



INTERNSHIP IN LOGISTICS SEEN FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Marta Kadłubek, Dariusz Krzywda, Joanna Krzywda

Czestochowa University of Technology
Faculty of Management

Abstract: Logistics is an area where practice is particularly important and appreciated. In the their studies, students shall, in accordance with the programme of study, carry out internships which are to give them appropriate practice and experience. The article is the first part of two parts of the study, which aims to identify how logistic students perceive student internships and apprenticeships in a broad sense as work in the company. In this section, an attempt will be made to answer the question how students perceive and evaluate student internships and what should change in the attitudes and relations of the three stakeholder groups involved in internships: students themselves, companies and universities. The materials for the research were provided by two surveys conducted among students of the logistics faculty of one of the Polish universities.

Keywords: student internships, practice in logistics, didactics in logistics

DOI: 10.17512/znpcz.2017.3.1.15

Introduction

Student practice is an integral, very important part of education. It is an essential element of student's vocational training for future job. It is the opportunity to gain personal experience and to develop practical skills based on theoretical knowledge (Pike, Kuh and Massa-McKinley 2008).

As a result, many students choose to continue their practice beyond the program of their studies, on their own, just to gain experience and additional skills that will result in getting interesting job in the future. Professional internship during the studies prove an individual's adulthood and ambition, who adopt quickly in the company, cooperate better in a group, has no problem with operating within the framework.

Unfortunately, it happens that students decide for the practice accidentally, or choose an employer who does not require much. Many of them do not consider the choice of an interesting company, do not want to spend time on researching the market (Kabus, Nowakowska-Grunt, Kościelniak 2017). They look for an employer who only issues a certificate of practice. This is one of the major mistakes students make, and employers point out that lack of business practice is one of the main problems that often disqualify a candidate for a job (Tłuczek 2012).

Aim of the study

The article is the first of two parts of the study which aims to identify how students of logistics perceive student internship and apprenticeship in terms of - broadly understood - work in a company. In this part, an attempt is made to address the question of how students perceive and evaluate student internships and what should change in the attitudes of and relations between the three stakeholder groups involved in internships: students themselves, companies and universities.

The logisticians entering the labor market from the students' perspective

According to the results of the research "Start on the labor market" (2016), the most important barrier to entry into the labor market, from the students perspective, is the lack of experience (74%), which can be understood as a shortage of widely understood practical skills. Important barriers include also too high employers' requirements (51%), too few internships and trainees (42%) and lack of knowledge about the labor market (38%).

More than half of students (57%) have already taken compulsory internships/practice, and 39% have participated in optional internships. The opportunity to take up internships at the university/faculty is quite often dependent on huge effort (39%), which indicate their poor promotion or insufficient acquaintance (19%) - only 15% of students admit that simply they are available. According to another group of students, internships are difficult to access (20%) or even inaccessible (6%).

Twice as many students (32%) perceive the appropriability of internship compared to the group of opposite opinion (15%), more than half of them evaluate practice ambivalently. This is related to the quality of traineeship (Cichoń 2013) rather than the negative assessment of this form of experience gaining. It can be hypothesized that the course of these traineeships is not satisfactory so they do not meet the objectives set.

Therefore the approach of the students is important - the correct course of study, the high level of activity during their studies, and the quick access to a career path. Fortunately, over 93 percent of the students who took part in the study conducted by the Praca.pl web portal believe that best start for the career is during the studies. Over 55% of respondents assume it should take place in the first or second year of studies ([http://www.praca.pl/...](http://www.praca.pl/), 2017).

Nearly 60 percent of the students' surveyed has recently completed traineeship. Most of them, as almost 38 percent, did not benefited much from them, but did not recognize that time as completely wasted. 14% of the respondents claim that upon this experience acquired they got a dream job and have learned a lot. Only 12 percent of respondents evaluated their practices as worthless. Every third of the respondents, through their practice, developed their competences and gained valuable experience. According to more than half of the respondents in the study conducted by Praca.pl web portal, the most important during the practice is gaining

experience and knowledge. Students also appreciate ambitious tasks and the opportunity to work with experienced experts, but do not count on getting to know new people and building a business network (<http://www.praca.pl/...>, 2017).

