

Human Interaction Skills and Employability in Courses with Internships: Report of a Decade of Success in Information Technology

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Abstract : The option to implement curricular internships with undergraduate students is a pedagogical option with some good results perceived by academic staff, employers, and among graduates in general and IT (Information Technology) in particular. Knowing that this type of exercise has never been so relevant, as one tries to give meaning to the future in a landscape of rapid and deep changes. We have as an example the potential disruptive impact on the jobs of advances in robotics, artificial intelligence and 3-D printing, which is a focus of fierce debate. It is in this context that more and more students and employers engage in the pursuit of career-promoting responses and business development, making their investment decisions of training and hiring. Three decades of experience and research in computer science degree and in information systems technologies degree at the Portuguese University, Portuguese private university, has provided strong evidence of its advantages. The Human Interaction Skills development as well as the attractiveness of such experiences for students are topics assumed as core in the conception and management of the activities implemented in these study cycles. The objective of this paper is to gather evidence of the Human Interaction Skills explained and valued within the curriculum internship experiences of IT students employability. Data collection was based on the application of questionnaire to intern counselors and to students who have completed internships in these undergraduate courses in the last decade. The trainee supervisor, responsible for monitoring the performance of IT students in the evolution of traineeship activities, evaluates the following Human Interaction Skills: Motivation and interest in the activities developed, interpersonal relationship, cooperation in company activities, assiduity, ease of knowledge apprehension, Compliance with norms, insertion in the work environment, productivity, initiative, ability to take responsibility, creativity in proposing solutions, and self-confidence. The results show that these undergraduate courses promote the development of Human Interaction Skills and that these students, once they finish their degree, are able to initiate remunerated work functions, mainly by invitation of the institutions in which they perform curricular internships. Findings obtained from the present study contribute to widen the analysis of its effectiveness in terms of future research and actions in regard to the transition from Higher Education pathways to the Labour Market.

Keywords : human interaction skills, employability, internships, information technology, higher education

Conference Title : ICCTE 2017 : International Conference on Contemporary Trends in Education

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : September 21-22, 2017