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HOSPITALITY HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EXPLORATORY

STUDY OF STUDENTS’ LEARNING EXPERIENCE DURING

OVERSEAS INTERNSHIP

BY

Lui Wing Yin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF HOTEL AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

April, 2015
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other tertiary institution. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references given.

___________________________ (Signature)

(LUI WING YIN)
ABSTRACT

“All genuine education comes through experience” (Dewey, 1938, p.25). Practicum is a critical element of any student’s overall education, particularly in hospitality education. With the growing trends and needs of overseas internship in hospitality management programs, the reform of the education system in Hong Kong, and the research gap in hospitality education literature, there is a need to study the learning experience of student interns in hospitality overseas internships. As experiential learning theory provides a theoretical foundation for studying the process of learning, this study explores, through the perspective of the experiential learning cycle model developed by David Kolb, the interns’ learning experience during overseas internship in the hospitality management degree program.

The researcher conducted an extensive literature review to construct the theoretical framework of this study and then generate the interview questions. She employed a qualitative method for this study, interviewing 18 interns from two universities in Hong Kong offering government-funded hospitality management related programs regarding their perceptions on overseas internship and their learning experience. The researcher also conducted focus group discussions and kept contacts with the interns via an online social network site before, during, and after their internship. Apart from the interns, the researcher also interviewed internship
coordinators to triangulate the data obtained from the interns.

The findings showed that more students after the internship perceived intercultural experience as a critical element in their learning. Moreover, interns explained that, after the internship they felt their internship coordinators and mentors at the university were not as important for their education as they thought before the internship. Instead, they found their colleagues and on-the-job supervisors to be the most significant ones to facilitate their learning. Furthermore, prior relevant work experience, regular feedback, and a final meeting for evaluation were critical for effective learning during the overseas internship. These findings regarding the overseas learning process not only fully support Kolb’s experiential learning theory, but also facilitate the construction of a new model of overseas internship learning.

This study explores the student learning process in overseas hospitality internship program in the context of Kolb’s learning cycle, which contributes to the extant literature on hospitality internship. The newly constructed overseas internship learning model also provides information for further research. Results of the study can serve as references for higher education institutions and the industry to improve the overseas internship programs and facilitate student learning experiences. Hospitality educators should continue efforts to imbue overseas internship with a real world and global orientation in close collaboration with host organizations.

**Keywords:** Learning Process, Learning Experience, Experiential Learning, Kolb’s Learning Cycle, Overseas Learning, Overseas Internship, Hospitality Education
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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents research background for the study. The first section provides an overview of related research and identifies existing problems. After the problem statement, the third section outlines the study's objectives and the significance of the study. The final sections define the key terms and outline the organization of this study.

1.1 Background

“All genuine education comes through experience” (Dewey, 1938, p.25). Practicums are an important component for any student’s overall education. Work-integrated education (WIE) and work-based learning (WBL), therefore, become crucial components in the curriculum due to the increasing complexity of the workplace environment (Gruman, Barrows, & Reavley, 2009; Mayburry & Swanger, 2010; Solnet, Kralj, Kay, & DeVeau, 2009). In hospitality programs, WIE or WBL has been widely adopted as an educational tool due to nature the hospitality industry and its need to develop practical skills. Internships can provide students opportunities and a learning landscape to experience real-world situations that directly relate to the application of knowledge (Beggs, Ross, & Goodwin, 2008). Many researchers have found practical experience to be a significant part of the curriculum for academic programs in hospitality, recreation, hotel, travel, and tourism related fields in comparison to other disciplines such as the humanities (Breiter, Cargill, & Fried-Kline, 1995; Cho, 2006; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Kay & Deveau, 2003; Petrillose & Montgomery, 1997/98).

Learning is most effective when it is grounded in experience (Train & Elkin, 2001). To provide students a real-world working environment, internships have now
become an essential part of the total student learning experience in hospitality programs (Barrows, 1999). However, a major problem higher educational institutions face today is the uncertainty about future career environment and conditions in the field due to the ever-changing nature of the industry and the complexity of the environment (Chen & Gursoy, 2007; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004).

To be successful in today’s and tomorrow’s hospitality field, higher educational institutions should keep themselves up to date regarding the knowledge and skill sets required so that the curriculum can meet the constantly changing needs of the industry (Chen & Gursoy, 2007; Clark, 2004; Gursoy & Swanger, 2004, 2005; Jayawardena, 2001).

Zehrer and Mössenlechner (2009) found that activity- and action-oriented competencies were the most important for tourism-related jobs, followed by social, communicative, personal, professional, and methodological competencies. Higher educational institutions should find a sustainable way to produce the preferred graduates with higher employability to the industry. Internship experience is one important mechanism to help students develop the competencies as required.

Substantial research has recognized the benefits of internship in recreation, hotel, and tourism management curriculum for students, employers, and higher educational institutions (Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, & Ogden, 2007; Beggs et al., 2008; Booth, 2004; Bowen, Lloyd, & Thomas, 2004; Busby, 2005; Chen & Gursoy, 2007; Cole, Cole, & Ferguson, 2005; Contomanolis, 2005; Fell & Kuit, 2003; Fox, 2001; Simmons, 2006). However, various researchers have discussed the negative impacts of internship (Barron, 2008; Barron et al., 2007; Beggs, Ross, & Knapp, 2006; Broadbridge, Maxwell, & Ogden, 2007; Eisner, 2005; Jenkin, 2001; Kusluvan, Kusluvan, & Eren, 2003; Rodriguez & Gregory, 2005). Manns (2003) noted that “simply having an experience does not mean that ‘learning’ has taken place”
Even worse, a bad internship experience can quickly turn a young person away from the industry (Wen, 2007). Therefore, it is important to understand the learning process during internship to prepare students properly for their hospitality career pursuits.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1.2.1 The Growing Trend of Overseas Internship Programs

Recently, overseas internship programs in the recreation, hotel and tourism management curriculum have proliferated, providing more graduates with stronger required competencies (Busby & Fiedel, 2001). In addition to the benefits of local internship, the overseas internship program offers the added advantage of benefits of an international environment (Bodenhorn, Jackson, & Farrell, 2005; Gibson, 2009; Toncar & Cudmore, 2000). It not only can enrich students’ cultural experiences and awareness with global insights, but also offer students opportunities to explore learning that is more meaningful by meeting people from different cultures (Bowen et al., 2004; Conceição & Skibba, 2007).

With the increasing globalization and competitiveness, as well as the importance of interacting with different people in the industry, professionals in the hospitality industry must have cultural experience and awareness to deal with cross-cultural issues arising from the multiculturalism of their staff and customers (Jordan, 2008; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004; van’t Klooster, van Wijk, Go, & van Rekom, 2008). Students who enter international studies and overseas internship are encouraged by their home institutions to gain a broadened perspective as global citizens (Finkelstein & Walker, 2008).

1.2.2 Reform of Education System in Hong Kong

The university curriculum in Hong Kong has been reformed from three to four
years since 2012. The reform seeks to integrate diverse learning experiences into the curriculum (Yang, Webster, & Prosser, 2011). Institutions offer experiential learning opportunities such as study abroad and work placement to equip students with appropriate work capabilities and develop as global citizens (Finkelstein & Walker, 2008). Higher educational institutions in Hong Kong providing hospitality programs such as Hong Kong Baptist University, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University also provide overseas internship opportunities to their students. With the recognition of possible negative impacts of internship on the relevant stakeholders, studying student learning experience from overseas internship allows hospitality management curriculum designers to provide pragmatic, adequate, and balanced education.

1.2.3 Research Gap

Many research studies have conceptually and empirically shown the effects of the internship program on different stakeholders including students, institutions, and industry. However, few researchers have studied the learning process in overseas internship programs, particularly in the context of hospitality management education.

The researcher searched the Proquest Dissertations and Theses database to develop a profile of existing research relating to learning experience in hospitality overseas internships. She used a combination of education terms and natural language terms with Boolean operators “or” or “and.” These include “overseas / international / abroad,” “internship / placement,” “hospitality / tourism / hotel / recreation” and “learning.” The researcher searched the database from its inception to January 2012. However, it yielded no study relating to the concerned topics. Among the past literature related to overseas internship programs, most studied programs in social work (Hay & O’Donoghue, 2009; Rai, 2004) or business related curriculum (Chapel, 1998; González, 1993; Toncar & Cudmore, 2000). Research on
hospitality overseas internship has been lacking.

Although there were three studies related to the overseas work placement of hospitality programs, the findings mainly focused on the perspective of the schools, reflected British viewpoints (Busby & Gibson, 2010; Gibson & Busby, 2009) and were concerned with learning outcomes (Yang et al., 2011). The research focused on the impacts of hospitality overseas internship on the administration and design of the program. No hospitality management literature focused on interns’ learning process during overseas internships.

Hence, the rationale for this study was to address the lack of literature found in this area and the need to review critically the issues in relation to overseas internship program in hospitality education. Since 1980s, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) introduced the activity approach, then the Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC) and curriculum integration to promote the student-centered approach to teaching (Yeung, 2009). This approach focuses on the needs of the students, and seeks to empower and enable students be autonomous in their own learning. Students’ learning experience significantly affects the effectiveness of the curriculum and student learning outcomes (Wright, 2011).

An overseas internship program enables students to construct knowledge themselves while the teachers and supervisors in the industry facilitate their learning. Thus, researchers should comprehensively explore student learning experience in overseas internship programs. Their studies can serve as a reference for higher educational institutions and the industry to improve overseas internship programs to enhance student learning experiences.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore students’ learning experiences during
overseas internship as part of the hospitality management curriculum. As learning is a continuous process whereby knowledge is created throughout the overseas internship program, the focus of this study is to examine the process of learning of interns during overseas internship. The study addressed the following two research questions:

1. How does learning experience affect interns’ perceptions toward overseas internship?
2. How do interns learn during the overseas internship?

In particular, the researcher intends to achieve the study’s main purpose through the following objectives:

- Examining students’ expectations of their overseas internship experience before the internship;
- Examining students’ perceptions of their overseas internship experience after their internship;
- Exploring challenges faced by students during their overseas internship program; and
- Determining the factors affecting student learning experience in each stage of the learning process.

By using the experiential learning theory, the study will conclude by providing a clear understanding of an effective learning process and offer a newly constructed overseas learning model.

1.4 Significance of the Study

By investigating the influence of overseas internship experience on interns and exploring student learning process in the hospitality overseas internship program, it is anticipated that this study would significantly contributes to the overseas learning
literature and to the practices of hospitality management education.

**1.4.1 Significance to the Academia**

First, little research has been conducted on student learning process in overseas internship. The majority of the research related to the hospitality internship has focused on the impacts on hospitality stakeholders. This study emphasized on the learning process of overseas internship in the context of hospitality management education, which was the area previously neglected from scholars, and it could bridge the research gap as previously identified.

Second, this study first attempted to develop a model of the learning process of hospitality overseas internship by integrating a learning theory into student learning process. It used Kolb’s experiential learning cycle as a conceptual framework of hospitality overseas internship learning process. Thus, this study tested the four stages model of Kolb’s learning theory empirically and verified the experiential learning theory in the context of hospitality overseas internship learning. As a preliminary study on the topic, the results can also serve as a foundation for future research. Therefore, this study made theoretical contributions relevant to hospitality higher education and learning theories, and extended the existing knowledge in the hospitality overseas internship from an academic standpoint.

**1.4.2 Significance to the Practices of Hospitality Management Education and Industry**

The practical contributions of this study benefit the hospitality stakeholders including institutions, industries, and students. From the institutional perspective, hospitality educators have realized the importance of work experience for hospitality graduates to develop their future career; they have consequently set a certain level of work experience as an outcome of hospitality management programs. As institutions are responsible for overseeing the internship program, a greater understanding of
student learning experience and the exploration of challenges students have faced in this program can help develop and improve the program. From the industry perspective, the results provide more information about students’ expectations and problems faced. The supervisors can learn more about their interns so they can better assist students in meeting their requirements and achieving their internship goals. Based on the findings of the research, both hospitality educators and the industry will be able to reflect on how to enhance interns’ learning experience during overseas internship to bring hospitality talents to the industry upon their graduation.

Students would definitely benefit from this study. They should benefit from this study by gaining better understanding of the overseas internship before they make the decision to enter it. They will have more realistic expectations for the program. Narrowing the gap between students’ expectations and reality may result in higher satisfaction at the completion of the program. In other words, all three groups of stakeholder win as more skillful and knowledgeable students enjoy higher employability and productivity that also benefits institutions and the industry.

In summary, the results of this study provide guidance for both institutions and the industry to improve and strengthen the effectiveness of the program on student learning experience in such a way that all stakeholders are receiving benefits. The results are also significant for future studies regarding student learning experience and overseas internship programs in a hospitality curriculum.

1.5 Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined specifically for this investigation:

1.5.1 The Hospitality and Tourism Industry

An early definition of hospitality included all businesses and services whose primary objective was serving people outside of a private home (Barrow, 1999).
Stutts (1999) observed “the hospitality and tourism industry includes multiple segments, all interrelated yet discrete, including lodging, food service, contract services, gaming services, private clubs, meeting planning, theme parks, suppliers, and hospitality education, among others” (p. 21). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the accepted definition of hospitality stated by the International Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (I-CHRIE), which includes food, lodging, recreation, and travel-related service (Barrow, 1999).

1.5.2 Hospitality Education

Riegel (1995) defined hospitality education as “a field of multidisciplinary study which brings the perspectives of many disciplines, especially those found in the social sciences, to bear on particular areas of application and practice in the hospitality and tourism industry” (p. 6). Adopting a slightly more restricted definition, Fidgeon (2010) traced back the origins of tourism education as “the study of some of its component sectors namely hotel operations and catering or component activities such as leisure and recreation” (p. 699). This study uses an operational definition of hospitality education from I-CHRIE as education related to food, lodging, recreation, and travel-related services.

1.5.3 Higher Education

The definition of higher education varies depending upon the laws and culture of the country involved. It generally means education beyond the secondary level, especially education at the college or university level. Higher education in Hong Kong means any education higher than secondary education, including professional, technical, and academic. It is the highest level of education in Hong Kong, regulated under the Hong Kong Law Education Ordinance (Cap. 279).

1.5.4 Internship

There are numerous definitions for the term “internship,” most of which
describe its various natures and functions. Internship is “an opportunity to have an intensive, work-based exposure to a broad range of operations within a company” (Crossley, Jamieson, & Brayley, 2007, p. 312). It is an opportunity offering students an individualized, real-world educational experience through the study of a structured employment situation. The internship can also be referred to as planned employment as part of a higher education program (Inui, Wheeler, & Lankford, 2006). Busby, Brunt, and Baber (1997) identified the duration of internships lasting as short as four weeks to as long as 14 months.

1.5.5 Overseas Internship

Gibson and Busby (2009) identified overseas internship as “internship taken place outside the country within which the university is located” (p. 468). An objective of an overseas internship program is to develop industry knowledge and skills under different cultural settings. For this reason, this researcher operationally defines overseas internship as any internship outside of Hong Kong. Internships in mainland China or Macau are also considered as overseas internships in this study due to cultural differences. Since Hong Kong was leased to the United Kingdom (UK) for 99 years from 1898 to 1997, and although Hong Kong was returned to the People’s Republic of China on 1 July, 1997, its identification as a former British colony and current Special Administrative Region of China make it culturally different from either UK or China (Hong Kong Higher Education, 2007b).

1.5.6 Hospitality Internship Stakeholders

Although stakeholders in the internship experience are wide-ranging, the three key parties involved are students, the industry, and institutions (Busby, 2005; Cho, 2006). They are all key elements in the success of internships.

Intern. A hospitality management student who participates in an internship program.
**Internship coordinator.** An assigned person at the educational institution who is responsible for overseeing the internship process for student interns. This individual may recruit and approve internship placement sites.

**Internship mentor.** An influential person in the educational institution who guides and supports the protégés’ learning throughout the internship.

**Industry.** Any business operating in the field of hospitality, which includes any business that involves food, lodging, recreation and travel-related services.

**Host organization.** The company or organization offering the internship opportunities to the students.

**Industry coordinator.** The key contact person and coordinator of internship at the work site. This individual may be a member of the human resource staff or the intern’s direct supervisor.

**Industry supervisor.** An employee who is responsible for overseeing the fulfillment of internship experience requirements for an intern. He or she has the authority to guide and support the interns to reach their personal and career development through the training process (Tanke, 1986).

1.6 Organization of the Study

This thesis contains five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the background of this study, presenting the problem statement, purpose and significance of the study, definition of terms, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature regarding hospitality education and internship, impacts of internship and overseas internship, and theories related to student learning experience. The comprehensive review of literature underlines and supports the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology employed. It justifies the research approach and method adopted, and covers the details of the
research process as well as the method of analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the interviews with interpretations and offers a full discussion. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a discussion of the contributions of this study, offers researchers suggestions for future research, and provides hospitality stakeholders recommendations for further improvement.

1.7 Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 first provided the context for this study by presenting the necessary background information. It identified the research problems by recognizing the issues inherent in the growing trend of overseas internship and the research gap. These problems provide justification of this study and lay a foundation for the study’s objectives. Moreover, the chapter discussed both the academic and practical significance and value of the study. The chapter concluded with the definition of key terms in this study and an outline of the thesis’s organization.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter critically reviews the existing literature on hospitality education and its internship, impacts of internships and overseas internships on the hospitality stakeholders, and learning theories underpinning the internship learning experience. It first introduces the background of hospitality education, which shows the importance of practicums in hospitality programs given the nature of the industry, and the pivotal role of hospitality programs in producing preferred graduates for the industry.

The second section presents the growth of internship programs in the hospitality curriculum. The section also reviews approaches adopted in the programs, including the WIE and WBL, to understand better the objectives and components of internships.

The third section provides a review of the impacts of hospitality internships on hospitality stakeholders in light of the benefits and problems previous studies have identified. The fourth section reviews the empirical research on overseas internships to examine the differences between local and overseas internship programs and realize the issues raised regarding overseas internships.

The fifth section reviews learning theories. To explore the student learning experience in overseas internship programs, it is necessary to review the literature regarding the theories underpinning the internship learning experience to construct the theoretical framework for this study. The final section concludes the chapter by summarizing the literature reviewed and providing a justification of the theory selected to construct the theoretical framework for this study.
2.1 Hospitality Education

2.1.1 Development of Hospitality Education

Hospitality education is a multidisciplinary study including components of hotel operations, catering, tourism, leisure, and recreation (Fidgeon, 2010; Riegel, 1995). It arose from the need for apprentice programs in hotels and restaurants as on-the-job training, common in Western Europe for many years with its predominately skill training approach (Fletcher, 1994; Tsai, Goh, & Huffman, 2006). Mayburry and Swanger (2010) observed the focus of hospitality education prior to 1950 was on skill training. The origin of hospitality education goes back to the late 19th century and it began to grow noticeably in the early 1920s.

Gillespie and Baum (2001; 2002) identified Lausanne Hotel School as the first specialist school, founded in 1893. However, the European Hotel Diploma (EURHODIP) was the first formally recognized education program for tourism-related subjects in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Moreover, the Hotel School at Cornell University introduced the first four-year program in 1922, after a request and support from the American Hotel Association (AHA) (Fu, 1999). Today, Cornell University is still one of the most famous and prominent institutions in the world offering programs in hospitality. Following Cornell, schools such as Michigan State University and University of Nevada at Las Vegas offered programs (Severt, Tesone, Bottorff, & Carpenter, 2009). These programs began as a response to a need for trained managers with professional knowledge.

Hospitality programs grew rapidly over the next decades for many various reasons. A favorable business environment in the 1960s to 1980s stimulated the explosive need of qualified managers for the hospitality industry. Moreover, greater academic preparation required to run the business due to the increasing complexity gave hospitality programs a pivotal role in the industry. The trend has continued;
industry support for the programs and an increasing need for specialized talents fueled the growth in hospitality education in recent years (Foucar-Szocki & Bolsing, 1999).

2.1.2 Hospitality Education in Hong Kong

2.1.2.1 Higher education in Hong Kong. There are eight government-funded, internationally-recognized universities in Hong Kong that offer Associate, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees. These and other institutions also offer post-secondary diplomas, certificates, and vocational training (Hong Kong Higher Education, 2007a).

In the Hong Kong higher education, a non-statutory advisory committee is responsible for advising the government of the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the development and funding needs of higher education institutions in the SAR. It is called The University Grants Committee (UGC) of Hong Kong. The UGC believes that the future of Hong Kong depends upon harnessing knowledge and understanding to define the cultural vision, and create and respond to economic opportunity. Hong Kong must have its own strong higher education system. To achieve the mission, the UGC aims to promote international competitiveness where it occurs in institutions, understanding that all will agree to this endeavor and that some institutions will have more internationally competitive centers than others (UGC, 2006).

The two latest reports regarding the education policy for higher education set out a suggested direction for the future development of the higher education sector (Legislative Council, 2011; UGC, 2012). The report highlights trends of globalization and needs for internationalization. Particularly, the 2012 education reform regarding the extension of university curriculum to four years seeks to integrate diverse learning experience into the curriculum (Yang et al., 2011).
Therefore, other than attracting non-local students to study in Hong Kong, the UGC suggested sending local students to overseas exchange programs as a means to achieve internationalization of the higher education sector (Legislative Council, 2011).

2.1.2.2 Hospitality degree programs in Hong Kong. There are 34 hospitality bachelor degree programs in Hong Kong offered by 16 institutions or jointly run by overseas universities (see Appendix A). These programs fall into two categories: degrees for Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) and self-financing top-up degrees for sub-degree holders (mainly higher diploma and associate degree graduates). As top-up degrees are tailor-made to sub-degree holders to advance their qualifications to a degree level (Education Bureau, 2012), students who are studying top-up degree programs must have certain industry experience during their sub-degree studies.

Among these hospitality degree programs, only four UGC-funded programs exist: (a) a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Physical Education and Recreation Management offered by Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU); (b) a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Hotel and Tourism Management offered by The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), (c) a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Hotel Management, and (d) a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Tourism Management. The last two degrees are offered by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). These four programs offer overseas internship for students to gain industry experience in different countries to enhance students’ competitiveness.

Department of Physical Education (PE), Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). Physical Education is an academic department at HKBU as well as a service unit in the community. It provides one UGC funded degree program, the BA (Hons) in Physical Education and Recreation Management (PERM). Internship is an
essential component in the PERM program. It adopts a strategy of applied learning and a structured program developed and supervised by the university in collaboration with a cooperating organization. The work experience is a part of the student’s final assessment (Hong Kong Baptist University [HKBU], 2012).

The internship is a two-unit course in which each student works in a recreation and sports organization for at least 300 hours during the summer after their second year of study. The internship experience is a valuable element to nurture students’ professionalism and practice in preparation for their future career. It can be either operational based or project based in Hong Kong and abroad. Students can gain exposure to the industry operation through summer internships. Upon the completion of the internship, students are expected to (a) gain practical experience in the recreation and sports field; (b) integrate and apply theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to real life experience; (c) develop self-confidence, social and communication skills; and (e) discover strengths and weaknesses while working as an apprentice. Students can choose their placement in different types of sports and recreation agencies locally as well as overseas. To increase the exposure of students, more than half of the internships are arranged in overseas agencies each year (HKBU, 2011).

**School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK).** The BBA in Hotel and Tourism Management (HMG) is the only UGC degree program offered by SHTM, CUHK. It nurtures hospitality leadership in the regional and global arena and delivers an integrated business education in the context of the broader hospitality field. Students are required to take the core curriculum of business courses, similar to those offered by the Integrated BBA Program, plus courses in hotel and tourism management, real estate and property investment, and hospitality strategic management.
The program curriculum emphasizes both theory and practice, offering students an excellent opportunity to learn how to apply business theories to real-life situations in the hotel, tourism, real estate, and other service industries. In addition to business knowledge, the program provides students with comprehensive and practical training for the service industries in the context of hotel and tourism management. All students must participate in industry-related internships during the summer of their course of study. Some students will have the opportunity to join overseas internships in the United States, Spain, and Japan. The summer internship is a non-credit bearing module (The Chinese University of Hong Kong [CUHK], 2011).

School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). PolyU emphasizes the value of practical education and connecting classroom theories with workplace applications through on-the-job placement to provide professional education to meet the needs of society. Since 2006-2006, all students taking undergraduate degree programs must complete a mandatory WIE component as part of the curriculum (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University [PolyU], 2007). The SHTM offers two UGC funded degree programs including a BSc (Hons) in Hotel Management and a BSc (Hons) in Tourism Management. Following the strategy of PolyU, the SHTM implements WIE by placing over 400 students each year at leading hotels, restaurants chains, and tourism organizations in Hong Kong and overseas.

The three-credit placement program requires the students to work in a hospitality organization for at least 440 contact hours. It offers students WIE with a number of personal and industry relevant outcomes that students should (a) gain experience in a relevant industry sector; (b) develop and acquired skills through practical work experience; (c) apply classroom theory in practical settings; (d) learn
to appreciate industry practice and the importance and role of service quality; (e)
develop people skills through interactions with peers, subordinates and supervisors;
and (f) develop positive attitudes as hospitality professionals.

Other than the placements in Hong Kong, students can choose overseas
placement for the 10-week placement program. They are required to attend the
scheduled compulsory tutorials in preparation for the placements. Those who do not
pass the placement cannot be awarded a degree (PolyU, 2012). Different from the
internship programs in PolyU and HKBU, the internship Program in CUHK carries
no credit but required for graduation (CUHK, 2011).

2.2 Hospitality Internship Programs

The workplace is one of the most important opportunities for learning
throughout life. Shaw and Green (1999) stated:

[the] workplace… offers opportunities for developing and accrediting
knowledge and learning in the widest sense, and hence is capable of
providing more immediate and relevant opportunities for learning…
The approach is not new; it has been and remains the foundation of the
apprenticeship system and other practice-based schemes. It is however a
more novel concept in some parts of higher education and one which
continues to set challenges for those responsible for developing and
delivering programs (p.173).

As noted by Kolb (1984), “learning must start with personal experience that frames
future learning.” Education relevant to work occurs primarily within the confines of
vocational education (Hoerner & Wehrley, 1995). The notion of a close relationship
between teaching and practice in which work and learning go hand-in-hand can
support the importance of work experience (Swallow, Hall, & English, 2006). John
Dewey (1916), an early education theorist, advocated education to train students
with technical skills and produce educational outcomes that foster the growth of
democratic-minded citizens.
Today, WBL and WIE have become more important due to the increasing complexity and dynamic changes of the environment. Institutions struggle with challenges and adapting to changes (Gruman et al., 2009; Mayburry & Swanger, 2010; Solnet et al., 2009). Statler, the father of American hotels, was first to advocate hospitality experiential learning, teaching ‘real world’ management through hands-on experience for hospitality students (Damonte & Vaden, 1987). In contrast with generic business subjects, hospitality-related fields such as hotel, leisure, and event management deal with specific sectors of the hospitality industry and are thus applied subject areas (Solnet, Robinson, & Cooper, 2007). Being a form of WBL or WIE, internship should be included in the hospitality management curriculum (Zopiatis, 2007).

Recently, student participation in hospitality internship programs has grown significantly (Solnet et al., 2009). It had dramatically increased to the point that three of four hospitality graduates completed an internship by 2000, compared to only one in every 36 graduates in 1980 (Coco, 2000). In a global survey involving more than 1,500 hospitality students and 42 institutions across 17 countries (Young Hotelier Summit, YHS, 2011), 37% of student respondents said that they were looking for an internship as their next position. In response to the rapid growth of hospitality education and the importance of work experience, the I-CHRIE Handbook of Accreditation started to include work experience as one of the three sections of curriculum requirements for majors in hospitality management (Su, Miller, & Shanklin, 1998). Consequently, internship has become a necessity in designing hospitality curriculum and has developed in various forms to assist students in locating internships, with some offering academic credits (Cho, 2006; Ko, 2007; Lam & Ching, 2007). In a hospitality curriculum, internship programs can be compulsory or elective, some offer academic credits ranging from one to 15 credits.
Despite the differences, a common key goal of internship is to provide students with practical experience in a real-world situation.

Atkinson, Rizzetti, and Smith (2005) regarded WBL and WIE as umbrella terms to describe the range of educational programs combining classroom learning and practical experience such as work-based projects and cooperative education programs. Accordingly, internship can be classified as a form of WIE or WBL, providing valuable learning experiences for student interns (Clark, 2003; Solnet et al., 2009).

