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REGULATIONS GOVERNING STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME IN GHANA: A SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper seeks to ascertain the regulations governing students' internship programmes in Selected Technical Universities in Ghana.
Design/Methodology/Approach: The sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was utilised. Two separate structured questionnaires were administered to 481 students and 299 senior members (lecturers and administrators) of six selected technical universities (TUs); whereas members of industry, executives of business associations and government regulatory bodies in the tertiary sector of Ghana's education system were interviewed, using an interview guide. Data was analysed through descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and Constant Comparative Analysis.
Findings: There was no well-defined enforceable law requiring TUs to secure internship placement for students, although, some regulatory bodies insisted that TUs showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training before awarding programme accreditation.
Research Limitation/Implication: The study focuses on regulations governing student internship programmes in Ghana. The study concentrated on selected Technical Universities in Ghana.
Practical Implication: The knowledge advanced in this study underscores the need for proper synergy between Technical Universities regarding regulation governing student internship which should be spearheaded by the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Education, Ghana Tertiary Education Commission acting as a facilitator, creating interfaces and providing funding and incentives.
Social Implication: The Government of Ghana can allow companies some tax exemptions or make the environment business-friendly for companies so that they can expand their operation to accept more interns.
Originality/Value: This paper synchronises the perspectives of multiple actors on the regulations governing student internship programmes.

Keywords*: Internship. multi-stakeholder. perspective. regulations. universities*

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INTRODUCTION

In recruiting new employees, the job market emphasises work experience, aside from paper qualifications. This requirement, according to Verhaest and Baert (2018), makes work experience or industrial training fundamental in higher education institutions (Marginson, van der Wende & Wright, 2018). Since one of the basic reasons for education is employment (Miralles-Quirós & Jerez-Barroso, 2018), higher education institutions need to provide students with the opportunity to translate the knowledge gained into practice through industrial training (Saniter et al., 2018), to improve their chances of being employed (O'Higgins & Pinedo, 2018). The internship programme is a practical skill training initiative designed to bridge the gap between the theoretical world of the academic enterprise and the world of work of professional practice (Verhaest et al., 2018).

Stakeholders have perceived an internship programme based on an experiential learning approach as a catalyst for human resource development (Baert et al., 2016). The internship serves as a perfect transition from the classroom to the world of work by developing students' job-related skills (Holford, 2017), enhancing job placement opportunities (Odlin, Benson-Rea & Sullivan- Taylor, 2021), and developing problem-solving, communication and human relations skills of students. Mahy et al. (2015) argue that internship integrates practical experience with theory, builds students' professional confidence level, and bridges the gap between the classroom and the world of work. The classroom environment may never be able to provide students with the complexities and problem analysis involved in the real world (Di Meglio et al., 2019). Practical experimental activities are necessary to give students skill development and knowledge, that they cannot get within the confines of the classroom (Anjum, 2020).

Internship combines the acquisition of soft skills and experience, thereby enhancing students' employability, facilitating the transition from tertiary education into the labour market, and serving as a source of income for them (Bittmann & Zorn, 2019). Internships play a pivotal role in preparing students for the business world by providing quality and professional guidance (Routon & Walker, 2019). As such, an internship is regarded as an investment in human capital (Petzold, 2020), and this assertion is explained by Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory. According to this theory, an internship is an investment, paid for by accepting low or no wages, in exchange for skills and experiences that increase an individual's productivity (Becker, 1964).

Higher productivity, in turn, entails higher income in the labour market. Moreover, experience directly increases income (Arthur, 2022). Thus, according to Becker (1964), internship increases income through greater human capital and acquired experience among students, particularly those in technical universities. Technical university education emphasises practical work, as against

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theory. Put differently, the practical internship programme is core to technical university education (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2016). It is considered a compulsory or a required four-credit hour course. It is a vital component of the curriculum (Tran, Phan & Marginson, 2018), and is related directly to the major programme and career interests of the student (Rodríguez-Gómez et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, there seems to be an annual recurrence of the challenge of placing every practical internship programme in most technical universities in Ghana (Nduro et al., 2015). While some companies readily grant requests for an internship, others discriminate by turning down students' requests due to their gender (Ismail, 2018), race (Baert, 2017), and low family socio-economic status (Holford, 2017). These employers give excuses, highlighting unpleasant remarks about the whole exercise (Baert et al., 2015). The attitude of employers defeats the *UN Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5*, which aim to ensure inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls respectively. On the other hand, few university officers are willing to partake in the student internship supervision exercise (Sin & Amaral, 2017). The unwillingness of employers in accepting students for internship and the unwillingness of university officers to partake in the student internship supervision exercise is believed to originate from the hearsay evidence that there are no clear regulations governing the student internship programme in Ghana (Nkrumah, 2017).

