

Work-integrated learning in context: A South Korean perspective

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Globally internships are increasingly applied as means of providing Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and as a channel for graduates into employment. Whilst these trends have crossed national borders, the transferability of such WIL practices, across national contexts has been largely assumed rather than empirically substantiated, thereby, necessitating work which situates WIL practices within specific national contexts. This exploratory study provides the contextual backdrop of internships in South Korea and seeks to unearth any contextual variables of potential relevance to the practice of internships and by extension WIL in South Korea. The study's findings indicate that both conceptually and in application WIL in South Korea is shaped by underlying contextual influences. This highlights avenues for further empirical investigation, including internships as qualification rather than as a learning experience, culturally specific forms of mentoring within internships and the role of internships in the Korean graduate employment market.

Keywords: Internships, work-integrated learning, university to work, higher education, South Korea

Participation in work-integrated learning (WIL) programs has become an increasing prevalent component of the higher education experience internationally. WIL is used as the umbrella term that captures student activities that attempt to integrate academic programs with practical application in the workplace (Khampirat & McRae, 2016; Nagle, Lannon, & McMahan, 2018). Although, WIL has expanded its scope beyond internships, they remain a foundational component of WIL. Internships are programs through which university students as interns gain real world career-relevant work experience, in settings outside of the classroom, prior to graduation from an academic program (Rose 2016b). It has been noted by D'Abate, Youndt, and Wenzel (2009), that when the term internship is used, the level of structure and systematic integration with an intern's academic learning is generally low, relative to other forms of WIL such as co-operative education. The investigation of internships facilitates international comparison, given that internships, have well established international lineage of both practice and research relative to other forms of WIL. Hence, this study will utilize internships as a representative example of the practice of WIL in Korea.

In the 1960s, the term internship was almost exclusively associated with medical students in the United States. However, over the last two decades internship participation has rapidly increased, and in the 2000s a substantial proportion of university students in the United States completed internships, and a growing number of organizations utilize internships as a recruitment and selection tool (Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2004; National Association of College and Employers (NACE, 2018). Participation in internships is not isolated to the United States, as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany also extensively utilize internships as a component of higher education (Dessinger, 2006; Jackson, 2018). Paralleling these trends, a majority of Chinese university students now undertake internships prior to graduation (Liu, Wang, & Chen, 2010; Rose 2013; Rose, 2018b) and there are calls for the expansion of internship programs in other national contexts such as Vietnam (Bilsland, Nagy, & Smith, 2014).

Despite the widespread practice of internships globally, less is known regarding the practice of internships in contexts outside of the West, as the majority of extant internship knowledge is founded

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on research conducted in Western research contexts, leading to calls for WIL work contextualized to the Asian region (Zegwaard, 2012, Zegwaard, 2019). This bias in the research tied to the traditional objective of scientific research of developing generalized theories which explain and predict phenomena, independent of their context (Hempel, 1965). However, the applicability of this objective has long been challenged in the context of socially-based phenomena (Hickson, Hinings, McMillian, & Schwitter, 1974; Tsui, 2007). This objective has been particularly questioned relative to Asian workplace contexts, given the historical and cultural dominance of the West in establishing the extant body of contemporary workplace knowledge (Tsui, 2004; Van de Ven & Jing, 2012). Coupled with variables within Asian workplace and educational contexts which are known to shape phenomenon in a manner which is distinct from Western environments (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Holtbrügge & Mohr, 2010), this justifies a more emic approach to research when exploring the WIL within Asian national contexts.

In order to contribute to redressing the aforementioned asymmetry in the WIL literature, this study seeks to contextualize the practice of WIL to Korea, via the prism of internships. This was done by seeking to situate internships relative to Korea's social, cultural, economic and institutional backdrop, followed by an exploration of internships in Korea from the local intern participants perspective. In order to explore which contextual factors, may influence both the conceptualization and practice of internships in Korea? The objectives of this study were thus twofold, one, to provide the prerequisite knowledge to better define and calibrate the practice of internships to Korea relative to global practice, and two, to unearth any contextual variables of relevance to future empirical work related to enhancing the practice of WIL beyond Western contexts.