### 2.2.1 Work-Based Learning Approach

Hoerner and Wehrley (1995) maintained the education system should be changed from content-based learning to WBL to make a smooth transition from school to work. In this new educational paradigm, WBL is the key to providing effective school-to-work transition for all students to be productive, contributing members of society. It merges theory with practice and knowledge with experience. It also recognizes that the workplace offers as many opportunities for learning as the classroom. Such learning, however, needs to center around reflection on work practices. Gruman et al. (2009) realized the extent to which the hospitality management discipline adheres to the basic principles of WBL. The practices in this approach lay the fundamentals of developing management skills and providing students with some work experience and the opportunity to put what they have learned into practice.

Work-based learning is defined as “learning experiences and activities that are based on and in some type of work setting or stimulated work setting, that is, apprenticeship, internship, co-op, on-the-job training, career academies, school-based enterprises, occupational/technical labs, job simulation, and the like” (Hoerner & Wehrley, 1995, p.10). The value of experience, reflection, and
community are emphasized in WBL; they develop insight into one’s chosen profession and the foster management skills (Realin, 1997). Clark and Whitelegg (1998, p.325) described as “the incorporation into university degree structures of some methods of giving students an appreciation of ‘world of work.’” The authors suggested adding the skills acquired in the university through WBL without displacing any existing style of learning. The study described how WBL works, who benefits, and by how much. Worked-based learning takes place at the employer’s place of business and on compulsory basis, with higher employer involvement, more intense contact between the students and employer, and greater range of skills potentially affected. These factors enhance effectiveness of student learning.

“Learning as required in the midst of action and dedicated to the task at hand” is a critical element in the WBL process (Realin, 2000, p.2). Hence, action learning is key. Revans (1980), the pioneer and founding father of action learning, identified action learning as an education strategy and an approach to management education and training. It emphasizes learning by doing and seeks to generate learning from human interaction arising from engagement in the solution of real-time (not simulated) work problems. Real problems should become the focus of study because people learn most effectively when experiencing and solving real time problems (McGill & Brockbank, 2004). After a comprehensive review of what action learning is from various theorists and practitioners, O’Neil and Marsick (2007) developed the definition as “an approach to working with and developing people that uses work on an actual project or problem as the way to learn” (p.6).

2.2.2 Work-Integrated Education Approach

Work-integrated education is an essential element in many academic curricula around the globe, acting as a bridge between theories learnt in the classrooms and applied in the workplace (Solnet et al., 2009). It is designed not only to give students
real world experience and skills, but to reinforce and motivate their academic studies at the same time (Stull, 2003). This form of learning can also provide more varieties of tasks and opportunities to develop the specific competencies, desirable attitudes, and transferable skills college-based education does not have (Hodkinson, 2005).

Work-integrated education refers to activities that integrate work (or industry) experience with formal studies through work experience, internships, site visits, industry based projects, case studies using industry experience, and having industry experts provide guest lectures (Edwards, 2007). Wiredu (2005) described work-integrated learning as

“… an epitome of social learning in which the learner is immersed in the practice of what is being learnt – in which the engagement of learners in the experience in purposeful, deliberate and predetermined as a part of work arrangements of an organization rather than accidental or coincidental engagement” (Wiredu, 2005, p.51).

Work-integrated learning is also referred to as active learning and experiential learning. Meyers and Jones (1993, p.20) derived active learning from two basic assumptions: “(1) that learning is by nature an active endeavor and (2) that different people learn in different ways”. Different from the traditional passive learning where teachers present information to passive recipients (students) through lectures, active learning is an education transformation involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing in higher order tasks such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Students are immersed in the active learning environments and more likely to achieve the learning objectives (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; La Lopa, 2006). Active learning involves many activities including role playing, student debate, and class games. However, internship, where education is integrated with work and students have the opportunity to develop ‘on-the-job’ skills, is the most widespread and visible use of active learning in hospitality education (Solnet et al., 2009).
The literature does not explicitly differentiate WBL from WIE. Based on the literature, students are expected to apply relevant theories and acquire knowledge of the organization or industry during the WBL. The literature also highlights the importance of a student’s individual development (Hamilton & Hamilton, 1997). Work-integrated learning has a dual emphasis on the development of both the students and the employers. In WIE, the students are not only expected to demonstrate an understanding of new knowledge, but also apply that knowledge in ways that perceptibly benefit the organization (Delahaye & Choy, 2007). Under the policy of WIE and university-industry-government (UIG) collaboration, integration of work-based and school-based learning was required to reinforce and motivate student learning in Hong Kong higher education (Lam, 2010). Thus, this implies that WBL is a component of WIE.

2.2.3 Hospitality Internship Stakeholders

Although stakeholders of the hospitality internship are wide-ranging, the three major parties involved are student interns, industry and institutions; all contribute to the overall quality, education, and career preparation components of an internship experience (Busby, 2005; Cho, 2006). Martin and Hughes (2009) indicated the students, academic supervisors, and employers have a collective responsibility for the true integration of WIE. Different stakeholders play different roles in the internship, and a well-coordinated internship program jointly developed by hospitality stakeholders could maximize the potential to prepare high quality hospitality management talent for the workplace (Simmons, 2006). However, the institutions should recognize their responsibility to accommodate the needs of other internship stakeholders, as well as of the professional associations, the government, the academic community, and wider society.
2.3 Impacts of Internship Programs on Hospitality Stakeholders

This section discusses the benefits of, and issues related to hospitality internship programs, thereby offering a more comprehensive picture of the relationship between internship and student learning experience. Since hospitality stakeholders interact with each other throughout the internship, this section discusses the impact of internship programs on various hospitality stakeholders but focuses on student learning.

2.3.1 Benefits of Internship Programs for Hospitality Stakeholders

Research results supported internship programs as important in bringing beneficial outcomes to the hospitality stakeholders (Barron et al., 2007; Beggs et al., 2008; Booth, 2004; Bowen et al., 2004; Busby, 2005; Chen & Gursoy, 2007; Cole, Cole, & Ferguson, 2005; Contomanolis, 2005; Fell & Kuit, 2003; Fox, 2001; Simmons, 2006). All the hospitality stakeholders can benefit from the internship.

2.3.1.1 Benefits to students. The learning outcomes of an internship program can be generally classified as career development, professional and work skills development, and personal development (Lee, 2007). If the outcomes can be achieved, interns would benefit from the program.

Career preparation. Internship is a form of WIE to provide actual work experience as part of a career preparation program (Cho, 2006; Hoerner & Wehrley, 1995). It serves as the “shop window of the industry” allowing student interns to have “real life” experience in the workplace. This experience should be designed to complement coursework to so the interns can gain more understanding of the relevant job duties and become more familiar with the industry environment, thereby giving them realistic expectations for their careers (Ayres, 2006). Stock (2004) suggested the internship experience might influence student interns’ decisions on their future career as it is a chance for them to see whether the chosen field is a good
fit for their long-term plans. Similarly, Stalberte (1996) stated a properly structured internship program could assist students with career development, providing valuable information about career choice, self-awareness, and pre-employment preparation.

Chen and Gursoy (2007) concluded the more experience students had in the field and the longer they had been enrolled in the programs, the more closely their expectations regarding beginning position, salary, work hours, and responsibilities matched reality. Programs with internship requirements are more likely to produce graduates who have reasonable expectations of their first jobs; interns are also more likely to be motivated and satisfied with their jobs than non-intern might be (Cole et al., 2005). Internship is an important preparation for post-degree employment in that it can align one’s expectation with the reality of the workplace (Fell & Kuit, 2003).

Many hospitality recruiters reported that graduates with industry experience are better prepared for employment than those without such experience (Tsai et al., 2006). Although there is no guarantee interns will receive an employment offer upon their completion of internship and graduation, the industry partners are likely to recruit the interns who have experience in their organizations. Moreover, it is a chance for interns to build employment contacts. Interns may earn credits toward graduation, even sometimes being paid during the internship (Cook et al., 2004; Gualt, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Students have reported that their internship program was the most valued experience in the hospitality programs throughout the educational preparation process (Fry, Bottoms, & O’Neill, 2005; Morrison, 2005).

**Industry knowledge and skills development.** Tse (2010) revealed students could develop practical skills through dealing with customers, using software, and experiencing work procedures, while their supervisory and managerial skills could be developed by practice and observation. Therefore, internship is valuable for
students’ learning experience throughout their study.

During the internship, students are given not only day-to-day responsibilities, but also face unexpected situations that arise at nearly any workplace (Bailey, Hughes, & Moore, 2004; Cook, Parker, & Pettijohn, 2004). The experiences can cultivate student ability to define and solve problems, work productively with others, and develop a sense of self-confidence and direction. Clark (2003) found students became “reflective practitioners” and attained greater intellectual maturity after joining the internship. Scholars have noted the internship experience enhances both the knowledge and skill base of the individuals involved. Internship provides a meaningful context and interactive activities that call upon real world knowledge, skills, and experiences. Internship is not only develops students’ industry knowledge and skills, but also improves their generic skills. They gain much more than job experience; they develop personally as individuals from the internship program.

**Personal development.** Foucar-Szocki and Bolsing (1999) classified the specific skills that internship programs could enhance, including conceptual knowledge, management skills, communication skills, career development skills, application of work environment skills, program needs assessment skills, and accountabilities. Most importantly, internships can foster students’ development as whole persons and equip them with the capabilities of problem solving, critical thinking, team building, a sense of responsibility, and intercultural sensitivity (Yang et al., 2011).

Many researchers (Bailey et al., 2004; Clark, 2003; Ko, 2007) found the results of higher marketability and employability of interns than those who have not been interns. Even more, students had an enhanced positive self-image and higher perceived self-efficacy upon completion of their internship. Beyond these benefits, both Cook et al. (2004) and Tse (2010) found interns seem to perceive the social
factors -- including working relationship with colleagues and personal growth -- can be the most beneficial aspect of the program.

2.3.1.2 Benefits to institutions. Most of the institutions in the field have used internship as an educational component for hospitality management students (Cho, 2006). From the educational perspective, internship is the most direct and appropriate method to check if students are able to apply theoretical knowledge to real world situations. It provides a laboratory for application of theoretical knowledge (Martin & Hughes, 2009) and closes the gap between college-learned theories and practical reality (Fox, 2001). Through the internship experience, interns can gain a better understanding and appreciation of how and why classroom performance is important in their future career and hence exert more effort in their studies (Lindell & Stenström, 2004). Moreover, the interns can gain higher employability with the development of skills and knowledge developed in internships. As a result, institutions can gain credibility especially when the employment rate of graduates is high or students perform well after graduation.

Furthermore, institutional relationships with the industry may become closer through the cooperation of internships (Beggs et al., 2008; Cook et al., 2004). Prigge (2005) indicated internship is a strategy institutions could meaningfully engage with industry partners to establish long-term working relationships. Internships can enhance collaborative research opportunities and provide the institution with up-to-date information about market trends in the industry (Walo, 2001). In the long term, the implicit benefits of the internships for institutions are the continuous improvement of the education process and curriculum design. Enhancement of the professional curriculum can definitely enhance student learning experience (Martin & Hughes, 2009). Lastly, even though it is not an objective, programs with credit bearing internships can generate tuition income with minimal time commitment from
staff of the institutions.

2.3.1.3 **Benefits to employers and industry.** Through internship partnerships, hospitality organizations fulfil their social responsibility of fostering and preparing students today for the career they embark on tomorrow. This cooperation enhances their public relations and image (Fox, 2001).

From the perspective of employers, interns are usually readily available and easily transferred to different departments. Some employers find and use talent at little or no cost through joining the internship program. Even better, employers can reduce the training costs and hiring expenses if they later hire their interns because the interns are already familiar with the operations of their organization (Cook et al., 2004; Dixon, Cunningham, Sagas, Turner, & Kent, 2006). Interns can be a trained workforce and valuable source of labor in today’s economy. Therefore, internship providers can gain excellent entry-level employees and used the opportunity to select and cultivate suitable and talented interns for long term careers with higher levels of responsibility.

Moreover, employers have opportunities to get the latest academic information and skills from the interns through offering internships (Cook et al., 2004; Martin & Hughes, 2009). A positive relationship forms between institutions and employers that has the potential to establish a networking pool for both parties. The employers should provide a good working environment for interns as it is a way to increase not only their effective commitment to the organization, but also their long-term commitment to the profession.

2.3.2 **Issues Relating to Internship Programs**

Research findings have not been consistent regarding the impacts of internships. Despite of the observation that all hospitality stakeholders benefit from internship programs, various researchers (Barron, 2008; Barron & Maxwell, 1993;
Barron et al., 2007; Beggs et al., 2006; Broadbridge et al., 2007; Eisner, 2005; Jenkin, 2001; Kusluvan et al., 2003; Rodriguez & Gregory, 2005) have indicated internship programs yield numerous problems and results of internships are not as encouraging as expected. As early as 1993, Barron and Maxwell found that the period of internship had a significant effect on the overall educational experience of students and related to the level of disillusionment with the hospitality industry. Numerous studies successively showed most of students were discouraged from entering the hospitality industry after gaining experience from internships (Callan, 1997; Jenkin, 2001; Kusluvan et al., 2003). Jenkins (2001, p.20) concluded “many hospitality students, through exposure to the subject and industry, become considerably less interested in selecting (hospitality) as their career of first choice.” Manns (2003, p.78-79) noted the key problem of internship program was that “simply having an experience does not mean that ’learning’ has taken place.” Therefore, issues and problems of internship programs should be identified to avoid negative impacts on students’ learning experiences.

2.3.2.1 Administrative challenges. Regarding the industry engagement in the internship program, the quantitative requirement of hours has been the focus in the old way thinking, but qualitative consideration of the standard of the experience in industry is lacking (Solnet et al., 2007). Good mentor relationships are important factors for the student internship experience. However, Ko’s (2007) study found that administration of internship programs, including “prepare student for the internship”, “internship time”, “service for student”, “internship arrangement for student”, “mentor to care student” and “well-being for student” received the lowest rating among all items of interns’ satisfaction. A lack of feedback from the mentors and supervisors also affects the quality of internship experiences. In addition, the absence of quality assurance in internship programs is another issue hindering the intern’s
experience (Zopiatis, 2007). A lack in clarity and purpose, inadequate academic assessment, and ineffective integration into the overall hospitality curriculum are problems affecting the overall quality of the internship programs and student learning experience.

The administration should be more systematic and put more effort into dealing with students’ internship programs (Ko, 2007). Quality of internship programs should be assessed on a regular basis. Failure to meet the objectives of the programs may cause negative results such as poor student learning experience and limited quality among hospitality management graduates (Ju, Emenheiser, Clayton, & Reynolds, 1998).

2.3.2.2 Discrepancies between student expectations and reality of the industry. A discrepancy between student interns’ expectations and the reality of the industry is always an issue hindering the student learning experience. Numerous researchers have empirically examined the issue of expectations (Cho, 2006; Beggs et al., 2006; Jenkins, 2001; Leslie & Richardson, 2000; Raybould & Wilkins, 2005; Simmons, 2006). The gap between students’ expectations and the real world situation of the industry is a key determinant for reducing student job satisfaction and even discouraging students from joining the industry (Beggs et al., 2006; Broadbridge, 2007; Cho, 2006; Eisner, 2005).

Students’ expectations. There are many factors affecting students’ expectations of their internship. These factors include personal working experience in the industry, comments from friends and colleagues, and information obtained from lecturers. Owing to the unique nature of personal experience gained, each student would have his or her own set of expectations for the internship within the hospitality industry (Simmons, 2006).
Glass (2007) and Martin (2005) stated students expected to have constant feedback from internship mentors and industry supervisors during their internship. They also would like to be praised for their efforts. Moreover, Szamosi (2006) and Broadbridge et al. (2007) found that students’ expectations of their internships included being cared for, rewarded, empowered, respected, involved in the workplace involvement, and supported by management. Some also assumed that they deserve better positions and have at least middle level management positions upon graduation (Austin, 2002). The Youth Hotelier Summit Association (YHS, 2011) conducted a study to investigate the criteria for choosing an internship. The results revealed that learning opportunities were listed on the top, followed by career opportunities, work-life balance, and choice of job location.

**Negative internship experience.** Research has emphasized the issue of students’ unrealistic expectations for their internship instead of simply the problems of internship itself (Beggs et al., 2006; Broadbridge, 2007; Cho, 2006; Simmons, 2006; Tse, 2010). An unmet expectation seems to be an inevitable accompaniment to the experience of entering an unfamiliar organizational setting; it is not simply a consequence of poor communication of what the workplace is like (Fell & Kuit, 2003).

Barrow and Maxwell (1993) first surveyed the post-internship impression of 482 students at seven Scottish higher educational institutions offering hospitality courses. Most post-internship students gave negative comments on the industry such as employers require employees’ total dedication with unfair return, staff was poorly treated, efforts outweighed non-financial rewards, the industry offered little or no training to its employees and priority was always placed on profits. In general, students showed they were unable to foresee a long-term career path in the hospitality industry.
In reality, students find that the hospitality industry has a poor reputation as a source of permanent employment, offering low pay, requiring long and anti-social working hours, and having physically demanding and menial work. Students perceived menial and repetitive work as lacking in challenges. All these factors are contributed to low satisfaction with internship in the industry (Baum, 2002; Kusluvan et al., 2003; Richardson, 2008). In Barron et al.’s study (2007), students highlighted the limited managerial professionals, poor managerial communications, imbalances in work-life, and poor rewards discouraged them from joining the industry. Even worse, some students reported their internship experience as an exploitation of cheap labor, the employers were not interested in their development, employers were not willing to adopt their ideas, and showed little interest in developing their understanding of the industry.

In addition, researchers found inadequate training and lack of task orientation provided to students during internship (Callan, 1997; Cho, 2007). Students also commented that they had no chance to exercise responsibility at work. In Kusluvan and Kusluvan’s study (2000), almost two-thirds of students indicated they felt like slaves while working in the industry and admitted some disillusionment with the working environment and conditions. As a result, students’ negative attitudes towards different aspects of working in the industry emerged from the practical work experience. Taken altogether, these observations lead to the conclusion that students were disappointed when they discovered reality differed from their expectations. For at least some hospitality students, alternate careers began to look better (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005).

2.3.2.3 Differences in perceptions among interns, institutions and employers. Apart from the gap between student expectation and the reality of the industry, discrepancies among interns, institutions, and employers of internships
have also been reported. A significant challenge facing the hospitality internships is that internship programs are designed for academic purposes while they are carried out in non-academic environments (Solnet et al., 2009). Gilbert and Guerrier (1997) revealed differences between the perceptions of industry and educators on the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required for successful careers in the industry. Barron (2008), and Raybould and Wilkins (2005) had similar findings regarding the discrepancies between industry, students, and educators. While the industry criticized educators for over emphasizing theoretical concepts and identified deficiencies in certain practical skills, educators expected students to develop conceptual and analytical skills.

Solnet et al. (2007) also indicated the conflict of objectives between the industry and educators. The industry partners often seek needed labor, yet found the internship programs to be too costly and often ineffective at providing the interns truly meaningful work. Industry partners also perceive they did not obtain the anticipated return on their investment (Cook et al., 2004). In contrast, the educational institutions seek a structured learning experience for the students. Therefore, the academics are dissatisfied that the industry does not make the best use of students, both during their practical training and upon graduation.

While the institutions are satisfied with the internship hours required, academic credit awarded, types of documentation required, and program administration, the industry coordinators stated that insufficient internship hours are required by hospitality programs (Downey & Deveau, 1987). Regarding the established methods of evaluating student interns, the industry partners are not satisfied as they commented that simple written reports are inadequate, and both written and oral evaluations are preferred. However, most institutions believed a written report is enough (Ju et al., 1998).
Conflicts between students and institutions as well as industry were also evident. Beggs et al. (2006) found inconsistency between what students believed they were capable of doing and what industry supervisors believed the student interns could do. Students complained that they were assigned meaningless tasks, left unsupervised, and not supported by their institutions through their work experience, while internship supervisors and employers noted that graduates do not have realistic industry expectations (Ju et al., 1998). Due to the nature of the industry, staff in the workplace may come from different countries and cultural differences might also result in related discord between interns and employers during the internships (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005).

This section reviewed the impacts of hospitality internships on stakeholders to identify benefits and problems. Because work experience is a critical factor influencing career decisions of potential hospitality employees, internship can play a significant role in forming hospitality students’ attitudes toward pursuing a career in the industry upon graduation (Ayres, 2006; Chen &Cursoy, 2007; Richardson, 2008). However, as discovered in the review, negative internship experiences may cause students to avoid pursuing a career in the hospitality industry (Cho, 2006; Leslie & Richardson, 2008; Wen, 2007; Wu & Wu, 2006, Zopiatis, 2007). Therefore, it is important for hospitality educators to recognize the factors affecting the student learning experience so they can enhance the educational outcomes through internship programs.

2.4 Overseas Internship Programs

Due to the trend of increasing competitiveness and internationalization worldwide, multinational companies have confront many cross-cultural issues arising from the multiculturalism of their staff and customers. Institutions,
companies, government, and non-profit organizations have been supporting students to enhance their cross-cultural competencies and accountability requirements for national success in the global knowledge economy through international education (van’t Klooster et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2011). As the hospitality industry becomes a major participant in our global economy, hospitality graduates with cross-cultural experiences and awareness will be better prepared for careers in the industry (Jordan, 2008; Littlejohn & Watson, 2004). Accordingly, hospitality programs associated with overseas internship programs will likely enhance students’ careers and the reputation of the educational institution.

The provision of overseas internships in hospitality programs is a recent growing trend that can better equip the students with required competencies. In some cases, overseas internships are even compulsory for participation, especially for courses with an international focus or requirement of a foreign language (Busby & Fiedel, 2001). The Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales (AIESEC), the world’s largest overseas internship intermediary, reported an impressive growth of international internships from 1,000 in 1998 to 4,342 in 2005. Kristensen (2004) estimated that 175,000 people from European Union member states participate in overseas placement annually, which shows the increasing popularity of overseas internship as an instrument of learning. Gibson and Busby (2009) defined overseas internships as internships taking place outside the country within which the university was located. It aims at developing the industry knowledge and skills under different cultural settings.

2.4.1 Benefits of Overseas Internships for Students

While overseas internships offer similar professional benefits as reported for local internships, there are additional benefits. They add value to students’ learning when they are experiencing real world situation in other countries (Busby & Gibson,
2010; Gibson & Busby, 2009). Research has found added advantages; interns’ global insights can be broadened as they have a chance to work with people from different cultures (Bodenhorn et al., 2005; Bowen et al., 2004; Conceição & Skibba, 2007; Gibson, 2009).

Overseas internships foster cross-cultural competencies, which can be defined as “the individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad” (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006, p.6). Roberts (1998) suggested well-prepared overseas internships could provide students with an opportunity to understand cultural differences that could not be learned in the classroom. Bodenhorn et al. (2005) also highlighted the benefits of deepening students’ cultural awareness for those employed in multi-national settings because overseas internships provided opportunities for students to live and work side-by-side with people of the host country, familiarizing them with customs, values, and worldviews in other regions of the world (van’t Klooster et al., 2008). Moreover, Conceição and Skibba (2007) found meeting people from other cultures and experiencing the life overseas could guide students to explore meaningful learning. They also revealed that authentic learning situations could create a positive learning experience. Most importantly, Stronkhorst (2005) indicated overseas internships are more effective in teaching foreign language skills, cultural empathy, self-efficacy, and intercultural competencies than other forms of international studies such as study exchanges.

Apart from the benefits of cross-cultural competencies, more benefits exist for students studying and working abroad (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Hansel, 1988; Stitsworth, 1988). Students are more aware of international issues, more appreciative of foreign language ability, more adaptable, more independent in their thinking,
less materialistic after different forms of overseas study.

2.4.2 Issues relating to Overseas Internship Programs

Similar to local internships, researchers have also found there are disadvantages to overseas internships. Cullen (2010) observed that overseas placement can be daunting and intimidating to students across a number intra- and interpersonal dimensions. Additional challenges arise in the context of students undertaking overseas internships (Gibson & Busby, 2009). The need of an adjustment to the host culture from experience abroad is inherently challenging; it can create a complex range of issues in respect to planning for the provision of support by both the institutions and employers (Busby & Gibson, 2010; Gibson & Busby, 2009; Yang et al., 2011).

Before the start of their overseas internships, interns are likely to feel anxious due to the unfamiliar environment. They may have many questions concerning where they are located, how accessible the location may be in terms of a visit by university staff, how easy it is for students to communicate with the university, and the demands of the workplace. Obviously, they worry about the adaptation to culture of the overseas location, their accommodations during internship, and other issues such as travel insurance and medical arrangements (Gibson & Busby, 2009). Institutions need to address students’ requirements for more information to prepare them for the overseas internships. The institutions need to provide the appropriate information and direction for students to deal with potential problems in advance.

Busby and Gibson (2010) conducted a research to identify and analyze the problems and issues faced by students on overseas placement. A working environment without peer support, independent work experience, and accommodations were all issues indicated by students. While low cultural similarity and proficiency in the language of host country contributed to social and
communication difficulties, it was surprising to find that language was not an issue for student learning during overseas internships (Conceição & Skibba, 2007; Gibson & Busby, 2009; Kim, 2009).

In short, students might experience cultural shock, stress, and other difficulties in adjusting to the host culture during overseas internships (Yang et al., 2011). To tackle these problems, a robust and appropriate system should be established to support the students and enhance their learning experiences in overseas internships. Students should recognize the extent of differences between their own cultural values and norms and those of their counterparts in the host country (Bodenhorn et al., 2005).

Gibson and Busby (2009) indicated students were not likely to be visited as they were on an overseas placement due to the limited budget of institutions, so interns’ perceived support is also important for the learning experience in the overseas internship. Frequent contacts between institutions and interns is important, but it is difficult for the faculty internship mentor to maintain regular contact with the students during an overseas internship (Busby, 2005).

Internship is a critical component in a hospitality curriculum to produce graduates with preferred competencies. Positive work experience and intercultural experience make positive personal change. It is important for the institutions and employers to create positive experiences for interns to achieve the intended learning outcomes (Yang et al., 2011). If industry practitioners perceive that students are not well prepared for the industry, the reputation of the hospitality institution can and should be questioned (Mayburry & Swanger, 2010). Therefore, there is a need to examine the learning process of students who participate in overseas internship programs.
2.5 Theories Underpinning Internship Learning Experience

Learning is a highly complex and elusive phenomenon (Knowles, 1984) and internships can be valuable learning experiences (Clark, 2003). Appropriate learning theories can provide clear answers to questions, including what changes performance, by what processes the results emerge, what triggers the processes to occur, and what resources or experiences form the basis of learning (Yoon, Song, & Lim, 2009). To construct the theoretical framework for this study, this section presents information and views from a number of theorists and authors to delve further into the theories behind the internship learning experience. Various theorists have discussed cognitive, behaviorist and humanist theories to provide some understanding about student learning through education. However, these models often focus on learning in the academic setting, which may not be applicable to the learning experience provided by internships (McGugan & Peacock, 2005). As mentioned previously, the internship program is a form of WBL or WIE in hospitality education designed to ease the transition from classroom learning to real world situations. Learning theories, including experiential learning, transformative learning, and reflective learning, are relevant to learning from internships. These theories emphasize ‘experience’ and are discussed from that perspective in the following sections.

2.5.1 Experiential Learning

Experiential education has a long and noteworthy history in higher education due to the wide recognition of the importance of practicums for application of knowledge and development of industry skills. Researchers have identified the problem of “over-qualified but under-experienced” for graduates in hospitality degree programs (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). In response, experiential education can revitalize the university curriculum and react to the dynamic changes faced by higher education today (Beggs et al., 2008; Kolb, 1984). For years, experiential
learning has been advocated to enhance and promote student learning. The experiential learning has become the method of choice for learning and personal development. The experiential learning theory provides the foundation for an approach to education that encourages a lifelong learning process (Kolb, 1984). Moreover, it is a broad term referring to student learning from work-based applied learning opportunities in educational institutions. Hospitality programs have used experiential learning as an educational method; internship programs have become an academic requirement to foster work experience and develop the necessary skills to supplement students’ theoretical learning (Lee, 2007).

2.5.1.1 Origins and development of experiential learning. Learning from experience is one of the most fundamental and natural means of learning available to everyone (Beard, 2010). The concept can be traced back to the oft quoted statement by Confucius (551 BC – 450 BC), the experiential Chinese educator, “Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand.” Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC), the famous Greek philosopher, once said, "for the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing." Another related adage is "experience is the best teacher.” For more than two thousand years, wise people have realized the importance of direct involvement in the process of experiential learning (Hayes, 2008).

The modern movement of experiential learning is attributed to the educational philosophy of John Dewey, lauded as the philosophical father of experiential education. He advocated fundamental importance of experience as in education and training, arguing that “education by, of and for experience” is the best pedagogy (Dewey, 1916). This belief, known as Deweyian, maintains “there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (Dewey, 1938, pp.19, 20). Deweyian belief influences the design of innovative
educational approaches and is critical of completely “free, student-driven” education. Traces of Deweyian thought are also most evident in the concept of learning by doing, which argues that it is insufficient for teachers to simply transmit information to the students or for students to simply participate in active tasks for learning. Rather, real learning occurs at deeper levels with education is grounded in experience and students actively reflect on that experience (Lee, 2007).

