

**Bridging the Gap from Brick-and-Mortar to Experience-Based Learning:  
Basis for On-the-Job Training Framework**

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0403346>

Recommended citation:

Dela Peña, R. C., Villena, A. S., Malto, M. A., Zabala, J. B., Saluna, H. S. & Santos, L. A. (2025). Bridging the gap from brick-and-mortar to experience-based learning: Basis for On-the-Job Training framework. *Pantao (The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences)* 4 (3), 3762-3771. <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0403346>

## ABSTRACT

A professional learning experience, such as allowing learners the chance to acquire new skills and explore and grow their career, with professional learning experiences, such as an internship or on-the-job training (OJT), is quite essential. The training provides learners practical, applicable work connected to their study or professional interests. One of the benefits of the program for learners is that they can get significant job experience in their chosen field of study. Internships offer experiential learning opportunities that are organized and monitored formally. Thus, internships are a sensible and practical way to obtain priceless work experience. Undergraduate students use and apply what they have learned in class, as well as acquire new skills, during this phase of the course. Accordingly, internships give students a great opportunity to network and create significant career connections before they even graduate. Internship or on-the-job training (OJT), is crucial in providing learners with the opportunity to explore and advance their careers as well as develop new skills. Thus, internships are a sensible and practical way to obtain invaluable work experience. The Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order No. 104, S. 2017 declares that the commission will mandate student internships and the development of strong academic ties between higher education institutions and industry, business, and duly recognized government and non-government organizations, including civil society organizations, to promote and equip students with employable skills and attitudes. Since the corporate landscape is constantly changing, the 14-year internship program at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Valenzuela College of Business Administration is to stay up to date with current requirements and challenges facing the business world. The study focused on 411 students and employed a quantitative-descriptive research methodology using a census sample technique. The primary respondents were academic advisers and supervisors of host training establishments. Anchored on the COLE Framework, to bridge the gap from brick-and-mortar to experience-based learning of students, the following weighbridge, which focused on job knowledge, quality of work, dependability, initiative, organization, industry, and attainment of objectives for learners' performance and attitude toward work and the establishment, punctuality, cooperation and teamwork, decorum, and communication for behavior were used.

Keywords: internship, experience, learning, skills, performance, dependability, communication

Date Submitted: June 12, 2025

Date Accepted: July 15, 2025

Date Published: July 27, 2025

## INTRODUCTION

Providing learners, the chance to acquire new skills and explore and grow their careers, a professional learning experience—such as an internship or on-the-job training (OJT), is essential. These training programs provide learners with useful, relevant, hands-on work aligned with their field of study or professional interests. One of the benefits of the program for learners is that they can gain valuable job experience in their chosen discipline. Internships offer experiential learning opportunities that are organized and monitored formally. Thus, internships are sensible and

practical ways to obtain priceless work experience. During this phase of the course, undergraduate students use and apply what they have learned in class, as well as acquire new skills. Accordingly, internships give students an excellent opportunity to network and create significant career connections before graduation.

The CMO-No. 104, S. 2017, states that to promote and equip students with viable skills and attitudes for employment, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall require student internships and the creation by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of strong academic links with business, industry, and duly recognized government and non-government organizations, such as civil society organizations. Collaborations between HEIs and companies can increase reciprocal advantages by exchanging information and creative ideas through the utilization of academic internships. (Franco, Silva and Rodriguez, 2019). Many companies in practically every industry offer internship programs. Students can open doors for future employment and obtain experience in a profession by taking part in an internship. It addresses purposeful learning objective goals, direct supervision by a professional with relevant work experience in the field, ongoing observation, assessment, and feedback for personal development, academic advancement, hard and soft skill development, and striking a balance between learning objectives and the organizational needs of a business. (indeed.com editorial, 2023).

Many educational institutions prioritize and value this type of education to the point that they require all students to take advantage of opportunities for apprenticeships. Some provide students the option to either take advantage of internship opportunities or obtain the same number of credits in another manner. (The College of St. Scholastica, 2018).

Conversely, a business or host training facility (HTE) can gain a lot from the new insights and concepts that interns bring to the platform. They usually have up-to-date knowledge of the field, and when paired with an optimistic mindset, they can provide original ideas and unique answers to most problems. (Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission).