However, empirical literature addressing the regulations governing the student internship programme in technical universities of Ghana is sparse. The two close studies found were that of Nduro et al. (2015), and Nyarko and Amegbor (2019). Yet, both studies were limited to the views of actors in Takoradi Metropolis, a single Metropolis, thereby limiting its applicability to Ghana as a whole. In other words, the existing literature on Ghana is not broad and in-depth to greatly inform policy in Ghana. To bridge this gap in the literature, this paper seeks to ascertain the regulations governing student internship programmes, using both quantitative and qualitative data from multiple actors in six Metropolises of Ghana (Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi, Tamale, Koforidua and Sunyani), which are largely concentrated by industries that have frequently engaged technical university students for industrial attachment over the last five years.

THORIES UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

The literature review discusses existing literature around the concept of internship, internship as a job placement strategy for higher education institutions, how the human capital theory explains student internship in technical universities of Ghana, traineeship and internship regulations in some European Union countries, traineeship and internship regulations in Africa countries, traineeship

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and internship regulations in Ghana, and empirical literature on the regulations governing student internship programme, consequently leading to the purpose of this research.

The concept of an internship

Arthur (2022) defines internships as structured and career-relevant work experiences obtained by students before graduation from an academic program. Gault et al. (2000) state that internships generally refer to part-time field experiences and encompass a wide variety of academic disciplines and organisational settings. From the perspective of the International Youth Foundation (2013), internships are an extension or a complement to classroom training that aims to expose young trainees to the world of work and provide a hands-on professional experience. According to Gairín-Sallán et al. (2020), an internship is a commitment to provide short-term supervised work experience usually related to a student's specific field of study or career aspirations. Therefore, internship is an activity which tends to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Internship as a job placement strategy for education institutions

The internship programme is often the first and most important job placement strategy for educational institutions. Internships provide youth with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills (both hard and soft) in an actual work environment and to adapt to new situations that may come up in the workplace (Miller et al., 2018). Internships are usually the result of an agreement between three parties—the youth trainee, the educational institution providing training, and the employer. The term employer includes a broad category of potential internship-hosting organisations (Baert et al., 2019).

Although the private sector has been the main source of openings for internships, in some cases, educational institutions have worked with government agencies or non-profit social sector organisations for young people to carry out their internships there (Di Meglio et al., 2021). Placements should be relevant to the interests, career aspirations and training of the youth. For example, youth in a hospitality-industry vocational training program should be placed in internships in hotels and restaurants, not auto-repair shops (Sayeda, 2020). Whenever possible, internships should lead to full-time, permanent employment opportunities for youth trainees—whether with the employer who provided the internship or with another employer in the same industry or sector (Cerulli-Harms, 2017). As a result, placements should be in industries and areas where there is significant labour market demand for entry-level employees (Miralles-Quirós & Jerez-Barroso, 2018).

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How human capital theory explains student internship in technical universities of Ghana

Internship can be regarded as an investment in human capital. According to Becker's (1964) Human Capital Theory, the internship is an investment paid for by accepting low or no wages, in exchange for skills and experience that increases an individual's productivity (Becker, 1964). Higher productivity, in turn, entails higher income in the labour market (Arthur, 2022). Working during high education could represent a valuable experience upon entering the labour market as a graduate (Schulz, Lee, Cantwell, McClellan & Woodard, 2007). Thus, internship increases income through greater human capital and acquired experience (Petzold, 2020) among students, particularly those in technical universities.

Technical university education emphasises practical work, thereby making practical internship programme core to technical university education (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2016). It is a vital component of the curriculum and is directly related to the major and career interests of the student (Rodríguez-Gómez et al., 2017). It has been documented in the Higher National Diploma (HND) and Bachelor's degree syllabus of technical universities in Ghana that practical internship should last for at least six months: three months after the first year's course

work, and three months after the second year's coursework (Nunfam et al., 2015). Each student pursuing the HND or Bachelor's degree programme, therefore, is expected to undergo six months internship and to obtain at least a grade of 1.5, irrespective of his/her final CGPA, before qualifying for the award of the HND certificate (Adjei, 2018).

