the affirmative with means between 3.82 and 4.12 (F = 0.252, p = 0.86, ns). The interns wrote reports which were assessed by teachers. So, regarding assessment, Ghana's practice is similar to practices elsewhere (Clark 2003; Walo 2001).

    The last statement on assessment looks at the views of alumni, teachers and industry on the extent of satisfaction concerning jobs performed by students when

on internship. Both alumni (mean = 3.85) and teachers (mean = 3.82) contended that employers were generally quite satisfied with the job performance of students. Industry representatives were the least ranked on satisfaction with students' job performance during internship with a mean of 3.40 ($F = 1.853$, $p = 0.16$, ns). The means suggest there were no significant differences among stakeholders. The means of alumni and teachers imply that they were quite confident in their students' ability to work to a satisfactory level in industry. A percentage rating of 55% of industry respondents in total agreeing to the statement is quite positive.

The hospitality industry (predominantly private sector owned) in Ghana was quite satisfied with HCIM students. However, the private sector employs a relatively low number (25%) of alumni whilst in the public sector, particularly in health and education, as much as about 67% are employed. The figures confirm the study by Boateng and Ofori-Sarpong (2002) that in Ghana graduates from tertiary institutions prefer to work in the public sector (job security is guaranteed and career progression is favourable) than in the private.

Table 3 summarises the perceptions of stakeholders regarding student internship.

In conclusion, the stakeholders' views on collaboration, placement, duration and assessment did not differ. However, the relatively low means (2.72 to 3.64) on the issue of collaboration suggest that linkages between the department and industry need to be strengthened. The duration for internship was too short; hardly any students fulfil the mandatory period earmarked for internship. The placement of students in industries which relate to their academic programme was encouraging. Assessment of students' industrial experience in the form of report writing was known to all stakeholders. They held the views that employers were quite satisfied with interns' job performance. It should however be noted that all views expressed suggest there is an opportunity for interns to improve on their competencies if the roles of stakeholders are clearly defined and delineated with appropriate policy directives that ensure all key stakeholders are committed to the empowering of interns with employable competencies.

Research Question 2. What are the implementation challenges student internship faces?

Stakeholders' views on implementation of an internship programme did not differ (Table 4). The mean values ranged from 3.00 to 3.55 with standard deviation between the magnitude of 1.2 and 1.4 ($F = 0.489$, $p = 0.69$, ns). It is interesting to

Table 3.   Summary of stakeholders' perceptions regarding internship.

Condition	Remarks
Collaboration	Industry–polytechnic (HCIM departments) collaboration needs to be strengthened.
Placement	Relevant to interns' academic programme but about 20% did not carry out internship.
Duration/ time	Relatively shorter than required; about 50% of students spent four weeks on placement; only 6% on average met target period.
Assessment	Stakeholders unanimously concurred that students wrote reports about their industrial experience; Reports were assessed by teachers; Job performance of students on internship was quite satisfactory.

Table 4.   Views of stakeholders on implementation of internship.

Statement	Students (*n* = 160)	Alumni (*n* = 40)	Teachers (*n* = 33)	Management representatives (*n* = 11)
Internship programme for HCIM students is well implemented.	3.09 (1.4)	3.00 (1.2)	3.06 (1.4)	3.55 (1.2)

Note: Figures in parentheses are standard deviations; figures not in parentheses are means; *n* is sample size.

note that only management representatives quite agreed (3.55) with the statement that the programme was well implemented, but the rest (does not apply to industry) remained neutral. The means of students in the four polytechnics ranged from 2.33 and 3.50 ($F = 5.263$, $p = 0.002$). Tukey's *post-hoc* test reveals that there was a significant difference between students of Kumasi and Takoradi ($p = 0.001$).

Table 5 shows the challenges that students face during internship. Challenges like unfriendly relationships between industrial staff and students and unwillingness of industrial staff to teach interns constitute 25% of the responses. Industry's failure to provide transport, and high transportation fares to and from industry and lack of accommodation for interns constitute 16%. Other challenges were no proper training during internship (15%) whilst 13% stated they were restricted to some departments/sections of industry and restricted to one activity (in particular, duties like slicing vegetables and washing dishes).

Unqualified industrial staff and lack of modern facilities, and no allowance given to students after internship, were each mentioned by 10% of students. Other equally important challenges that need to be addressed were limited time for internship, difficulty in obtaining placements and lack of monitoring by both academic staff and industrial staff. These challenges had percentage ratings of between 4% and 7%. These challenges are usually symptomatic of an unstructured internship.

Table 6 shows a summary of stakeholders' perceptions of a well-structured internship and challenges faced by students during internship.

To sum up, students faced a catalogue of challenges during internship. These challenges could be categorised as social, economic and technical, as well as lack of professional commitment.

Table 5.   Students' views on challenges faced during internship.

Response (*n* = 157)	Frequency	Percentage
Unfriendly relationship and unwillingness of industrial staff to teach students	69	25
Lack of transportation and accommodation	44	16
No proper training	42	15
Restricted to one department/section and one activity	37	13
Unqualified staff and lack of modern facilities	29	10
No allowance given to students	29	10
Limited time and difficulty getting placement	21	7
Academic staff and industry inability to monitor internship	10	4
Total	281	100

Note: Some respondents indicated more than one response; *n* is sample size.