Internships have long been regarded by students as an excellent way to gain firsthand job knowledge and experience, which increases their employability in a competitive labor market. As a best practice, many educational institutions allow students to choose between classroom learning and hands-on experience in real-world settings. The application of theoretical and pedagogical information, intellectual and practical abilities, and affective disposition are strengthened and verified by out-of-classroom learning (Kuh, 2000, Storey, 2010, as cited in Bawica, 2021).

Gupta et al. (2020) suggested that internships can close the knowledge gap between academic theory and practical application in the business. Furthermore, internships help students become more proficient in their chosen subjects and develop greater professional competencies, which improves their effectiveness at work.

Higgins and Pinedo's (2018) research, however, indicates that not all internships effectively help young people in obtaining employment in the future. Internship prospects and their overall effect on young people's medium-term workforce absorption appear to be limited. Numerous studies have emphasized the many benefits of internships, but there are also many disadvantages, such as low pay, long shifts and working hours, unfavorable behavior from superiors, a lack of mentorship, and an inadequate working environment (Yiu & Law, 2012; Seyitoglu, 2014; and Farmaki, 2018, as cited in Trinidad, 2020).

Provisions for relevant and real-world work experience must also be taken into account. Both HEIs and HTEs should provide student interns the chance to work on important projects that improve the bottom line, as stated in Briones' (2022) recommendation. Engage the interns during their placement by letting them work on real projects, address difficulties, and tackle real-life problems.

In the case of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Valenzuela (PLV) College of Business Administration (CBA), an internship program is already in place and has been in effect for 14 years. As years go by and as the corporate landscape changes significantly over time, an enhancement of the aforementioned program is in fact, indispensable to keep the HEI attuned to the present requirements and challenges in the business world.

Conflicting opinions regarding the study of internships and their effect on students' career preparation are provided by the dispute in the previous thoughts. Therefore, it is crucial to assess PLV-CBA's present internship program in order to ascertain how its results affect students' preparedness for the workforce.

The previous idea is laid out and reinforced in the COLE Framework for an Effective Assessment, which, in the words of Siddiqui (2017), is a framework that uses four essential elements to define an effective evaluation. These characteristics include setting clear standards and providing guidance to both educators and learners, as well as offering a well-organized learning environment and ongoing assessment of the implemented program. This framework takes into account the various forms of knowledge that educators and students should consider.

Furthermore, the framework considers effective orientation as a way to help learners become more comfortable in their new jobs, teams, and environments while also increasing their awareness of HTE expectations and regulations (Heritty, 2024). According to Anthony (2024), a good learning environment places a strong emphasis on being genuine, interactive, and team-oriented to improve engagement and information retention. Furthermore, it is inquiry-based, provides value to the learner, and encourages both student self-evaluation and social learning. An efficient and effective learning environment encourages development and learning, which boosts performance and productivity. Last but not least, assessing the produced learning activities and experiences is a great approach to finding evidence that the learning goals are being reached. The techniques used by educators to evaluate students have a significant impact on determining how confident and certain the learners are as to their ability to meet the learning and teaching objectives (L&T Hub, 2021).

### Statement of the problem

To meet the demands of the business world and address the issues presented by the evolving corporate landscape, this study is essential to the college's zeal and substantial development. To prepare students for an actual employment environment after graduation, the study specifically aimed to ascertain the role of PLV-CBA in developing the paramount training framework for OJT students. The On-the-Job training framework is necessary to ensure that students' experiential learning is more than merely sporadic hands-on activities. It turns into a methodical, systematic procedure that is advantageous to the organization and the learner. By identifying gaps, establishing defined goals, and enabling ongoing progress monitoring, it eventually transforms training into tangible, quantifiable outcomes. Unequivocally, it searches for rejoinders to the following inquiries:

1. How may the interns' performance be described in terms of job knowledge, quality of work, dependability, initiative, organization, industry, and attainment of objectives?
2. Is there a significant difference in the description of the two groups of respondents as to the learners' performance?
3. What behavior may the interns be characterized by in terms of attitude toward work and the establishment, punctuality, cooperation and teamwork, decorum, and communication?
4. Is there a significant difference in the responses of the two groups of respondents as to the behavior of learners?
5. From the result of the study, what On-the-Job Training Framework may be proposed to prepare the learners for the actual work conditions after graduation?