THE KOREAN WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING CONTEXT

Higher Education in Korea

Since the 1960s, Korea has experienced rapid economic growth, with a large-scale shift from a largely agriculturally based economy into manufacturing and service industries, with an increasing global presence in high-technology and value-added sectors. This remarkable economic transformation has been paralleled by a large expansion of higher-education in Korea, to the point where within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Korea now has the highest rates secondary educational completion, and the highest proportion of these students progressing to tertiary education (OECD, 2018). Furthermore, higher-education entrants in Korea arrive equipped with high numeracy and literacy skills by global standards according to the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2016). These educational achievements are driven by the strong emphasis that Korean society places on education and educational attainment (Kuczera, Kis, & Wurzburg, 2009).

Korea's traditional educational philosophies are influenced by Confucianism, manifested today in an elitist hierarchical education system, which clearly demarcates between skill sets and occupations regarded as intellectual and those of a non-academic or vocational nature (Cooke, 2005; Shin, 2012). Consequently, the goal of intellectual or academic education traditionally has been to produce individuals who possessed intellectual, humanistic, and moral superiority, rather than a narrowly defined applied skill set (Bodde, 1957; Hu, 1974). This historical demarcation is clearly demonstrated in the contemporary civil service examinations, which evaluate a broad intellectual ability relative to other candidates, with attainment in these examinations functioning as the primary selection method for public officials, a practice which has also been replicated to varying degrees in the private sector, for instance the Global Samsung Aptitude Test (GSAT) (Chang, 2009). For organizations who do not

have their own inhouse examinations, the rank of the candidate's university becomes a key selection criterion, given that this rank is reflective of the graduate's relative performance in the national university entrance exams, and thus position in the educational hierarchy (Chang, 2009).

The above Confucian inspired conceptualization of higher education has implications for WIL in Korea, as the acquisition of practical work-related skills has historically been regarded as being the domain of lower status vocational training, rather than academic education (Goodman, Hatakenaka, & Kim, 2009). Although a vast majority of secondary school graduates complete 4-year academic degrees, vocational institutes, polytechnics, human resource development institutes and 3-year junior colleges emphasizing more practical work-related skills in Korea, have also undergone expansion in the preceding decades (Chae & Chung, 2009). However, these institutions have traditionally been viewed as lower status, and graduates of these institutions may face social stigma upon graduation, and restrictions for entering non-blue collar positions or promotions, even subsequent to gaining substantial work experience within a relevant field (Jung et al., 2004). A majority of career paths into both public and private white-collar positions require a minimum of a 4-year university degree (Green, 2015). Such degrees are largely regarded not to be representative of an accumulation of skill sets directly related to a profession/occupation, but rather as a prerequisite minimum qualification for selection or promotion (Shin, 2012). Thus, WIL as a component of university education represents a nexus between these two historically distinct forms of education and career pathways, thereby, proposing an educational mode diverging from the culturally prescribed demarcation between academic and more applied work-related educational realms.

Korea's University to Work Transition

Although Korean universities have successfully produced a significant quantity of graduates, there are growing indications of a disjuncture between the supply of new graduates and the demands of the contemporary Korean workplace. The foremost indicator is a rapid increase in graduate unemployment rates, which are now amongst the highest in the OECD, coupled with stagnant graduate starting salaries (Statistics Korea, 2019). The aforementioned, influence of Confucianism on Korean university education is a potential contributing factor to this mismatch, namely a persistent emphasis by students, parents and society on success and social standing, via pure relative academic achievement, rather than the development of applied work related competencies, thereby exasperating the disconnect between higher education and industry (Kuczera et al., 2009).

There are additional contextual factors which contribute to an increasingly difficult university to work transition for Korean graduates. Firstly, graduates selective job-seeking behaviors focused on a narrow number of prestigious organizations, coupled with a reluctance to lower their expectations to align with the value of their academic degree in the contemporary employment market (Kim & Jeon, 2015; Lim & Lee, 2019b). A second related contextual phenomenon is that when faced with the realities of a competitive job market a graduate's reaction is not to enhance their employability through gaining relevant work experience, but rather to supplement their university degree with additional qualifications (Hong, 2018). These additional pre-employment qualifications are colloquially referred to as "specs" an abbreviation of specifications. These specs largely consist of the competitive process of bolstering ones resume with additional examinations, certifications and activities deemed to enhance employability, in an arms race against other new graduates. This, process has been revealed to delay workforce entry by up to 1.5 years in many cases, whilst resumes on paper have been enhanced towards desired employment targets, rather than spending this time to accumulate actual work experience for career advancement (Kim & Jeon, 2015; Lim & Lee, 2019b).