Traineeship and internship regulations in some European Union Countries

In Austria, paid internships are partly covered by compulsory health insurance, depending on the salary of the trainee. The unpaid internship is covered by the insurance only within the scope of the accident insurance based on general labour and social law. Insurance also covers travel to and from work: travel related to the employee's duties. Thus, there is mandatory work insurance for interns in Austria, but it may be partial, depending on the type of internship. In Belgium, trainees are fully insured, even if they receive no remuneration. Insurance also covers pupils and students who are exposed to a risk of occupational disease during their studies. Insurance on travel to and from work that is related to trainee or intern duties is also covered. Thus, there is mandatory insurance at work for trainees and interns and similar rules apply for all types of internships in Belgium (Strategic Partnership for Higher Education, 2017).

In Bulgaria, Traineeship Employment Contract is a fixed-term contract for no less than six months and no more than 12 months. Trainees are entitled to all rights of people working under employment contracts, including occupational safety insurance on general rules. For unpaid internships, only

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general health insurance is provided for trainees and interns. However, similar rules do not apply to all types of the traineeship. Insurance cover encompasses travel to and from work (Strategic Partnership for Higher Education, 2017).

Traineeship and internship regulations in Africa

Some African countries, such as Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia have promulgated laws and regulations for the implementation of industrial training. These legal provisions do not only make technical and vocational education and training (TVET) attractive, but also they enhance the quality of training given to students. In Nigeria, for instance, the Industrial Training Fund Act of 1971 established the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), which is utilised to promote and encourage the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce to generate a pool of indigenous trained manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the Nigerian economy. In 2011, the Act was replaced by a new law, the Industrial Training Fund (Amendment) Act, 2011, which became operational on 3rd June 2011 (Nyarko & Amegbor, 2019).

Some of the changes the new law introduced include the reduction of the minimum threshold for an employer to become liable to contribute to the fund from 25 employees to a minimum of 5, or an annual turnover of N50 million. Again, the required contribution by an employer is 1% of payroll payable by 3rd September 2011 in respect of the commencement year and for the subsequent years, not later than 1st April of the following year. The Fund reimburses employers up to 50% of contributions each made depending on the training programmes of the respective employer (Nyarko & Amegbor, 2019).

Traineeship and internship regulations in Ghana

There are two main bodies charged with different levels of regulatory powers in the TVET sector of Ghana's education system, namely the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) and Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). Although not without their challenges, these regulatory bodies sometimes have overlapping functions. The CTVET, established by Act 718 of 2006, is mandated to coordinate and oversee all aspects of TVET in Ghana. This means that CTVET's functions cuts across the whole spectrum of Ghana's educational system from the basic to the tertiary level (Nduro et al., 2015). Essentially an examination body, CTVET is mandated to formulate and administer schemes of examinations, evaluation, assessment and standards for skill and syllabus competencies for non-university tertiary institutions accredited by the GTEC. The Board issues the Higher National Diploma to all graduates from technical universities in Ghana (Nyarko & Amegbor, 2019).

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GTEC, which was established by Act 1023 of 2020, has responsibility for the accreditation of public and private tertiary-level institutions concerning the contents and standards of their programmes. CTVET and GTEC have programme accreditation functions and technical universities are caught in this web. GTEC also oversees the proper administration of tertiary institutions in Ghana and also advises the government through the Minister of Education. The most critical question is, *to what extent have these bodies performed their regulatory functions concerning industrial training, separately and independently*? The TVET institutions, including technical universities, are required to implement industrial training as an important component of the curriculum. The enabling legislation of the technical universities, Technical Universities (Amendment) Act, 2020 (Act 1016) states, among others, that the objective of technical universities is to "*provide opportunities for skills development*" which can be achieved through supervised industrial training. Yet, it appears there is a lack of a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing industrial training or internships in Ghana (Nyarko & Amegbor, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Research design, population, sampling procedure, sample size

This paper employed the sequential explanatory mixed method approach. For the quantitative phase, the population comprised all third-year students, lecturers, and administrators of the six selected technical universities in Ghana. The total population of third-year students, administrators and lecturers in the six technical universities were 10,594; 527; and 1,062 respectively. Data was sourced from the records section of the technical universities. Regarding the qualitative phase, key officials of the Commission for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET), Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC), Association of Ghana Industries and Ghana Employers Association, as well as members of the industry who were beneficiaries of student internship programme formed the population.