After Dewey, various theorists in the field of experiential learning have tended to use the term experiential learning in two contrasting senses. On the one hand, experiential learning involves a “direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter, or only considering the possibility of doing something about it” (Borzak, 1981, p.9, as cited in Smith, 2001). It describes the sort of learning undertaken by students who are given a chance to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and feelings in an immediate and relevant setting sponsored by an institution and used in training programs for professions. On the other hand, experiential learning is used to describe “education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life” (Houle, 1980, p.221, as cited in Smith, 2001). It is learning achieved through reflection upon everyday experience and is the way that most of us do our learning. In this different sense, it is not sponsored by a formal educational institution.

Many researchers have proposed models of experiential learning to support the learning process by linking theory to practice (Boud & Walker, 1992; Gibbs, 1988; Kolb, 1984; Joplin, 1981). Experiential learning theory provides a holistic model to explain how people learn, grow, and develop with emphasis on the central role experience plays in the learning process (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). The experiential learning model is a framework for examining and strengthening the relationships among education, work, and personal development (Figure 2.1).
2.5.1.2 David A. Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning. David A. Kolb’s theory of experiential learning (1976; 1981; 1984) seems to be the most influential in describing the process of experiential learning. The work of Kolb and his associate Roger Fry (Kolb & Fry, 1975) provides the central reference point for discussion. Kolb's interest lay in exploring the processes associated with making sense of concrete experiences and the different styles of learning that may be involved. His model has been the underlying structure of the learning process based on research in psychology, philosophy, and physiology. The model draws makes explicit use of understandings of experiential learning in the works of Lewin’s social psychology, Dewey’s philosophical pragmatism, Piaget’s cognitive developmental genetic epistemology, and others (Kolb, 1984; Kolb et al., 2001; Lai & Kwan, 2003; Smith, 2001).

Kolb (1984) defined experiential learning as a “process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p.38). It involves transactions
between the individual and the environment, which refers to the individual’s internal experience and the objective, external experience. Different from the behavioral and cognitive theories of learning, experiential learning theory offers a holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior (Conceição & Skibba, 2007). Its unique perspective on learning and development can be characterized by the following propositions based on three previously mentioned major traditions of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, pp.26-36). They are:

1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
2. Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.
3. The process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.
4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.
5. Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment.
6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge.

Kolb’s learning model is based on the Lewinian experiential learning model (see Figure 2.2), which shows learning a four-stage cycle (Kolb, 1984). The learning cycle can begin at any stage, and should be approached as a continuous spiral. A real learning process often begins with a person carrying out a particular action and then seeing the effect of the action in this situation. The second step is to understand these effects in the particular instance and then anticipate what could follow from the action if it were taken in a similar future circumstance. Third, the learner arrives at an understanding of the general principle under which the particular instance falls. Fourth, the learner applies the action in a new circumstance within the range of generalization (Kolb & Fry, 1975).
Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (1984) further described the learning process as a four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes (Figure 2.3). Starting at the beginning of the cycle, the learner engages directly in a new experience (Concrete Experience). Second, the learner reflects on that experience (Reflective Observation). Third, the learner conceptualizes the experience and draws out new ideas (Abstract Conceptualization). Fourth, the learner finally experiments with the new concept, which creates another experience (Active Experimentation). This cycle in turn will provide a new experience for the next cycle of experiential learning, and so on (Lai & Kwan, 2003; O’Neil & Marsick, 2007).

These four learning stages (Figure 2.3) represent two dimensions, concrete experience and abstract conceptualization, which poles on the comprehension / apprehension dimension, while reflective observation and active experimentation are poles on the transformation dimension (De Jong, Wierstra, & Hermanussen, 2006). Learners must go through the entire cycle to learn fully from experience.
Kolb’s work in experiential learning has given insights to various practitioners. Many experiential education practitioners and educators adopt Kolb’s model and consider it applicable to their needs, especially those involved in service learning (Delve, Mintz, & Stewart, 1990; Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley, & Colby, 1996; Ralston & Ellis, 1997; Williams & Lankford, 1999; Zlotkowski, 1995, as cited in O’Bannon & McFadden, 2008). Literature has grown around experiential learning, indicating the need for greater attention to this area, particularly in the area of higher education (Kolb et al., 2001).

**2.5.2 Transformative Learning**

Overseas internship is a form of WBL or WIE that transfers interns’ learned knowledge and skills from the education setting (classroom) to the work setting (workplace). It effectively merges theories with practice and knowledge with experience. According to Eraut (2002), transfer is a learning process with four
components. It first requires understanding of the new context, followed by recognizing what prior knowledge is relevant to the current situation; then, transforming that prior knowledge so that it fits the situation, and finally integrating the new assembly of knowledge and skills to create the required new situational understanding and responsive action.

Transformative learning is another theory based on learners’ experience. Mezirow (1975) was first to apply the label ‘transformation’ in the study of learning experience. His theory rests on the works of Kuhn’s paradigm, Freire’s conscientization, Habermas’ domains of learning, and others (Kitchenham, 2008; O’Neil & Marsick, 2007). These scholars provided the significant concepts of disorienting dilemma, meaning schemes, meaning perspectives, perspective transformation, frame of reference, levels of learning processes, habits of mind, and critical self-reflection as the key components of the transformative learning theory. The theory attempted to explain how learners’ expectations, framed within presuppositions and cultural assumptions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences (Brown, 2004).

Mezirow (1978) defined transformative learning as “an approach to teaching based on promoting change, where educators challenge learners to critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them” (p. xi). Additionally, he indicated the goal of transformative learning is to understand fully the actions and views that lead to the actions through exploring the values and knowledge on which learners are based (Mezirow, 1991). He also classified the learning process into two types: instrumental and communicative. When learners engage in task-oriented problem solving, such as learning how to do something or how to perform, instrumental learning happens. During the instrumental learning process, learners reflect on the content or
procedural assumptions that guided their problem solving.

With respect to communicative learning, Mezirow (2004) clarified that learning does not simply come from experience; instead, it comes from reflection on experience. In communicative learning, a different kind of reflection is needed to understand the meaning of what others communicate concerning values, ideals, feelings, moral decisions, and concepts like freedom, justice, love, and democracy. As such, critical reflection is the significant transformative learning process that transforms meaning into learning. Critical reflection refers to the form of rational discourse resulting in re-formulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one’s experience.

For both instrumental and communicative learning, experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse are the three central processes the learner undergoes to validate a best judgment (Mezirow, 2006; O’Neil & Marsick, 2007). In contrast to traditional learning that focuses on what we know, transformative learning focuses on how we know, which suggests we learn from subjective interpretations of experiences (Mezirow, 1996). Consequently, Mezirow advocated a learner-centered, participatory, and interactive education that involves group deliberation and group problem solving. Educators should act as facilitators and provocateurs rather than as authorities on subject matter; they should help learners become aware and critical of their own and others’ assumptions. Moreover, educators should work themselves out of their job as authority figures, and progressively transfer their leadership to the group (O’Neil & Marsick, 2007). Yoon et al. (2009) indicated that organization culture and support are crucial to encourage performance-oriented action and enhance successful transfer of learning through a more programmatic and systematic management of knowledge and learning transfer.

After Mezirow’s development of transformative learning theory, many scholars
leveled critiques leveled against the theory. In response, Mezirow revised the transformative learning model with further expansion, a more thorough explanation, and a tighter description of the theory (Kitchenham, 2008). Consequently, the transformative learning developed by Mezirow provided the foundation for empirical and theoretical testing afterwards and the theory continues to expand through the work of others (Brookfield, 2000; Cranton, 2006; Dirkx, 2006; Taylor, 2007). Transformative learning continues to be a growing area of study of adult learning and contributes to the area of practice of teaching adults (Taylor, 2008).

2.5.3 Reflective Learning

Internship can provide students the opportunities for reflection and intellectual growth in their learning process. They can learn to understand themselves, their job, and their internship context better. Internship is also where they increase their employability through various academic assignments with practical and reflective components (Clark, 2003). Jordi (2011) indicated “reflection is a key concept in adult education theory and more specifically within experiential learning discourses” (p.182). Schön (1987) observed that students can become “reflective practitioners” through learning advanced cognitive skills from internships. The emergence of constructionism has given reflective learning a focus in current education (Lê, 2006). The concept of reflective learning is part of the most modern theories of learning for deep and applicable learning (Yoon et al., 2009). It is defined as “an intentional process, where social context and experience are acknowledged, in which clients are active individuals, wholly present, engaging with others, and open to challenge, and the outcome involves transformation as well as improvement for both individuals and their organization” (Brockbank, McGill, & Beech, 2002, p.6).

Dewey (1938) initially identified human reflection as the process by which individuals make meaning from the constructive experiences, interpersonal
collaborations, and interactions with environments. Argyris and Schön (1979) stated reflection is a form of “double-loop” learning. It involves examining and critically questioning the assumptions and premises on which theories are based, which enables learners to determine the effectiveness of these theories in solving management problems. Schön (1983) identified reflection as an essential component to the process of professional education throughout the complete learning process. He argued that the inadequacy of many professional courses might result from the failure to include reflection as a learning tool. He proposed reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as the types of human reflection. Reflection-in-action is a simultaneous reflection through which the individual is consciously monitoring the problem-solving process and modifying the sequential actions immediately. In comparison, reflection-on-action occurs after an event and leads to change in the future series of the actions throughout the reflective learning process. While those two types are the first two levels of reflection, which are reactive in nature, reflection-for-action is proactive in nature as the third level of reflection. It is an anticipated outcome of the previous two levels (Schön, 1990).

After a review of works of Dewey, Kolb, Mezirow, and Schön for understanding of reflection, Black and Plowright (2010) redefined reflection as “the process of engaging with learning and/or professional practice that provides an opportunity to critically analyze and evaluate that learning or practice” (p.246). Through the reflection process, professional knowledge, understanding, and practice can be developed with the incorporation of a deeper learning that is transformational, empowering, enlightening, and ultimately emancipatory.

The reflection concept is common to a range of learning theories, while reflective learning builds a variety of other educational theories. Therefore, reflective learning is a multi-faceted learning theory (Castelli, 2011; Jordi, 2011). Instructors
must have foundational knowledge of the concept to understand and practice reflective learning effectively. Yoon et al. (2009) observed that reflective inquiries take time and commitment, but facilitating reflective thinking and evaluation are important for improving current work practices and performance.

Either in a classroom or workplace, educators should incorporate relevant and consequential instruction to motivate students’ reflective learning. Both academic and industry supervisors should create a learning environment that is safe and encourages self-expression for students during internship. A ‘trusting’ atmosphere between the learners and supervisors promotes double-loop learning and openness to share experiences. Furthermore, supervisors should find ways to engage students in the learning process to answer questions such as “how does this learning impact me?” so that they are encouraged to reflect on what they learn and question their current values, beliefs, and assumptions (Castelli, 2011; Yong et al., 2009).

In summary, all the learning theories reviewed are related to experience. While, there are criticisms of those theories, such criticism creates and develops stronger theories and definitive frameworks for describing how we learn best (Kitchenham, 2008). Although, a full discussion of criticisms on these learning theories is beyond the scope of this study, the resources cited offer rich details.

**2.6 Selection of Learning Theory as the Study Framework**

No theory of learning embraces all the activities involved in human learning (Brockbank, McGill, & Beech, 2002). However, a thorough review of previous research on issues related to hospitality internships and overseas internships as well as theories related to experiential learning provide the theoretical background of this study. Many general learning theories can provide understanding about the student learning process; however, they mostly focus on classroom learning. Dewey stated
that an educator must take into account the unique differences between each student as each person is different in terms of genetics and past experience (Neill, 2005). Kolb (1984) suggested that the learning process is not identical for all human beings. Thus, no fixed model can examine the learning process of all people. The researcher had to select a learning theory to formulate a conceptual framework that addresses the research problems of this study. Consequently, she selected Kolb’s experiential learning cycle to guide the examination of students’ learning experiences during overseas internship for the following reasons.

Many previous studies indicated the relationship between internship and experiential learning. In Kolb’s model, experience is the central source of learning, which is consistent with the goal of overseas internship learning. McGugan and Peacock (2005) indicated that the model of experiential learning emphasizes “doing” and “learning from experience,” which relate to learning during internships. Lam and Ching (2007) stated internship can be expressed as a kind of experiential learning, which is an integrates thinking and doing. Students can “take what they have learned in the classroom and apply it to something considerably more than situational classroom simulations (p.13)”. Through experiential learning, students can be well prepared to work in real situations (Nasr, 2004). Many proponents of WBL, WIE, and action learning used Kolb’s learning cycle as their theoretical base (O’Neil & Marsick, 2007; Raelin, 1997; Wiredu, 2005).

Raelin (1997) indicated that WBL is much more than the familiar experiential learning that adds a layer of experience onto conceptual knowledge. Wiredu (2005) stated the processes of WIE, including constructive learning, and social and cognitive development, can be best explained by the experiential learning cycle, especially by the concepts of internalized reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. The involvement of the learner in the practice and experience of
what is being learned is the core principle of the model, which explores the process from reflection, conceptualization, action, and further experience. Furthermore, O’Neil and Marsick (2007) revealed that action learning enables learning in each stage of the experiential learning cycle. As discussed in previous sections, overseas internship is a form of WBL, WIE, and action learning approaches. Consequently, Kolb’s learning cycle is compatible with the process operating in these educational approaches.

In addition to the preceding theorists, Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) indicated learning is experiential and is undertaken with a specific goal in mind focusing on intentional learning from experience. Clark and Whitelegg (1998) stated ‘learning by doing’ reinforces classroom understanding by contextualizing knowledge and promoting the ‘application’ and ‘reflection’ stages of Kolb’s cycle of learning that describes how learners turn experience into learning.

In the most recent research on students’ experiences studying abroad, Yang et al. (2011) considered the experiential learning model and intercultural component to examine the students’ learning process and experience. They revealed that reflection is crucial in assisting students to connect prior learning with development during the time abroad and learning after returning home. Therefore, the experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984) is an established framework for examining and strengthening the relationships among education, work, and personal development that is relevant to interns’ learning in overseas internships.

Fenwick (2003) placed experiential learning into five theoretical orientations: (a) constructivist theory (emphasizes reflection on experience) (b) situative theory (gives emphasis to learners involved in a community of practice; learning is intertwined with doing), (c) psychoanalytic theory (focuses on getting in touch with unconscious desires and fears), (d) critical cultural theory (seeks to transform
existing social orders through critical questions and awareness of power as central to experience); and (e) complexity theory (centers on the relationships among experiences). Beyond this, the experiential learning theory identifies the holistic learning space wherein learning transactions take place between individuals and the environment, which covers the process of individual learning, team learning, and organizational learning. Kolb and Kolb (2008) showed experiential learning is comprehensive enough to cover all different learning aspects. Most importantly, the focus on cultural aspect is especially crucial in the learning process during overseas internships.

Although Kolb (1984) stated different learning theories in practice can vary, there is an underlying unity in the nature of the learning process on which they are based. The Kolb’s learning theory is an examination of that learning process. The previous section also revealed that both reflective learning and transformative learning can apply to the learning process of interns during overseas internships and serve as a suitable framework for this study. However, considering the comprehensive coverage and compatibility with the overseas internship learning, the experiential learning theory is the most applicable and appropriate for this study as the theory already includes the components of reflective learning and transformative learning.

There are many critiques whether Kolb’s experiential learning cycle best represents learning in all situations. Nevertheless, the Kolb’s model is widely known and used in education and training circles, and continues to grow in popularity (Neill, 2010). It also serves as a useful framework to design and implement management programs in higher education and management training and development (Kolb & Kolb, 2008).

Moreover, experiential learning theory is a holistic theory of learning used to
identify the components of learning processes among different academic specialties. The relevant research is highly multidisciplinary, addressing learning and educational issues in many fields. Kolb first published this theory in 1971 (Kolb, 1971; Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1971, as cited in Kolb et al., 2001). Since then, the Kolb’s model has been widely used. The latest update of the Experiential Learning Theory Bibliography (Kolb & Kolb, 2012) contains more than 3,300 references of scholarly papers, doctoral dissertations, books, presentations, technical manuals, and master’s theses that can be accessed through research databases such as Social Science Citation Index, MEDLINE, Education Abstract, Dissertation Abstract, ERIC Document, Google Scholar and others. By using Google Scholar, the researcher found the first resource for experiential learning: “Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development” (Kolb, 1984), which has been cited more than 18,502 times (Google Scholar, 2012).

All strong theories have been critiqued, tested, revised and retested to arrive at a definitive framework for describing how we learn best (Kitchenham, 2008). Kolb’s experiential learning cycle has undergone modifications and incorporated new constructs. The newly developed models such as the work of Peter Jarvis (1995) and model of experiential andragogy (O’Bannon & McFadden, 2008) also build on Kolb’s model. Therefore, this thesis used Kolb’s experiential learning cycle as the theoretical framework of this study.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The second chapter contextualized the concepts of WBL and WIE together with internship learning and, in particular, the learning theories associated with the overseas internship experience. This literature led to the conclusion that using a WBL or WIE approach can deepen the quality of the student learning experience by
enhancing students’ interest, motivation, participation, knowledge, and skill development. This chapter showed the significance of these education approaches in hospitality management programs to enhance students’ learning process and to build students’ knowledge and skills necessary for success in the current dynamic and contemporary business environment (Gruman et al., 2009).

In addition, a review of the literature to determine the benefits of and issues related to the internship indicated that those are the factors affecting students’ learning process and overall quality of the internship program. The further review of overseas internship related research also pointed to the importance of the cultural component in the intern learning process. It is necessary to explore how interns’ learning process operated during the overseas internship program. The results of this study should be beneficial to both institutes and employers who wish to gain maximum benefits from overseas internship programs.

Furthermore, this chapter reviewed various learning theories related to the learning process of students during overseas internships. The discussion stressed that experiential, reflective, and transformative learning are important to the intern learning process overseas. After a comprehensive review of these learning theories, with consideration of the compatibility of the theory with overseas internship program, this chapter postulated that experiential learning model is perhaps presently the best framework to study overseas internship learning experience.

In summary, the model of Kolb’s experiential learning offers a conceptual framework to explore and understand intern learning during overseas placement. This study not only contributes to a grounded theoretical conceptualization of overseas internship learning, but also may be used in an effort to improve the quality of learning during overseas internship, as well as the level of support and supervision from academic institutions and employers.
CHAPTER 3. METHODS

This chapter describes the methods adopted to achieve the research objectives stated. The first section justifies the research approach and methods chosen in this study. This chapter then provides an overview of the research process, followed by a section on the population and sample selection methods. The fourth and fifth sections describe the design of the interviews and data collection processes with interview details. The last section presents the method of analysis used for this study.

3.1 Research Approach and Methods Used

3.1.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative and quantitative methods have different strengths and logic to address different kinds of research questions and goals; they are not simply different ways of doing the same thing (Maxwell, 2005). Maxwell (2005) indicated qualitative research could contribute to the understanding of the process by which events and actions take place. Further, qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of samples or situations and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses so they are able to understand how actions, events, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which they occur.

The purpose of this study is to explore the interns’ learning experience in their overseas internship of hospitality management programs. Given the exploratory nature of the study, as well as the central research interest in understanding the learning process of the interns in overseas internship, the researcher adopted the qualitative research approach to generate a suitable depth of understanding from the process of engaging with research subjects (Crotty, 1998). A goal of qualitative analysis is to disclose the nature of individual experiences in particular instances. It can yield intricate details about phenomena, specifically the “feelings, thought
processes, and emotions” participants experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.11). Therefore, qualitative methods allow the researcher to delve further into the interns’ experiences with experiential learning and probe for more details (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This analytical approach uncovers how students engage with the overseas internship programs and what, if any, benefits they feel they gain as well as problems they feel they encounter from their experiences. The researcher used this approach because it had the potential to provide new perspectives about interns’ experiences of overseas internship.

3.1.2 Interview

The methods of qualitative research such as case studies, participant observations, non-participant observations, and different types of interview enable researchers to be part of the situation. Among all these methods, the researcher deemed interviews to be most appropriate to target data collection from student interns as they can be a valuable way of gaining a description of actions and events that took place in the past (Maxwell, 2005). This study uses in-depth interviews and focus group interviews to collect data from the informants.

3.1.2.1 Individual in-depth interviews. The in-depth interview is a qualitative research method for collecting data that uses “repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding informants’ perspectives on their lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.77). Its open-ended design allows the researcher to probe and explore the respondent’s views, feelings and perspectives for generating experiential data that can then be theorized.

An unstructured in-depth interview can allow informants to talk freely about events, behaviors, and beliefs in relation to the theme; however, the problem of having no control over content and direction of interview may result (Saunders,
Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). To avoid the problem of uncontrollability, it was appropriate to use semi-structured questioning as a method for exploring the research questions in this study, which combined the flexibility of the unstructured interview with comparability of key questions. Because the researcher selected Kolb’s experiential learning model as the framework of this study, she selected a pre-set list of themes and questions related to the model and overseas internships and incorporated them into the semi-structured interviews. At the same time, this method provided a certain amount of free interaction between the interviewer (researcher) and informants (interns) with provision for either side to seek clarification at any stage or question.

3.1.2.2 Focus group interviews. Focus group interviews are designed to elicit perceptions, information, attitudes, and ideas from a group in which each participant possesses experience with the phenomenon under study. Different from individual interview, the participants of focus groups have opportunities to clarify and modify their ideas through discussion with other participants. It can generate different discussion-oriented data, which often involve disagreement and discussion among participants (Bridget, 2003). Moreover, the aim of the focus group is to bring forth different viewpoints on an issue, which is well suited for exploratory studies in a new domain (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This method allows the researcher to generate further insights and build understanding of the interns’ experience from the group responses and interaction.

This study sued both in-depth interviews and focus groups interviews to obtain the data from students. The two methods could help avoid common method bias. They also allowed the researcher to tease out the strength of participants’ beliefs and subtleties surrounding any topics that may be missed in individual interviews (Bridget, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated focus group interviews enable
participants to describe, share, and recall experiences with others. The researcher can use the data in conjunction with other data, which is at the heart of qualitative research’s validity. After the researcher conducted the initial individual interviews in each phase, she invited additional informants to engage in a focus group.

Other than interviewing the interns, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the internship coordinators of the institutes involved to collect the data from different perspectives. Thus, it allowed her to answer the research questions from different angles and triangulate the data obtained from interns (Barbour, 2001).

### 3.1.3 Online Social Network Site

The in-depth and focus group interviews, which were conducted before and after the overseas internship, investigated how the learning experience affected interns’ perceptions toward overseas internship and learning during the overseas internship. Nonetheless, there was a limitation for getting the responses of interns’ views and feelings after the overseas internship. Thus, maintaining communication with the interns during the internship was necessary to avoid attrition in study participation due to other engagements. It also fostered the participants’ continued interest in the study. Also, the information collected during the internship should be the most accurate as it was gathered while learning was happening.
Interns might not be willing to give responses to the call or email during the internship due to their busy schedule, therefore other means of data collection was explored. Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) found that individuals using systems of online social network sites (SNSs) would be connecting with others outside their pre-existing social group or location, allowing them to form wider communities. Widely adopted by students, SNSs have the potential to become valuable resources supporting educational communications and collaborations with faculty (Roblyera, McDaniel, Webb, Hermand, & Witty, 2010). In this regard, the researcher developed a virtual group in online social network sites (e.g. Facebook group, WhatsApp group) to keep in contact with interns during internship. Interns were encouraged to post on the online group their feelings and experience during their overseas internship. Data collected from the online social network site could enrich the study and be compared with the responses received from the post-internship interviews.

3.2 Research Process

The previous chapter offered a comprehensive review of the internship programs and learning theories underpinning the internship learning experience to construct the conceptual framework for addressing the research problem of this study. The researcher deemed Kolb’s experiential learning theory the most suitable foundation for understanding the learning process in overseas internships. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the researcher used a discovery-oriented qualitative approach, in-depth interviews, to uncover new clues and yield information (Guion, 2006). Focus group interviews followed to obtain data from two different sources.

The research process (Figure 3.1) began with presetting the questions for data collection from informants. The questions, based on the results of the literature review, were translated into Chinese using the back-translation technique with a
bilingual test (Maneesriwongul & Dixon, 2004). The researcher selected the sample selection by approaching the universities which offer hospitality overseas internships.

Finally, the researcher collected data and analyzed it in three phases (Table 3.1), before, during, and after overseas internships. The first and third phases were more or less the same. In the first phase, the researcher started with individual in-depth interviews, followed by focus group interviews to construct and validate the preliminary model. In the second phase, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with internship coordinators and kept contacts with interns through online social network sites for reliability checking and extension of the model. In the third phase, the researcher conducted individual in-depth interviews and focus groups interviews with the same set of interns to further check for reliability, extend the model, and corroborate the learning process of student interns during overseas internships.
Questions pre-set for individual in-depth and focus group interviews

Verify the questions by students and hospitality educators and translate the questions by professionals

Approach universities

Recruit study samples

Data collection and analysis - Phase 1 pre-overseas internship (in-depth and focus group interviews with interns)

Data collection and analysis - Phase 2 during internship (online social network site contacts with interns and in-depth interviews with internship)

Data collection and analysis - Phase 3 post-overseas internship (in-depth and focus group interviews with interns)

*Figure 3.1 Overview of the Research Process*
Table 3.1

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Data Collection 1</th>
<th>Data Collection 2</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(pre-overseas internship)</td>
<td>In-depth interviews with interns</td>
<td>Focus group interviews with interns</td>
<td>Transcription and coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Setting focus group questions</td>
<td>Construction and validation of preliminary model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Data Collection 3</th>
<th>Data Collection 4</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(During overseas internship)</td>
<td>In-depth interviews with internship coordinator</td>
<td>Social network site contacts with interns</td>
<td>Transcription and coding of interviews and responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check for reliability of model and construct the extension of the model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 3</th>
<th>Data Collection 5</th>
<th>Data Collection 6</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Post-overseas internship)</td>
<td>In-depth interviews with interns</td>
<td>Focus group interviews with interns</td>
<td>Transcription and coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check for reliability of model, and construct the extension of the model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Corroboration of the model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3 Population and Sample Selection

Since cultural differences is an important factor affecting students’ perceptions and expectations of an internship program, the scope of the study only consisted of Hong Kong students to avoid possible influence of cross-cultural bias (Lam & Ching,
Overseas internship was then operationally defined as any internship outside of Hong Kong. Consequently, the researcher selected as a sample students who had internships outside of Hong Kong. The sample included those in mainland China and Macau.

The previous chapter listed and categorized hospitality degree programs offered in Hong Kong. Top-up degrees are tailor-made to sub-degree holders to advance their qualifications to a degree level (Education Bureau, 2012), therefore, the researcher delimited samples to students studying in the University Grants Committee (UGC) funded hospitality programs to minimize variances. The informants were those undertaking the overseas internship starting from summer 2013 from the selected degree programs including BA in Physical Education and Recreation Management offered by HKBU and BSc in Hotel Management and BSc in Tourism Management offered by PolyU. Although the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) also offers a degree program, the researcher could not get a positive response from CUHK to her invitation to participate. Therefore, degree program offered by CUHK was not included in this study. As the overseas internship programs were arranged by the institutions and not by individual students, internship coordinators from each university also became informants in this study so the researcher could obtain different perspectives about the students’ learning experience. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews were conducted with the coordinators while students were participating in their internships.

Due to the criteria set for sample selection, the researcher use purposive sampling to deliberately select particular persons who could provide unique information regarding their learning experience in overseas internship (Maxwell, 2005). There were 30 of 51 students from PERM, HKBU. Around 74 of 490 students from SHTM, PolyU had their internship outside Hong Kong in the 2012/2013
academic year. The researcher recruited potential participants through participating universities and invited them to meet at a particular time and place.

For the individual in-depth interviews, there was no fixed number of informants pre-determined as interviews should be continued until saturation of data. That is, when data provided became redundant and no new information or insights were being provided, data collection stopped. Informants invited for focus group interviews were those who had not been invited for the individual in-depth interviews so that the information collected from these two sources could avoid common method bias. A group of four to eight people is the most ideal size of a focus group for most noncommercial topics as it should be small enough for everyone to have opportunities to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The researcher used the same approach in phase 3 of the data collection. All student informants were expected to participate in all three phases of data collection

3.4 Design of the Interviews

The interview is a valuable tool to gain a description of actions and events. The interviewer should ask questions about specific events and actions rather than posing questions that elicit only generalizations or abstract opinions (Maxwell, 2005). The researcher formulated interview questions with the guidance of Kolb’s experiential learning model and extensive review of relevant literature. She incorporated all four steps of the process described by Kolb (1984) while formulating the questions to understand the learning process of interns during overseas internship.