According to universities' graduates employed in logistics companies, the most important activity in preparing for finding a job was to practice in logistic companies during the holidays starting from their first year of studies. Often they have had their first experience in other industries. The certified knowledge of a foreign language was also significant. Apart from preparing an interesting resume, the most predominant action in the search was finding a large number of job offers or practices. They were looking for them by attending various types of job fairs, by reviewing the offers posted by the College Career Office and available on the website. The first work is usually a positive surprise, although it is not exactly the same as imagery about it. Young graduates often emphasize that flexibility and adaptability to new conditions and goals are important in logistics, even if they differ from previous expectations (Trochymiak 2012).

Accordingly when the first contact with the labour market occurs after graduation, it is definitely too late. Preparations to do the first job are best to start early, even while studies. This is getting more and more easy, especially since most large logistics companies offer summer practice programs and it is sufficient to discern and apply respectively to take part. Unfortunately, young people make use of this proposal rarely. Such an initiative requires to devote the part of a holiday for work and, as a rule, these practices are unpaid. Students often do not realize how much they lose by not taking advantage of such employer proposals. According to S. Gołuchowska from the Raben Group, usually young people would like to be well-perceived in the labour market, but take little active action to take care of it (Trochymiak 2012).

At the same time, only 13 percent of the students assess the labour market as open to the young people. As much as 36 percent of the respondents poorly evaluate the labour market. According to them, employers require a great deal of expertise and young people do not have a chance to work satisfactorily - according to the *Praca.pl* survey conducted among the students (<http://www.pracujwlogistyce.pl/...>, 2017).

Characteristics of the study sample and methodology

The study sample comprised the students of the last year of their degree course in Logistics. Their age average is between 22 and 26; thus they belong to the so-called Generation Z. It is a generation of people born after 1990, who enter the labour market with ambitions and aspirations, often perceived as excessive in the eyes of previous generations. They find it difficult to accept employment in less prominent and less paid jobs. Young people of Generation Z believe that having a university diploma secures a good job and therefore they often struggle when confronted with the reality of a highly competitive labour market. This results in denying the value of the university diploma and means that young people have to look for other solutions. Very often, graduates start their studies with dreams and ambitions, and eventually they land a full-time job in a place where they do not

really want to work. Many of them abandon their qualification to work elsewhere, and it is natural for them to change jobs (Mathur, Hameed, p. 63). It is common to have retraining and temporary work both at home and abroad. Employers value flexibility and adaptability. At the same time, Generation-Z graduates are highly computer literate and live with the Internet and in the Internet. They are not actually in demand on the labour market because due to their young age, lack of experience and impatience they are not considered as being attractive for the employer. The modern generation also has a communication problem and their interpersonal skills are at a low level. The reason for this is a lifestyle in which the virtual world plays an important role and new technologies limit interpersonal relationships (Skrzydłowska-Kalukin 2015). Generation Z are also competing for jobs. It is a generation of individualists who move and act alone on the labour market and are determined to pursue their own personal success.

However, Generation Z, modern and computer literate, has an enormous potential. A high level of computer skills and the use of modern, abstract technologies is an advantage in a number of workplaces and industries.

The material for the study was provided by two surveys conducted among the students of the Faculty of Logistics at one of the Polish universities. The first one is carried out every year as part of the faculty's system of improving the quality of education as a mandatory element of the procedure concerning student internships (Survey 1). This year, 120 students of the last (third) year of bachelor- and general engineering-degree courses, and extra-mural studies took part in this survey. However, this survey was treated as an auxiliary material. The second i.e. main survey was conducted specifically for the purposes of the present study and covered 64 students in the last - 2nd year of the second-cycle i.e. Master's degree course in *Logistics* (Survey 2). The survey comprised 18 questions. The authors deliberately chose not to determine correlations between variables such as gender, as the study sample does not seem sufficiently representative to allow conclusions to be drawn with regard to such correlations. Some of the questions formulated in the survey use the method of semantic differential and Likert's scale; however, several closed questions were formulated as well.