In arriving at the sample size for the quantitative phase, this study adopted the sample size table for a known population proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). According to Krejcie and Morgan, the minimum sample size of 370 third-year students, 217 administrators and 278 lecturers is appropriate for a known target population of 10,594 third-year students, 527 administrators and 1,062 lecturers, respectively, which is conditioned under a population proportion of 50% and a confidence level of 95%. These sample sizes were increased by 30% to cater for the non-response rate. After catering for non-response rate adjustments, the sample sizes increased from 370 third-year students, 217 administrators and 278 lecturers to 481 third-year students, 282 administrators, and 361 lecturers. The simple random sampling technique was used to choose samples for this paper. This procedure allowed each third-year student, administrator and lecturer from each of the

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six selected technical universities to have an equal and independent chance of being selected, making it more accurate and representative. Concerning the qualitative phase, the purposive sampling technique was used to select key officials from CTVET, GTEC, Association of Ghana Industries, and Ghana Employers Association, as well as members of the industry who were beneficiaries of the student internship programme. Interviews with these key officials were ended upon reaching saturation. In the end, one key official from CTVET, GTEC, Association of Ghana Industries, and Ghana Employers Association, as well as four members of the industry were interviewed.

Instruments

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative phase. Two separate questionnaires were designed and utilised for this purpose. The two, but distinct questionnaires were administered to third-year students, and senior members (administrators and lecturers). For the qualitative phase of this paper, an interview guide was used to collect data from key officials of government bodies, professional associations, and members of the industry. The government bodies were CTVET and GTEC. The professional associations considered were the Association of Ghana Industries and Ghana Employers Association, and the members of the industry were employers or employing organisations who have been beneficiaries of internships undertaken by technical university students. A pre-test was done to test the validity of the questionnaire before the main survey. The interview guide was validated using expert judgment.

Data collection procedures

Data for the quantitative phase was collected from third-year students and senior members through the Industrial Liaison Office of each of the six selected technical universities in Ghana, to collect them later after completion. In collaboration with the Industrial Liaison Office, the researchers recruited six field assistants, each of whom was assigned to one of the six selected technical universities in Ghana, to aid in the data collection for the quantitative phase. These field assistants were trained by the researchers and a data collection expert, before the data collection. The questionnaires were self-completed by respondents due to the high educational level of the targeted participants, who were third-year students and senior members of technical universities. Data collection commenced on 21st June 2021. During the period of data collection, the researchers made follow-ups by making phone calls and paying regular visits to the Industrial Liaison Offices, to speed up data collection. Completed questionnaires were picked up by the researchers on the 16th of August, 2021. Data collection lasted for eight weeks.

Eventually, 356 out of 481 questionnaires were completed and returned by the third-year students

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of the six selected technical universities in Ghana, and 483 out of the 643 questionnaires were completed and returned by senior members [administrators (n=211), lecturers (n=272)]. The response rate for third-year students was 74.01%, and the non-response rate was 25.99%. The response rate for senior members was 75.12%, and the non-response rate was 24.88%. While data collection for the quantitative phase was ongoing, the researchers scheduled and successfully conducted interviews with two key officials each from CTVET, GTE, AGI, and Ghana Employers Association, as well as six members of the industry who were beneficiaries of the student internship programme. Interviews were conducted solely by the researchers without field assistants. The interviews were held face-to-face. The researchers directly approached key officials with appropriate permissions. If interested in participating in the research, an appointment was arranged with the researchers to discuss possible participation in greater detail.

The interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants. This interview site was chosen by the participants themselves. The interview session lasted for 20-35 minutes. In ensuring consistency during the interview, the researchers followed the protocols in the interview guide. Before the interview, the researcher introduced himself to the participant, described the research and its purpose, and the steps being taken to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Field notes were taken because it was preferred to audio-recording from the viewpoint of participants. After the interview, the researchers expressed their appreciation to the participants for their cooperation and participation.

Data processing and analysis

Both the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately but merged when discussing the findings. For the quantitative phase, mean and standard deviation were utilised. The results were displayed in Tables. A mean range of 1.0 to 2.9 suggested *disagreement* from respondents, while a mean range of 3.1 to 5.0 indicated *agreement* from respondents. A mean of 3.0 indicated that the respondents were unsure. The software employed was Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for windows, version 24. Thus, for continuous quantitative data, which was used in addressing the research objectives, the mean and its associated standard deviation were employed. Concerning categorical data, which sought the background information of respondents, frequency and percentage tools were utilised. The results were presented in Tables.