Table 6.   Summary of implementation challenges.

Status/challenge	Remarks
Status of implementation	Stakeholders were quite hesitant about the implementation of internship; Perceptions on implementation did not differ generally.
Social	Uncooperative nature of industrial staff constitutes 25%.
Economic	Lack of transportation and accommodation (16%) and non-payment of allowance (10%) amount to 26%.
Technical	Limited time and placement constitute 7%.
Professional commitment	Lack of professional commitment on the part of industry and teachers totals (15+13+10+4) 42%.

Research Question 3. What are the suggestions to improve internship for HCIM students?

Stakeholders responded to statements regarding suggestions for improvement in the implementation of internships. The purpose of these statements was to determine how prepared stakeholders were regarding subsequent internships. The statements are given in Table 7.

Perspectives of stakeholders: support

All stakeholders unanimously supported the idea that industry should redouble their support in the training of students; means ranged from 3.73 to 4.46 with standard deviations within the magnitude of .73 and 1.1. An ANOVA test showed there were differences in views between the four stakeholders that suggest significance ($F = 2.978$, $p = 0.03$). The significant difference between students' and management representatives' views on industry redoubling their efforts in the training of students may be due to the fact that the former are directly affected by whatever goes on during internship and for that matter may show more interest in that regard than the latter, who are quite remote. There was also a significant difference between teachers ($F = 3.152$, $p = 0.040$). Tukey's *post-hoc* test reveals the difference between teachers in Kumasi and Tamale. Kumasi is situated in the southern part of Ghana which is well endowed with social infrastructure whereas Tamale to the north is generally less endowed, the implication being that the latter was keener to receive support from industry than the former. In related issues on what specific functions stakeholders would like to perform to improve teaching and learning, about 33.3% of the teachers indicated the need for stakeholders to organise internships for students and teachers. About 95% of industry representatives expressed the need for students to be provided with practical training in order to realise curricular objectives, whilst 60% indicated the promotion of the student internship programme.

Perspectives of stakeholders: time extension

Stakeholders saw the need for the time spent on internship to be extended. The means of 3.73 to 4.36 ($F = 1.914$, $p = 0.11$, ns) amply demonstrate the extent to which respondents agreed to the extension of time (Table 7). Means of 4.36 and 4.30 respectively for teachers and industry further suggest they were more optimistic about the extension of time than students, alumni and management representatives. The extension of time will be made possible if polytechnics restructure their

Table 7. Stakeholders' suggestions for improving the implementation of internship.

Statement	Students (*n* = 160)	Alumni (*n* = 40)	Teachers (*n* = 33)	Management representatives (*n* = 11)	Industry (*n* = 20)
Hospitality industry should redouble their support in the training of HCIM students.	4.46 (.92)	–	4.30 (.73)	3.73 (1.1)	4.10 (.91)
Time for internship programme for HCIM students should be extended.	3.82 (1.4)	3.88 (1.1)	4.36 (.82)	3.73 (.79)	4.30 (.66)
HCIM teachers should actively involve themselves in the student internship programme.	4.28 (.89)	–	4.33 (.78)	4.00 (1.2)	4.40 (.75)
There should be closer collaboration between all key stakeholders of HCIM education in the polytechnics.	4.39 (.80)	4.42 (.75)	4.70 (.47)	4.09 (1.2)	4.70 (.47)

Note: Figures in parentheses are standard deviations; figures not in parentheses are means; *n* is sample size.

academic semesters and adopt flexible internship times practised elsewhere (Republic Polytechnic 2008; University of Pittsburgh 2009).

However, there were significant differences in means between the alumni of Ho (3.20), Takoradi (3.40) and Kumasi (4.60) ($F = 5.123$, $p = 0.005$). The implication is that Ho and Takoradi, unlike Kumasi, did not see the extension of time as crucial. It could be deduced that the alumni of Ho and Takoradi had better planned and executed internships than those of Kumasi. Tukey's *post-hoc* test reveals that there were significant differences between the alumni of Ho and Kumasi ($p = 0.011$), and Kumasi and Takoradi ($p = 0.037$). It is crucial to note that the extension of time in itself is not the solution to students being equipped with attitudes, knowledge and skills, but the importance of what goes on during internship. One way of overcoming the problem of duration is to restructure the academic semesters (currently 16 weeks per semester) in order to create longer summer vacations for internship time, or to adopt practices in other countries where internships are available all year round (Republic Polytechnic 2008; University of Pittsburgh 2009).

Perspectives of stakeholders: teacher involvement

It goes without saying that the role of the teacher in the HCIM programme, like all other academic programmes, cannot be overemphasised. In response to the statement, 'teachers should actively involve themselves in the internship programme', stakeholders unanimously answered in the affirmative. The means ranged from 4.00 to 4.40 with standard deviations within the bounds of .75 and 1.2 ($F = 0.526$, $p = 0.67$, ns). If teachers have expressed the desire to actively participate in internship then the academic institutions should endeavour to mobilise adequate funds to meet the financial implications.