## METHODOLOGY

This study followed a quantitative research design, which is defined by Olasile (2020) as a methodical examination of phenomena through the collection of numerical data and the use of statistical, mathematical, or computational tools. The primary subjects of quantitative research methodology also include the planning, creation, and application of data collection and analysis processes. Excellent quantitative research is characterized by a careful evaluation of the technique and the reliability of the data-gathering tools (Wilson, 2019). Following this, the primary goal of a quantitative study design is to determine the number of individuals who have a particular way of thinking, doing, or feeling. Quantitative projects that prioritize the volume of replies use large sample sizes.

To describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied, the study used the descriptive research method. It is mostly used to understand a group or phenomenon by collecting data via surveys, interviews, or firsthand observation. Questions like "Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How" are addressed by descriptive research designs (Survey Point Team, 2023). Descriptive research aims to precisely and methodically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon (Laco et al., 2024), quoting Taherdoost (2022). Using a range of research methodologies, it can answer the following questions: what, where, when, and how to look into one or more situations (Siedlecki, 2020).

In this investigation, the census sample technique was adopted. The OJT Advisers and the HTE Supervisors were the two groups of respondents. The instrument was already in use, and permission from the rightful owner was obtained before it was utilized in the study. A total of 411 OJT students in the second semester of the academic year 2023–2024 were the focus of the study, which was equivalent to the number of replies obtained from the HTE Supervisors and OJT advisers. To bridge the gap from brick-and-mortar to experience-based learning of students, the following weighbridge, which focused on job knowledge, quality of work, dependability, initiative, organization, industry, and attainment of objectives for learners' performance and attitude toward work and the establishment, punctuality, cooperation and teamwork, decorum, and communication for behavior were used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The interns' performance

The data gathered in this study aimed to comprehensively characterize the professional development experiences of CBA students, specifically in terms of skill acquisition, career exploration, and growth through structured learning opportunities such as internships or On-the-Job Training (OJT). These experiential learning modalities served as platforms for students to enhance their competencies in real-world settings. The resulting data were systematically analyzed to determine statistically significant differences among various key evaluation areas, providing insights into the effectiveness and impact of these professional development interventions.

The evaluation of intern performance by academic advisers and Host Training Establishment (HTE) partners revealed consistent results across several important metrics. Both groups rated the interns "Very Satisfied" on indicators including Job Knowledge, Quality of Work, Dependability, Initiative, Organization, Industry, and Attainment of Objectives, with weighted mean scores ranging from 3.51 to 3.67. HTE partners gave the highest rating in Job Knowledge (3.67), demonstrating interns' thorough understanding of their tasks, while academic advisers gave the highest rating in Attainment of Objectives (3.63), reflecting successful achievement of predetermined goals. The overall weighted mean of 3.59 from both evaluator groups suggests a consistent and mutually favorable opinion of intern performance. This alignment underscores the internship program's effectiveness in equipping students with the necessary skills and perspectives for professional practice, reinforcing the importance of experiential learning as a vital component of career preparation.

Despite generally positive evaluations, Dependability emerged as the area needing the most improvement among the assessed categories. This indicates issues related to interns' timeliness, consistency in completing assignments, and general accountability. Given that dependability is a foundational attribute affecting workplace effectiveness, team dynamics, and professional growth, it is critical to address this through targeted training programs. Emphasizing dependability in training will help students develop stronger work ethics, better preparing them for the demands of the professional environment and contributing to long-term job success.

### Difference in the description of the two groups of respondents as to the learners' performance

An independent samples t-test comparing the evaluations of the two groups revealed statistically significant differences in three of the seven performance indicators: Job Knowledge, Quality of Work, and Dependability. These differences may stem from variations in evaluator expectations, training exposure, or perspectives on performance. In contrast, no significant differences were found in Initiative, Organization, Industry, and Attainment of Objectives, suggesting similarity in overall performance across most evaluated areas. Furthermore, the lack of significant overall difference between the two groups supports the conclusion that academic advisers and HTE supervisors provide consistent assessments of intern performance, reinforcing the reliability of the evaluation process.