Though the themes and questions were pre-set, the researcher omitted some questions in particular interviews, given a specific organization contexts encountered in relation to the research topic. The order of questions varied depending on the flow
of conversation. The researcher can also use responses to probe further into participant conceptions, allowing clarification and further thoughts and comments on earlier responses. The researcher also asked additional questions to explore the research questions and objectives identified during the interviews (Saunders et al., 2009).

Viable learning theories must provide clear and supportive answers to questions of (a) results (changes in performance), (b) means (by what processes the results are brought about), and (c) inputs (what triggers the processes to occur and what resources or experiences form the basis of learning) (Yoon et al., 2009). Accordingly, the questions were designed to understand the above concerns by incorporating the Kolb’s experiential learning model. The focus group interview questions were more or less the same as the individual in-depth interviews at the same phase, while the researcher made some modifications after collecting data from the individual interviews to probe into areas of interest, clarify vagueness, or gain a deeper understanding of some issues.

Interview questions were developed (Appendix B) to gather the information regarding the learning process of interns during overseas internship. These questions provided more holistic view to the major stakeholders so that they could have a better understanding of the existing situation and identify the key aspects of perspectives from hospitality students.

3.4.1 Phase 1 – Pre-internship Individual In-depth Interviews with Interns

The researcher selected the in-depth interview with semi-structured questioning as the starting point of the data collection process. The first individual in-depth interviews were conducted before the commencement of overseas internships. The interviews consisted of two parts.

Part one collected informants’ demographic characteristics, including gender,
age, educational qualifications, previous level, and duration of industry experience. This part also collected overseas program information such as duration, country/city, sector, and position. Apart from getting the basic information of informants, this part was intended to get informants to say something early in the conversation that would foster more interaction between interviewer and informants. After the informants have said something, it is more likely that they will speak again (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

In part two, informants were asked to respond to open-ended questions about what they expected and how they prepared to learn in the overseas internship. The data collected from this part could address the two research questions of how learning progressed in the overseas internship and how learning experience affected interns’ perceptions toward overseas internship. The latter question could be answered after comparing with the data collected from phase 2.

3.4.2 Phase 1 – Pre-internship Focus Group Interviews with Interns

After the individual in-depth interviews, the researcher conducted a focus group interview to validate the data collected from the first-round of data collection. In focus group interviews, the key to success is making the group dynamic work for the goals and objectives of the research. Planned or improvised probes give informants opportunities to express more and provide specific examples.

The researcher conducted only one focus group interview as the purpose of this data collection was to use it in conjunction with the data collected from individual interviews to understand how learning is expected to occur during the overseas internship. Questions set in this stage were the same as the previous ones, with minor modifications for probing vagueness in the in-depth interviews.
3.4.3 Phase 2 – Pre-internship In-depth Interviews with Internship Coordinators

In addition to interviews with interns to explore their learning experience during overseas internship, the researcher interviewed internship coordinators to gain a holistic view from different perspectives. Similar with the interviews with interns, the researcher selected an in-depth interview format with semi-structured questioning to collect data from the two internship coordinators.

Part one collected the basic information of informants, including workplace, years of working experience, and number of students. Part two included the interview questions, which were similar with the questions set in the interviews with interns (Appendix B).

3.4.4 Phase 2 – Online Social Network Site Contacts during Internship

Considering the pragmatic difficulties and the interns’ willingness of maintaining communication after the internship, the researcher developed a virtual group on online social network sites to remain in contact with the interns during the internship. The researcher closely monitored the online group and kept interacting with interns (Table 3.2) to gain more information about what interns experienced and how they learnt. Moreover, as Facebook was not accessible in mainland China, the researcher was not able to contact the interns there through Facebook. Consequently, she used WeChat, another online social media in mainland China, to reach those interns.

However, the responses to the questions asked in the group were unexpectedly low, which might be due a reticence to express feelings or experiences in the group chat format. Therefore, the researcher sent questions individually via WhatsApp and WeChat so they could reply confidentially at their convenience. Responses were received intermittently after sending out the questions each time. Yet, not all the
informants had given responses during the internship.

At the end, only few questions were asked via WhatsApp and WeChat during the internship, and the questions were as same as the questions in the post-internship interview. Not all informants gave responses and the data collected showed no obvious differences between the two periods of contact (during the social media phase and post-internship interviews). Consequently, the researcher did not include in the data analysis data collected via online social media. The questions asked through WhatsApp and WeChat were:

First-time contact on 25 June 2013 during the internship:

1. What have you learnt from the internship?
2. What difficulties have you encountered throughout the internship program?

Second-time contact on 31 July 2013 during the internship:

1. What have you learnt from the internship?
2. What difficulties have you encountered throughout the internship program?
3. What did you do/think after applying what you learnt in overseas internship?
Table 3.2

*Timeline for Reaching the Interns through Online Social Media during their Internship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Apr</td>
<td>Set up the Facebook group for contacting all potential interviewees</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 May</td>
<td>Restructured the Facebook group again for interns who were interviewed</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 May</td>
<td>Sent a message to all student interviewees to notify the setup of the Facebook group and to ask for reply</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Jun</td>
<td>Set up a chat group via WhatsApp</td>
<td>One intern returned via private message by WhatsApp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Jun</td>
<td>Sent private message to all student interviewees via WhatsApp or WeChat</td>
<td>More than half replied intermittently from 25 June to 3 July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Jul</td>
<td>Sent private message to all student interviewees via WhatsApp or WeChat</td>
<td>Half replied intermittently from 31 July to 15 August</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.5 Phase 3 – Post-internship Individual In-depth Interviews with Interns

At the third phase, the researcher conducted another set of in-depth interviews after students completed their overseas internship. With the same set of interns, the researcher asked some of the same or similar questions she asked in the first phase. With comparison of the data collected from the first phase, the researcher could answer the first research question to examine the influence of internship experience on interns’ perception towards overseas internship. Before the start of the interviews, the researcher reconciled the identification information of the informants in the first phase with that of the third phase to ensure the data collected could be compared with those from the same person in the first phase. She then started the interviews.
3.4.6 Phase 3 – Post-internship Focus Group Interviews with Interns

The researcher conducted a focus group interview with the same set of informants in phase 1 to triangulate the data collected in the phase 3 to compare the data in the two phases. She asked questions similar to those of the in-depth interviews, but made some amendments to clarify issues arising from the in-depth interviews. By the time of completing this focus group interview, all data collection was finished and the researcher checked the model’s reliability before extension and corroboration of the final model.

Table 3.3 clearly shows how each question in the three phases represents the stages of Kolb’s experiential learning model. It also shows if the question addresses the research questions stated earlier. Some questions may cover more than one stage of Kolb’s model and address more than one research question. In addition, some similar questions were asked in other phases, as indicated in the remarks. It reveals the question sets comprehensively cover all stages of the learning process in Kolb’s theory in relation of the learning experience of interns to obtain the data to address the research questions stated.
Table 3.3

Mapping of Questions with Kolb’s Model and Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>RO</td>
<td>AC</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>RQ1</td>
<td>RQ2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>B1/C1</td>
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<td>B2/C2</td>
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<td>B3/C3</td>
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</tr>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>C8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<table>
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<td>A1/C1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>A2/C2</td>
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<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>A3/C3</td>
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<td>C4/C7</td>
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<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>A1/B1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>A2/B2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>A3/B3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>B4</td>
<td></td>
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<td>C5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>B5</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>B4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* CE - Concrete Experience  RO - Reflective Observation  
AC - Abstract Conceptualization  AE - Active Experimentation

RQ1: How does learning experience affect interns’ perceptions toward overseas internship?

RQ2: How do interns learn during the overseas internship?

Remarks: Similar questions in the other phase

A1–A6: Questions set for Phase 1 pre-overseas internship interviews
B1–B6: Questions set for Phase 2 internship interviews with internship coordinators
C1–C10: Questions set for Phase 3 post-overseas internship interviews
3.4.7 Modifications of Interview Questions

The researcher modified interview questions after hospitality students and educators checked them for the content validity. First, on January 26, 2013, she sent the interview questions to two year-two hospitality students with same study level of the informants, one from PERM, HKBU and one from SHTM, PolyU. These students checked the understanding of the wording of the questions. Then, on February 16, 2013, the researcher sent the first modified version to two bilingual hospitality educators to check the content validity and offer comments on further improvements. After that, on February 20, 2013, the researcher sent the second modified version to a professional translation company to translate the English version into Chinese, using a blind translation-back-translation method (Maneesriwongul & Dixon, 2004) (Appendix C). This was followed by a back translation of the Chinese version into English by another translator on February 26, 2013. The two versions of the interview questions were compared to detect items yielding discrepant responses. On March 2, 2013, the researcher sent both English and Chinese versions to the same hospitality students and educators to review the questions again. The researcher made some amendments after receiving their comments and advice. Then, the researcher sent the translated version of the questions to the translation company again for rechecking to enhance its accuracy. Finally, the final version of question set was produced.

Overall, the main amendments made throughout the content validity checking process were (a) consistency of the word “overseas internship”; (b) change the word “employer” to “workplace” for some questions; (c) minor grammatical changes; (d) elaborations for few questions, and (e) the addition of some new questions. Based on the information collected from phase 1 and 2, some questions were added and modified again for the phase 3 post-internship interviews to ensure the data collected
were useful for this study. For example, the internship coordinators commented that the interns could learn more by comparing what they learnt in overseas internship and their local experience. Therefore, they suggested that the university could arrange local work experience for interns before sending them overseas. To check the usefulness of the local work experience, the researcher added a question to interns in phase 3: “What do you think about your learning experience of this internship if you have/do not have relevant local work experience? Any changes?”

3.4.8 Interview Guide

After setting the interview questions, the researcher outlined interview guides for individual in-depth interviews (Appendix D) and focus group interviews (Appendix E) so the interviewer and moderator could keep the interviews on track. Most of the items in the guides were similar, but there were still some differences in two different settings. The guides were written to internalize the questions and keep the discussion conversational; the guides served as a script and reference for the interviewer and moderator. They also minimized misunderstanding and objections from the informants as the questions and flow of the interviews were sent to them prior to the interviews.

To make sure the informants understood the purpose and arrangement of the interviews, and felt comfortable and safe in whatever they were going to answer, a preliminary meeting was held with all of them before the interviews to explain the details and guarantee all data would be reported anonymously.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection processes were conducted over a period of six months between April and October 2013. In the first and third phase, individual in-depth interviews were first conducted, followed by focus group interviews to explore and
investigate the interns’ learning process during overseas internship, based on data collected from the two sources. Phase 1 started in April 2013 before the overseas internship program commenced. In the second phase, in-depth interviews with internship coordinators were conducted and online social network sites were used to keep in contact with interns during their internship. The last phase started within two months after the completion of the overseas internship program and the interns’ return to Hong Kong.

Interviewing requires mental discipline, preparation, and group interaction skills. Other than the well-developed questions asked of the right respondents, a skillful interviewer and moderator is important for the success of the interview (Krueger & Casey, 2009). For this reason, the interviewer and moderator facilitated the data collection procedures and the researcher played these two roles during the interviews. Apart from the interview guides, the researcher developed a checklist (Appendix F) for the moderator to have a smooth data collection process.

The data collection procedures were not limited to the interviews. To achieve meaningful results and facilitate smooth execution of this research, the researcher sent a contact letter to the relevant schools and departments (Appendix G) and interns of overseas internship (Appendix H). With the assistance of internship coordinators, 42 of 104 students who had overseas internship agreed to participate, with 25 of 30 from HKBU and 17 of 74 from PolyU. Before the interview, each participant signed a consent form (Appendix I) for voluntary participation. In accordance with the research protocol, the researcher built ethical, validity and reliability considerations into the study design and interview guides.

3.5.1 Ethical Issues

Considering the ethical issues, students invited to take part in the study were informed that their participation was voluntary and did not constitute a formal part of
their program of studies. They were made aware of the purpose of the study and asked to provide informed consent to be involved before the start of the interviews. The researcher conducted interviews in a private location using a digital recorder, protecting the confidentiality of interviewees’ contributions during the recording, analysis, and reporting stages of the study. Informants also received the opportunity at the end of the interviews to withdraw anything they had disclosed with which they did not feel comfortable (Barron et al., 2007).

3.5.2 Triangulation Issues

Triangulation is a strategy for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings. It is an important methodological issue in qualitative approaches to control bias and establish valid propositions (Golafshani, 2003). Flick (2004) described triangulation of data as a method that combines data drawn from different sources, at different times, in different places, and from different people. As such, triangulation is crucial to ensure and strengthen the validity and reliability. This study used both data and methods triangulation. In-depth interviews, focus group interviews, and interaction through social media contacts were used to complement each other. In addition, interviews with both interns and internship coordinators served a complementary way of data collection. Figure 3.2 illustrates the triangular relationship among these methods.
3.5.3 Validity Issues

Validity refers to whether an interview study investigates what is intended to investigate. Audio recording serves two different purposes in this study, it can not only ensure the descriptive validity of the transcriptions, but also stimulates recall and reflection of the interviews with interns. Regarding the interview questions, to check the content validity of the instrument, the researcher pre-tested the interview questions before conducting the interviews. Two hospitality students at the same level (i.e. one from PolyU and one from HKBU) and two hospitality educators were invited to check their understanding of the questions so that the questions could be verified and assured to be clearly understood. Moreover, as most of the target samples in this study are Hong Kong hospitality students, the questions were translated into Chinese (Appendix C) using a blind translation-back-translation method (Maneesriwongul & Dixon, 2004).

The interconnected data from the two sources (i.e., in-depth interviews and focus group interviews) and two groups (i.e., interns and internship coordinators) can
strengthen the findings by triangulating the information obtained. In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected data through online social network sites during the internship. By using these methods, the researcher can secure in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question and reduce the risk of systematic bias or limitations of a single-method for the conclusions of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The focus group discussion provided another measure of validity for interview data, fostering a broader understanding of the issues investigated.

3.5.4 Reliability Issues

Reliability refers to how consistent the results are. To ensure the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings, the same set of informants are interviewed twice: once before the start of the overseas internship and once after informants’ completion of the program. Moreover, to examine the influence of overseas internship experience on interns, some interview questions were asked before interns’ starting of the placement so that the halo effect from the negative learning experience during the overseas internship can be avoided or detected.

Furthermore, to achieve acceptable levels of reliability, the process of coding text (Ap, 2003, p. 14) entails several steps: (a) identify the purpose and objectives of the study; (b) select the sampling units; (c) determine sample size by “theoretical saturation”; (d) collect data and make it into text; (e) code the data; (f) transform codes into categories, labels, or themes; (g) sort materials used to collect data by categories, identifying similar phrases, patterns, relationships, and commonalities or disparities; (h) examine sorted materials to identify and isolate meaningful patterns and processes; and (i) consider identified patterns in the context of previous research and theories. Researchers can conduct content analysis systematically and objectively by following the above nine steps.

Validity and reliability are two vital components to any research. Therefore, the
researcher drew data from different sources (i.e., in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, and online social network sites) and at different times (i.e., before, during and after the overseas internship), from different people (i.e., interns and internship coordinators). These methods are part of the efforts to deal with validity threats. Data triangulation further contributes to both the validity and reliability of the research.

3.6 Method of Analysis

The extensive literature review in the previous chapter revealed a lack of existing literature on students’ learning experience in overseas internship programs. This study, therefore, used the exploratory and inductive data analysis approach to explore issues related to overseas interns’ learning experience to fill the knowledge gap. The researcher used a qualitative design to explore the learning process of interns during overseas internship and conducted content analysis of the collected data. This technique for a systematic quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) can determine the existence of certain words or concepts within texts.

3.6.1 Transcription of the Data

Data collected from in-depth interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded with field notes taken. To capture and reflect all the messages from the interviews, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggested raw data from qualitative methods need to be analyzed as soon as possible. Therefore, within two weeks of data collection, the researcher reviewed all interview transcripts and field notes for familiarization with data, and then transcribed them into Word document. Moreover, for the purpose of the thesis presentation, the data was first transcribed into written Chinese, and then translated into English for data analysis. To ensure the accuracy of the transcription and translation, English transcripts were compared with the Chinese version and
adjustments were made. In total, 354 pages of transcribed data were content analyzed.

3.6.2 Content Analysis of the Data

The researcher carried out content analysis of the interview records manually by reading the transcribed data line by line carefully. To move the research from description toward conceptualizing that description, coding is the pivotal first step for analysis (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). The researcher coded the transcriptions, breaking them down into manageable categories on various levels for analysis and inductively generating them using the “grounded” approach. In this study, the coding process was initiated by the two research questions and literature review.

Grounded theory coding is at least a two-step coding process, which represents “the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). First, the researcher conducted open coding to make beginning analytical decisions about the data. This initial coding involved the scrutiny of the data, which required transcript analysis word for word, line-by-line, and phrase-by-phrase. She followed this with focused coding, which used the most frequent or significant initial codes to sort, synthesize, and conceptualize large amounts of data obtained. In this way, a framework of interrelated concepts was then developed showing posited relationships between the central concepts (i.e. the identified core codes which represented the central phenomenon in response to the questions and each stage of learning process in Kolb’s model) (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Douglas, 2003). During the data collection and analysis processes, the researcher took memos to facilitate her thinking and stimulate analytical insights. Finally, the researcher constructed a conceptual map to show the thematic relationships between Kolb’s theory and learning experience in overseas internship.
To minimize the bias of coding processes, an experienced helper in content analysis was invited to code part of the data for setting up the coding systems. After the first meeting to brief the coder about the research objectives and the coding procedures, the helper coded three in-depth interviews. The coding of the both researcher and helper were compared and the differences were analyzed and discussed until consensus was reached at the second meeting. Following the coding rules of Pfeil and Zaphiris (2009), the repeated concepts were coded once only. Then, the coding was further refined in a repetitive process. Finally, the researcher completed all coding following the agreed up coding scheme, counted the number of coded responses in each subcategory.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the methodological issues. Two qualitative methods, individual in-depth and focus group interviews with interns, and in-depth interviews with internship coordinators were employed to explore the learning process of interns in overseas internship and triangulate the data for validity. The researcher chose participants who studied in UGC-funded hospitality degree programs in Hong Kong. To examine the influence of internship experience on interns’ perception towards overseas internships, the researcher conducted interviews with both interns and internship coordinators in three phases; once pre-departure, once during, and once post-overseas internship. From these interviews, she collected data from different angles at different times. The researcher incorporated interns’ learning experiences and the Kolb’s experiential learning theory to address the research questions. Finally, the researcher conducted a process of content analysis to analyze the qualitative data collected from interviews for further processes of this study.
CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter discusses the content analysis of the data obtained from the interviews to explore and develop an understanding of student learning experience during overseas internship. It first presents an overview of the analytic phases, followed by the demographic profile of the interviewees. Findings about the interns’ learning experience are then divided into two key parts to achieve the research objectives. The researcher identifies the influence of learning experience on student perception towards overseas internship by comparing the data collected from the pre- and post-internship interviews and then explains how interns’ learning experience progresses during the overseas internship. Discussions follow each part of the results presentation. In addition to the results of content analysis, the researcher presents the findings of the interviews with direct quotations and paraphrases of informants’ responses as basic sources of the raw data. The researcher then constructs a framework for the interns’ learning process. The final section of this chapter presents the research findings briefly again to recapitulate the influence of overseas internship on learning and how learning progresses during internship.

4.1 Overview of the Analytic Phases

Incorporating findings from an extensive review of the literature, the researcher conducted in-depth and focus group interviews to obtain views from internship coordinators and hospitality students. The researcher produced a complete verbatim transcription of the interviews, believing it would yield a more methodical and complete analysis than simply taking notes would (Veal, 2011). The interview study generated a total of 1,089 minutes and 14 seconds of audio recordings, which were transcribed into 354 pages of single-spaced text for the purpose of content analysis.
The researcher conducted content analysis with another coder. The researcher developed the coding scheme by organizing data into categories according to the subject of discussion (Richards, 2005). She selected relevant passages in the transcripts and allocated them to categories based on initial reading of the transcripts, the literature, and the original research questions.

As this was a qualitative study, the data was presented as a selection of direct quotes and paraphrases of informants’ comments with the researcher’s interpretations of these words. This allowed the researcher to note themes and metaphors in participants’ overseas learning experience. The percentage of coded responses to total number of informants (N=18) was also calculated and presented in the findings. To ensure confidentiality, all quotations are recorded in isolation and unlinked to other materials contributed by the same informant. All names were pseudonyms.

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Informants

Table 4.1 outlines the demographic profile of the student informants and an appointment list is also given for reference (see Appendix J). The researcher interviewed 18 student interns (10 from HKBU and 8 from PolyU) at pre- and post-overseas internship to reach data saturation. Among the informants, 15 were females, and only 3 were males. The uneven distribution might result in gender bias in the opinions expressed. However, the hospitality sector belongs to the group of gender-segregated industries that female domination is found due to its particular characteristics (Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera, & Roper-Garcia, 2011).

She also interviewed one internship coordinator from each university. The Physical Education and Recreation Management program accounted for 56% of the informants, and Hotel Management and Tourism Management accounted for same
proportions with 22% each. Most informants had their overseas internship in the United States (44%), followed by China (28%), Taiwan (11%), and Singapore (16.7%). Seven informants worked in hotels (39%), six worked in campsites (33%), four worked in theme parks (22%), and one worked in property management (6%).

Table 4.1

Demographic Profile of Student Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Baptist University</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of school program</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education and Recreation Management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country for overseas internship</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job nature</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campsite</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme park</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the fifteen informants (83%) who reported that their participation in overseas internship were based on their personal decisions, only four (22%) were
solely initiated by themselves, while the other 11 (61%) were initiated by themselves together with the support from other parties including senior schoolmates (44%), family (39%), friends (11%), and professors or lecturers (11%). Three participants (17%) encountered disagreement from their families about participating in the program (see Table 4.2).

Interns’ willingness to learn is an important element in the overall learning process and the process of experiential learning requires that students should be actively involved in the experience (Karns, 2005; Kolb, 1984). Therefore, most of the interns had a good start for their overseas learning by being actively involved in the decision to participate in the internship.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solely self-initiate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solely supported from others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal decision</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported from others</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior schoolmates</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professors/Lecturers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Encountered discouragement or disagreement (from family)

| Yes | 3 | 16.7 |
| No | 15 | 83.3 |

4.3 Influence of Learning Experience on Interns

Based on the first research question -- “How does learning experience affect
interns’ perceptions toward overseas internship? — the influence of learning experience on interns’ perception towards overseas internship was coded into the following sections (see Figure 4.1): (a) interns’ perception differences towards overseas internship; (b) perceived most important competencies learnt; (c) perceived practicability and applicability of competencies learnt; and (d) persons who enhance interns’ learning experience. The researcher compared results from the content analysis of pre-internship and post-internship to determine the influence of overseas learning experience on interns.

![Figure 4.1 Data Coding System for the Influence of Learning Experience on Interns’ Perception towards Overseas Internship](image)

**4.3.1 Interns’ Perception Differences towards Overseas Internship**

The coding was based on the study of Yang et al. (2011) regarding students’
perceptions on important things learnt through study abroad. The researcher made slight modifications and additions to the categories and themes due to the differences in the data obtained.

The researcher asked the informants twice about their perceptions towards overseas internship: before and after the internship (see Table 4.3). Before the internship, most informants replied that they deemed overseas internship superior to a local one. Around half of the informants replied it would have been difficult for them to have the chance to work overseas in the future (66.7%) and they could learn more in an overseas internship than in a local internship (44.4%). Interestingly, no informants considered the overseas internship superior to the local one after the internship. As well, almost 45% of the informants in the first interview mentioned the internship as chances for them to play, visit, or travel, but only 16.7% mentioned this after the internship.

Table 4.3 shows more informants mentioned the intercultural perspective and personal development after the overseas internship. Comparing their perspectives before and after the internship, participants presumed they could experience different cultures (from 22.2% to 33.3%), enhance language ability (from 16.7% to 27.8%), experience different lifestyles and attitudes (from 11.1% to 16.7%), enhance self-awareness and independence (from 16.7% to 50.0%), and make friends (from 5.6% to 27.8%). Fewer interns linked the overseas internship with a disciplinary or career perspective, dropping significantly from 33.3% to 5.6%.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts (Pre-Internship)</th>
<th>% (Pre)</th>
<th>% (Post)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts (Post-Internship)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural perspective</td>
<td>Learn different work systems and work environment</td>
<td>‘The work system and contents may be different from Hong Kong… what I will learn can be applied in Hong Kong’ (PR-S13)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>‘I learnt a lot as I stayed in a new work environment where I was not familiar with…’ (PO-S13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience different cultures</td>
<td>‘The experience gained will be different as we had to deal with different culture and people from different countries’ (PR-S4)</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>‘I could experience the cultural differences there… and learnt to adapt it’ (PO-S7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhance language ability</td>
<td>‘I can learn English as it is compulsory for me to speak in English during the internship’ (PR-S12)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>‘I think that the improvement in English is much more than what I expected…’ (PO-S3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary/career perspective</td>
<td>Equip myself for future career</td>
<td>‘I think overseas internship can help enhance the portfolio’ (PR-S3)</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry skill and knowledge</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘I worked in F&amp;B department, they taught me some specific skills such as mixing coffee and complaint handling…’ (PO-S7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Pre-Internship)</td>
<td>% (Pre)</td>
<td>% (Post)</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Post-Internship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Enhance self-awareness and self-independent</td>
<td>‘It can force me to minimize my weaknesses and learn the strengths from others’ (PR-S9)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>‘I needed to take care of myself without my families… it was an valuable experience for me’ (PO-S7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience different lifestyles and attitudes</td>
<td>‘I can learn from people there with people with different attitudes’ (PO-S11)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘I was able to gain new insights for communication and attitudes’ (PO-S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior of overseas internship</td>
<td>Difficult to have chance to work overseas/ already had local work experience</td>
<td>‘We can work as part-time in Hong Kong… but it would be difficult for me to have a chance to work in a U.S. campsite… It is really a valuable chance to me’ (PR-S1)</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn more than the local internship</td>
<td>‘I think overseas internship can help local students to learn something new, which cannot be learnt in Hong Kong’ (PR-S3)</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Play/ visit/ travel</td>
<td>‘I like travelling… other than work, I can go to visit different places and play before, during, and even after the internship’ (PR-S5)</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘I felt happy to visit many places in Taiwan and build networks there’ (PO-F2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Pre-Internship)</td>
<td>% (Pre)</td>
<td>% (Post)</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Post-Internship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make friends</td>
<td>‘I want to visit other countries… to know foreign friends…’ (PR-F4)</td>
<td>5.6 27.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘I was happy to meet many people from different countries such as Mexico and Middle East’ (PO-F4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher also interviewed two internship coordinators regarding their thoughts of interns’ perceptions towards the overseas internship (see Table 4.4). Both internship coordinators revealed that interns could perceive overseas internship as a chance to play, visit and travel, and experience something more and different in another country.

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IC001</td>
<td>‘In my opinion, they treat it as a chance to have a trip and play... The want to experience the work environment in other countries. They want to try something different from Hong Kong’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC002</td>
<td>‘There are many reasons for them to join the overseas internship programs. They want to have overseas experience exposure... or equip themselves with better portfolio... they like the countries... they can also stay over there and play... whatever... whatever reasons’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 shows the gap between interns’ expectation for and actual experience from the overseas internship. Only two (11.1%) reported no difference in their perceptions towards the overseas internship. Most informants (88.9%) felt the reality of the internship differed from what they expected. Half reported their experience in the internship was better than what they expected and described the benefits of learning more, having an easier job, less workload and better outcome than expected. In contrast, around 40% felt the experience was worse than what they expected due to a lack of learning opportunities, a heavier workload, and more challenges.
Table 4.5
*Gap between Interns’ Expectation for and Actual Experience from the Overseas Internship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No difference</td>
<td>More or less the same</td>
<td>‘More or less the same… previously I expected overseas internship could give me an opportunity to experience the environmental differences in another country and I experienced…’ (PO-S12)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences existed</td>
<td>Better than expected</td>
<td>‘After going there, I found that it was not so difficult to get along with them as perceived… They were willing to help…’ (PO-S6)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worse than expected</td>
<td>‘It was not as easy as expected… I thought that I could overcome the problem of adaptability, but I couldn’t… I felt depressed of language barrier, suffering homesickness… and difficult to adapt the culture…’ (PO-S10)</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings revealed that interns partook of overseas internship because they perceived it superior to a local internship. The overseas internship could offer a range of cultural exposure that they neither could have learnt from classroom nor could anticipate prior to their placements (Roberts, 1998). They also regarded the internship as a chance to play, visit, and travel. Most importantly, based on their local work experience, they wanted to learn and experience something different from Hong Kong. The results were consistent with the studies of Gibson (2006; 2009), and Toncar and Cudmore (2000) that the combination of work experience with travel was highlighted by the interns. The students related internship experience to travel experience and their motives for travel were also related to personal development,
adventure, and fun (Van’t Klooster et al., 2008). Similar with many studies related to local internship (Beggs et al., 2006; Broadbridge, 2007; Cho, 2006; Eisner, 2005), discrepancies between interns’ expectations and their actual experience were found. However, not all reported negatively, half of the interns gained a better learning experience than what they expected in the overseas experience, which was different from the findings of local internship studies.