For the qualitative phase, interviews with key officials were transcribed verbatim before data analyses (CCA). In analysing the interview data, the writers employed constant comparison analysis.

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The researchers read and studied the entire raw interview data sometimes to become very familiar with the data, after which the data were grouped into smaller meaningful parts by labelling them into descriptive titles/themes, an important tenet of CCA. Texts or narrations as provided by interviewees were therefore sorted, and grouped under relevant themes that constantly appeared from the raw interview data. In presenting the raw interview data, the researchers used narration(s) from the participant(s) that represented what all or most participants said concerning a given theme. The themes were compared for analysis and the comparisons were done to ascertain whether the themes developed from the interview data corroborate or otherwise with the outcomes from previous studies. The results of the qualitative data were displayed in narrated quotations. Regarding ethical considerations, first of all, clearance was sought from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. After following the protocols stipulated by the IRB, the researchers obtained clearance to collect data on 16th June 2021. The ethical clearance ID was UCCIRB/CES/2021/62. Secondly, the researchers sought permission from the authorities of the six selected technical universities, because, they were the 'gatekeepers'. Other ethical considerations which were taken care of when designing the instruments were informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Students' opinion on the regulations governing the student internship programme

Firstly, the opinion of the third-year students was sought. From Table 1, the indicator "*There is a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing internships in technical universities in Ghana*" produced a mean of 2.54, indicating *disagreement* from respondents, with a degree of variability of a standard deviation of 0.85, suggesting that respondents' opinions were not wide apart. Therefore, the third-year students expressed their disagreement with the statement that there is a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing internships in technical universities in Ghana. This finding compared well with the result of research by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the authors found that there was no legal backing governing internships in Ghana and certainly no penalties for non-compliance.

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Table 1: Students' Perspective of Regulations Governing Internship Programme

Statements/Indicators	Mean	SD	*D*f
There is a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing internships in technical universities in Ghana.	2.54	0.85	356
There is a n industrial training Fund Act in Ghana that promotes and encourages the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce.	2.31	0.91	356
Industries are obliged to accept students for internship.	2.72	1.54	356
In industry, travel to and from work by interns are covered by insurance.	2.22	1.85	356
There is mandatory insurance for interns in industry.	2.48	1.94	356
In industry, insurance covers interns who are exposed to a risk of occupational disease.	2.34	0.84	356
Interns abide by the rules and regulations by the host organisations.	3.54	1.75	356
Students on internship are covered by the host company's collective bargaining agreement.	2.47	0.93	356
Students on internship are covered by the Workmen Compensation Act of the host company.	2.38	0.82	356

The next indicator "*There is an Industrial Training Fund Act in Ghana that promotes and encourages the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce*" obtained a mean of 2.31, signifying *disagreement* from respondents, with a degree of dispersion from a standard deviation of 0.91, indicating that respondents' views were not varied. Thus, the third-year students of the six selected technical universities disagreed that there is an Industrial Training Fund Act in Ghana that

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promotes and encourages the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce. This finding implies that unlike countries such as Nigeria, where there is an Industrial Training Fund Act that enhances the quality of industrial training given to the student, the same cannot be said for Ghana.

The subsequent indicator "*Industries are obliged to accept students for internship*" showed a mean of 2.72, suggesting *disagreement* from respondents, with a degree of variability from a standard deviation of 1.54, indicating that respondents' opinions were diverse. Hence, the third-year student disagreed with the statement that industries were obliged to accept students for internships. This result can be likened to the result of a study by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the analysts reported that industries in Ghana were not obliged to accept students for industrial attachment.

The next indicator "*In industry, travel to and from work by interns are covered by insurance*" revealed a mean of 2.22, indicating disagreement from respondents, with a degree of dispersion from a standard deviation of 1.85, signifying that respondents' opinions were wide-ranging. Consequently, the third-year students disagreed that, in the Ghanaian industry, travel to and from work by interns was covered by insurance. This result connotes that, unlike other countries such as Bulgaria, Belgium and Austria, where insurance cover travel to and from work by interns, the situation looks different for interns in Ghana.

The subsequent indicator "*There is mandatory insurance for interns in the industry*" showed a mean of 2.48, suggesting *disagreement* from respondents, with a degree of dispersion from a standard deviation of 1.94, indicating that respondents' opinions were wide apart. Hence, the third-year students disagreed that there is the mandatory insurance for interns in the industry in Ghana. This finding implies that, unlike other countries such as Belgium and Austria, where there is mandatory insurance coverage for interns, the situation is not the same for interns in Ghana.