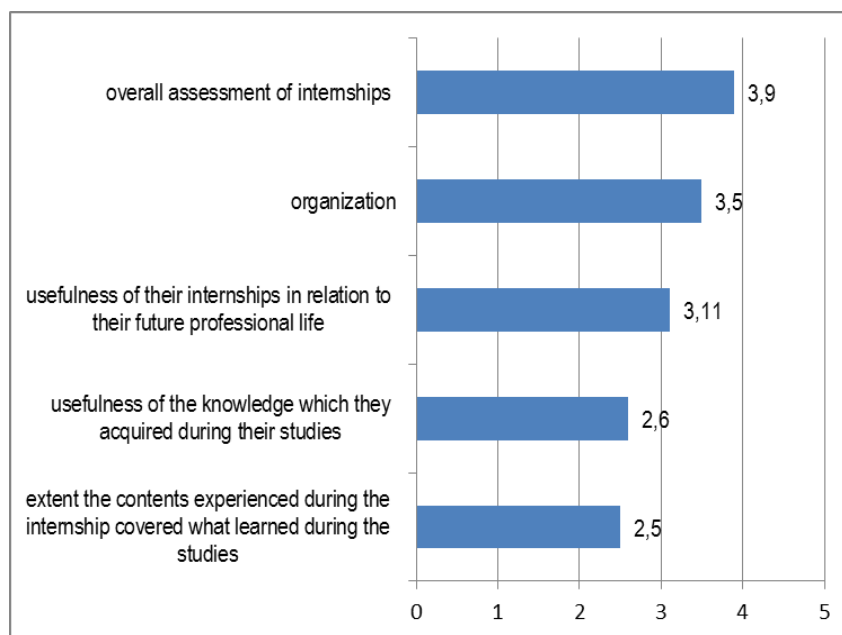
Analysis and results of the surveys and discussion

The first question asked in the survey was about having any hands-on work experience in a company, and here 12.5% (8 people) responded that they had not had any such experience. Of those who declared such experience, 53% received remuneration for the work which they did. Among the departments and positions named by the students as the places where they gained professional experience were mainly the sales and logistics departments, followed by departments of quality control and customer service, administration, production, production optimization and transport, and also positions of a freight forwarder, a warehouse worker, a consultant, a driver, and a road inspector. The job tenure in 31% of the respondents was one month. Longer internships - from 2 to 6 months - were selected by 21% of the respondents in total, and 28% of them have had hands-on

experience ranging from one to seven years. It is worth noting that 71% of all the respondents claim to be willing to work in logistics after their studies. Students find companies in which they do their internship either on their own or being recommended by family, friends or acquaintances. There was only one person out of 120 people questioned in Survey 1 who declared to have chosen a company upon their University's recommendation. In all cases, the type of the company's business activity was in line with their field of study. The same was also the case with Survey 2, which was carried out for the purposes of this study.

The aim of the first part of Survey 2 was to examine how students evaluate student internships. Since they are a compulsory element of the first-cycle studies, it was assumed in the Survey that all respondents had completed such internships. The few negative answers to the question about having had any hands-on experience need to be interpreted as misunderstanding of the essence of internship, especially that having or having had a part- or full-time job exempts students from doing internships, and it is therefore likely that students who have been in employment said that they were not in internship.

The way in which students perceive internships was examined in five areas, i.e. general evaluation of internships, their organization, usefulness for future professional life, usefulness of the knowledge gained during internships, and the overlap of the degree course content with internship content. The distribution of the



results is shown in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1. Evaluation of internships