A comparison of the interns’ perceptions towards the overseas internship before and after the internship identified some differences. Based on the emergent findings, more interns related overseas internship to ‘intercultural perspective’ and ‘personal development’ after the internship experience. Half of the interns regarded the internship as an opportunity to enhance their ‘self-awareness and self-independence,’ while around one-third regarded it as a chance to ‘experience different culture,’ ‘enhance language ability,’ and ‘learn different work systems and work environment.’ Similar findings were reported in various studies; overseas interns tend to have deeper understanding and appreciation for the foreign cultures and gain better knowledge of themselves for personal growth after the internship (Gibson & Busby, 2009; Toncar & Cudmore, 2000; Tse, 2010). Most importantly, the interns gained life experience by interacting with the environment and local people in the host country, which constitutes authentic learning in a positive context (Conceição & Skibba, 2007). Moreover, dealing with internship mobility, interns embraced the change and experienced emotional transitions that contributed to their identity; overseas internship enabled them to develop as individuals in various aspects, including self-esteem, personal strengths, and fundamentally changed attitudes (Callen, 2010; Gruman et al., 2009; Ko, 2007; Tse, 2010).

Although fewer interns perceived the internship from the ‘disciplinary or career perspective’ after gaining overseas experience, the overseas learning helped
the students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as prepared them for their careers, future study, and their roles as global citizens (Ko, 2007; Riggio, Sapolis, & Chen, 2011; Tse, 2010). Moreover, more interns stressed ‘making friends’ and ‘experiencing different lifestyles and attitudes’ as essential elements in their internship after gaining actual experience. Likewise, they identified the establishment of working relationships with their colleagues (González, 1993; Tse, 2010), change of attitude, and adjustment of life goals resulting from the work experience (Bodenhorn et al., 2005; Yang et al., 2011).

The abovementioned revealed that interns tended to focus on primarily on the ‘intercultural perspective’ of the overseas internship, secondarily on ‘personal development’, and least on ‘the career or disciplinary perspective.’ These findings accord with various studies on overseas learning (Papatsiba, 2006; Yang et al., 2011). According to one internship coordinator, students might not put their focus on learning the technical skill and knowledge.

“In my opinion, interns may not focus on learning the technical skill and knowledge when comparing with the local internship... from my understanding, students choose the department and job nature when joining the local internship... However, for those who join the overseas internship, besides the location, the actual overseas experience becomes the most critical consideration for them... and therefore, the component of learning technical skill and knowledge become less important comparatively... and they tend to be less picky and demanding on the overseas than the local one”(IC002)

### 4.3.2 Perceived Competencies Learnt and Their Practicability

Interns should be able to reflect on their actual experience and identify the effects on their learning and development as it relates to their pre-internship learning intentions (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). Therefore, the researcher asked them to reflect what competencies they developed in the internship and their practicability for future.
4.3.2.1 Important competencies learnt through the overseas internship. The informants were asked to identify the two most important competencies learnt through the overseas internship for their future career in the pre- and post-internship interviews. Based on the Yang et al.’s study (2009, p.72), the competencies learnt were classified into three categories: (a) multicultural competencies (e.g., knowledge about the behavioral styles and beliefs of local people, and skills for social interaction in the host culture), (b) disciplinary/ career competencies (e.g., study skills, disciplinary/ professional knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving), and (c) personal competencies (e.g., awareness of others’ values and beliefs, self-independence and confidence, teamwork skills).

Most of the informants reported different competencies before and after the overseas internship. Six interns changed one of the items and ten interns changed both items. Only two interns did not change their items most important competencies. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in the categories between pre- and post-internship, though most interns changed their reported competencies due to increases in language learning, and improved attitudes and ethics. There was a decrease in cross-cultural communication, self-awareness, and independence within the category (see Table 4.6). The findings leaned more towards ‘intercultural development’, followed by ‘personal competencies’ and ‘disciplinary/ career competencies’. ‘Cross-cultural communication’ was the most important competency in pre- and post-internship findings (72.2% and 61.1%), followed by ‘language learning’ (33.3% and 44.4%). Regarding personal competencies, differences were found in the themes of ‘self-awareness and independence’ and ‘attitude and ethics’. Around 30% of interns selected ‘self-awareness and self-independence’ as the most important competency for future career before their internship, but only 11.1% chose this item after the internship. Only one intern identified ‘attitudes and ethics’ before
the internship, but it was dramatically increased to 27.8% afterwards. The changes were also explicitly expressed by one internship coordinator:

“Our attitudes have changes, their life attitudes and attitudes toward problems handling have changes after experiencing the cultural differences... Not as traditional as Hong Kong... they become more open-minded... they are more willing to accept changes after the overseas internship... they learnt different work system... and easier to accept something different” (IC001)

Table 4.6
Perceptions on the Two Most Important Competencies Learnt through the Overseas Internship for Future Career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Pre (%)</th>
<th>Post (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural competencies</td>
<td>Cross-cultural communication</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language learning</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intercultural learning and adaptation</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary/ career competencies</td>
<td>Academic and professional knowledge and skills</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem solving and critical thinking</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal competencies</td>
<td>Self-awareness and independence</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading and cooperative skill</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitudes and ethics</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overseas internship provides similar benefits as those in local internship, with additional benefits cited by extant literature, particularly in the intercultural perspectives. Similar with Yang et al.’s study (2009), the emergent findings revealed that intercultural competencies were the most important, followed by personal competencies and disciplinary/ career competencies. The themes of ‘cross-cultural communication’ and ‘language learning’ were the two most important competencies
learnt for the future in both pre- and post-internship interviews.

Although the destination for overseas internship may affect interns’ intercultural learning, this issue was not within the scope of this study. Having said that, the researcher found no obvious differences in learning process between interns who had their overseas internship in Asia and those who had their internship in non-Asian countries. Whether interns worked in Asian or non-Asian countries, they all gained intercultural experience through their overseas internships.

4.3.2.2 Practicability and applicability of what would be/ was learnt. Interns were also asked if they think what they would learn or had learnt was practical for their future career in the hospitality industry or other industries (Table 4.7). Before the internship, most of the interns (77.8% and 94.4%) expressed that what they would learn was practical for their future hospitality or other career. Three interns (16.7%) expressed that what they would learn would not be practical because the position they would work in the overseas internship was not related to what they were studying or their planned future career. One student (5.6%) stated she participated in the program to experience the location, not to gain technical skill or knowledge, so she was unsure whether it was practical.

“I hope that I can apply what I will learn from the overseas internship for my future career or even other works… but I really don’t know what I can learn in the overseas internship… up to this moment” (PR-S1)

However, all interns found that what they learnt was practical, whether it related to their future career in the hospitality industry or other industries. The intern who changed her response from ‘not practical’ to ‘practical’ expressed:

“Yes, what I had learnt is practical… Interpersonal skill, adaptability, language ability… Interacting with others and foreigners are particularly important for future career… it can be applied to other works as well… interaction with others are required across all areas in a real work situation” (PO-S4)
Table 4.7

**Practicability of What would be/ was Learnt during Overseas Internship for Future Career**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>For hospitality industry</th>
<th>For other industries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pre %</td>
<td>Post %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practicability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td></td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not practical</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applicability of the competencies learnt</strong></td>
<td>Intercultural competencies</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural learning and adaptation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-cultural communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary/career competencies</strong></td>
<td>Academic and professional knowledge and skills</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal competencies</strong></td>
<td>Self-awareness and Independence</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and ethics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading and cooperative skill</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft skill</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the practicability and applicability of the competencies learnt, all the interns replied with positive responses that what they learnt was practical for their future hospitality and other career even though some did not think so prior to the internship. ‘Intercultural competencies’ was perceived as the most important competency, this competency was also perceived as the most applicable one from interns’ eyes. Acrodia and Dickson (2009) explicated that intercultural learning
might be best ‘experienced’ in a communal setting as interns were inherently interested in learning with people from different cultures. Van’t Klooster et al. (2008) indicated that travel education resulted in more cross-cultural understanding was rooted in social contract theory. With the increased globalization of the hospitality industry, intercultural competence is the most practical competency for an intern’s future (Lim & Noriega, 2007). Hong Kong, a world city marked by cultural fusion and diversity (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2014), requires cross-cultural competence (Bond, 1992).

Consistent with previous research, the present study found that interns also considered ‘personal competencies’ as applicable competencies for their future careers (Yang et al., 2011). These competencies are just as important for sustainable productive work and a society as the essential skills and knowledge. In addition, ‘disciplinary/ career competencies’, in particular the problem solving and critical thinking skills, are practical and useful. People who are equipped with career-related skills adapt well to the changing employment environment (Kong, Baum, & Cheung, 2009; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). Similarly, ‘cross-cultural communication’ and ‘language learning’ were perceived as the two most applicable competencies, while only one to two students mentioned in both pre- and post-interviews career competencies as practical for their future hospitality career. Overseas internship can enable whole person development with various capabilities (Finkelstein & Walker, 2008). Only one student mentioned the benefits of improving interviewing skills after the internship, something also revealed in Yang et al.’s study (2011).

It was interesting that no interns mentioned the theme of ‘equip myself for future career’ when the researcher asked about their perceptions of the overseas internship while all the interns gave positive responses when the researcher asked specifically whether they thought the competences learnt from overseas internship
were practical for their future career during the post-internship interviews. It might be because other issues were more prominent when asking about their perceptions of the overseas internship. In fact, intercultural and personal development perspectives were relatively more important than disciplinary or career related issues from the interns’ views.

In sum, the findings of present study further confirmed the need to including overseas internship in the hospitality management curriculum to build competencies in the intercultural, personal, career, and disciplinary.

4.3.3 Persons Enhance Interns’ Learning Experience

4.3.3.1 Perception differences in persons enhancing interns’ learning experience. Table 4.8 shows the persons who could enhance interns’ learning experience in the overseas internship from the view of interns. Staff in the school -- including internship coordinators (11.1%), mentors (27.8%) and a supporting team among the faculty (5.6%) -- were important to enhance the learning experience before the internship, but all suffered dramatic drop after the internship: to 5.6%, 5.6%, and 0%, respectively. More than 60% of interns considered the importance of classmates with whom they shared an internship, but this figure dropped dramatically to around 20% after the internship because they were not working at the same department.

All interns considered staff in the workplace as people who could enhance their overseas learning experience both before and after the internship. Percentages of colleagues and direct managers or supervisors increased from 50.0% to 77.8% and 44.4% to 55.6% respectively. Surprisingly, none remarked on top management before the internship but 50.0% mentioned this group after the internship. The findings showed that staff in the workplace, especially their colleagues, was the most significant group for their learning experience during the internship. This conclusion
was manifest in one participant’s responses of her internship experience:

“Colleagues were more important than others... as the manager was remote from me... but colleagues were those dealing with me most frequently, they gave me advice and I learnt from them... I tried to observe what they did, and reflected what were their strengths and weaknesses. I got some insights sometimes through their sharing’

PO-S8

In addition, only one student mentioned families and friends before the internship, but around 28% expressed they were important afterward. One participant (PO-S14) epitomized such an opinion, reporting a desire to share with family and friends and seek their emotional support, particularly during difficulties in the internship.
## Table 4.8

**Persons who could Enhance the Learning Experience in the Overseas Internship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories/Themes</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts (Pre)</th>
<th>Pre (%)</th>
<th>Post (%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts (Post)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Internship coordinator</strong></td>
<td>‘When I feel unhappy or any special thing happened, I can make a call to the internship coordinator or mentor… At least they can give advice for us to handle the problems… and comfort us… as a support’ (PR-S1)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘After solving the problems I encountered, I told my internship coordinator, He know that my problem was settled… but he gave me emotional support’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentor</strong></td>
<td>‘I can seek help and assistance from my mentor during the internship… though I don’t know who is my mentor up to this moment’ – (PR-S12)</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘Colleagues, supervisor, family, friends in Hong Kong, internship coordinator, and mentor… they all could help and support my learning’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporting team in the faculty</strong></td>
<td>‘As the supporting team in my faculty have taken up the internship program with my host organization for few years, it would be better for me to seek assistance from them, in case if there are any problems’ (PR-S2)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classmates who had internship with me</strong></td>
<td>‘classmates who go with me… we can share the learning experience with each other’ (PR-F2)</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘Classmates… as we shared our experience when we were staying at the dormitory during the internship’ (PO-S12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories/Themes</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Pre)</td>
<td>Pre (%)</td>
<td>Post (%)</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top management</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>‘The general manager was very kind and supported us to learn… and assigned different duties for us so that we could learn more’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I think the supervisor who assign work to me… if my supervisor can assign more duties to me, I can learn more’ (PR-F4)</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>‘Restaurant manager (direct manager) who I reached most frequently. He was the most important one to teach me and let me get involved in the work during my internship learning process’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct manager or supervisor</td>
<td>‘Maybe something like briefing session or training… the hotel I worked trained me the basic skills for a week. Hopefully, trainers can provide assistance to us…’ (PR-S12)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘Most important one should be my instructors as they had different styles and abilities, I really learnt a lot from them’ (PO-F2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainer or instructor</td>
<td>‘If my colleagues can communication with me well, and they are willing to explain more when running a task, it is definitely helpful’ (PR-S13)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>‘My colleagues… as they were those I were most familiar with… and we worked together at most of the time’ (PO-S11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘I even learnt from the chefs, they shared their cooking experience with me… I could learn!’ (PO-S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories/Themes</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Pre)</td>
<td>Pre (%)</td>
<td>Post (%)</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts (Post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All staff</td>
<td>‘Depends on the staff there… if they are willing to lead us for working together’ (PR-F2)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘All of them… my manager, supervisor and colleagues taught me and reminded me the important things… my work partners also helped me a lot’ (PO-S5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>‘Family support is also important, as I may not be able to adapt the environment there… if family can give me a call, to support and show their concerns, I would be happier for working for the overseas internship’ (PR-S7)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘Sometimes I called my families and shared my experience with them. They would give me some suggestions for improvement’ (PO-S14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>‘Friends… we can share the happiness and unhappiness… talk with each other when we encounter difficulties’ (PR-S12)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘I shared my difficulties encountered with my friends… and what they offered was a kind of emotional support during the overseas internship’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interns</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘USA internmates… I learnt from them through experience sharing’ (PO-F3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me</td>
<td>‘It also depends on me… whether I am initiative to learn more’ (PR-F2)</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘Me… facing the challenges… I had to stay calm and solve the problems alone’ (PO-F4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Likewise, two internship coordinators also pointed out the importance of direct supervisors and classmates who had internship together for interns’ overseas learning experience. According to the internship coordinators’ remarks (see Table 4.9), direct supervisors could significantly contribute to interns’ learning experience.

Table 4.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IC001</td>
<td>“Be frank, how they treat the interns, how much they are willing to release interns to work by themselves, how much they teach the interns, these all affect what and how much the interns can learn directly. Therefore, the direct supervisor is very important. If the direct supervisor shows their willingness to help and communicate with the interns, students will seek assistance from their direct supervisors directly, but not me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC002</td>
<td>“As an internship coordinator... I play the supporting role as mentioned... of course (I am) very important in the pre-internship stage. However, it depends after their departure to overseas... it depends on whether they are willing to contact us... especially if nothing special... and not much contacts in result. In my opinion, their industry supervisors are very important... If their supervisors can play a good role, as a team player, show caring, and willing to teach the interns... It definitely has positive effects on interns’ life and learning experience in the internship”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings revealed interns perceived both staff in school and the interns’ workplace as important for their learning experience before the internship. However, only one intern perceived that her internship coordinator and mentor could enhance her learning experience, and most interns reiterated the importance of the staff in their workplaces for their learning after the internship. These findings were not surprising because the persons who the interns reached most during internship were those in their workplaces, and workplaces were where their learning took place.
According to interns and internship coordinators, interns seldom contacted their internship coordinators or faculty mentors unless something special happened during the internship. Internship coordinators were more important in the period of pre-internship for arranging their applications and contacts between the workplaces and interns, but during the internship they could not help much and simply assumed supporting roles.

Moreover, a few interns felt that classmates with whom they shared an internship could enhance their learning. This could be because even though they were assigned to different departments or sections, they could still share their experience with each other after the working hours.

“Colleagues... yes... because we worked together everyday...
Classmates... ur... sometimes we were assigned to work in different restaurants” PO-S12

4.3.3.2 Interns’ perceived most important person for enhancing learning experience. Interns were also asked in the post-internship interview to identify the most influential person for their internship learning experience. Table 4.10 compares the findings with those in the previous section. Similar to the pre-internship interviews, in the post-internship interview almost all interns explicitly expressed the importance of the staff in their workplace for their learning experience and only one intern considered her classmates with whom she shared an internship together as the most important. Again, colleagues were identified as the most important persons who could enhance their learning in the internship, followed by direct supervisors, and then top management and trainers/instructors. The following comments elucidated why they perceived a person as the most important one for their learning:
“The restaurant manager (intern’s direct supervisor) who I reached him most frequently... He was the most important one to teach me and involve me into the works during my internship learning process” PO-S4

“Most important one should be my colleagues... they were the one most familiar with the section operations... they taught me a lot” PO-S6

“A among all, I think that the Girls Unit Director... is the most important one, she is a caring person, just like a ‘mother’ of our team... She reminded me what I should do... for example, spending five minutes on each child to show understanding and caring to them” PO-S13

“The trainer helped much... as they were responsible for my learning during my internship” PO-S14

“Supervisor was the most important one... what he could see was different from others... He could remind me for the area of improvement and answer my enquires” PO-F1

The above deliberations revealed that those who worked closely with and triggered interns’ learning were perceived as the most important persons for the interns’ learning.
Table 4.10  
*Interns’ Perceived Most Important Person who could Enhance their Learning Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Pre (%)</th>
<th>Post (%)</th>
<th>Most important person (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Internship coordinator</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting team in the faculty</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classmates who had internship together with me</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>Top management</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct supervisor</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trainer or instructor</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All staff</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other interns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Me</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colleagues were perceived as the most important people for the interns regarding their work experience. According to Tse (2010), inexperienced interns rely heavily on their colleagues and the relationship between them constitutes most of their recollection and experience of the internship. The notion was manifest in one participant’s report:

“I seldom found my supervisor to discuss my work as they were quite busy… But I would chat with my colleagues, especially those similar ages with me... they understood me a lot… and I did share with them and learn from them” PO-S3

Furthermore, previous overseas internship studies highlighted the dynamics involved in leaving a peer-supported environment (Gibson & Busby, 2009) and
losing the support of caretakers (Cullen, 2010). Interns tended to find a substitution who was closely related to them during the internship, and colleagues could replace their peers and caretakers to a certain extent. It also revealed why more interns considered friends and families as influential persons for their internship; they would like to gain support from them even they were far away. In addition, other than colleagues, direct supervisors, trainers or instructors, and top management were the most influential persons for interns’ overseas learning as they facilitated the experiential learning activity in the internship (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012).

Wasonga and Murphy (2006) indicated that interns working closely with a mentor could access tacit knowledge within the organization through observation, participation, and leading. The interns explained why they perceived mentors as the most influential person in their internship learning. No matter who their direct supervisors, top management, trainers, or instructors were, those who train the interns directly and supported them were vital to the success of the interns. The literature review and the views from both internship coordinators in this study confirmed this finding by highlighting the crucial role of on-the-job supervisors to the success of the internship experience (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012).

4.3.4 Section Summary

No significant perception change surfaced among interns after their overseas experience. The intercultural experience seemed to be the most critical and influential element throughout their learning either before or after the internship. Moreover, most interns perceived intercultural competence to be more important than personal competence and career/disciplinary competence for their future. Furthermore, after gaining actual experience, interns did not perceive internship coordinators and mentors as significant. Instead, colleagues became the most important persons to affect their learning experience, followed by their direct
supervisors and top management. The finding shows that people who work closely with, support, and train the interns are crucial for the interns’ learning.

4.4 Students’ Learning Process in Overseas Internship

To answer the second research question of how interns learn during the overseas internship, this section explores the problems interns faced and determines the factors affecting interns’ learning during the overseas internship. According to Kolb’s experiential learning theory and the mapping of questions with the model (see Table 3.3), students’ learning process in overseas internship were coded into the four stages (see Figure 4.2) including (a) concrete experience (CE), (b) reflective observation (RO), (c) abstract conceptualization (AC), and (d) active experimentation (AE). Learning may be entered at any point, but the stages should be followed in sequence (Kolb, 1984).

Concrete experience is based on personal involvement in specific learning situations (Kolb, 1984). Powell and Kalina (2009) defined the learning process of getting concrete experience as the assimilation of prior knowledge with newly presented knowledge to create new knowledge. As such, prior work and learning experience and prior preparation for overseas learning are classified as concrete experience.

With the need of concrete experience at the primary level, learning can transfer to a more abstract level of secondary concepts (Piaget, 1970). This is the second stage of Kolb’s learning cycle – reflective observation. Kolb (1984) and Boud et al. (1985) noted reflection took place when learners were observing and examining the views of others, while Zopitatis (2007) indicated that students could benefit from constructing meaning of their learning by reflecting on the learning activities in which they participated. Therefore, persons and activities that could trigger interns’
reflection were examined in this stage.

At the third stage of learning cycle, abstract conceptualization, learners involve themselves in thinking about new knowledge through the logical analysis of ideas and acting on an intellectual understanding of a situation (Kolb, 1984). At this stage, learners compare what they have done and reflect upon with what they already know (Mobbs, 2014). The actions they took after facing similar or different situations from their learning were investigated.

Active experimentation is the final stage of the learning cycle. Learners consider how they are going to put what they have learnt into practice. This is the stage of planning or trying out what they have learnt. This stage emphasizes practical hands-on approaches, trial and error, and being willing to take risks (Kolb, 1984). Learners in this stage tend to combine experimentation with theory to develop solutions new to their experience (Boud et al., 1985). Accordingly, learning from challenges faced in the internship and immediate actions taken after applying what was learnt were examined for this final stage.
Figure 4.2 Coding System of the Data Analysis for the Interns’ Learning Process
4.4.1 Concrete Experience (CE)

“Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 184, p.41). Therefore, concrete experience is the starting point of Kolb’s learning cycle. This section examines interns’ classroom and work learning experience to determine what interns experienced before the internship and investigate how their experience affected their learning.

4.4.1.1 Impacts of relevant work experience on the learning experience of overseas internship. In the interviews, one internship coordinator recommended more training about the role and work system in Hong Kong for interns before the overseas internship. He anticipated that interns could learn more by comparing the differences between Hong Kong and other countries and contribute more in the overseas internship. Likewise, interns indicated their desire to experience the differences in the work culture and system between Hong Kong and another city. Therefore, the researcher modified and expanded questions in the post-internship interviews to examine the impact of relevant work experience on interns’ overseas learning. Interns who had relevant experience were asked about what they thought might change if they did not have relevant experience, and vice versa.

Table 4.11 shows all informants had part-time work experience ranging from few months to few years before their overseas internship. More than half (55.6%) had experience relevant to the overseas internship while the remaining (44.4%) did not have relevant work experience prior to their overseas internships.
Table 4.11  

**Work Experience of the Interns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant work experience with the overseas internship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12 shows the impact of relevant work experience on interns’ learning experience. Only a few interns with relevant work experience thought that there would be positive outcomes if they did not have relevant experience. They explained that they could learn more as they knew nothing before the overseas internship. However, most expected a negative impact from not having any relevant work experience. The following statement is an example:

“If I did not have relevant experience, I would have no idea on what I could do... it would be more difficult to adapt the changes together on top of the language barrier problems” PO-S1

The interns further expressed:

“I think work experience is needed before the overseas internship so that we can have certain work and learning attitude during the internship” PO-SI

Conversely, only one intern without relevant work experience expected heavier workloads and more stress if she had relevant work experience. The remaining predicted the positive consequences of having better adaptability, a higher level of assigned tasks, and better and deeper leaning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories/Theme</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sample excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If did not have relevant experience</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>(For those who had relevant work experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘If I did not have any experience... I think that I could even learn more... as I could experience those I didn’t learn’ (PO-S10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>‘If I did not have any F&amp;B experience, I believe that my internship would not be such smooth... as I did not have the technical skill that I could not pick up the work and learn quickly... or I needed to put more efforts and spent more time to adapt and get involved in the restaurant operations’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If had relevant experience</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>(For those who did not have relevant work experience)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>‘If I had relevant work experience, I think that I could perform better as I had knowledge in the fast food restaurant operations already... and the manager would not simply give me simple work tasks for me at the beginning... even I might have chance to take up some managerial tasks’ (PO-S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘If I had relevant experience, I would not enjoy my learning process so much... I might be more stressful as they would be more demanding on me... um... learning process might not be so good’ (PO-F2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interns were asked in the post-internship interview whether what they learnt from school or work experience could help their learning in overseas internship (see Table 4.13). Only 16.7% of the interns responded negatively to the question, and all three explicitly expressed that the work assigned was irrelevant to what they studied and they did not gain relevant work experience. In contrast, a large majority (83.3%) gave positive responses to the question. Three interns perceived both their work
experience and knowledge obtained from their studies were beneficial for their overseas learning. Over half (61.7%) considered their work experience helpful to their internship learning. Half of the interns stressed the importance of the industry skill and knowledge learnt, while one each mentioned adaptability, communication skill, and work attitude learnt from their past work experience as helpful to their overseas internship. Close to 40% of interns found their classroom learning useful for their internship. All also pointed out the significance of industry skill and knowledge learnt. One intern mentioned language ability.

The findings revealed that industry skill and knowledge learnt either from work experience or study was perceived as most useful for their overseas learning. One participant represented such opinion:

“I attended some low event courses and worked as a basketball coach… I learnt the skill of teaming up them and integrating mini games during coaching in order to arouse their interests… my knowledge and skill learnt could help and enhance my confidence… it could help for a more smooth-going process for my internship” PO-S13

The findings were consistent with the analysis from one internship coordinator that students with significant work experience can take better advantage of an internship experience and derived more benefits from it. Interns with prior work experience could gain more insights by making comparisons of what they learnt overseas with their past work experience in Hong Kong. They could also contribute more by bringing the work system in Hong Kong to the host country. This view was affirmed by the following participants:

“I worked in hotel in Hong Kong, therefore, I could experience the differences and uniqueness of the hotels between DunHuang and Hong Kong, for example, their culture and work system… I learnt to adapt the new environment as well” (PO-S7)

“I learnt some games in the camp… I found that campsites in Hong
Kong promote group challenges, leadership and self-challenge programme while the campsites in the U.S. entails self-exploration of talent. They provide group challenge programme too, but not the main theme… but simply a part of the programme” (PO-S1)

In contrast to the previous section, industry skill and knowledge was not perceived as the important competency learnt in the overseas internship, but it was perceived as the most important competency internship can teach. Interns considered industry skill and knowledge as the background knowledge needed to familiarize oneself with the new work operation and environment. Those who discounted the usefulness of their learning from school or work explained that the nature of assigned job in the internship did not relate to what they studied. The literature also revealed that not all students had internships in the areas where they wished to have internships (Leslie & Richardson, 2000). As such, internship coordinators should provide relevant WBL and match the needs and expectations of the students and the host organizations for well-prepared interns (Cho, 2006; Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sample excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>‘As I had work experience in hotel last year... therefore, I was familiar with the hotel operation and found easier to pick up’ (PO-S11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry skill and knowledge</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>‘Actually, I have work experience in restaurant operations in Hong Kong already... I worked in a café, and that’s why I learnt the skill easily. For example, tray holding, food and drinks delivery... we were more efficient... and easier to adapt the work as well’ (PO-S6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>‘I was a sport coach... and learnt how to communicate with others... especially children’ (PO-S9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication skill</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘Um… I think… EQ (could help)... As I worked as part-time waitress, I learnt to stay calm... I learnt to stay professional and calm down myself... which could help in my overseas internship’ (PO-F4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learnt from Study</td>
<td>Industry skill and knowledge</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>‘Yes, especially the event management in volunteering... Honestly, I didn’t have much experience in camp activities, but I learnt camping games during my study’ (PO-S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language ability</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘English… I learnt business English and formal letter writing at school... it could help when I was assigned to write a letter in English’ (PO-S7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not useful</td>
<td>Work attitude</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘As I am studying in hotel management... but I worked for clubhouse and property management which my study does not cover and relate... especially I am a year one student only, I do not have any experience in the field’ (PO-F1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.1.2 Preparations for learning in overseas internship. In the pre-internship interview, interns were asked about their preparation for overseas learning. Correspondingly, in the post-internship interview, they were asked what could better prepare them for the internship experience. The researcher categorized the findings into three groups (see Table 4.14): (a) preparations by the interns themselves, (b) preparation by the schools, and (c) preparations by the host organizations.

