

Curricular traineeship in an internship and employability office: a world of opportunities? - a case study

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The subject of work-related training has been widely addressed and its importance in the transition of students from higher education to the labour market has been the subject of numerous national and International Studies (Hora, Benbow and Smolarek, 2018; O'connor, and Bodicoat, 2017). However, Guile and Lahiff (cited in O'connor, and Bodicoat, 2017) consider that the research carried out so far is not sufficiently sustained and serious.

The traineeship is almost always seen as a challenge for the student of Higher Education, a reality reinforced in the OECD report (2016) when considering internships as drivers of employability.

The increasing emphasis on employability has created considerable pressure on students to develop their own employability potential towards a demanding talent-hungry labour market (O'connor and Bodicoat, 2017). This reality gave the motto for the creation of internship offices, assigning them an important role in the effective support by linking students and employers, with the goal of facilitating the insertion of graduates in the labour market.

Having the opportunity for the traineeship to take place in an internship and/or employability office can add value to the trainee by the set of possible scenarios to be faced. This fact, in addition to promoting the development of competencies related to the area of the degree, as it would happen in any other entity, may generate the development and application of communication and inter-relational skills, more accurate, considered as a "competitive differentiator" in the world of today's work (Barbosa and Cintra, cited in Asuncion, 2016, p. 177).

Soft skills are considered to be more difficult to acquire and develop (Sharma, 2018), the possibility of being worked in a traineeship context, and even in a more informal way, could provide a more sustainable, personal and professional growth. This led us to the following question: Can a curricular traineeship in an office of this nature provide enriching opportunities for inclusion in active life?

The aim of this article was to provide an initial overview of the opportunities that a traineeship (in an entity promoting active job search) offers by promoting the acquisition of increased skills. This is a case study of a quantitative nature (Coutinho, 2014). For the collection of data, an original survey was built, previously validated, applied online, to all trainees who had interned in the ISCAP's Internship and Employability Office (GEE), having answered 61% of the target population.

The data obtained allows us to state that the internship in the GEE has provided trainees with increased opportunities for the development of technical and soft skills, very useful for their future professional life, representing an added value to their insertion in the labour market, as the opinions of all inquired. However, the soft skills assumed a more relevant role, namely: oral communication, team spirit, problem-solving ability, sense of responsibility, pro-activity, organization, self-confidence, flexibility or management of the time and, to a lesser extent, work under pressure and leadership. As for technical skills, the emphasis was placed, on: computer tools, correspondence management, face-to-face service, document management and written communication.

These results have fully answered the initial research questions and are in line with those outlined by other studies in the same area (Bhagra & Sharma, 2018; Sharma, 2018; Vieira & Marques, 2014).

Key words: curricular internship, technical skills, soft skills, internship office, employability office.

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