

# Chapter 10

## Internships as Catalysts for Career Development: Bridging Education With Industry

### ABSTRACT

*In an ever-evolving global economy, the role of internships in preparing graduates for the workforce has gained renewed importance. Despite their significance, research on internships in New Zealand remains limited and requires updating to align with the changing tertiary, business, and political landscapes. Recent findings from a research committee commissioned by the New Zealand Government have underscored the critical need for graduates to emerge as market-ready professionals with degrees that are directly relevant to the business environment. Employers increasingly prioritize competencies such as communication, quantitative analysis, information technology, problem-solving, and teamwork—skills that internships can nurture alongside profession-specific technical expertise.*

### INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century workplace demands graduates who can seamlessly translate academic knowledge into professional impact (World Economic Forum, 2020). In response, higher education has increasingly adopted **work-integrated learning (WIL)** modalities—most prominently, internships—to cultivate both technical expertise and transferable skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and digital literacy (Billett, 2011). In New Zealand, a recent government-commissioned workforce report highlighted that less than 30% of business graduates felt “market

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-8834-1.ch010

ready” upon graduation, despite strong theoretical grounding (New Zealand Government, 2022).

Internships offer a structured route to **develop career-relevant competencies** by immersing students in workplace settings under supervised mentorship (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Yet, the **New Zealand context** presents unique challenges: regional skill shortages, limited formal internship frameworks within curricula, and a lack of coordinated evaluation of internship quality (Te Pūkenga, 2021). This chapter addresses these gaps by investigating:

1. How do structured internships contribute to the development of discipline-specific and generic competencies?
2. What systemic and logistical barriers impede effective internship implementation in New Zealand?
3. Which program design features and partnership models optimize outcomes for students, employers, and institutions?

Following this introduction, we first review the international and local literature on internships (**Literature Review**). We then outline our qualitative, two-phase **Methodology**, before presenting synthesized findings on the **Importance and Challenges** of internships. The chapter concludes with actionable **Recommendations** for embedding internships as **transformative** educational experiences in New Zealand’s business curricula.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic and practitioner literature on internships converges around their role in facilitating experiential learning, bridging academic curricula with workplace practice, and enhancing graduate employability. In this extended review, we explore four interrelated streams: (1) theoretical foundations underpinning internships; (2) documented benefits for students, employers, and institutions; (3) persistent challenges and barriers; and (4) emerging models of best practice, with a focus on relevance to the New Zealand context.

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