Before the internship, almost 80% of the interns searched relevant information about the host organization and the country through different channels. They tended to search the information about the country and the host organization through the Internet, while they obtained more details about the internship through their senior fellows who had the same internship with them. One participant (PR-S8) stated she could gain the information such as service hours, registration procedures, and accommodation details through her senior fellows. Around half tried to learn and practice the industry knowledge and skill by attending short courses and practice their skills, while two learnt the culture and practiced the required language in preparation for their overseas learning.

The interns also considered that arranged briefing (77.8%), relevant industry knowledge and skill training (44.4%), sharing sessions (33.3%), and meeting with mentor or internship coordinator (27.8%) organized by their schools could prepare them for the internship learning. Regarding the host organization, interns revealed that the information (50.0%) and briefing (44.4%) provided, selective interview and test arranged (27.8%), and training provided before the internship (22.2%) could enable them prepare well and understand more about their knowledge and skill level, as well as the industry providers’ expectations. Interns stressed the importance of information on the visa application provided by the host organization for interns’ preparation.
“Comparing with other host organizations, I think mine is better than others because they sent us the details on schedule… visa application procedures, workplace information, checklists, what have to be prepared before leaving Hong Kong… I think that we have less trouble than others as they are now having problems on visa applications” (PR-S3)

When asked after their return from the internship about what better preparations could be made for their learning, some responded that they themselves could do nothing better prepared (55.6%), nor could the school (27.8%), or the host organization (22.2%). Some indicated they could search for more information (22.2%), equip themselves with better industry knowledge and skill (22.2%), and become more familiar with culture of the host country (22.2%). Some expected the school to provide more information about the internship (27.8%) and arrange more senior fellows to share their past experience with them (16.7%). Other than provision of more information about the internship details (44.4%), some interns suggested the host organization could provide accurate and consistent information (22.2%) due to the problems experienced by the interns. One participant epitomized the abovementioned opinion:

“Nothing else I could better prepare… I already searched the information of the country in advance to have more understanding of it… For the school, it would be good if they could arrange some sharing sessions by our senior fellows so that we could gain more details about the job duties and workplace, in particular, any special things should be noted… For the host organization, maybe they could provide more information such as the work environment and hotel information for us in advance so that we could have better psychological preparation for the place we would stay” (PO-S11)

The findings showed more than half of the interns prepared themselves well by searching information, contacting the stakeholders concerned including their mentors, sponsors, and senior fellows, and practicing the skill and knowledge required before their departure. The results further demonstrated that background information of the
host organization and country, and industry skill and knowledge were required for students to have better learning experience. Interns need to be adequately prepared to participate through their study before the internship (Karns, 2005).

Moreover, what interns suggested for better preparation was due to the problems they had experienced during the internship. They encountered various problems such as complicated visa application procedures, poor communication with the host organizations, cultural differences, and inconsistent information. Consequently, they suggested the school should have better communication with the host organizations and provide more information on the visa application, and the host organizations should provide accurate and consistent information. Similar findings were also found in the literature highlighting the importance of coordination and communication between and among the internship stakeholders to improve the satisfaction level of the interns (Beggs et al., 2008; Lam & Ching, 2007).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Pre (%)</th>
<th>Post (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interns</td>
<td>Searched the relevant information through different channels</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learnt and practice the industry knowledge and skill</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learnt the culture</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practiced the required language</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing could be better prepared</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Arranged briefing for details</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided relevant industry knowledge and skill to learn</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arranged sharing sessions</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting with mentor/ internship coordinator</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided support services and subsidies</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided information about the internship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing could be better prepared</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host</td>
<td>Provided information about the internship</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>Provided briefing to interns</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selective interview and test arranged</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided training before the internship</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better communication with interns</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provided accurate and consistent information</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.4.1.3 Learning activities experienced during the overseas internship.

Interns were expected to experience certain learning activities during their overseas learning, and thus, they were asked to identify those activities they experienced and
the one they learnt most to understand how interns respond to the learning activities employed in their overseas internship. The learning activities indicated fell into two categories based on time (see Table 4.15). Before the internship commenced, most interns received classroom learning (66.7%), orientation, and a tour of the placement site (22.2%). Other learning activities were also provided such as online training by host organizations, Facebook group discussion, and skill tests. During the internship, all the interns indicated that they learnt through on-the-job training. They also learnt by observation (22.2%), classroom training (11.1%), meeting with supervisors or managers (11.1%) and debriefing (5.6%).

One intern each considered classroom learning before the internship, observation, meeting with supervisors or managers, and debriefing during the internship as the most important for their learning. However, most (77.8%) stressed the significance of on-the-job training for their overseas learning. The notion was manifest in the following:

“On-the-job training learnt most… as the training simply provided the basic information which they could even send me the materials to read… but I could ask whenever I didn’t know during the on-the-job training… which my queries could be solved.” (PO-S4)

“On-the-job training… I learnt directly from colleagues and supervisors… and got their instructions and guidelines… it should be the most efficient way for me to learn in the internship.” (PO-S7)

Training is an important part of students’ learning as it provides job-related competencies (Ko, 2007), so it was not surprising that on-the-job training was selected as the most important learning activity during the internship (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). Different from other activities, interns could be directly involved in the work process during the on-the-job training with higher learning effectiveness (Kolb, 1984). Apart from the traditional learning, which was classroom-based and
workplace-based, web-based learning such as online modules and Facebook discussion was indicated as a learning activity. Similar to Karns (2005), the interns regarded online learning as contributing relatively to their learning. However, Ko (2007) found that creative learning activities could have positive effects on interns’ satisfaction with their internship and job, which in turn contributed to interns’ willingness to stay in the industry.

An intern’s intention to learn through various activities is a crucial component in the overall learning process (Karns, 2005). Establishing good learning activities for interns is important for the quality of the internship program (Ko, 2007). Thus, the internship coordinators and industry supervisors should take note of these results to enhance interns’ learning effectiveness through quality learning activities.

Table 4.15

*Learning Activities Experienced as Part of the Overseas Internship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Learning Activities Experienced (%)</th>
<th>Activities Facilitated Most Learning (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-internship learning</td>
<td>Orientation and familiar tour</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom training</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online training</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facebook group discussion</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill test</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning during the internship</td>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>77.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom training</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting with supervisors/managers</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debriefing</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.4.2 Reflective Observation (RO)**

Reflection is a form of response from the interns based on their actual
experience. By participating in collaborative learning activities, building on previous knowledge, and using reflection in the learning process, they could construct meaning from their experiences (Yang et al., 2011; Zopiatis, 2007). The next section investigates possible learning activities related to reflective observation.

4.4.2.1 Activities and persons triggered interns’ reflections. Activities that could trigger interns’ reflections fall into two categories: on-site work and off-site. On-site work activities include activities through which learning took place during work, while off-site work activities include activities where interns’ engage in learning after work. Reflection can take place in isolation or in association with others (Boud et al., 1985). The notion was consistent with the findings displayed in Table 4.16. Interns indicated they would reflect when mistakes were made or difficulties were encountered (33%). This was consistent with the Deweyian model that postulates reflection arises from some discomfort with one’s present state.

A state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which reflective thinking originates, and … an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity. (Dewey, 1933, p. 12)

Reflection also took place when learners were looking at different point of views or appreciating the views of others (Kolb, 1984). In this study, the interns stated their reflections took place when they compared the differences with others (33.3%). Two interns mentioned briefing/ debriefing (11.1%) and another two stated observation (11.1%) could trigger their reflections. One participant’s remark represented such an opinion:

“Sometimes when we made mistakes and encountered difficulties such as inefficient work processes, I would reflect if there was something wrong in the process and which part was wrong… Or when I had different views or arguments with colleagues or classmates, I would reflect myself… and see if it was my fault in communication and attitudes” (PO-S4)
Reflection took place not only at work, but also after work and away from the workplace. As an important activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it, reflection is important in the learning process (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1995). Half of the interns reported they would reflect after getting comments or evaluation from others, 38.9% expressed that they would reflect when they were alone and reviewing their work, 16.7% reflected on their learning during discussions with others, and another 16.7% reflected during writing the internship report.

Concerning the persons who triggered their reflections, the findings were consistent with the previous section regarding the most important persons for their learning. All interns stressed the importance of the staff in their workplaces. Most discovered that colleagues (61.7%) and direct supervisors (50.0%) stimulated their reflections through discussions and evaluations. Moreover, some interns reported they reflected when sharing their experience with classmates (22.2%) or receiving special responses from their clients or customers (11.1%).

The anecdotal evidence in this part suggests that reflections take place with interns’ conscious and voluntary efforts to establish belief based on firm evidence and rationality (Dewey, 1933), whether self-generated while alone and reviewing performance or provoked by external agents such as mistakes, writing the internship report, or responses from customers.

Just as interns found on-the-job training the most important activity for learning, the literature highlights the crucial role of on-the-job supervisor in ensuring the success of the internship experience (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). However, the quality of on-the-job supervisor was the least controllable variable among hospitality stakeholders. Internship coordinators should review and discuss with the industry supervisor ways to implement a quality internship program together.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities Triggered Reflection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onsite work</strong></td>
<td>Mistakes made/ Facing challenges or difficulties</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>‘There was a challenge for my department when organizing the WTO conference... I reflected and learnt the importance of communication among the department... and preparation was very important’ (PO-S5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compare the differences with others</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>‘I reflected myself when I compared myself with the Singaporean interns... as I didn’t want to perform worse than them’ (PO-F2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘Through observing others... when other leaders lead the games, I asked myself why everything could be under their control... I tried to find out the reasons to improve myself’ (PO-S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Briefing/ Debriefing</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘Feedbacks were given by manager during debriefing... made me reflecting myself’ (PO-S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offsite work</strong></td>
<td>After getting comments or evaluation</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>‘The evaluation enforced me to reflect the usefulness of what I learnt and experienced’ (PO-S13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stay alone and review my work performance</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>‘I jotted notes after work everyday after off duty’ (PO-F1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss/ Chat with schoolmates or colleagues</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘I stayed with my teammates and therefore, we had much time to get along with them and discuss the areas for improvement... I could reflected myself’ (PO-F3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing the internship report</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘At the end, we needed to submit an assessment report to manager. I had self-reflection on my performance at that moment’ (PO-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>(%)</td>
<td>Sample Excerpts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persons Triggered Reflection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Classmates</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘My classmates… they faced similar situations and worked with me. They pointed out what was wrong with me once they observed’ (PO-S6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior fellows</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘I chatted and shared with my senior fellows as they were experienced in the internship’ (PO-S3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>‘I observed my colleagues’ performance, and compare my performance with them and tried to find out the area for improvement’ (PO-S11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct supervisor</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>‘Manager… He gave me comments and I could learn something afterwards’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Top Management</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘Camp supervisor and group supervisors… I reflected and learnt after gaining their feedback’ (PO-S9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trainers</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘The trainers acted as very good role models… they always tackled the problems that I could learn from them’ (PO-S14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Customers/ Clients</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘As mentioned, I experienced the misbehavior of a kid with mentally problems… The kindness and patience of other kids made me reflecting myself… and seems I learnt from them’ (PO-S13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People in the host country</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Even I could learn from people there… for their work attitude… (PO-F4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The abovementioned reveals that interns’ reflections were stimulated when they were being evaluated, working on an assignment, or receiving comments in the internship.
4.4.2.2 Evaluation tools, action taken and their effectiveness. The previous section described evaluation as a learning activity that can trigger reflections during the internship. This part examines how the interns’ performance was evaluated, what actions were taken after being evaluated, and whether the interns thought they were evaluated in an effective way.

The evaluation tools fall into two categories: ‘formative evaluation’ and ‘summative evaluation’. In this study, formative evaluation is defined as periodic evaluation of progress made throughout the internship, while summative evaluation measures the results of the interns’ performance upon completion of the internship and determines if the interns have mastered the internship objectives (see Table 4.17). Throughout the internship, interns were formatively evaluated by informal comments (27.8%), briefing or debriefing (27.8%), and tests after training (16.7%). Regarding the summative evaluation, most (72.2%) indicated the employer completed an evaluation form required by their schools for final evaluation of their grades in the internship program. About half stated their supervisors gave comments and appreciation for their work in the final meeting at the end of the internship.
Table 4.17
Evaluation Tools for Interns’ Work Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative evaluation</td>
<td>Informal/ casual comments</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>‘There was an informal way to give feedback for our work. Supervisors and supporting staff would write a letter to those they appreciated with’ (PO-S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Briefing/ Debriefing</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>‘At the first month, we gave debriefing every week after each camp’ (PO-F3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘After the training, a test was provided for front desk trainee in order to check our knowledge about the hotel…’ (PO-S7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Random assessment by managers</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘At the last week of my internship, I was drawn to be assessed’ (PO-F4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation form filled by the employers</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>‘There was an assessment form from school for the front office manager to fill in’ (PO-S14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final meeting with supervisor</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>‘At the end, my supervisor and department head met me and gave comments and suggestions for me’ (PO-F1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To examine the interns’ learning processes in the internship, the researcher asked about actions taken after being evaluated (see Table 4.18). Only 22.2% of the interns stated that they did nothing after the evaluations. However, most expressed they tried to take note of areas for improvement (61.7%) while some would simply read the comments and follow the instructions from the evaluation (44%). Some interns stated they would recall what they learnt (22.2%) and compared the evaluation results with what they expected (22.2%). The above actions could be used together, as revealed in the following statement:
‘First, I recalled what I did and tried to compare the result of evaluation with what I expected… Read which items I could get good grade and I got advantage of… and which items I should improve’ (PO-S1)

Table 4.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action taken</td>
<td>Noted the area for improvement</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>‘I would take a look for what I performed well or not well… so that I could learn and pay attention to the area for improvement’ (PO-S2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the comments/ Took the advice</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>‘I followed their instructions after getting the negative comments’ (PO-S6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recalled what I learnt/ did</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘The PowerPoint presentation required us to reflect what we learnt and experience for sharing’ (PO-F2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared with what I expected</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘I reflected whether the results met my expectation or not; (PO-S11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No action</td>
<td>Nothing special</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘Nothing special, all of us got Grade A… it’s fair’ (PO-S12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interns were also asked whether they thought evaluations were effective to determine the factors affecting their learning processes (see Table 4.19). More than half of the interns (55.6%) gave positive responses, while few (16.7%) gave negative responses, the remaining (27.8%) indicated the evaluation was partly effective. Among those with positive responses, they reported that their direct supervisors evaluated their performance (27.8%) and satisfactory grade were gained (22.2%). The interns with negative responses indicated their direct supervisors did not evaluate their performance and it was unfair to them. This was also the reason why interns considered the evaluation as ‘partly or maybe effective’. Some revealed that
they did not know what aspects their supervisors evaluated or even did not know the results because the evaluation form was sent to the school directly. For this reason, they thought the evaluation ‘might be effective.’

The findings here show the importance of interaction between the supervisor and the intern and having the direct supervisor evaluate the interns’ learning. Even if the supervisor fills out the appraisal form, the evaluation was ineffective when interns did not know their results. A final meeting to discuss and review the interns’ job performance is important to the interns because they can receive comments directly from the supervisors and respond directly to any disagreements or queries. The supervisors should take the role of facilitators to develop the interns’ own understanding and summary of their learning through review, discussion, briefing, and debriefing. This process enables interns to learn by drawing out the issues and developing further thoughts to contribute to their learning (Thompson, 2010).
### Table 4.19

*Effectiveness of the Evaluations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Direct supervisor evaluated my performance</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Sure it’s fair, my direct supervisor evaluated my performance’ (PO-S12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfactory result</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Sure it’s fair, my direct supervisor evaluated my performance’ (PO-S11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similar with what I expected</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes, I think that the evaluation was fair which the results were similar with what I expected’ (PO-S14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily feedbacks were given</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yes, it was effective as they gave me feedback everyday (PO-F2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video-recorded my performance and played back to me</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The hid to video-record my performance and played back to me... I knew the area for improvement and tried to follow their suggestions’ (PO-F4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not evaluated by my direct supervisor</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘No... not really my direct supervisor filled in the evaluation form finally’ (PO-S8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly/ might be</td>
<td>Not evaluated by my direct supervisor</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘A must there were discrepancies between my work performance and evaluation... as the manager was not my direct supervisor’ (PO-S3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Didn’t know what they evaluated</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Um... maybe... I didn’t know the evaluation results as they sent back to the school directly’ (PO-S2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The results was better than what I expected</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Partly... sometimes, I thought that my performance was not really as good as what they evaluated’ (PO-F3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2.3 Assignment submitted and its effects on interns’ learning. Interns should be required to submit an assignment as part of the internship requirements, and they should relate their work and learning experience with suggestions for improvements in the report (Tse, 2010). The assignment is a component for the school to assess interns’ work performance and have better understanding of their experience as part of the review of the internship program. Upon completion of the internship, interns were required to submit an internship report (61.7%) or give a presentation (38.9%) to their academic department to review their internship experience and reflect on what they had learnt during the overseas internship. Only few interns reported that they were required to submit an internship report (22.2%) or give a presentation (11.1%) to their industry supervisors.

The researcher asked interns to comment on whether the assignments were useful in reflecting on factors affecting their learning. Only two (11.1%) of the interns stated that the assignment was not useful at all as they learnt everything during the internship. The vast majority explicitly expressed that the assignment was useful as they reflected their learning experience throughout the internship (83.3%). Some considered it a summary of their internship (33.3%). The assignments are largely reflective in nature and pivotal for interns not only to critique the work they have done during their internship and to connect it with their classroom learning, but also to demonstrate their professional and personal growth (Clark, 2003; Tse, 2010; Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). Therefore, coupled with internship, the assignment could enhance interns’ learning experience and help interns become “reflective practitioners” who know how to learn from their experience and integrate theory and practice (Clark, 2003).
Table 4.20
Assignment Submitted and Their Effects on Overseas Internship Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment submitted</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Internship report</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>‘We were required to submit a report to our school’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>‘A presentation is required... and my teacher will give us some suggestions for improvement’ (PO-S6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Internship report</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘We were required to submit a report to the manager at the end... At that moment, I had self-reflection on my performance’ (PO-S12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘The presentation required by the employer could help review my internship experience’ (PO-F3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Usefulness of the Assignment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful</td>
<td></td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflected my internship experience</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>‘It could give me a chance to recall my memories for what we learnt... it’s meaningful... and useful for our learning’ (PO-S1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarized my work experience</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>‘Yes... the presentation seemed to be the conclusion of my internship... for what we learnt and which area for improvement’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helped for setting objectives</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘It could help set objectives and reflected my internship experience’ (PO-F2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not useful</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘Internship report... but not really useful... even your interview is more useful for my learning as your questions can lead my reflections on my learning experience’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2.4 Comments on interns’ work performance and their effects on interns. On-the-job supervisors are significant to the effectiveness of interns’ learning (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012), and their comments on interns’ work performance would have certain effects on interns’ learning. Therefore, interns were asked to describe the compliments or criticisms they received from their supervisors and review the effects of those comments on them (see Table 4.21). All stated they received compliments from their supervisors for their good work performance (55.6%) and professional attitude (50%). However, most (72.2%) also received criticisms. Their supervisors criticized them for not performing well (27.8%), not taking initiative (16.7%) or having poor time management skills (16.7%). The following statements represented this finding:

“Diligent and efficient! At the end, there was an evaluation for me… the comments were not bad… for sure, sometimes not very good. .. as we had long working hours and might look tired… at that moment, they suggested that we should be more productive and pay more attentive to details” (PO-S6)

The remaining 27.8% did not receive any negative comments as their supervisors simply gave advice for improvement instead of giving negative feedback. One student reported that the supervisor commented on the student’s lack of industry knowledge and skill (5.6%). The findings revealed that supervisors tended to comment on interns’ overall work performance and attitudes instead of their knowledge and skill.
Table 4.21

Comments on Inters’ Work Performance and Their Effects on Interns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compliments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good work performance</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Their comments were tended to be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quite positive… always said ‘very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>good and efficient’ (PO-S2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional and good attitude</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Passionate, creative for the game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>design, and the back-up games’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(PO-S13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good language ability</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mostly, our supervisor praised our</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ability in English speaking’ (PO-S4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criticisms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>72.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not perform well sometimes</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘They didn’t criticize me directly…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>instead, they gave advice of area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for improvement… I missed the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>important steps and performed badly’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(PO-S2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not taking initiative</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘For negative comments… I was lack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of self-confidence… and always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thought myself had not yet been</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prepared’ (PO-F2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor time management</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Negative views… late for work…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and the supervisor was unsatisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with my lateness’ (PO-S12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short of industry knowledge or</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skill</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘seems they were dissatisfied that I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>was unable to work for check-in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>procedures’ (PO-S14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Negative comments… seems not… as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>they would not criticize us… but</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>simply gave advice for improvements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>instead’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the effects of comments on the interns (Table 4.22), all interns expressed that they felt positive and happy after gaining the compliments. Half indicated that the compliments were the driving force for them to maintain their
good work and gave them the sense of affiliation; however, one intern felt stressed by the compliments. Correspondingly, interns felt unhappy (27.8%) after being criticized by their supervisors. Also, 22.2% used criticisms to remind themselves of their need for improvement, while 16.7% tried to explain the reasons for their poor performance. The finding revealed the interns’ self-reflection processes (16.7%) were triggered after getting negative comments from their supervisors.

Similar to the study of Boud et al. (1985), the findings indicated reflective learning took place when the work was done well or poorly, successfully or unsuccessfully. Interns tried to improve their work after receiving comments. Whether in the form of a compliment or criticism, supervisors could positively affect interns’ experiences if the interns could receive regular and timely feedback from them (Ko, 2007).
### Table 4.22

**Effects of Comments on Interns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliments</td>
<td>Felt good and happy</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>‘Happy! Because I was being recognized!’ (PO-F1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of affiliation</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘After being praised… I got a sense of affiliation!’ (PO-S12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivations for keeping good work</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘Getting compliments motivated me to put more efforts… and asked if there were rooms for improvement’ (PO-F4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felt stressful</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘I would pay more efforts on my work… but I would be a bit stressful as well’ (PO-F2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>Felt unhappy</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>‘I felt helpless… in fact, I was afraid of disturbing them if I asked questions always… but not initiative’ (PO-F1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remind and improve myself</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘I would take note to their advice and remind myself at the next activity’ (PO-S9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tried to explain</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘For the criticism, I respected their culture and regulations… I would explain why I did so… and followed their instructions at the end’ (PO-S10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-reflected</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>‘Hard feeling at that moment… but after self-reflected, I understood that it’s my responsibility’ (PO-S6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This part of the study enhanced the understanding of how students respond to different assessment activities including evaluation, assignment submission, and comments from supervisors. These activities enable students to reflect on their
learning, which is a vital stage of the interns’ learning. Ideally, interns can learn effectively if they engage in personal thoughts, challenges, and discussion before coming to some form of conclusion (Thompson, 2010). Experiential learning involves people learning directly through the development of their own understanding (Kolb, 1984). Internship coordinators and industry supervisors should seek ways to enable this to happen through various assessment methods.

4.4.3 Abstract Conceptualization (AC)

Abstract conceptualization is a dimension where learners involve themselves in thinking about new knowledge through logical analysis of ideas and acting on intellectual understanding of a situation (Kolb, 1984). At this stage, interns compare what they have done and reflect upon with what they already know (Mobbs, 2014). While internship provides opportunities for practical applications of classroom theories to real-world situations, they might find the situations relevant or contrary to what they had learnt. To explore this issue, the researcher asked interns what actions they would take when encountering familiar and unfamiliar situations based on what they had learnt (see Table 4.23).

When facing the situation that was similar to what they had learnt, all interns responded they would follow the guidelines and instructions, and apply what they had learnt for the situation. Some might also try different methods (11.1%) or evaluate whether they could be able to handle the situation (5.6%) like the following intern:

“For similar situation, there was a picture for what I had learnt from lessons or training in my mind instantly… I might also follow the procedures of what I learnt. However, sometimes I might use different methods as the situations might be varied” (PO-S1)

In contrast, when facing different situations from what they had learnt, most (72.2%) would seek advice from others and try to handle it by themselves. Some (11.1%)
analyzed the reasons for the differences and observed how others dealt with the situations. The following intern’s deliberation illustrates how they handled different situations:

“If it was an urgent matter, I would still try my best to handle the case. However, I would also seek advice from managers and colleagues instead due to the unfamiliar environment of the hotel industry if allowed” (PO-S7)

Consistent with Boud et al. (1985), the researcher postulates that reflection could be prompted by positive states such as an experience of successfully completing a task which previously was thought impossible. A reappraisal of other tasks and the planning of new experience would be stimulated thereafter. Interns would draw upon theories learnt from the classroom or previous work for framing and explaining the situations, obtain advice from colleagues or supervisors, use previous observations, or draw on any other knowledge they have developed when facing situations either similar or contrary to what they had learnt (Mobbs, 2014).
### Table 4.23

**Actions Taken when Encountered Familiar/Unfamiliar Situations with/from what was Leant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiar situations</td>
<td>Followed/ Applied what I learnt</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>‘For example, a guest complained that an insect was found in the glass of red wine, I followed the steps for complaint handling I learnt… listened to the guest and then apologized’ (PO-S5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes tried different methods</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘Not really a must follow because different workplaces even different managers have different work style and work procedures… therefore, my handling method depends on the situations… but not simply apply what I learnt’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluated whether I could be able to handle</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘Followed the procedures they taught… and evaluated if I could handle in a good manner afterwards’ (PO-S14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfamiliar situations</td>
<td>Tried to handle by myself</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>‘I would follow the instructions and guidelines of the supervisor, and asked if the method in my mind was workable’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sought advice from leaders/supervisor/manager/colleagues</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>‘I would ask my manager to seek for advice and help to avoid any disputes with the customers’ (PO-S5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observed how others dealt with the problems</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘Observed from my colleagues and adjusted by myself’ (PO-S14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyzed the reasons for the different situation</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘I would reflect whether it was the problem of cultural difference’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.4 Active Experimentation (AE)

Active experimentation is the final stage of the learning cycle. Here the learners consider how they are going to put what they have learnt into practice and plan for a forthcoming experience (Kolb, 1984; Mobbs, 2014). This section investigates learning from challenges in the internship and applying what was learnt (see Table 4.24).
4.4.4.1 Challenges in the internship. Challenges are expected for interns having overseas internship. Yang et al. (2011) emphasized the inherent challenges of studying abroad, especially when it comes to adjustment to the host culture. Therefore, this section examines interns’ learning when encountering difficulties.

4.4.4.1.1 Difficulties encountered during the internship. After an initial reading of the interns’ responses, the researcher categorized the difficulties encountered as (a) intercultural perspectives, (b) disciplinary/ career perspectives, (c) personal perspectives, and (e) others. From the intercultural perspective, language barriers (38.9%) were the most frequently found problems among the interns, followed by cultural differences (22.2%). These problems would extend to communication barriers between the interns and people in the host country that influenced their work performance. However, difficulties such as differences in culture, communication style, and language were common with students who had internship outside their home city (Papatsiba, 2006; Tse, 2010). However, the language barriers identified in this study contradicted Gibson and Busby (2009) who found language was not an issue for overseas students. This discrepancy might be due to less cultural differences between the home city and the host cities (i.e. both in Europe), and English, the mother language of their study sample, which was commonly used in the host cities. Nevertheless, early language acquisition is a precursor for interns to gain a better cultural understanding in overseas internship (Callen, 2010).

From the disciplinary/ career perspective, only three of the interns were insufficient in technical knowledge and skills, while another three encountered complaints or emotional problems from their customers. Working in a new environment with different cultures, personal issues require attention. Some interns lacked the confidence to take up the duties assigned and did not take the initiative to learn (11.1%). Four interns (22.2%) also encountered unexpected events during the
internship, including injury and loss of property.