Interns within the Korean Organizational Context

Interns uniquely straddle blurred role identities between student, intern, job seeker & newcomer employee (Rose, 2018a). This ambiguous organizational status may be particularly problematic within the Korean context, given that Korean society and workplaces are structured along clearly defined hierarchies, and thus defining one's exact relative position in this hierarchy has significant implications (Milliman, Kim, & Von Glinow, 1993). Specifically of relevance to interns, Korean society and organizations draw a sharp hierarchical distinction between regular/permanent and non-regular employees commonly on fixed 2-year term contracts. These two categories of employees often work alongside each other performing similar tasks; however, the former receives marked preferential treatment in terms of their organizational status, salary, benefits, rights and job-security (Cooke & Jiang, 2017). In a restrictive labor market, the distinction between these two employee categories has widened creating a significant societal issue, and obtaining sought after regular employment positions has become an increasingly competitive pursuit amongst new graduates (Hong, 2018). This distinction in employment status has two primary implications for graduate's workforce entry and, by extension, internships. Firstly, graduates often will not accept non-regular employment positions, whilst preparing to apply for regular positions contributing to the aforementioned pre-employment qualification building race and delayed workforce entry. Secondly, many graduates enter non-regular employment positions with the hope of achieving conversion in their status to regular employee after an initial 2-year contract period, a process which as potential parallels with the process of conversion from intern to regular employee, after the completion of an internship.

It is unclear where an intern would fit relative to this system of significant distinctions in employment status. Although interns would sit below non-regular employees in the organizational hierarchy, they may share commonalities with non-regular employees primarily in terms of possessing a fixed term non-renewing position, with the possible desire to be converted to a permanent position. However, there are some finer grained distinctions in the Korean workplace hierarchy of relevance to internships. Namely, there is a category of internships in Korea completed after graduation, within which interns formally compete against one another for limited regular employment positions. The unique dynamics of these intern positions include competition between interns, extensive unpaid overtime, and navigating the organizational hierarchy. This type of internship is so entrenched in popular culture, that the most popular workplace TV drama of recent times *Misaeng* created by Lee, Lee, & Ham (2014), is solely dedicated to depicting the struggle of interns competing for regular employment positions. Culturally, specific elements of the Korean organizational context can be highlighted via such internships. For instance, in one episode of *Misaeng* interns undergo the competitive process which elevates their title and an incremental movement up the organizational hierarchy from "intern" to "temporary employee in training" (Lee, Lee, & Ham, 2014). Such internships as depicted in *Misaeng* although widespread in Korea are more designed towards end of screening, intensive employee induction, and the process of organizational socialization, rather than the traditional goals of WIL. Furthermore, the prevalence of these internships coupled with a competitive job market have led to concerns regarding the exploitation of intern/trainees as cheap labor and calls for expanded legal protection of the ambiguous employment category of interns (Kim & Jeon, 2015).

On the backdrop of high graduate unemployment, there have been ongoing calls to enhance the process of transition from education to work via strengthening the relationship between education and industry (Choi, 2017; Jung et al., 2004). Specifically, enhancement of WIL programs to better facilitate the transition of new graduates into the labor market has been advocated (Lim & Lee, 2019a). The government has also acknowledged the role of internships and enacted a number of policies aimed at

mitigating some of the aforementioned issues with internships, for instance small and medium-sized enterprises can receive government subsidies for the wage costs associated with internships and grants to encourage conversion to regular employment (Kuczera et al., 2009). However, despite the prevalence of internships in Korea, and their potential ability to mitigate the current university to work disjuncture, to date there is a lack of empirical work from a Korean perspective. Therefore, on the social, cultural, economic, and institutional backdrop outlined, the subsequent sections of this paper are dedicated to at unearthing the contextual themes of relevance from a Korean intern's perspective.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design & Procedure

Thematic analysis was selected as the method of analysis used to interpret the data gathered from the interviews in this study, a method used for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes that emerge within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is appropriate for this study, as the aim was unearthing contextually relevant variables. A contextualized approach to research requires a degree of flexibility when performing analysis, which is facilitated by thematic analysis, and allows ongoing engagement with the literature throughout the analysis process (Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). Regarding the identification of representative extracts, from interviews Krueger's (1994), criteria were utilized as a framework, namely: words, context, internal consistency, and frequency of comments.