Source: Authors' own research

First, the students were asked to give an overall evaluation of internships. The evaluation was done by marking it on a semantic scale (0 – I am not satisfied with the internship, 3 – I am moderately satisfied with the internship, 6 – I am very satisfied). The average overall assessment of internships was 3.9. The respondents also evaluated the usefulness of the knowledge which they acquired during their studies during their internships. This time, also on a semantic scale (0 – the knowledge was not useful, 3 - the knowledge was moderately useful, 6 – the knowledge was very useful) the students awarded an average score of 2.6 for the knowledge usefulness. In another question, the respondents were asked to assess the internships in terms of organization and were given the following scale: 0 – very weak organization, 3 – average organization, and 6 – very good organization. On average, the students rated this aspect at 3.5. According to a similar pattern, the students assessed the usefulness of their internships in relation to their future professional life by placing the answer on a scale of 0-6 (0 – not useful at all, 3 – moderately useful, 6 – extremely useful). The average evaluation for this particular aspect was 3.11. The last question was about the overlap between the content of the knowledge acquired during studies and the contents of internships. Again, on a semantic scale, the students were supposed to indicate to what extent the contents that they experienced during the internship covered what they had learned during their studies (0 – there was no overlapping content at all, 3 – there was a moderate overlap of contents, 6 – there was a full overlap of contents). On average, the students rated the extent of the overlap at 2.5.

On the basis of the students' evaluation of internships, it should be stated that in general students are satisfied with the internships, and they also think them to be fairly well organized. For a large group of students it was the first contact with an enterprise, and also with the organizational side of the enterprise; hence their high ratings. The overall satisfaction with internships results from the satisfaction coming from the learning process confronted with the practical problems and the fact that combining theory with practice convinces learners about the usefulness of knowledge, taking actions and their effectiveness, and that it is one of the fundamentals of the cognitive process. In individual interviews, the students often express general satisfaction with the internships and they emphasize that they are an important and appealing element of their education. It should also be stressed that the satisfaction with the internships and their good overall evaluation is clearly linked to their duration. In general, the longer students are in internships, the greater satisfaction they feel, which is evidently connected with the feeling of performing tasks which are perceived as necessary. This is also confirmed by the other surveys conducted as part of Survey 1. Every year, a survey in which students evaluate internships in their organizational, practical and theoretical terms with the highest rating (this year the rating in all three aspects was at 5.0) awarded to internships by the students who have often had longer internships i.e. apprenticeships in companies and thus have more hands-on experience.

At first glance, the evaluation of the knowledge gained during the studies and the overlap between the contents of the studies and the contents of the internships

may seem rather interesting. First of all, it might suggest that it is necessary to introduce more practical training in classes conducted during studies. On the other hand, a certain disappointment in these aspects may be due to poor choices made when choosing a company or position for the internship. This may also be due to the students' misunderstanding of the role of degree courses and universities and their own role in the preparations for entering the labour market. This attitude reveals a shift in the *self-direction vs. conformity* axes towards *conformity*, which means that the respondents are of the opinion that the university is fully responsible for how well they prepare for their profession. This dichotomy, well-known in the sociological sciences, and fluctuations between the two abovementioned extremes, can often be noticed in this type of research.

The last question related to the internships was about the areas that the students learned only during internships and what they found surprising. The answer to this question is illustrated in *Figure 2*.