Schools and host organizations tried to provide sufficient information and training to prepare interns before the internship. Nonetheless, various problems existed. To prepare interns better with cultural understanding and to mitigate cultural confusion, pre-departure cross culture training dealing with topics such as cultural awareness and sensitivity, stress and coping strategies, intercultural business skills, and information on daily living issues should be arranged (van’t Klooster et al., 2008).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural perspective</td>
<td>Language barriers</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>'Sometimes I encountered communication problems due to my language ability. I was unable to listen clearly as they spoke quickly' (PO-S3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural difference</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>'I was not able to adapt the culture there instantly' (PO-S7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being discriminated</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>'Being discriminated there was common… I could be patient for that' (PO-F4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary/career</td>
<td>Insufficient technical knowledge and skill</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>'Pinyin typing for operating the new food ordering system' (PO-S6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>Customers’ complaints/ Clients’ emotional problems</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>'A child who suffered mentally problem suddenly loss of control' (PO-S13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heavy workload</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>'Compromised the time for report duty… and overtime work was too heavy' (PO-S14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal perspective</td>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>'I was not confident to take the responsibility of leading the camp activities' (PO-S9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Sudden events</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>'Because of the spider bites… I entered the hospital' (PO-S1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.4.1.2 Persons who offered help during the difficulties. Expectedly, staff members in the workplace were the ones who offered help most when interns were encountering difficulties in the internship (see Table 4.25). Consistent with the previous findings, interns tended to seek help from colleagues (61.7%) either when they faced situations different from what they had learnt or when they encountered difficulties. It was not surprising that colleagues were identified as the ones who
offered help to the interns when facing challenges as they were those working closely with them. Interns considered their colleagues the most important persons who triggered their reflections and enhanced their learning experience. The researcher concludes colleagues affect students’ learning experience and quality of the internship program (Ko, 2007; Tse, 2010).

Moreover, some also considered supervisors or management (27.8%) as persons who offered help during the difficulties because they could give advice and instructions for them to tackle the problems. Ko (2007) indicated supervisors could help interns learn from mistakes, while ‘help from supervisor’ was identified as an important factor affecting interns’ satisfaction (Lam & Ching; 2007).

Classmates who participated in an internship together (22.2%) could also help by sharing and supporting each other even if they were not working in the same department. Interns (55.6%) also expressed that they helped themselves in the midst of challenges when they sought advice from others or overcame their problems directly. Some interns did not have support or care from parents and friends, as reflected below:

‘For other friends and classmates... they could not help much as they were far away from me’ (PO-S14)

The previous studies also highlighted the possibility of losing support of a caretaker and peer during the overseas internship (Gibson & Busby, 2009; Giddens, 2006).
Table 4.25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Classmates who had internship together</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>‘Schoolmates… we supported and encouraged each other’ (PO-S6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace</td>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>‘Colleagues were patient to repeat again and speak slowly’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisors/Management</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>‘The leader gave us advice and suggestions for improvement’ (PO-F2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>‘I tried to get involved in their conversation and shared my thoughts with them’ (PO-S7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘Sometimes I called and shared with my family… they gave suggestions to me’ (PO-S14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>‘My apartment was broken into… Police helped’ (PO-S8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.4.1.3 Learning from the difficulties in the internship. Problems arouse a situational interest that drives learning (Schmidt, Rotgans, & Yew, 2011). Therefore, challenges could enforce the interns to get involved in the learning process. Again, the researcher categorized ‘learning from the difficulties’ into three perspectives. Although intercultural problems (i.e. language barriers, cultural differences) were the most frequently reported difficulties, the interns did not perceive them as the most critical learn from which to learn.

Table 4.26 shows that difficulties associated with personal development prompted the most learning. Interns discovered their personal growth could be enhanced from the challenges through learning a proper work attitude (38.9%) and taking initiative (27.8%). The interns identified problem solving skill development (33.3%) as an important gain as they learnt and practiced the procedures of dealing
with problems. They expressed that they learnt to take initiative to seek help and learn, and learnt to be confident and positive when facing the difficulties. Only two of the interns stated that experiencing different culture, developing industry skill and knowledge, or earning work experience were what they learnt when tackling the problems.

While intercultural competency was the most significant item for interns’ overall learning, it was not the case in learning from difficulties faced. Experiential learning refers to learning and development through personal experience and involvement through engagement, stimulation, and challenges (Thompson, 2010). Kolb, Rubin, and Osland (2000) noted the goals of the experiential learning process are to learn the specifics of a particular subject matter and to learn from experience. In this regard, interns could achieve the goal of realizing how to learn from the experience of facing the difficulties rather than learning something specific. Therefore, it is not surprising that personal development is the most critical area of learning from the difficulties. Interns could develop their intercultural competencies in their daily lives through using the language, learning the history of the specific context, and interacting with others during the internship (Conceicão & Skibba, 2007).

An interns’ responsiveness to learning activities may have negative results with respect to the level of difficulties involved in leaving the industry, for example, but this issue was not within the scope of this study. Whether the difficulty encountered was a positive or negative experience, interns could learn by continued practice with confidence or developing ideas to improve and overcome the problems (Thompson, 2010).
### Table 4.26

**Learning from the Difficulties in the Internship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>(%)</th>
<th>Sample Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural perspective</td>
<td>Experience different cultures</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘I learnt to be more initiative and opened to communicate with people from different cultures during the learning process’ (PO-S4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary/career perspective</td>
<td>Develop problem solving skill</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>‘I learnt to be positive… stay calm when facing problems… be more mature and better problem solving skill’ (PO0-S8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Earn work experience</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘At the beginning, I did not get used to the new environment, after adapting it, I thought that it’s the experience earned’ (PO-S9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop industry skill and knowledge</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>‘Debriefing skill is important in camp activities and I learnt it’ (PO-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal development</td>
<td>Learn proper work attitude</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>‘I learnt to be insistent, to have self-confidence, to enjoy my work, to give positive messages to myself’ (PO-S10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn to take initiative</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>‘To be initiative to seek assistance from others, but not simply await one’s doom’ (PO-S2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.4.4.2 Immediate actions after applying what was learnt.

In the active experimentation stage, Kolb (1984) suggested learners attempt to apply what they learnt by creating an experiment after understanding what is to be learnt from the experience. To explore this issue, the researcher asked interns before and after the internship to describe their immediate actions and feelings after applying what they had learnt. She divided her findings into three categories based on Kolb’s learning cycle: ‘feel,’ ‘think,’ and ‘do’ (see Table 4.27).
Before the internship, most interns tended to the ‘do’ aspect of performing and applying again what they had learnt again (72.2%). Regarding the ‘think’ aspect, more than half (55.6%) would rethink what they had learnt and did. Some would reflect on whether they successfully applied what they had learnt (16.7%) or what the next step should be (11.1%). Apart from ‘do’ and ‘think,’ four interns felt happy or positive (22.2%) and one felt a sense of accomplishment (5.6%) after performing what was learnt.

The findings were slightly different when the researcher asked the question again in the post-internship interviews. The responses were more in the ‘feel’ domain, with almost half of the interns expressing that they felt happy or positive (55.6%), gained a sense of accomplishment (44.4%), and felt what they had learnt was useful and practical (33.3%). Unlike the pre-internship interviews, only 27.8% indicated that the application would drive them to perform or apply again, but more interns (38.9%) said that learning during the internship was a driving force for them. The findings were consistent with Thompson’s notion (2010) that experiential learning could provide a positive emotional platform for new learners to respond confidently and positively to continuous learning. Three interns (16.7%) reported they would reflect on what they did after their applications. Boud et al. (1996) indicated reflection could be prompted by more positive states when learners were successful in completing a task to gain new experience.
Table 4.27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate Actions after Applying What was Learnt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel</td>
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To conclude, after trying to tackle difficulties and applying what they learnt in the internship, interns will continue the practice with confidence and gain new experiences. These experiences enable them to predict what will happen next, decide what actions they should take to refine or revise the way a task is to be handled, stimulate a reappraisal of other tasks, or plan a new experience (Boud et al., 1995; Kolb, 1984; Mobbs, 2014; Thompson, 2010). The finding further illustrates that the overseas internship learning process could be seen as a continuous spiral, as suggested by the Kolb's learning theory.

4.4.5 Section Summary

The process of experiential learning requires that students: (a) be actively involved in the experience; (b) reflect on the experience; (c) analyze and conceptualize the experience, and (d) use decision-making and problem-solving skills to apply new ideas gained from the experience (Kolb, 1984). Overseas internship allows interns to complete the whole learning circle, starting with actively getting involved in the learning process. Through different learning activities such as training, briefing, and evaluation, interns’ reflections on their learning are triggered.
Interns can also learn by themselves through observing others, tackling difficulties, applying what they have learnt to gain confidence, and gaining new experience. The findings of this study revealed consistency in the significant role of colleagues and supervisors for interns’ learning (Ko, 2007; Tse, 2010). Prior relevant work experience, provisions of detailed internship information, arrangement of sharing sessions, and post-internship meetings for evaluation are crucial for the effectiveness of interns’ learning.

4.5 Proposed Overseas Internship Learning Model

In this section, the researcher constructs a proposed overseas internship learning model (Figure 4.3) based on Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (1984) to determine how interns’ learning progresses during their overseas internship program. She also attempts to address the factors affecting interns’ learning in each stage of the learning cycle.
Figure 4.3 Proposed Overseas Internship Learning Model
Before the internship, students engaged in various learning activities to gain concrete experience. They were equipped with required knowledge and skills to prepare for their learning during the internship. The schools enabled interns to have basic industry knowledge and skills through classroom learning. They also provided briefings and sharing sessions for interns to have more information about the internship and prepare them psychologically. The host organizations also offered briefing, orientation, and training before the internship to develop the interns’ understanding of their organizations and positions as well as equip them with required skills and knowledge of their jobs. Among all the learning activities, interns found they learnt most through on-the-job training in the internship. In addition, relevant past work experience was found to be unique and significant in enabling interns to have better and deeper learning experiences during their overseas internship. The interns should be provided with practical relevant local work experience and equipped with intercultural competence prior to the overseas internship. Different from local internship, interns also need to search for information of the host country and host culture to prepare for their overseas internship learning.

After gaining the concrete experience, interns should be able to reflect on their learning by building on their previous knowledge and participating in various learning activities (Yang et al., 2011; Zopiatis, 2007). Colleagues and supervisors take the crucial role in facilitating internship learning activities to stimulate their reflections. Timely and regular feedback can be given during briefing/debriefing or even through causal chats with supervisors and colleagues. Most importantly, a post-internship meeting is necessary for interns to review and reflect on their learning. Apart from external bodies triggering interns’ reflections, interns could have informal self-reflections when reviewing their learning after work. They are
also required to review and reflect on their experience and learning through writing a reflective internship report or giving a presentation after the internship. In addition, direct supervisors should conduct an effective evaluation of interns’ work performance.

Through reflections, interns attempt to integrate what they learnt from their classrooms with knowledge developed from the internship (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). They assimilate new knowledge through comparing and contrasting the real work situations with what they have learnt from study and training. Different from local internship, interns would also compare the work system and culture in their home cities with the host cities, and thus, they would find themselves learning even more by making such comparisons during overseas internship. If they encounter situations similar to what they have learnt, they can apply the knowledge learnt. Conversely, they can reflect upon what was learnt, analyze logically, seek advice from others, and then plan for the next step if they found discrepancies during the internship.

The next stage of learning involves interns taking an active role in experimenting with different situations (Kolb, 1984). Instead of simply watching a situation as in the previous stages, the interns would plan and then take a practical approach by applying what they learnt and solving the problems, and evaluate whether their actions are workable. Intercultural problems, especially language barriers, are the most frequent challenges during the internship. After applying what was learnt and tackling problems by themselves, positive learning occurred. The experience offers new insights to the interns, enhances their confidence to continue the practice, and stimulates their planning and engagement in new experiences (Kolb, 1984; Mobbs, 2014).

This complete learning process allows the interns to learn new skills, develop
new attitudes, or even create entirely new ways of thinking as they have new experiences. Then a new learning cycle begins and the process continues. The model suggests that overseas internship is an effective learning experience for interns who complete the four stages of learning.

4.6 Chapter Summary

By comparing the data obtained from pre- and post-internship interviews, this chapter examined the influence of learning experiences on interns’ perceptions towards overseas internship and determined the factors affecting the learning process. It also compared the findings with those of past literature to identify similarities and differences in interns’ learning processes. This chapter further explored the relationships these different factors before and after the internship.

The results of this study offer insights into interns’ perceptions towards overseas internship and their perceived benefits. Interns believe that because of their overseas internship experience, they have a better understanding of the hospitality industry and they have gained real-world industry experience. Overseas internship learning is often collaborative and develops intercultural competence and personal growth by providing future hospitality leaders with a global perspective and multicultural sophistication (Ko, 2007).

Having a relevant internship matching the job with what interns study at the university is important for the interns’ overall learning. Moreover, colleagues and supervisors play significant roles in enhancing interns’ learning as they enable interns to reflect and tackle different problems during the internship (Ko, 2007; Tse, 2010). This study reveals the overseas internship can help enhance or deepen the interns’ learning experience. The program offers experiential learning opportunities and allows interns to be involved actively in the learning process through diverse
activities and occasions for personal reflection.

The study found the interns’ learning process to be cyclical, which is consistent with the Kolb’s learning cycle (1984). The researcher used Kolb’s experiential learning theory as the framework to explain the study findings and found the theory applied to the student learning process in overseas internship programs. The proposed model for overseas internship learning provides insights for hospitality educators and host organizations as they review and enhance the quality of overseas internship programs to prepare hospitality students with required competencies. As effective learning only occurs when interns are able to execute all four stages of the model, no one stage of the cycle is effective as a learning procedure on its own. Hospitality educators and industry partners should evaluate students’ learning experience as a whole and not simply focus on one part of the comprehensive process.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter falls into four sections. It begins with a summary of the study, recapping the key findings. The second section offers the theoretical and practical contributions of the findings, followed by recommendations for hospitality education and management that may yield benefits to hospitality stakeholders. It also offers suggestions for future research. The researcher identifies limitations of this study at the end of the chapter.

5.1 Summary of the Study

In the context of the rapid growth of overseas internships and education reform in Hong Kong, this study first addressed the needs and specific purpose for exploring students’ learning experience during overseas internship in hospitality management programs. The research questions are twofold: (a) How does learning experience affect interns’ perceptions toward overseas internship? (b) How do interns learn during the overseas internship? The study is intended to achieve the following research objectives: (a) to examine students’ expectations of their overseas internship experience before the internship; (b) to examine students’ perceptions of their overseas internship experience after their internship; (c) to explore challenges students faced during their overseas internship program; and (d) to determine the factors affecting students’ learning experience in each stage of the learning process.

To construct the theoretical framework for this study, the researcher comprehensively reviewed the existing literature on topics of hospitality education, hospitality internship and its impact, overseas internships, and learning theories underpinning the internship learning experience. Through the extensive review of the literature related to hospitality internship and learning theories, the researcher justified her selection of Kolb’s experiential learning model as the theoretical
framework for this study.

The researcher conducted a qualitative study using in-depth and focus group interviews with interns before and after the overseas internship. She also had in-depth interviews with internship coordinators and kept in contact with interns during their internship so she could validate the data collected. By incorporating the experiential learning model, the researcher designed a list of pre-set questions for data collection during the interviews and focus group. For sample selection, the researcher recruited participants from three UGC-funded hospitality degree programs in two Hong Kong universities that offered credit-bearing overseas internship programs. The researcher considered ethical, triangulation, validity, and reliability issues to ensure the integrity and quality of the study.

For the purpose of content analysis, interviews with 18 interns and 2 internship coordinators generated 354 pages of single-spaced text transcription from 1,089 minutes and 14 seconds of audio recordings. The researcher and another analyst developed a coding system to minimize the bias of the coding processes. The findings reveal the influence of the overseas learning experience on interns’ perceptions towards the internship. After their overseas experience, interns found intercultural competence and their colleagues to be more important for their learning than they thought they would be before their internships.

Based on Kolb’s experiential learning cycle and findings, the researcher constructed a proposed framework for overseas internship learning process. The findings of this study supported Kolb’s experiential learning pedagogies that interns’ learning progresses through the four stages cyclically with different learning activities. The study further found that interns with relevant work experience would have better learning experiences than interns whose internship assignments did not relate to their previous work experience. It also found that on-the-job training,
feedback from supervisors and colleagues, and reflective assignments are essential for interns’ reflection on their learning.

This study represents a preliminary exploration into the students’ learning experience during overseas internship in hospitality education. The study makes a worthwhile contribution to the hospitality literature and to the practices of hospitality education and management. It can fill the gap in the existing body of knowledge on overseas internship programs, particularly in the field of hospitality management. Furthermore, the understanding of students’ learning process modeled in this study can help hospitality institutions and industry improve their overseas internship programs to best facilitate interns’ learning process and experience. In turn, this will strengthen students’ intentions to stay in the hospitality industry upon graduation.

5.2 Contributions of the Study

This study contributes to the literature, education, and industry related to hospitality. Its findings are valuable to academic researchers, educators, and practitioners. This section presents the study’s contributions in two areas: the academic and the practical.

5.2.1 Academic Contributions

5.2.1.1 Exploring students’ learning experience in hospitality overseas internship. As no academic research had been conducted on the topic of learning process in hospitality overseas internship, this study represents a preliminary exploration into the students’ learning experience during overseas internship in hospitality education. In particular, the researcher explored factors affecting interns’ learning process and problems they have faced in their internship program. The study finds the uniqueness of overseas internship learning process that intercultural components are crucial factors for deepening interns’ learning. This study integrated
a learning theory into students’ learning process throughout the overseas internship. Furthermore, the model of overseas interns’ learning constructed, which is a unique contribution of this study, can provide insights for further studies after it is empirically tested. For example, comparison of interns learning experience from different fields of work or different locations could be conducted based on the model.

5.2.1.2 Extending experiential learning and overseas internship research to hospitality higher education. This study contributes to the extant literature by extending experiential learning and overseas internship research within the context of hospitality education. It investigated the influence of overseas internship on interns’ learning and perception of internship programs. It further verified the findings of previous research on the experiential learning as a tool for enhancing the learning experience of hospitality students. Moreover, as Kolb’s learning cycle had not been empirically tested from the “process” view in overseas internship learning, it adds to a growing body of experiential learning literature by supporting previous studies of Kolb’s learning cycle.

5.2.1.3 Attempts of various triangulation methods and integration of learning theory into interns’ experience. This study integrated Kolb’s learning theories into interns’ overseas learning experience, which provides a good example of the employment of learning theories to investigate students’ learning process. Previous research related to hospitality internship often adopts a single method to elicit interns’ perceptions towards the overseas internship, but this study obtained the views from both interns and internship coordinators by using different methods to gain deeper insights into the understanding the interns’ learning experience from different angles. The focus group interviews enabled interns to discuss their learning experience with others, while information obtained from internship coordinators
provided objective data for triangulation.

5.2.2 Practical Contributions

Findings of this study may be of practical value by providing a framework to help create effective overseas internships. Having good understanding of interns’ overseas learning process could benefit both hospitality education and the hospitality industry. The entire spectrum of hospitality stakeholders -- including institutions, industries, and students -- could reap benefits from this study.

5.2.2.1 Practical contributions to hospitality education. From the educational perspective, this study provides empirical support for prevailing opinions regarding the value of overseas internship programs and addresses ways to make the overseas internship program more meaningful by incorporating various experiential learning opportunities. This study indicates that relevant work experience and sharing from senior schoolmates are significant for better preparing students learning in overseas internship. These new findings can help refine curriculum design and student services provision throughout the internship.

5.2.2.2 Practical contributions to the hospitality industry. A good understanding of students’ learning process can foster ideas for the hospitality industry to improve their overseas internship programs to best facilitate interns’ learning process and experience. In turn, these improvements would improve interns’ work performance and commitment during the overseas internship. They would also strengthen students’ intentions to remain in the hospitality industry upon their graduation.

5.3 Recommendations for Hospitality Stakeholders

The findings of this study have revealed significant insights for hospitality stakeholders concerned about retaining effective talent in the industry. Improving the
quality of internship program enhances students’ learning experience and satisfaction. This can improve the caliber of students entering the field and help retain them in the hospitality industry upon their graduation.

In light of the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Pre-Internship Period Preparations

5.3.1.1 Matching the needs and expectations between students and host organization. The findings show interns find their overseas learning less useful for their future career when their overseas work does not relate to what they are studying. Accordingly, the researcher suggests the internship coordinator ‘customize’ internships for both the students and the host organizations by matching their needs and expectations (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012). Moreover, the internship coordinator can give a more realistic picture of overseas internship to students, advising them that skills and knowledge are secondary objectives than intercultural and personal development in the overseas internship. Furthermore, it is important for the host organizations and institutes to recognize and meet the expectations of the interns to avoid dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the hospitality industry (Barron, 2008).

5.3.1.2 Pairing up the interns for each host organization. Overseas internship studies have identified that interns can feel they have lost peer-support during their internship (Cullen, 2010; Gibson & Busby, 2009). Consequently, institutions should arrange at least two interns to have internships at the same host organization together, if possible. Interns may feel better as they find the sense of security and peer support whenever they encounter difficulties.

5.3.1.3 Providing information about host organizations, culture and job duties. Interns could be better prepared before departing Hong Kong if they had
more information related to the host country and host organization. Interns may have doubts if the provided information is detailed enough and problems may result. The host organization has the responsibility to deliver their information to the educational institutions. For their part, the institutions can gather the information and hold workshops or briefings for students so they know more about the host country and host organization. The institution can also give students sources of information and teach them how to search for the more. This can mitigate the worries and uncertainties of interns regarding the upcoming internship.

5.3.1.4 Arranging sharing sessions and linking up interns with senior fellows. The findings reveal that sharing sessions from senior fellows are the most effective way for interns to obtain the information of the host organization and host country because the senior fellows can share from the views of interns their experience and problems encountered. As such, arranging sharing sessions and linking up the interns with experienced senior fellows can better prepare students for overseas learning.

5.3.1.5 Providing relevant local work experience. Interns found their relevant work experience positive to their overseas learning. It can equip students with basic industry knowledge and skill that better prepares them for overseas learning. If a prior local internship is not possible, the institution could accommodate students with more realistic practice such as work-based projects or local work experience rather than simply theoretical concepts or classroom learning prior to the overseas internship.

5.3.1.6 Equipping interns with intercultural competence. The intercultural component is critical for interns’ learning and their future career (Kim, 2009). However, it is also the source of problems interns encountered, especially as it relates to cultural diversity and language barriers. Cross-cultural diversity and
language ability are particularly important for hospitality students to negotiate and fit in with the host culture. The hospitality management curriculum must be designed to deal with these issues (Lim & Noriega, 2007) so students can learn to appreciate and effectively manage diverse cultures and strengthen their language ability. Classroom learning and pre-internship preparation can facilitate this process. The host organization should also support cultural diversity in the workplace. For instance, they can hold some intercultural events to reflect the country of an international staff member to create cultural harmony.

5.3.1.7 Setting up a good communication channel among the host organizations, interns and the institutions. Interns have many queries about their internship after confirming their host organizations, but they find it difficult to raise their questions and approach the right persons for answers. Consequently, institutions should set up a communication platform between host organizations and interns so that they can deal with each other directly in their mutual preparations. Moreover, the institutions should let the host organizations know the importance of communication for a quality internship program. The host organizations are encouraged to initiate communication with their interns in pre-internship period. This will help interns to be more satisfied with the host organizations and prepare them better for their overseas learning. Moreover, institutions should communicate well with the host organization before delivering the information to the interns because some interns in this study commented that the information provided by the institution and host organization was inconsistent.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Enhancing Learning during the Internship Period

5.3.2.1 Assigning a supervisor and maintaining close contact with interns. Training quality and job satisfaction could be enhanced if internship co-workers could be assigned to assist them before and during the internships. Consistent with
past literature (Broom & Bai, 2011; Ko, 2007), this study found that mentors or
direct supervisors are crucial for interns’ learning experience. Therefore, the mentor
or direct supervisor should be well trained to develop interns’ practical skill by
“doing” instead of simply delivering the abstract knowledge by “telling” (Broom &
Bai, 2011). Interns also perceive more successful internship experiences with a good
mentor relationship. Supervisory commitments of both organization and institution
are especially important in overseas internship and interns are encouraged to
maintain close contact with both the industry and academic supervisors during the
placement (Ko, 2007; Martin & Hughes, 2009). Contacts between the supervisor and
intern need not be compulsory; the supervisors should make interns feel that they are
free to contact their supervisor whenever they have questions or want to seek help
and advice.

5.3.2.2 Providing regular feedback. Some of the industry supervisors only
evaluate interns at the end of their internship and neglect regular feedback, which is
important for enhancing interns’ learning. Ko (2007) found instant feedback to the
interns greatly improves the quality of internship experiences. Thus, industry
supervisors are advised to provide regular and constructive feedback to the interns
during the practice so the interns can reflect on what they are learning during the
internship. The researcher suggests institutions require host organizations to provide
a mid-term evaluation report in addition to the usual final one. The formal evaluation
can compare the intern’s levels of performance and competency development to
predetermined internship objectives established by the institution.

5.3.2.3 Facilitating interns’ reflections for learning. Apart from giving
regular feedback, the findings reiterate the significant roles of colleagues and direct
supervisors in facilitating interns’ reflections during the internship. Host
organizations should develop both formal and informal communication channels to
encourage interns to reflect further upon their experience. Industry supervisors and mentors should offer a clear picture of what they expect interns to learn and trigger their reflections on how they can learn from experience. If students do not know what they learn and how they learn effectively, it may result in negative experiences of education.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Enhancing Learning after the Internship

5.3.3.1 Final evaluation and meeting with direct supervisor after the completion of the internship. Interns reported that their final evaluations were not made by their corresponding supervisors, which confused them and made them skeptical about the accuracy and fairness of their performance evaluations. The interns’ learning experience can be enhanced through the final meeting as it enables the interns to reflect further on their performance and their supervisors’ comments (Thompson, 2010). The researcher suggests the direct supervisor evaluate the interns directly and review the evaluation with the interns upon their completion of the internship. The supervisors can explain how they evaluated the interns’ performance, review what the intern has learned, and give comments on improvement. The final evaluation can be included in the agreement signed between the host organization and institution, and its positive effects can be stated to encourage the practice.

5.3.3.2 Annual internship program review. To ensure program quality, all stakeholders should offer feedback about the internship program upon the completion of the overseas internship. Both academics and industry are responsible for the internship quality and the feedback is needed if the internship program is to be successful; areas for improvement can only surface by having all participants review the program (Lim & Noriega, 2007). All parties would profit from revisiting their understanding of how interns learn through their experience in the overseas internship program. Feedback from the interns can help create programs that include
a variety of activities catering to all learning preferences (Conceição & Skibba, 2007). Therefore, reviewing the internship program on a regular basis, combining information from students, industry professionals, and educators can make future overseas internship programs more practical and suitable.

In recognition of the difficulties in implementing some of the recommendations, especially those requiring resources from the host organizations, hospitality programs are suggested to communicate with the industry and “educate” industry partners about the importance of quality internship experience. Despite of the fact that communication is especially difficult because of the physical distance between the institution and the host organization, efforts should be made for the benefits of the students and all parties.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

To extend the knowledge of students’ overseas learning experience and learning process in overseas internship program, further research is needed and suggested as follows:

5.4.1 More diverse group of hospitality stakeholders and institutions

The researcher recommends additional research involving a more diverse group of hospitality stakeholders and institutions. Beyond the interns and internship coordinators, internship mentors and industry supervisors can provide unique and wider-ranging perspectives. For instance, it could be that the internship coordinators place higher emphasis on personal development than do industry supervisors. Moreover, broadening the range of institutions with different ways of managing internships would allow for the testing of significant relationships beyond the scope of this study (Solnet et al., 2009). The two programs included in the study both arrange internship for students. However, other programs may let students find their
own placement opportunities. Findings from those programs may be different.

5.4.2 More in-depth research on overseas experiential learning

In this study, the characteristics of institutions, host organizations, programs, and students varied considerably. For example, the length of the internship, programs differed in nature and content, the scale of the host organization, and of course, student demographics varied. All these characteristics might have affected students’ learning experience, but it was beyond the scope of this study to take them into account. In particular, the researcher observed that the interns’ prior relevant work experience was a significant factor in preparing them for their internship. Researchers could develop a questionnaire survey based on the framework developed in this study to test empirically how prior work experience affects the success of interns in their studies, internships, and future careers. The spiral nature of the learning cycle in overseas internship is also valuable to investigate in future research.