Perspectives of stakeholders: closer collaboration

Table 7 also addresses the need for closer collaboration among all key stakeholders of HCIM education. All stakeholders agreed without any reservations that there should be closer collaboration, attested by the means of 4.09 and 4.70 ($F = 2.248$, $p = 0.06$, ns). In related issues on what specific functions respondents would like key stakeholders to perform so as to improve teaching and learning, about 27.3% of the teachers stated that challenges facing the polytechnics could be overcome through effective collaborative efforts among stakeholders. Moreover, 20% indicated effective collaboration among stakeholders as the channel through which teaching and learning could be improved. About 45.5% of management representatives indicated that industry should create avenues for student internship and, moreover, employ students after graduation. About 18.1% suggested a well-structured internship programme and 27.3% suggested effective collaboration among stakeholders.

Suggestions from stakeholders regarding organisation of student internships have been summarised in Table 8.

In summary, stakeholders did not differ in their views regarding suggestions for improvement except in the area of support where the difference was significant between students' and management representatives' views. Stakeholders saw the need for internship activities to be reinvigorated so as to achieve the intended objectives in the curriculum. They did not differ in their views concerning extension of time, however teachers and industry were more optimistic. To industry, internship is

Table 8. Summary of suggestions for improving the implementation of internship.

Suggestion	Remarks
Industry support	Stakeholders were positive toward the hospitality industry redoubling support in the training of students; There was a significant difference in views expressed by management representatives and students.
Time extension	Stakeholders unanimously agreed to the extension of the internship period.
Teacher involvement	Stakeholders concurred that teachers should be actively involved in internship.
Closer collaboration	Stakeholders were of the opinion that there should be closer collaboration among them.

a means through which potential workers are subsequently employed. It is also a way of 'employing' cheap labour so extension of time for internship accrues to the benefit of industry. Alternatively, teachers feel more satisfied if their students fit into the labour market after graduation hence may call for more time for internship. Conversely, students who did not benefit from internship may disapprove of a time extension. All stakeholders suggested active teacher involvement in internship programmes as laudable.

Conclusion and discussion

This study aimed at getting a better understanding of stakeholders' perceptions and suggestions concerning student internship in the HCIM curriculum. Generally, stakeholders' perceptions on collaboration, placement, duration and assessment did not differ. Institutional collaboration between polytechnics and industry to foster student internship needed to be strengthened. HCIM students usually did their internship in industries relevant to their study programme and were assessed based on a report written about their experience in industry. Students faced social, economic and technical challenges and lack of professional commitment during internship. Despite these challenges, the views of alumni, teachers and industry did not differ regarding the satisfaction of employers regarding interns' job performance. Stakeholders did not differ in their views regarding suggestions for improvement except in the area of support where there was significant difference between students' and management representatives' views. Stakeholders perceived extension of time for internship as critical for interns' learning.

From the data gathered, it could be inferred that the relationship between teachers and industry was weak. With collaboration not formalised between them (Effah 2005), it is likely that both the polytechnics and industry did not understand their distinctive roles when it came to student internship. There is a real cause for concern if about 20% of students did not carry out internship because of a limited number of vacancies in industries for placement and if only 6%, on average, could satisfy the six-month mandatory period for internship. Stakeholders were unanimous on assessment of interns but if the relationship between the polytechnics and industry was episodic (Johnston 2008), then, the kind of assessment (Clark 2003; Walo 2001) could be questionable. Effective assessment should involve closer collaboration among teachers, industry and interns with clear-cut objectives spelt out which would improve the feedback system and thereby hone

the competencies of interns. By so doing, stakeholders would be much more satisfied with the job performance of interns. In the absence of collaborative curricular material jointly prepared by teachers and industry to help guide stakeholders, interns are bound to face a myriad of challenges which eventually result in stakeholders being less satisfied with job performance of interns (Collins 2001). It is however refreshing stakeholders' suggestions for improvement inspire confidence in future implementation of internship.

In order to articulate the proposition that internship is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders, the onus lies on stakeholders to collaborate effectively in ensuring that the proposition is materialised. Active teacher involvement in internship programmes is paramount. A policy directive specifying the functions of each stakeholder could guarantee an authentic learning environment for interns' training. In a follow-up study, teachers, industry and students will jointly prepare curricular material that may help streamline the implementation of internship with an aim to improve it. If stakeholders collaboratively prepare the material, it is believed they may consider the curriculum as their own product and not 'imposed' on them (Van den Akker 2003). A grassroots approach to curriculum design is likely to promote implementation because participants who craft the document may also implement and evaluate it. This will eventually lead to an effective curriculum for interns to acquire broad competencies where practical knowledge obtained in the hospitality industry supports and complements the theoretical studies learned in the educational institutions. The hope that Ghana will become the country of choice for tourists may be a reality if the human resources in the tourism and hospitality industry are given the needed impetus. In spite of the fact that this study has its practical limitations, and for that matter findings are tentative, it provides substantial baseline information for subsequent study geared toward managed internship (Divine et al. 2007).

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