The subsequent indicator "*In industry, insurance covers interns who are exposed to a risk of occupational disease*" produced a mean of 2.34, suggesting *disagreement* from respondents, with a degree of variability from a standard deviation of 0.84, indicating that respondents' views were not wide apart. Consequently, the third-year students disagreed with the assertion that, in the Ghanaian industry, insurance covers interns who are exposed to a risk of occupational disease. This finding suggests that, unlike countries, such as Belgium, where insurance also covers students who are exposed to a risk of occupational disease during their training, the same cannot be said for Ghana.

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The indicator "*Interns abide by the rules and regulations by the host organisations*" obtained a mean of 3.54, suggesting *agreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 1.75, implying that respondents' opinions were wide-ranging. Therefore, the third-year students agreed to the declaration that interns abide by the rules and regulations of the host organisations. This result seems contradictory to the finding of the research by Nduro et al. (2015) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, in which the researchers reported that students failed to submit their log books early, indicating non-adherence to rules and regulations governing internship exercise in the technical university.

The next indicator "*Students on internship are covered by the host company's collective bargaining agreement*" showed a mean of 2.47, indicating *disagreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 0.93, suggesting that respondents' opinions did not differ. The final indicator "*Students on internship are covered by the Workmen Compensation Act of the host company*" produced a mean of 2.38, indicating *disagreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 0.82, suggesting that respondents' opinions were not widely dispersed. Thus, the third-year students disagreed with the statement that students on internship are covered by the Workmen Compensation Act of the host company.

Senior members' opinion on the regulations governing the student internship programme

After analysing and discussing the views of third-year students concerning the regulations governing student internship programmes, this section continued with the analysis and discussion of the views of senior members of the technical universities on the same phenomena. The results were presented in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the indicator "*The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission insists that technical universities showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training before awarding programme accreditation*" revealed a mean of 3.54, indicating *agreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 0.91, suggesting that respondents' opinions were less dispersed. Thus, the senior members agreed that the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission insists that technical universities showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training before awarding programme accreditation. This finding resembles the result of a study by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, wherein the authors found that, for programme accreditation to be awarded, the GTEC insisted that institutions showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training.

The subsequent indicator "*CTVET insists that technical universities showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training before programme*

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accreditation is awarded" produced a mean of 4.12, suggesting *agreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 1.89, indicating that respondents' opinions were varied.

Table 2: Senior Members' Perspective of the Regulations Governing Internship Programme

Statements/Indicators	Mean	SD	Df
The GTEC insists that technical universities showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training prior to awarding programme accreditation.	3.54	0.91	483
CTVET insists that technical universities showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training before programme accreditation is awarded.	4.12	1.89	483
CTVET provide funding to support student internship in technical universities.	2.47	0.71	483
The Technical Universities Amendment Act, 2020 (Act 1016) mandates technical universities to secure internship placement for students.	2.37	2.12	483
There is a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing internships in technical universities in Ghana.	2.69	1.48	483
There are penalties levelled against technical universities who fail to secure secure internship placement for students.	2.45	0.87	483
There is an Industrial Training Fund Act in Ghana that promotes and encourages the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce.	2.42	2.55	483

Hence, the senior members agreed to the statement that CTVET insisted that technical universities showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training before programme accreditation is awarded. This result compared well with the finding of the study by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, in which the authors reported that, for programme accreditation to be awarded, the GTEC insisted that institutions showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training.

The next indicator "*CTVET provides funding to support student internship in technical universities*" obtained a mean of 2.47, suggesting *disagreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 0.71, signifying that respondents' opinions were not wide apart. Therefore, the senior

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members disagreed that CTVET provided funding to support student internships in technical universities. This result is identical to the finding of research by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the authors reported that CTVET had been funding some apprenticeships, but has not yet mounted any support programme for industrial training at the technical university level.

The indicator "*The Technical Universities Act, 2016 (Act 922) mandates technical universities to secure internship placement for students*" showed a mean of 2.37, signifying *disagreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 2.12, indicating that respondents' views were wide-ranging. Consequently, the senior members disagreed with the proclamation that the Technical Universities Act, 2016 (Act 922) legally mandates technical universities to secure internship placement for students. This finding is in line with the result of the research by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the authors informed that there was no well-defined enforceable law requiring technical universities to secure internship placement for students.