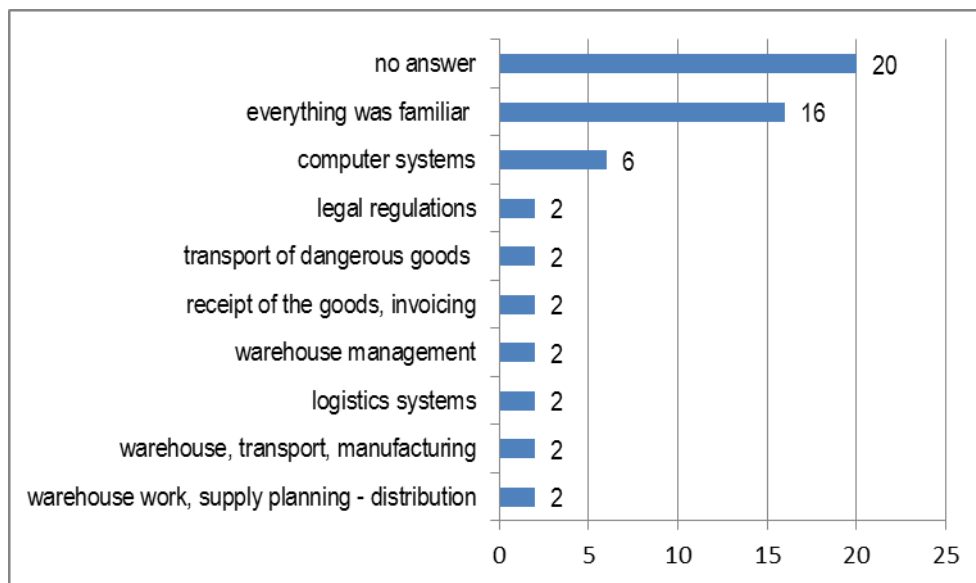


Figure 2. Areas that the students did not learn until completing the internship

Source: Authors' own research

As many as 20 people did not mention a single factor or any area in their response, and 16 people said that they were familiar with everything during the internships. Very few respondents reported various aspects and scopes within a number of different fields including legal regulations, transport of dangerous goods, invoicing, etc. Such distribution of answers suggests that the students felt quite confident during the internships and, although in the preceding questions in the survey they did not assess quite positively the usefulness of the knowledge they gained during their internships or the overlap between the contents of their studies and internships, it can be concluded that they were sufficiently prepared to be

familiar with most aspects and issues. It can also be concluded that the companies in which the students did their internship were very cautious and the students were appointed to perform tasks which proved to be well below their actual skills and abilities. It is in point of fact difficult to imagine that there were no tasks or aspects in a company that would be new to students, which a few specific replies would suggest. These must have been the answers of those who had been assigned more difficult and more responsible tasks and who therefore experienced obstacles and discovered their shortcomings. Of course, there is also a large group which either provided negative answers or did not answer the question because they happen to be generally reluctant to provide more exhaustive answers.

Conclusions

Student internships are a most significant element of education, of which students are fully aware. However, their assessment of internships – despite being generally fairly positive – in individual areas is not very high and students seem to have been disappointed with that particular experience. In order to increase student satisfaction at this stage of education, different ways of communicating between all three groups – universities, students and entrepreneurs – should be considered and revised. Firstly, students should be made aware of the current situation on the labour market in the logistics industry and should learn to shape their attitude in order to be ready to assume greater responsibility for their own career and success in finding the right job. It would also be useful to consider better communication with companies offering internships as they should be provided with more extensive information about students and the degree course which they are doing. Ideally, those companies could also be expected to show more trust in students' abilities, which eventually would translate into entrusting them with more demanding tasks during internships in which they could demonstrate their actual strengths. Undoubtedly, it is the duty of universities to continue to adapt the content and teaching methods of higher education to market needs. However, universities should not be blamed for student disappointment.

Literature

1. Brzozowska A., Szymczyk K. (2017), *Management Through Opportunities as an Unconventional Solution in the Theory of Strategic Management*, [in:] El Emary I.M.M., Brzozowska A. (eds.), *Shaping the Future of ICT. Trends in Information Technology, Communications Engineering and Management*, International Conference on Communication, Management and Information Technology 2016 (ICCMIT'16), Cosenza, Italy (April 26-29, 2016), CRC Press, Boca Raton.
2. Cichoń S. (2013), *Jakość kształcenia w szkole wyższej*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Częstochowskiej, Częstochowa.
3. <http://www.praca.pl/poradniki/studenci> (accessed: 02.10.2017).
4. <http://www.pracujwlogistyce.pl/okiem-rekrutera/19-najczesciej-czytane/5324-rynek-pracy-oczami-studentow-na-co-licza-mlodzi-ludzie> (accessed: 10.11.2017).
5. Kabus J., Nowakowska-Grunt J., Kościelniak H. (2017), *Management of Labor Market Based on the Example of the Czestochowa District*, [in:] Kadvanova K., Klenka M.,