5.4.3 Verification of the generalizability of the findings

Additional research with more diverse groups of hospitality stakeholders and institutions involved should be conducted to verify further the findings in this study. This study identified the factors affecting interns’ learning experience such as relevant local work experience, matching of interns’ interests, roles of supervisors and colleagues, and feedback for evaluation, one such limitation is this study may not be generalized beyond the Hong Kong population. Thus, the researcher recommends a replication study at a national or even international scale with adequate sampling size. Moreover, this study only focuses on the hospitality overseas internship; future studies could apply its approach to other educational programs that use internships. A cross comparison of interns’ learning experience might reveal whether results differ from location to location, and from field to field.
5.4.4 Research on other overseas learning

Due to the dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy, the development of individuals, and in particular young people, is emphasized through the promotion of mobility, exchanges, and recognition of educational periods spent in other countries to achieve better cultural integration (Cullen, 2010). This study explores the students’ overseas learning process and may be applicable to other overseas learning activities. For example, student learning process in other overseas learning such as study abroad programs, student exchange programs, or other overseas opportunities may be valuable directions for investigation in future studies. Comparison of students’ learning process among different types of overseas learning might also be examined to reveal the important factors affecting various overseas learning activities. Researchers may choose to discover whether a similar learning process exists among other overseas learning activities besides internships.

5.5 Research Limitations

There is no perfect research design and assessment. Consequently, this study had limitations in a number of areas. The first limitation was the sampling method. The researcher did not adopt a random sampling method but instead used convenience sampling. As a result, sampling bias might be introduced. In particular, the majority of the student participants of the study are females; thus gender bias may exist and the findings might not represent the views of the total population. In addition, the researcher collected data from UGC-funded hospitality degree programs in Hong Kong only, so the results of this study cannot be generalized beyond this region; the learning process and experience of students in other countries and programs may differ. Furthermore, both programs’ internships were arranged by the institutions themselves, while other institutions may allow students to find their
own. The relationship among the three parties would be very different and, thus, recommendations in this study may not be relevant.

The commitment of time from participants also constitutes a limitation to this study. The researcher used a pre- and post-internship interviews and invited the participants to remain in contact with her through various social media during the internship. The interns were busy and did not respond actively during their internship. This limited the amount of data collected. Moreover, the in-depth interviews lasted for about 45 minutes, and students’ willingness to participate in the study was affected. The subjects were volunteers and their responses might be different from non-volunteers.

Finally, the findings of this study were limited to the trustworthiness of the interviews as there is no control over whether the subjects were honest in the interviews.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

The final chapter first briefly summarized the whole study with its theoretical background, study method, and significant results. A discussion of the contributions of this study from academic and practical perspectives followed. In brief, this paper presents a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge on overseas internship programs and provides valuable information for hospitality educators and practitioners to improve the quality of overseas internship programs. In return, both parties can profit from revisiting their understanding of how interns learn and experience in the overseas internship programs.

The researcher offered recommendations for hospitality stakeholders for improving the quality of overseas internship programs and enhancing interns’ learning experience. Giving more information through various channels and
equipping interns’ with certain pre-requisite competencies are suggested to enhance interns preparedness for the overseas learning during the pre-internship period, while facilitating interns’ reflections during the internship, and meeting with the interns and reviewing the program after the internship are recommended after the internship. Further studies are recommended for broadening and deepening the research on interns’ overseas learning experience. More diverse groups of hospitality stakeholders, institutions, and programs involved could validate the generalizability of the findings and to make comparisons across different variables.

To conclude, the incorporation of overseas internship programs into hospitality curricula enhances hospitality students’ preparedness for their experiences as professionals in the industry. With the experience afforded by such internships, students can become better equipped to exercise their professional, ethical, and technical skill judgment to the best of their ability (Martin & Hughes, 2009). What is more, a quality internship program will entice a greater number of graduates to pursue a career in the industry, in turn helping to reduce the work force shortage facing the industry.

Participating as a hospitality educator or practitioner in an overseas internship program is challenging. When we assume the roles, we have to keep a question in our minds: “Am I willing to foster and help the students in the process of overseas internship?”
REFERENCES


Hong Kong Baptist University (2011). B.A. (Hons) in Physical Education and Recreation Management: PERM 2220 Internship Handbook. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist University.


APPENDICES
## Appendix A: Undergraduate Hospitality Management Degrees Offered in Hong Kong in Year 2012

### UGC- Funded Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree Offered</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU)</td>
<td>1. Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Physical Education and Recreation Management</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)</td>
<td>2. BBA in Hotel and Tourism Management</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)</td>
<td>3. BSc (Hons) in Hotel Management</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. BSc (Hons) in Tourism Management</td>
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Appendix A (Continued)

Non-UGC Funded Program

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree Offered</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Caritas Bianchi College of Careers</td>
<td>1. Bachelor of Hospitality Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>The Open University of Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. BA (Hons) Hospitality Management (Top-Up)</td>
<td>University of Huddersfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. College of International Education, Hong Kong Baptist University (CIE, HKBU)</td>
<td>3. BSc in Sport and Recreation Leadership (Top-up)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPACE, HKU)</td>
<td>4. BA (Hons) in Festival and Event Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>Edinburgh Napier University, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. BA (Hons) in Work Based Learning Studies (Sport Event and Entertainment Management) (Top-up)</td>
<td>Middlesex University, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Work Based Learning Studies (Recreation and Sports Management) (Top-up)</td>
<td>Middlesex University, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. BSc (Hons) Tourism Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>The University of Plymouth, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Bachelor of Science (Hons) Hospitality Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>The University of Plymouth, UK</td>
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## Non-UGC Funded Program

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<th>Institution</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree Offered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU)</td>
<td>9. BA (Hons) in Physical Education and Recreation Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hong Kong College of Technology (HKCT)</td>
<td>10. BA (Hons) in International Tourism Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>University of Central Lancashire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. BA (Hons) in Event Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>University of Central Lancashire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. School for Higher and Professional Education,</td>
<td>12. BA (Hons) International Hospitality and Tourism Management</td>
<td>Northumbria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Education Council (SHAPE, VTC)</td>
<td>13. BSc (Hons) Events and Leisure Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>Sheffield Hallam University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. BSc (Hons) Hospitality Business Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>Sheffield Hallam University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. BSc (Hons) Sport Business Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>Sheffield Hallam University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. BSc (Hons) Tourism Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>Sheffield Hallam University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. School of Continuing and Professional Education,</td>
<td>17. BA/BA (Hons) in Hospitality and Service Management</td>
<td>Edinburgh Napier University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City University of Hong Kong (SCOPE, CityU)</td>
<td>18. BA (Hons) in Tourism Management</td>
<td>Edinburgh Napier University</td>
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### Non-UGC Funded Program

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree Offered</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. School of Continuing and Professional Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUSCS, CUHK)</td>
<td>19. Bachelor of Business (Hotel Management) (Top-up)</td>
<td>Griffith University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Bachelor of Business (Event Management) (Top-up)</td>
<td>Griffith University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. School of Professional Education and Executive Development, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (SPEED, PolyU)</td>
<td>21. BA in Hospitality Management (Top-up)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. BA (Hons) in Travel Industry Management (Top-up)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA)</td>
<td>23. BA (Hons) in Leisure Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>The University of Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24. BA (Hons) in Tourism Management (Top-up)</td>
<td>The University of Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25. BA (Hons) in Business Studies- Tourism (Top-up)</td>
<td>University of Greenwich, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)</td>
<td>26. BSc (Hons) in Hotel Management (Top-up)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27. BSc (Hons) in Tourism Management (Top-up)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28. BSc (Hons) in Convention and Event Management (Top-up)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A (Continued)

Non-UGC Funded Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Undergraduate Degree Offered</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. The Open University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>29. Bachelor of Hospitality Management (Top-up)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, Vocational Education Council (THEi, VTC)</td>
<td>30. BSoSc (Hons) in Sports and Recreation Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:*

BA – Bachelor of Arts  
BBA – Bachelor of Business Administration  
BSc – Bachelor of Science  
BSoSc – Bachelor of Social Science
Appendix B: Interview Questions – English Version

Phase 1 – Pre-internship Individual In-depth Interviews with Interns

A1. What do you think about overseas internship?
   Probing Questions:
   Why did you select overseas internship instead of a local one? Who encouraged you to join?

A2. What prepare you to learn during the overseas internship?
   Probing Questions:
   Before the internship, how yourself/ your school or department/ your workplace prepare you to learn during overseas internship? What does the school or department/workplace do to ensure you are well-prepared before the internship?

A3. What do you expect to learn during the overseas internship?
   Probing Questions:
   Did your school or department/ employer tell you about it? (e.g. skill, knowledge and personal development) Which is the most important competence you think for your future career? Which comes next?

A4. What do you usually think/ feel/ do after learning something?
   Probing Questions:
   Anything in your mind after learning something?
Appendix B (Continued)

A5. In your opinion, what do you think about the practicability of what you will learn during the overseas internship?

Probing Questions:
Do you think what you will learn can be practiced in your future career? If yes, how? If no, why not? Do you think what you will learn can be applied to other work? If yes, how? If no, why not?

A6. In your opinion, who can enhance your learning experience/how your learning experience can be enhanced during the overseas internship? (e.g. school or department/ workplace/ families)

Phase 2 – Pre-internship In-depth Interviews with Internship Coordinators

B1. What do students think about overseas internship? How about your views on overseas internship?

Probing questions:
What are the learning outcomes of the internship program of your school/ department?

B2. What does the school/ department do to ensure the students are well-prepared before the internship?

Probing questions:
How about interns and employers? What did they do?
In your opinion, what could be better to prepare interns to learn in overseas internship? (school/ department, interns, workplace)
Appendix B (Continued)

B3. What could students learn from the internship?
   Probing questions:
   In your opinion, under what circumstances, interns’ learning took place during overseas internship? How can your school/department/intern’s workplace contribute to interns’ learning?

B4. Do you think the interns can achieve the learning outcomes of overseas internship program?
   Probing questions:
   What measures do your school/department adopt to evaluate interns’ performance?
   What academic assignment(s) is/are required to complete for the interns? How can it be useful for interns’ learning? Why?

B5. What difficulties did interns encounter throughout overseas internship?
   Probing questions:
   What did the interns do? How did they solve it? Did anyone help them?
   What the school/department could help when interns find difficulties?
   How would you describe the relationship between interns and you/interns and industry supervisors? Do you think you/industry supervisors play important roles in interns’ overseas internship? Why?

B6. Tell me about how interns’ views on overseas internship may have changed after getting internship experience.
Appendix B (Continued)

Phase 3 – Post-internship Individual In-depth Interviews with Interns

C1. What do you think about overseas internship? Anything changes happened to you after the overseas internship?

C2. In your opinion, what could be better to prepare you to learn in overseas internship in terms of yourself, school/department, workplace?

C3. What did you learn from the internship? Which is the most important competence you think for your future career? Which comes next?

Probing questions:
Do you think what you have learnt/ experienced in your study/ work can help your learning in overseas internship?

Do you think your skill level/knowledge/personal characteristics meet the employer’s expectation? If no, what are the discrepancies? Did your supervisor compliment/ express negative views on your work? What did they say? How did you feel?

C4. In your opinion, what could help you reflect/ evaluate what you learnt in the internship?

Probing questions:
Who could help reflect/ evaluate what you learnt in the internship?

How was your performance assessed? How often did your mentor and supervisor evaluate your performance? What was evaluated? What did you do after the evaluation? What did you learn from the evaluation? Do you think your performance was evaluated effectively? Why?/ Why not?

C5. What would you do when you found the situation at workplace was similar with/ different from what you learnt in class/ training provided during the internship?
Appendix B (Continued)

C6. What difficulties did you encounter throughout the internship program?

   Probing questions:
   What did you do? How did you solve it? Did anyone help you? What did you feel? Anything you learn from the difficulties?
   In your opinion, who could enhance your learning experience? How could your learning experience be enhanced during the overseas internship? Who was the most important? why?

C7. What learning activities did you experience during the overseas internship?

   Probing questions:
   Which one did you learn from the most? Most appreciate? Why?
   What academic assignment(s) is/are required to complete for the student interns?
   Do you think it was useful for your learning? Why/ why not?

C8. What do you think about the practicability of what you learnt in the overseas internship?

   Probing Questions:
   Do you think what you learnt during overseas internship can be practiced in your future career? If yes, how? / If no, why not? Do you think what you learnt can apply to other work? If yes, how? / If no, why not?

C9. What did you do/ think after applying what you learnt in overseas internship?

C10. What do you think about your learning experience of this internship if you have/do not have relevant local work experience? Anything changes?
Appendix C: Interview Questions – Chinese Version

第一階段 — 與實習生於實習前的個人深入訪問

A1. 你對海外實習有甚麼看法？
   探索性問題：
   你為什麼選擇海外而非本地實習？誰鼓勵你參加海外實習？

A2. 有什麼能讓你在海外實習期間的學習作出準備？
   探索性問題：
   實習前，你自己/你的學院或學系/你的實習機構如何為你在海外實習期間的
   學習作出準備？你的學院或學系/實習機構怎樣確定你在實習前已做好充分
   準備？

A3. 你期望在海外實習期間能學習到什麼？
   探索性問題：
   你的學院或學系/實習機構有否跟你提及過在海外實習期間將能學習到什麼？
   （例如：技巧、知識及個人發展）你認為當中哪一種能力對將來就業最
   為重要？接下來是什麼？

A4. 在學習過後，你通常會有什麼想法／感覺？你通常會做什麼？
   探索性問題：
   在學習過後，你心中有何想法？

A5. 依你所見，你對在海外實習中將學習到的實用性有何看法？
   探索性問題：
   你認為將學習到的能應用於將來的職業嗎？可以的話，如何應用？不可以
   的話，為什麼？你認為將學習到的能應用於其他工作嗎？可以的話，如
   何應用？不可以的話，為什麼？
Appendix C (Continued)

A6. 依你所見，誰能增進你的學習經歷？ / 如何能在你海外實習期間提升/增進你的學習經歷？（例如：學校或學系 / 實習機構 / 家人）

第二階段 — 與實習課程統籌的深入訪問

B1. 學生對海外實習有什麼看法？你對海外實習又有何看法？
探索性問題：
學院 / 學系的實習課程所訂立的學習成果是什麼？

B2. 學院或學系怎麼確定學生在實習前已準備充足？
探索性問題：
那麼，實習生或實習機構呢？他們做了什麼？依你所見，有什麼能為實習生在海外實習中學習準備得更好？（學院或學系 / 實習生 / 實習機構）

B3. 學生能在實習中學習什麼？
探索性問題：
依你所見，實習生在實習時的什麼情況下能夠學習？學院 / 學系 / 實習機構如何幫助學生學習？

B4. 你認為實習生能夠實踐海外實習課程所制定的學習成果嗎？
探索性問題：
學院 / 學系採取什麼方法來評估實習生的表現？實習生需要完成指定學術功課嗎？這些功課對實習生的學習有用嗎？為什麼？
Appendix C (Continued)

B5. 在實習期間，實習生曾遇過什麼困難？

探索性問題：

他們如何處理／解決這些困難？有人提供協助嗎？

若實習生遇到困難，學院／學系會如何幫助他們？

你會如何形容你與實習生／實習生與他們工作中的上司的關係？你認為你／實習生的上司在他們的海外實習中擔當了重要的角色嗎？為什麼？

B6. 你認為實習生在得取實習經驗後對海外實習的看法或有甚麼改變

第三階段 一 與實習生於實習後的個人深入訪問

C1. 你對海外實習有什麼看法？完成實習後，你的看法有沒有改變？

C2. 依你所見，如何能讓你更充分準備在海外實習時的學習？（你自己／學院或學系／實習機構）

C3. 在實習期間，你學到了什麼？你認為當中哪一種能力對將來就業最為重要？

接下來是什麼？

探索性問題：

你認為你在學習／工作中所學習／經驗到的能幫助你在海外實習中學習嗎？

你認為你的個人技能／知識／性格符合僱主的期望嗎？如不符合，當中有什麼差異？你的主管曾否對你的工作表示讚賞／不滿？他們讚賞／不滿的是什麼？你有什麼感覺？
Appendix C (Continued)

C4. 依你所見，有什麼能幫助你反思／評估在實習期間所學到的？

探索性問題：

誰能幫助你反思／評估在實習期間所學到的？

在實習期間，你的表現如何被評核？

你的主管及導師多久會對你作出評核一次？有什麼會被評核？被評核後，
你做了什麼？在評核的過程中，你學會了什麼？你認為自己的表現能被有效地評估嗎？為什麼？

C5. 若你在實習期間發現所遇到的情況與自己在課堂／訓練時所學習的有所相似／不同時，你會怎樣做？

C6. 在實習期間，你曾遇過什麼困難？

探索性問題：

你做了什麼？如何解決這些困難？有人提供協助嗎？你有什麼感覺？

你在這些困難中有所得著嗎？

依你所見，誰能增進你的學習經歷？他們如何能在你海外實習期間提升／增
進你的學習經歷？哪一位最重要？為什麼？

C7. 在實習期間，你經歷了哪些學習活動？

探索性問題：

你從哪一項活動中獲益最多？你最欣賞（喜歡）哪一項活動？為什麼？

實習生需要完成指定的學術功課嗎？你認為這些功課對你的學習有用嗎？

為什麼？
C8. 依你所見，你對在海外實習中將學習到的實用性有何看法？

探索性問題:
你認為所學習到的能應用於將來的職業嗎？可以的話，如何應用？不可以的話，為什麼？
你認為所學習到的能應用於其他工作嗎？可以的話，如何應用？不可以的話，為什麼？

C9. 在你應用了所學習到的於實習工作後，你做了什麼／有何想法？

C10. 假如你有／沒有相關的本地工作經驗，你認為自己在事次實習中的學習經驗將有什麼改變呢？
Appendix D: Interview Guide for In-depth Interviews

**Study Topic:** Hospitality Higher Education: An Exploratory Study of Students’ Learning Experience During Overseas Internship

**Research Objective:** To explore the learning experience of interns during overseas internship

**Logistics**
Informant# __________
Date __________
Time ________
Venue _______

Basic information should be first collected as follows so that the interviewer can get familiar with the informant:

**Personal Information**
Gender
University
Course Studying
Year
Duration of Working Experience
Sector of Working Experience

**Information of Overseas Internship**
Country/City of Overseas Internship
Employer of Overseas Internship
Sector/ Department
Position

**During the Interview**
1) **Introduction**
   A. **Welcome and Thanking for Participation**
   - “Good morning/ afternoon/ evening and welcome. Thanks for taking the time to join our discussion of overseas internship. My name is Catherine Lui, a student of Doctor of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.”
Appendix D (Continued)

B. Overview and Objective of the Study

• “We spoke, I am currently conducting a research about interns’ learning experience during the overseas internship in hospitality program.”

• “You were invited because you are one of the interns who will take the overseas internship program in your course. Your contributions of giving opinions and sharing experience can definitely help for providing useful information for this study.”

C. Procedures and Ground Rules

• “This interview should take approximately 30 minutes.”

• “There is no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your point of view whatever you want.”

• “I will audio record the interview because I don’t want to miss any of your comments. No names will be included in any reports. Your comments are confidential.”

• “If you have a cell phone, please put it on the quiet mode, and if you need to answer, please let me know and we can stop the interview briefly.”

2) Questions

a) Opening Question

• “Let’s begin. Tell us something about yourself and overseas internship such as your name, course and university you are studying, and the place and employer you (will) work(ed) for during the overseas internship.”

b) Core Questions

c) Ending Questions

• If you had a chance to give advice to the school and employers of internships, what advice would you give?

• Is there anything that we missed? Is there anything that you would like to say but didn’t get a chance to say?
Appendix D (Continued)

3) **Wrap up**
   - “Here follows a short summary of the major discussion points. Do you have other considerations? Are there any corrections to make? Are there any omissions?”
   - Turn off the recording equipment, indicate that the discussion is now completed, thank them for their assistance, and then ask, “Do you think we’ve missed anything in the discussion?”
   - Thank the informant for participating “We are done. Thank you.”

**Notes:**
- Always a 5-second pause after an informant comment
- Probing for getting additional information by asking “Would you explain further?” “Can you give me an example?” “Would you say more?”
- Head nodding and short verbal responses for giving responses to informants’ comments
Appendix E: Interview Guide for Focus Group Interviews

**Study Topic:** Hospitality Higher Education: An Exploratory Study of Students’ Learning Experience During Overseas Internship

**Research Objective:** To explore the learning experience of interns during overseas internship

**Logistics**
Focus Group Code: 
Date of the Focus Group: 
Time: 
Number of Participants: 
Location: 
Name of the Moderator: Catherine LUI
Name of the Assistant Moderator, if any: 

**Respondent Profile:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Duration of Working Experience</th>
<th>Course/University</th>
<th>Workplace/ City/ Country</th>
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Diagram of the Seating Arrangements, including the first name of each participant or a code for each participant (for example, 1-8 or A-H)
Appendix E (Continued)

During the Focus Group Interview
1) Introduction
   A. Welcome and Thanking for Participation
      • “Good morning/ afternoon/ evening and welcome. Thanks for taking the time
to join our discussion of overseas internship. My name is Catherine Lui, a
student of Doctor of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong
Polytechnic University.”
   B. Overview and Objective of the Study
      • “I am currently conducting a research about interns’ learning experience during
the overseas internship in hospitality curriculum.”
      • “You were invited because you are one of the interns who will take the
overseas internship program in your course. Your contributions of giving
opinions and sharing experience can definitely help for providing useful
information for this study.”
   C. Procedures and Ground Rules
      • “This focus group interview should take approximately 45 minutes.”
      • “There is no right or wrong answers. I expect that you will have differing
points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs
from what others have said.”
      • “I will audio record the interview because I don’t want to miss any of your
comments. No names will be included in any reports. Your comments are
confidential.”
      • “We have name tents here in front of us today. They help me remember names,
but they can also help you. Don’t feel like you have to respond to me all the
time. If you want to follow up on something that someone has said, you want
to agree, or disagree, or give an example, feel free to do that. Feel free to have
a conversation with one another about these questions. I am here to ask
questions, listen and make sure everyone has a chance to share. I am interested
in hearing from each of you, so if you’re talking a lot, I may ask you to give
others a chance. And if you aren’t saying much I may call on you. We just want
to make sure all of you have a chance to share your ideas.”
• “If you have a cell phone, please put it on the quiet mode, and if you need to answer step out to do so. Feel free to get up and get more refreshments if you would like.”

2) Questions

A. Opening Question

• “Let’s begin. Let’s find out more about each other by going around the table one at a time. Tell us something about yourself and overseas internship such as your name, course and university you are studying, and the place and employer you (will) work(ed) for during the overseas internship.”

B. Core Questions

C. Ending Questions

• If you had a chance to give advice to the school and employer of internship, what advice would you give?
• Is there anything that we missed? Is there anything that you would like to say but didn’t get a chance to say?

3) Wrap up

• “Here follows a short summary of the major discussion points. Do you have other considerations? Are there any corrections to make? Are there any omissions?”
• Turn off the recording equipment, indicate that the discussion is now completed, thank them for their assistance, and then ask, “Do you think we’ve missed anything in the discussion?”
• Thank the group for participating “We are done. Thank you.”

Notes:

• Remind the informants to give different points of view when they just simply echo the same concept by asking “Does anyone see it differently?” or “Has anyone had a different experience?” or “Are there other points of view?”
• Always a 5-second pause after an informant comment
• Probing for getting additional information by asking “Would you explain further?” “Can you give us an example?” “Would you say more?”
• Head nodding and short verbal responses for giving responses to informants’ comments
Appendix F: Focus Group Checklist for the Moderator

Advance Notice

_____ Select locations, dates, and times that are convenient for participants.

_____ Contact participants two weeks (or more) before the session.

_____ Slightly overrecruit the number of participants.

_____ Send each participant a letter or an email confirming time, date and place.

_____ Give the participants a reminder phone call prior to the session.

Questions

_____ Questions should flow in a logical sequence.

_____ Key questions should focus on the critical issues of concern.

_____ Use follow-up questions as needed.

_____ Limit the use of “why” questions.

_____ Estimate how much time you will spend on each question.

Logistics

_____ Arrive early.

_____ Make sure the room is satisfactory (size, tables, comfort, etc.)

_____ Check background noise so it doesn’t interfere with audio recording.

_____ Have name tents for participants.

_____ Place the digital recorder or a remote microphone on the table.

_____ Bring extra batteries, cords, name tents, lists of questions.

_____ Bring enough copies of handouts and/or visual aids.

_____ Arrange food.
Appendix F (Continued)

Plan topics for small talk conversation.

Moderator Skills

Practice introduction without referring to notes.

Practice questions. Know the key questions.

Be well rested, alert and fully present.

Welcome participants.

Create a comfortable, open atmosphere.

Use probes and pauses.

Manage the time.

Make sure everyone has a chance to share.

Avoid head nodding only.

Avoid verbal comments that signal approval.

Avoid giving personal opinions.

Immediately After the Session

Check to see if the recorder captured the comments.

Download the digital record files to your computer.

Debrief with the research team and audio record the discussion.

Prepare a brief written summary of key points if needed.

Appendix G: Contact Letter to the Institutions

Dear _______________.

My name is Catherine Lui, a doctoral student at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, studying hotel and tourism management. I sincerely would like to invite students in your school/department to participate in my study regarding the learning experience of interns during overseas internship.

Kolb (1984) indicates that learning must start with personal experience that frames future learning, thus he defines experiential learning as a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. I am convinced that research regarding experiential learning is significant, particularly in hospitality education. Therefore, the purpose of my study is to explore the students’ learning experience during overseas internship. The study addresses the following two research questions: (1) how learning experience affect interns’ perceptions toward overseas internship; and (2) how interns learn during the overseas internship.

This research is grounded in the literature of experiential learning theory. Methodologically, this research triangulates the qualitative in-depth interviews with focus group interviews. In this regard, I would like to seek your assistance for recruiting students who will participate in overseas internship during summer 2013 for the study. I have enclosed a list of interview questions and a student contact letter for your reference. Apart from the interviews with students, I also would like to have a short interview with you later in order to know more about the overseas internship in your school. With your approval, together we can better serve our students’ learning needs, and provide insights and understandings of experiential learning in the overseas internship context. I would be pleased to share with you the results of this study.

Thank you very much for reviewing the enclosed materials. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to you in advance for joining this meaningful study. I will contact you regarding your willingness to help accomplish this important research. Should you have any queries, please feel free to contact me at (+852) 9226 ______ or via lui.catherine@

Sincerely
Catherine W. Y. Lui, MSc, BA, CHE, CCSP
Doctoral Student
School of Hotel and Tourism Management
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Appendix H: Contact Letter to Students of Overseas Internship

Dear student,

My name is Catherine Lui, a doctoral student at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, studying hotel and tourism management. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study of exploring the students’ learning experience in overseas internship. After seeking assistance of your school, I learnt that you will be going overseas for an internship. I would like to interview you EITHER individually or as a group for this meaningful study. Details are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Arrangement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Interview</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of the Interviews</td>
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<td>No. of meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venue of Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from interviews, I will also stay contacts with you through a facebook group during your overseas internship. **Confidentiality** of you as the study participant and your responses will be protected throughout the study. I sincerely hope that you will consider participating in this important effort to enhance the learning experience of hospitality students in the overseas internship program. In return of your participation, I would be happy to be your advisor and offer assistance for your internship and study. You may share your experience with your schoolmates and interns in other universities through the facebook group.

I will contact you via telephone or email in the near future to confirm your participation in the interview. Should you have any queries, please feel free to contact me at (+852) 9226 9226 or via lui.catherine@

Sincerely,

Catherine W. Y. Lui, MSc, BA, CHE, CCSP
Doctoral Student
School of Hotel and Tourism Management
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Appendix I: Consent Form for Voluntary Participants

Potential Study Participant
Name: ______________________

I agree to participate in a study on interns’ learning experience during hospitality overseas internship. I will be completing interviews that will cover basic demographic information and questions regarding my learning experience during internship.

Voluntary participation
I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary, and that I may choose not to participate and withdraw my consent to participate at any time without being penalized in any way.

Confidentiality
I also understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded. My responses are confidential and that no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity. In other words, my name will not appear on any study documents with the exception of this form.

Consent
I understand this consent form and freely consent to participate in this study.

_________________________ (Signature)
Mobile: __________________
Email: __________________
Course Studying: ______________________
Country of Overseas Internship: ____________

Contact
You may call the researcher at (852) 9226 or by email at lui.catherine@ if you have questions about your rights as a research subject. The researcher will answer any questions you have about your participation in the study.
Appendix J: Appointment List for Interviews

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<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
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### Appendix J (Continued)

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**Focus Group Interview with Students**

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### Individual Interviews with Internship Coordinators

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### Post-Oversea Internship

**Individual In-depth Interview with Students**

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*Focus Group Interview with Students*

*Note.*

HKBU – Hong Kong Baptist University
PolyU – The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
PERM – Physical Education and Recreation Management
TM – Tourism Management
HM – Hotel Management