The sample for the interviews were collected purposefully, by selecting participants who had recently been involved in internships, and yet to enter the workforce. It was considered that such interviewees would be the most capable of providing insight into internships in Korea from an intern's perspective). The sampling frame consisted of an internal university database of students currently undertaking internships. Interviewees were selected from within business school undergraduates, as this facilitated sampling from a wide range of range of internship experiences relative to more narrowly defined degree courses such as engineering or medicine.

In regards to sample size, the study followed the established practice in interview research which utilize probabilistic samples, of discontinuing sampling when theoretical saturation occurs, and thus new conceptual categories cease to emerge from the interviews, thereby introducing redundancy in additional sampling (Birks & Mills, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Furthermore, this operationalization of saturation sampling, is consistent with the stated aims of the study to explore initial broad contextual themes of relevance to internships in Korea from the intern's perspective, rather than the aim of deriving causal inferences from the sample (Saunders et al., 2018).

Interviewees were first approached via e-mail, and once they had expressed interest in participating in the study, they were contacted by telephone to schedule the interview, in person, in an office on campus. Information regarding the interviewee and internship characteristics was also gathered via e-mail prior to the interview. Prior to the interviews, all interviewees were provided with a letter explaining the purpose and nature of the interview, highlighting that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. The final sample consisted of 26 former interns who had recently completed optional internships of approximately of three months to six months in length and received major elective course credits for their internship completion. Of the 26 interns, 61 % were female, and their mean age was 22.30 years with a standard deviation 1.40. Internships completed after graduation were excluded given that this category of internships can be regarded as serving a distinctly different purpose to pre-graduation internships in Korea. The internships were representative of a range of industrial sectors and ownership structures, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Characteristics of sample

Interns		Host -Organizations	
<i>Age</i>		<i>Ownership Structure</i>	
Mean	22.30	State-Owned Enterprise	7.69%
SD	01.40	Domestic Privately Owned	65.38%
<i>Gender</i>		Joint-Venture	7.69%
Male	29.00%	Foreign-Owned	15.38%
Female	61.00%	Government Departments	7.69%
<i>Major</i>		<i>Industry</i>	
Global Business	61.53%	Manufacturing	19.23%
Global IT Business	15.38%	Information Technology	15.38%
Economics	03.84%	Health Care	11.53%
International Trade	07.69%	Hospitality/Tourism	15.38%
Hotel and Convention	07.69%	Retail	11.53%
Management	03.84%	International Trade	26.92%

FINDINGS

Motivations and Outcomes

Interview responses revealed the primary motivation for undertaking internships was to increase employability in general terms, as a component of qualification building. Firstly, to mitigate perceived deficit in work experience, prior to applying for jobs “As I do not have much work experience, I feel I should, do an internship before I graduate and start applying for jobs”. In addition, internships were conceptualized as a required component of a new graduate’s resume “I think an internship is a basic ‘spec’ for new graduates” and “I already took one year off study to complete additional certifications, so I think doing an internship also will be good for my job seeking”. A secondary motivation for internship participation emerged, associated with career exploration, “I have no idea what I want to do with my future, so I think I should try some different jobs before I graduate” and “I think I need to know what the real world of work is like before I graduate”. Notably internships were largely not undertaken with a view to employment within the internship host-organization.

Although as aforementioned interns did not enter internships with the expectation of been converted to employees, the interviews did reveal that host organizations, particularly small and medium enterprises’ were utilizing internships in a recruitment and selection capacity, “My boss wants me to come back after I graduate, I think the work environment is good for me, so I will work for this company”. However, despite acknowledgment of the restrictive employment market interns were reluctant to accept offers, “I was offered to move to full time employment after graduation, however I think I will try for bigger company” and “Even though the company is good, I would prefer a more stable job so I will prepare to enter some government related organizations”. Such, statements highlight a misalignment between the intern and the host organization’s expectations regarding an internship’s employment outcomes.