Interns' behavior as characterized by in terms of attitude toward work and the establishment, punctuality, cooperation and teamwork, decorum, and communication

The behavioral characteristics of the interns were assessed by both academic advisers and HTE partners across five key areas: Attitude toward Work and the Establishment, Punctuality, Cooperation and Teamwork, Decorum, and Communication. Both evaluator groups consistently rated the interns as "Very Satisfied" in each category, reflecting high satisfaction with their professional behavior. Decorum received the highest rating from HTE partners (3.81), indicating strong professionalism and appropriate workplace conduct, with academic advisers echoing this sentiment with a score of 3.67. Communication received the lowest ratings from both groups (3.58 from HTE partners and 3.56 from advisers), highlighting a potential area for growth. Challenges in communication may be attributed to limited exposure to university-level academic communication skills and cultural or linguistic barriers. Overall mean scores (3.69 from HTE partners and 3.62 from advisers) demonstrate the internship program's success in developing important workplace soft skills among interns.

Difference in the responses of the two groups of respondents as to the behavior of learners

A statistical analysis of behavioral traits found that Punctuality and Decorum exhibited significant differences in ratings between academic advisers and HTE partners. This suggests varying perceptions of intern performance in these specific areas. However, no significant differences were found in Cooperation and Teamwork, Communication, and Attitude toward Work and the Establishment, indicating consistent evaluations across these behavioral domains. Despite these differences, the null hypothesis of no overall difference in behavior ratings between the two groups could not be rejected, reinforcing the general agreement about the interns' conduct.

#### A Proposed On-the-Job Training Framework

Based on the findings, the proposed On-the-Job Training Framework emphasizes addressing the identified areas for improvement, particularly communication and dependability, which received relatively lower mean scores. The framework aims to blend theoretical knowledge with practical application to foster realistic understanding of workplace dynamics and professional standards. Regular assessments by both academic advisers and HTE supervisors are incorporated to monitor intern progress, ensuring they meet critical performance benchmarks and are well-prepared for future employment.

To effectively bridge the gap between traditional education and experiential learning, the framework includes targeted training modules such as Introduction to Effective Communication, Active Listening Skills, Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication, Overcoming Communication Barriers, and Final Assessment and Feedback. For dependability, components include Overview of Dependability, Essential Habits of Dependable People, and Accountability and Problem Solving. These modules employ varied instructional methods including role-playing, group discussions, workshops, case studies, and capstone projects designed to enhance the interns' communication skills, workplace habits, and accountability.

In summary, the internship program at the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Valenzuela College of Business Administration has successfully met its objectives over 14 years, equipping students with the skills and dispositions necessary for professional practice. Evaluations by academic advisers and industry partners largely align, indicating that interns are both academically prepared and capable of applying their knowledge effectively in real-world settings. While most performance indicators and behavioral traits were rated highly, specific attention to dependability and communication within the On-the-Job Training Improvement Plan will further strengthen the program and better prepare students for the evolving demands of the modern workplace.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study's findings show how well the PLV-CBA internship program has equipped students with critical professional abilities and dispositions. These outcomes demonstrate how well the program adheres to the fundamental ideas of the COLE Framework of Effective Assessment, which places a strong emphasis on the importance of clarity, objectivity, learning-oriented, and evidence-based evaluation methods.

The high ratings of interns on important performance criteria like Job Knowledge, Quality of Work, and Dependability suggest that the internship program successfully satisfies the framework's demand for clarity in expected outcomes. Academic advisers and HTE supervisors frequently express satisfaction with the interns' performance, demonstrating a shared understanding of the program's objectives and expectations for students' professional conduct. This aligns learning between classroom education and real-world application and adheres to the COLE principle of explicit expectations. According to the research, an OJT training plan needs to be created, with a primary focus on two areas: dependability and communication. To guarantee that students can work with others in a professional setting and successfully express their thoughts, there is a need for improved communication training and skill development. Additionally, dependability was noted as a need for improvement since both industry and academic respondents suggested that the curriculum should place more emphasis on this quality.

Similarly, by ensuring that students receive specific guidance on their areas of strength and growth, the integration of HTE examinations and academic evaluations complements the evidence-based feedback approach. The program can build upon the statistically significant variations in Dependability and Communication ratings, which guarantee that future iterations of the internship offer customized possibilities for skill development.

The internship program adheres to the COLE Framework of Effective Assessment by effectively integrating professional practice with academic learning. The study identifies opportunities for development, especially in communication and reliability, even though the same prepares students for the workforce through objective evaluations. The program will continue to be effective and adaptable to changes in the industry with the support of ongoing feedback and curriculum modifications.

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