- Valacai P., Vlkova E. (eds.), *Current Issues of World Economy and Politics*, Publishing Ekonom, Bratislava, p. 551-559.
6. Kisperska-Moroń D. (2010), *Evolution of Competencies of Logistics and Supply Chain Managers*, "LogForum", t. 6, nr 3, p. 21-31.
 7. Mathur M., Hameed Sh. (2017), *A Study on Behavioural Competencies of the Z Generation*, International Conference on Management and Information Systems, September 23-24, 2016.
 8. Nowakowska-Grunt J., Sałek R., Strzelczyk M. (2017), *Znaczenie i rozwój systemów telematycznych w zarządzaniu informacją logistyczną*, [in:] Nowakowska-Grunt J., Mesjasz-Lech A., Kot S. (red.), *Wyzwania i perspektywy zarządzania organizacją sieciową. Logistyka w świetle współczesnych badań*, Wydawnictwo Wydziału Zarządzania Politechniki Częstochowskiej, Częstochowa, p. 131-140.
 9. Pike G.R., Kuh G.D., Massa-McKinley R.C. (2008), *First-Year Students' Employment, Engagement, and Academic Achievement: Untangling the Relationship between Work and Grades*, "NASPA Journal", Vol. 45, Issue 4, p. 560-582.
 10. Skowron-Grabowska B., Mesjasz-Lech A. (2016), *Konkurencyjne uwarunkowania zarządzania zasobami kadrowymi w przedsiębiorstwach w kontekście dostępu do rynku pracy*, "Przegląd Organizacji", nr 10, p. 22-28.
 11. Skrzydłowska-Kalukin K. (2015), "Wprost": *Zet idzie do pracy*, wiadomosci.wp.pl.
 12. *Start na rynku pracy. Materiały pokonferencyjne* (2016), Fundacja Inicjatyw Młodzieżowych, Warszawa.
 13. Surowiec A. (2016), *Zarządzanie łańcuchem dostaw w sektorze małych i średnich przedsiębiorstw*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Częstochowskiej. Zarządzanie", nr 24, t. 2, p. 215-224. DOI: 10.17512/znpcz.2016.4.2.17
 14. Świerczek A. (2007), *Od łańcuchów dostaw do sieci dostaw*, "Logistyka-Nauka", nr 1, p. 74-77.
 15. Tłuczek M. (2012), *Praktyki na studiach, po co one są?*, <http://www.praca.money.pl> (accessed: 18.11.2017).
 16. Trochymiak B. (oprac.) (2012), *Absolwent na rynku pracy – jak znaleźć pierwszą pracę w logistyce?*, <http://www.pracujwlogistyce.pl/okiem-rekrutera/18-okiem-rekrutera/1219-absolwent-na-ryнку-pracy-czyli-jak-znalezc-pierwsza-prace-w-logistyce> (accessed: 28.10.2017).
 17. Work Service (2017), *Barometr Rynku Pracy*, <http://www.workservice.com/pl/Centrum-prasowe/Raporty/Barometr-Rynku-Pracy> (accessed: 06.07.2017).

PRAKTYKI STUDENCKIE W LOGISTYCE Z PERSPEKTYWY STUDENTÓW

Streszczenie: Logistyka jest dziedziną, w której praktyka jest szczególnie ważna i ceniona. W trakcie studiów studenci odbywają zgodnie z programem studiów praktyki studenckie, które mają dać im odpowiednią praktykę i doświadczenie. Artykuł jest pierwszą z dwóch części opracowania mającego na celu rozpoznanie, w jaki sposób studenci logistyki postrzegają praktyki studenckie oraz praktykę rozumianą szeroko, jako pracę w przedsiębiorstwie. W niniejszej części podjęta zostanie próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, jak studenci postrzegają i oceniają praktyki studenckie oraz co powinno zmienić się w postawach i relacji trzech grup interesariuszy uczestniczących w praktykach: samych studentów, przedsiębiorstw i uczelni. Materiału do badań dostarczyły dwie ankiety przeprowadzone wśród studentów kierunku logistyka jednej z polskich uczelni.

Słowa kluczowe: praktyki studenckie, praktyka w logistyce, dydaktyka w logistyce