A lesser motivation for internship participation was of a more opportunistic nature, “I was offered a good chance for an internship by my major department. I applied and was accepted” and “The internship was closer to my home than the university, so it was convenient to do the internship rather

than travel to university for my final semester for credits". Notably, the expectation of work specific learning opportunities was a minor theme, when it was acknowledged it was prefaced on the disconnect between academic study and work in the "real" world, "I thought an internship would allow me to learn some real practical skills as the real world is quite different from study" and "You know study and work are quite different so I wanted to learn about real world". Thus, internships were undertaken to provide general overview of the world of work, rather than to develop specific skill sets related to a specific future occupation, or as a means to apply their academic study. When, specific work-related skill sets were mentioned, it was the realization of skill deficiencies to be rectified "After my internship I decided to learn more about excel and access" and "I think ability to do good presentations is very important, to succeed in work". However, interns did not perceive they learnt these abilities during their internship experience.

Internship Experience Characteristics

One overarching theme was the wide variance in internship experiences on numerous dimensions. For instance, underemployment vs overemployment, the former "I was only an intern so, I only did very simple tasks like photo copying and making coffee" and "There wasn't really much for me to do, I did a lot of data entry" the latter "their expectations were really high I felt many tasks I was not qualified to do" , "We were often asked to do overtime together with the regular workers, including Saturdays" and "We had to attend many social engagements after work with managers and regular employees, this was very tiring". One area which emerged, where interns felt their skill sets were appropriately utilized, was when the intern possessed multilingual abilities "I enjoyed my internship I was allowed to deal with international customers when they visited" and "I got to act as a translator for one of the managers, for some important tasks". These, themes taken together indicate a lack of consistency in host-organizations' expectations regarding the role of interns.

Another dimension of large variance between internships, was in terms of payment received "Although my internship pay was very low, the time I worked was quite flexible so it was OK" , "My internship was with a multinational company in Korea, thus I was surprised I was paid more than many internships and some entry level positions" and "my company paid me as non-regular employee, and provide meals and transportation however expected me to work very hard including unpaid overtime". The payment received also had implications for general attitude towards the internships experience "I felt that this was not an internship rather I was very cheap labor for the company". A number of interns highlighted the supplementation of their pay by university and government programs, "because I had to move house for the duration of the internship the internship pay could no cover the rent, however I was lucky I got extra funding from my university through a government program" and "half my salary was from the company and half was provided by my University". Such supplementation adds another contributing dimension to the variance between internship payments.

The quality of mentoring received was also revealed to be a core differentiator internship experience. One theme of note was that well-regarded mentoring was not restricted to specific skill sets associated with the internship role, but also encompassed broader career advice and assistance. "my senior gave me a lot of advice regarding, my future career" and "I learnt many things not just about my job from my senior for instance how to apply for jobs and what employers are looking for". Interns identified that mentors were not always formally designated by the host-organization. The aforementioned type of mentoring was amplified where a pre-existing base for the relationship existed, "I was lucky, my senior graduated the same university as me and taught me many things, and gave me advice about my future" and "One of the workers was from my home town so she took good care of me". The quality

of mentoring was also connected to the intern's overall perception of their internship experience. In addition to mentoring, host-organization insiders played another key role by exposing interns to the norms of high demands placed on employees within Korean organizations, "My co-workers were so busy they did not have time to teach me much", "My department did too many different things so it was difficult to teach me a specialized task" and "I realized by my seniors how hard and how much overtime I should work to have to be successful". Although, this organizational culture impacted negatively on the internship as a skill learning experience, it was regarded by interns a valuable insight into the reality of the world of

DISCUSSION

Although exploratory in nature, the study's findings highlight a number of a salient contextually specific phenomena of relevance, whilst also pointing to points of convergence with the established body of WIL literature. A core theme which emerged in this study was that interns' primarily conceptualized internships as a means to enhance their employability in general terms. This perspective has a degree of alignment with other research contexts, for instance internship participation has previously been shown to enhance an intern's general employability, (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000; Siegel, Blackwood, & Landy, 2010). Furthermore, research on early-career employees has indicated that they are strongly focused on developing their future career (Doering, Rhodes, & Schuster, 1983; Gould, 1979; Rose, 2018c). However, there is an important distinction in Korean context unearthed in this study, in that the responses indicated internships are largely conceptualized as an additional qualification to bolster one's resume alongside academic qualifications and examination-based certifications. This echoes previous work highlighting that Korean graduates undertake additional qualifications, as a means to enhance their competitive advantage relative to other employment candidates, rather than as a means to develop skills which would enhance their work performance in a specific desired job (Kim & Kim, 2015). This competitive process is escalated in an environment where 70% of graduates believe the qualifications listed on their resumes are deficient relative to their competition (Ock, 2016). On this backdrop this study's findings suggest that internship participation is evolving in Korea to be primarily valued as an additional pre-requisite qualification, box to tick on one's resume, prior to entering a competitive job market.