The indicator "*There is a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing internships in technical universities in Ghana*" produced a mean of 2.69, suggesting *disagreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 1.48, implying that the respondents' opinions are widespread. Therefore, the senior members disagreed with the statement that there is a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing internships in technical universities in Ghana. This result is comparable to the result of the research by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the authors informed that there was no well-defined enforceable regulatory framework governing internships in Ghana.

The subsequent indicator "*There are penalties levelled against technical universities who fail to secure internship placements for students*" revealed a mean of 2.45, suggesting *disagreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 0.87, indicating that respondents' opinions are less varied. Hence, the senior members expressed their disagreement with the assertion that there were penalties levelled against technical universities that fail to secure internship placements for students. This result looked similar to the finding of the research by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the authors reported that there were no penalties levelled against technical universities for not securing internship placements for students; thus, some educational institutions do not give industrial training the deserved attention. The final indicator "*There is an Industrial Training Fund Act in Ghana that promotes and encourages the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce*" showed

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a mean of 2.42, suggesting *disagreement* from respondents, with a standard deviation of 2.45, implying that respondents' opinions were wide apart. Consequently, the senior members disagreed with the statement that there is an Industrial Training Fund Act in Ghana that promotes and encourages the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce. This finding indicates that unlike countries such as Nigeria, where there is an Industrial Training Fund Act that enhances the quality of industrial training given to the student, the same cannot be said for Ghana.

Industry members' opinion on the regulations governing student internship programmes

After presenting and discussing the responses of third-year students and senior members concerning the regulations governing student internship programmes, this paper continues with the presentation and discussion of the results of interviews held with members of the industry on the same phenomena. Participants were asked three target questions. The first target question sought the opinion of industry executives concerning the regulations mandating technical universities to obtain internship placement for their students. Among the four industry executives that were interviewed, one participant put forward that:

"*Technical universities are expected to implement industrial training as a component of their curriculum for the benefit of students. This is well understood, but I am not known of any law or clear regulation mandating them to secure internship placement for these students. I stand to be corrected*" (Participant 2).

Participant 2's narration suggests that, although technical universities are supposed to help students obtain industrial training, there is no clear existing law or regulation mandating them to do so. This result looks similar to a statement put forward by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) that, it appears there is a lack of a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing industrial training or internships in technical universities in Ghana.

Another participant who held a similar view declared that there was no legal backing for instructing technical universities to obtain internship placements for their students and equally no severe penalties for non-compliance to this responsibility. More often than not, students are left on their own to find internship placements. This participant narrates as follows:

"*No law clearly instructs technical universities to find internship placements for their students and no severe penalties are levelled for non-compliance. Often times, students find internship placements on their own*" (Participant 4).

Participant 4's statement can be likened to the result of the study by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the authors reported that there was no legal

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backing mandating technical universities to secure internship placements for students, and certainly no penalties for non-compliance. The authors added that some educational institutions, therefore, do not give industrial training the deserved attention. According to the authors, students were often left on their own to source for placements which were either not available or not relevant.

The second target question sought the opinion of industry executives concerning the regulations that instruct them to accept internship invitations from technical universities. Participant 3 shared that:
"*As a stakeholder in higher education, we are expected to give hands-on experience and skill training to students through internships. However, I am not aware of any law mandating us to do so. We do our best, anyway*".

This statement put forward by Participant 3 suggests that employers are expected, but not mandated to offer practical training and skill development to students via internships, implying that no law requires them to do so. This outcome seems consistent with the result of the study by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University, where the analysts discovered that industries were not obliged to accept students for industrial training. Thus, several industries had closed their doors to upcoming interns.

The third target question sought the views of industry executives concerning the ways by which interns were covered by health insurance during their internship period. Participant 4 narrated that:
"*In our company, interns are not covered by health insurance during their internship period. They are covered by the general National Health Insurance Scheme offered by the state, if only they are active members and their policy is valid*".

The narration by Participant 4 implies that employers do not have any special internal health insurance package for interns during the internship period. Participant 2 shared the opinion of Participant 4 by adding that:
"… *Sometimes, we require interns to insure against accidents, especially when they would be placed in divisions that are very hazardous*".