The perception of internship participation as a resume filler alongside a range of academic based qualifications, is in contrast to perceiving the experiential learning value of internships. However, this perception aligns with Korean Confucian influenced educational philosophies, as within this traditional conceptualization, education qualifications, are a signal of your relative educational attainment in a hierarchal system, rather than indicative of competence in any applied skill set (Lee, Jeong, & Hong, 2014). Thus, within this context, internship participation too has become an additional signal of a Korean graduate's position in the educational hierarchy rather than as an indicator of acquisition of practical work-related skill sets. Contradicting the predominate presumption in the wider WIL literature, that the career value of an internship is primarily derived from the development of career relevant skills, ideally in synergy with academic learning experiences (Beck & Halim, 2008; Beenen & Mrousseau, 2010; Forde & Medows, 2011). These findings indicate that the applicability of these foundational experiential learning focused presumptions of WIL may require recalibration for the Korean context.

Where the findings of this study converge with previous work, is that the Korean interns perceive the value of internships as a means of career exploration (Brooks, Cornelius, Greenfield, & Joseph, 1995; Gamboa, Paixão, & de Jesus, 2013). Previous work has shown that internships, provide a realistic

picture of organizational life, clarifying interns' expectations and, thereby, facilitating their transition into the workplace (Gault et al., 2000). Additionally, although not the predominate motivation for internship participation, the interviewees did confirm that Korean host-organizations were utilizing internships as a means of employee recruitment and selection, corresponding with a global trend of internships being utilized as a pathway into employment with the host-organization (Beenen & Pichler, 2014; Rose, Teo, & Connell, 2014; Zhao & Liden, 2011). However, Korean interns in this study appeared to be selective regarding acceptance of employment offers with the host-organization, with only one from four offers converting to employment with the host-organization. This is also consistent with the documented selective job seeking practices of new graduates in Korea (Kim & Jeon, 2015; Lim & Lee, 2019b).

A further point of convergence with previous work is the substantial variability between internship experiences, in terms of formal structure, tasks performed, integration with academic programs payment and benefits indicated in this study (D'Abate et al., 2009; Jackson, 2018). Two specific contextual variables impacting this variance in the Korean internship experience were highlighted. Firstly, the impact of ongoing large government funded projects aimed at enhancing graduate employability and university industry linkages. This can be utilized by universities supplementing interns' wages and pay for costs associated with internship participation, thereby, differentiating payment conditions between those internship positions eligible for government support and those which were solely supported by the host-organization. Secondly, interns indicated large differences in the number of required working hours ranging from minimal flexible hours to requirements for excessive overtime. The requirement for workers to work unpaid overtime is consistent with a broader organizational culture in the Korea, as Korea has the highest number of hours worked in the OECD (OECD, 2019). To address the acute issue of Korea's overtime culture, new 2018 legislation imposes strong penalties for employers who exceed a 52-hour work week. Hence, these expectations regarding hours worked by interns are reflective of broader issues in the Korean workplace, rather than those specifically associated with internships. However, these findings do support calls to strengthen the legal protections afforded to interns to more closely parallel other employees in Korea (Kim & Jeon, 2015).

The focal role that internee-senior mentorship relationship within the internship experience highlighted is consistent with broader internship research (Feldman, Folks, & Turnley, 1999; Keating, 2012; Rose 2016a). Formal mentoring in organizations is defined as a developmental relationship in which a more experienced senior mentor and a less experienced junior protégé (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). This is often characterized by career support, including providing challenging assignments, giving job coaching, sponsoring career advancement, fostering positive exposure and visibility, and protecting protégés from adverse organizational forces (Chun, Sosik, & Yun, 2012). One distinction revealed by interns, was that mentoring received often extended to career advice beyond the host-organization, including strategies to enhance their general employability and employment referrals to other organizations. A less narrowly defined form of mentoring is consistent with cultural norms in Asian society and organizations, which favor more paternalistic forms of senior-junior relationships, within these paternalistic senior-junior relationships the scope of mentoring can be expected to be more holistic in nature, beyond the formal positions and the bounds of an organization (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