The statement by Participant 2 indicates that interns who may be placed in risky sections in companies are sometimes asked to insure against accidents before starting the internship. The narrations of Participant 2 and 4 resembles the result of the research by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, in which the authors reported that the few

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industries that were willing to accept students for industrial training often placed outrageous conditions in the way of trainees, such as requiring them to be insured against injury, theft or even death.

The opinions of professional associations and government bodies on the regulations governing student internship programme

Finally, the opinion of key officials from professional associations and some government bodies was sought concerning the regulations governing student internship programmes. Three target questions were put forward. The first target question asked participants' views about the regulations mandating technical universities to obtain internship placement for their students. The participant from CTVET narrated that:

"*I know that one of the objectives of technical universities is to offer opportunities for skills development, as enshrined in the Technical Universities Act, 2016 (Act 922), which can be attained via supervised industrial attachment, but I am not very sure this Act mandates them to secure internship placement for their students*"

This participant acknowledged the existence of the Technical Universities Act, 2016 (Act 922) which legislates technical universities to provide opportunities for skills development, but the participant is uncertain whether this Act mandates technical universities to find an internship placement for students, implying that there no clear policy or regulation instructing or mandating technical universities to secure internship placement for their students. This finding is parallel to the proclamation by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) that there is a lack of a well-defined legal and regulatory framework governing industrial training or internships among technical universities in Ghana.

The second target question sought their opinions on the regulations that instruct employers to accept internship invitations from technical universities. The participant from GTEC narrated that:

"*By accepting internship invitations from technical universities, employers fulfil their role as actors of higher education and play their part in providing skills training and hands-on experience to the students, making them employable. But, employers are not legally bound to accept internship invitations*".

This narration suggests that employers are not legally bound to accept internship invitations from students, but when employers choose to do so, they are only playing their part as stakeholders of higher education by providing skills training and industry experience for the technical university students, thus, making interns employable. This finding is similar to the result of the study by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) at Takoradi Technical University in Ghana, where the researchers found that industries were not obliged to accept students for industrial training.

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The final target question asked how interns are covered by health insurance during their internship period. The participant from CTVET stated:
"*Generally, we are all covered by the National Health Insurance Scheme once the individual is a member. Employers are also expected to ensure interns are against accidents, particularly when interns are placed in dangerous zones in the company. But, I doubt if employers do so*".

This narration implies that interns are largely not covered by any special health insurance package by employers during their internship period in cases of injury. They are covered by the general National Health Insurance Scheme subsidised by the state, only if they are members and their policy is valid. This result explains why some employers in Ghana required interns to insure against injury, theft or even death before offering internship placements to students, as reported by Nyarko and Amegbor (2019) in their research.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper concludes that there are no clearly laid down rules and regulations governing student internships in Ghana. There should be clear rules and regulations governing student internships in Ghana. Technical universities, industry and government regulatory bodies (GTEC and CTVET) should come together and prepare rules and regulations to govern student internships in Ghana. The Government of Ghana has a central role to play in this process, acting as a facilitator and provider of funding and incentives to encourage this exercise. The Government of Ghana can allow companies some tax exemptions or make the environment business-friendly for companies so that they can expand their operation to accept more interns. Companies should be monitored to ensure compliance. Also, technical universities should monitor interns to ensure compliance with rules and regulations during the internship.

Contribution

The paper contributes to knowledge in diverse following ways. This paper, first of all, builds on existing literature on human capital development through the internship programme, thereby strengthening the Human Capital Theory. The research also builds on the existing studies in Ghana by expanding the knowledge base that no clear legal and regulatory framework governs student internships in Ghana. Specifically, this paper contributes to the knowledge that, there is no Industrial Training Fund Act in Ghana that promotes and encourages the acquisition of skills in industry and commerce. Industries in Ghana are not obliged to accept students for internships. In

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industry, travel to and from work by interns is not covered by insurance. Students on internship are not covered by the host company's collective bargaining agreement. CTVET is yet to provide funding to support student internships in technical universities. There is no well-defined enforceable law requiring technical universities to secure internship placement for students, although, GTEC and CTVET insist that technical universities showed evidence of their ability to secure placements for their students for industrial training before awarding programme accreditation. There are no penalties levelled against technical universities that fail to secure internship placements. Interns are largely not covered by any special health insurance package by employers during cases of injury, theft or death. In sum, this paper synchronises the perspectives of multiple actors on the regulations governing student internship programmes, presenting useful suggestions which provide information to the government, business associations, employers, and technical universities for policy planning, formulation and implementation of student internship in Ghana.

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