The study also unearthed a further contextual point of relevance to mentoring within internships in Korea. Korean organizations and society are typified by clear hierarchical distinction between seniors and juniors, and thus mentors and protégés (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). Unlike the west these distinctions do not exist predominantly in formal organizational hierarchies, but rather exist

within every relationship between individuals across societal settings, for instance, an individual senior in age by even one year is regarded as a hierarchical senior. For an intern at the bottom of the formal organizational and age hierarchy there is a large potential pool of seniors who could fill a mentoring role. However, there is an additional cultural overlay which can facilitate amplification of the development of mentoring relationships during an internship, namely Korean culturally specific forms of social network ties. Specifically, in the case of this study, interns drew attention to the influence of a pervasive form of social network tie called *yonjul* a tie whereby individuals are automatically tied, for instance by graduating from the same school, university or by sharing a hometown (Horak, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2008; Yee & Chang, 2009). In the presence of such network ties, heightened obligations can be expected of the senior towards the junior, in this case the intern, thereby, fostering and enhancing the quality and scope of mentoring during internships as supported in the findings of the current study.

Implications for Practice

Due to the current disjuncture between higher education graduate supply and workplace demands, the current study provides a number of timely insights of relevance to the practice of internships and, by extension, WIL in Korea. Firstly, by demonstrating to WIL stakeholders the persistence of traditional demarcations between academic and workplace skill sets. In order to mitigate this demarcation, higher education providers should endeavor to formally couple academic curriculum with the mastery of work-relevant skills sets, acquired via internships, thereby, explicitly endorsing synergies between academic and experiential education. Host-organizations can also reinforce this association and achieve a better return on investment from their internship programs, by tangibly linking acquisition of work-relevant competencies obtained via internships to post-internship employment selection criteria. Making those connections would send a strong signal to interns and society of the advantageous nature of acquiring tangible workplace skills in synergy with academic learning, consequently countering a cultural bias towards the acquisition of exam based academic qualifications.

The findings also suggest that within the Korean cultural context, internship outcomes can be enhanced by leveraging mentoring relationships with host-organization seniors. This may require formally recognizing the responsibilities associated with supervising an intern, which may require reassigning regular employment duties. In addition, host organizations should also formally incorporate activities, which strengthen the intern-supervisor relationship; for instance, feedback sessions and opportunities for social interaction between interns and their supervisors. Specifically, within the Korean context where possible facilitating intern-senior pairings which share a *yonjul* social network base, may act to catalyze relational linkages, instigating higher degrees of responsibility for mentoring interns. In addition, the facilitation of an open exchange of work and career issues, within such mentoring relationships, may also work to better calibrate new graduates' career expectations to the realities of contemporary Korean work environment.

The aforementioned contextual insights have potential implications beyond Korea, given the emergence of Korea as a regional educational hub, contributing to disrupting the traditional east to west student mobility flows (Jon, Lee, & Byun, 2014; Kondakci, Bedenlier, & Zawacki-Richter, 2018) (Kondakci et al., 2018). Korea hosted 70,796 international tertiary students in 2018, whilst dispatching 105,399 (UNESCO, 2018). Given the increased prevalence of internships in higher education programs globally, there is an increasing probability that both these inbound and outbound students will participate in internship programs, meaning that contextualized conceptualizations and behaviors associated with internships, in this study may also cross-national borders. Thus, advocating for enhanced pre-internship inductions, on-boarding and placements to better align intern expectations

and actions within the relevant national context, for instance in Korea the consideration of how *yonjul* may impact on internship mentoring, particularly for international students who lack the prerequisite relational bases prior to the internship experience.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was exploratory in nature, thus future work is needed to further empirically substantiate the findings. It is advisable that extensions of this work apply a mixed method design applying triangulation to enhance the validity of findings (Cameron, 2018). Furthermore, to increase the generalizability of results sampling of majors outside of the business school is required. Lastly, comparative research is advisable related to convergence and divergence between Korean and other global WIL contexts. For instance, future studies may address the role of distinctions in underlying eastern and western educational philosophies, the impact culturally distinct forms of social network practices, and the influence of an interns differing status within the host organization's hierarchy, across national WIL contexts.

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