

Practice and academy, or working as learning: internship course at the Universitat de Barcelona LIS Faculty

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ABSTRACT

In degrees related to technical professions, cooperation between university –teaching its theoretical foundations— and professional world, is necessary to ensure that training is not abstract neither unrealistic. Internship or placement programs give to students the chance to combine theory and practice in a subject, applying theoretical concepts to a work environment, and inducing new knowledge from practical activities. Students become actors and responsible for their learning. Professors and internship center advisors are other players involved in this process. To ensure its success, all three must believe firmly that internship programs are educational and learning processes. As an instance, the internship model at Universitat de Barcelona LIS Faculty is presented. It is based on good relations between centers and the Faculty. The current internship syllabus is explained, as well as some features of the new curriculum, adapted to ECTS. Located in the seventh semester (of eight), internship is directly linked to other subjects; so, students may take advantage from the stage educational value to enhance their performance in other subjects. The comprehensive nature of internship allows students developing their ability to associate ideas and concepts, analysis and synthesis. Student assessment also aims to be comprehensive, assessing theoretical knowledge, practical skills and abilities, through an evaluation shared by advisors and professors, with written and oral parts. Some problems detected in interns (misconception of the internship educational nature, bad written and oral expression) are useful to propose

corrective elements in the new curriculum. Students also evaluate the development and quality of internships.

KEYWORDS: internship, placement, educational process, professional training, tutorship, cooperation university-profession, assessment, Universitat de Barcelona.

1. PRACTICE AND THEORY IN ACADEMIC TRAINING

The articulation of theory and practice in university careers, especially those training for a technical profession (or one with an important practical component), should have as objective not only that students learn to execute some activities, but that they to carry out these activities exercising their intelligence and using the theoretical know-how previously acquired. Only when a student, he himself, relate the practice to the learned theory, only when he reflect on the experience and the specific case he has worked on, we could be sure that a practical activity, as a part of the education, has been satisfactory.

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require to know theoretical items of intellectual nature and, in turn, to have a good command of skills and techniques of practical and professional nature. Therefore, the realization of an internship or work placement, understood as a period of practical stage in an information center has been, traditionally, an element present in many library schools curricula.

In the syllabi of the first schools in the United States or England, or already in the first courses (1915) in the Barcelona Escola de Bibliotecàries, precedent of the present faculty, this kind of internship is found and it is maintained at present in many university centers.

2. OBJECTIVES AND COMEPETENCES: INTERNSHIP AS A SYNTHESIS

The internship objectives are related to this linkage between theory and practice:

- Application of fundamental and theoretical concepts previously learned: linking contents from different subjects, developing the capability to think about them, etc.
- To have an overall picture and complete approach to operation and work of an information center.

Also, as objectives that could be implied in the previous ones:

- enhance the capacity of analysis through direct observation, comparison between centers and the evaluation of services and resources
- the acquisition of action lines from the experience and reflection about it.

Contents and competencies learned along the courses in different subjects have to be deeply worked through activities related to them, as:

- Instrumental skills, such as written and oral communication, through written essays, public presentations and discussions;
- Consolidation of basic concepts on information systems, required when students are analyzing and working about the center;
- Reflection and debate on “less academia” aspects of the degree: organizational and social environment, cultural, economic or political

aspects, etc.

Concerning to this, the advantage of an internship program is its comprehensive nature, also given by its location at the end of the curriculum. In contrast to other subjects, the practicum tries to integrate the whole of concepts and abilities received by the student during three courses before into their development, both in methodological aspects of subject development at the faculty, and in the work at the center.

The process is not always easy. Many students, especially if they do not have a working or vital experience, have not had to face similar situations. During their school and university education, they have become used to a compartmented learning, where each subject or matter remained isolated from each other.

The result is that the ability to relate concepts (necessary in the real world) is not perceived in the same way by students. They, actually, are training it very little. It is usual the dissociation (or rather, the lack of association) among concepts and skills taught in different subject matters, or among concepts related to a same subject but taught in different courses. Therefore, a synthesis, summarizing and relating concepts and subject matters in order to apply them in a practical experience can be not so easy as it seems.

Possibly, because of this effort and the required consolidation and mental organization of concepts, this is the essential process in the learning and the teaching, not only in this subject, but in the whole degree courses. More if we take into account that this work of analysis and synthesis, abstraction and application, has to be done by the student on his own (theoretically, because he has tutors who could guide him), facing a real work environment, in order to respond to specific needs. On the other side, this solution must be gauged considering its impact on the environment.

Students, after three years studying the reality as spectators (through readings, visits, case studies, etc.), find themselves immersed in the same reality, even if it is a rehearsal for professional life. Now, they are making decisions (usually a few, that is true) and these decisions, and the actions following them, have consequences: and not only consequences on an isolated service, but in the whole of the center services. Students acts not only will

benefit or harm themselves (as happens during their academic life), but that will also affect all the staff in the internship center.

In any case, an internship program is also a course subject: as such the educational and formative factor is the key. It is not, therefore, a training where students are working for a while for remuneration and with the sole idea of integrating themselves in a working environment. An internship, as our *Practicum*, is an activity with academic values where students have to learn, and professors and centers have to mold them. When internship centers are selected and in the talking with their advisors –when the center is offered and when they are accepting a student–, this formative aspect is emphasized in order to make sure that the stage will not become an advantageous way to employ cheap labour at the center¹.

3. NEW AGENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

This change in students is, surely, the most important formative process during an internship: it is a process taking place in their deep inside, and students, unwittingly, become active part of their learning and training process. The change is important if we take into account that students tend to be rather passive and leave to professors the leading role in their education (therefore, a student considers professors responsible for the success or, more often, the failure of his education). Possibly for the first time, students feel primary responsible for their training activities; they will be able to evaluate their chances of success in real life, so close. It implies also to evaluate their role as students, played by themselves during the three previous courses).

¹ Students also learn in a collaboration of this kind, but the approach is much more complete in internships. Advisors are required to monitor guide them, and there is a varied planning, representative of diverse tasks. In the most of work-placements or funded internships, tasks usually are only of a type (students are hired to do something very specific), and once they know how to do them, supervisors do not provide more additional training nor track students. Their educational value is therefore much more limited. This kind of work-placements is regulated by cooperation agreements between universities and organisms.

It is not an easy change of attitude: getting to the bottom of the issue, we are talking about how students are maturing and growing up, concerning their attitude toward education they are receiving.

But students are not the only "new players" of the educational experience. Because of the internship formative dimension, professors and students join a third agent who actively participates in the educational process: professional staff at the center, specifically one or more advisors who are monitoring and supervising student work.

Actually, internship advisors are who better evaluate students performance in the center. The professor's assessment, as discussed in the section about assessment criteria, will be subject to different standards of academic nature.

During the internship period, the advisor is who guides students, advises him, resolve or raise important questions, etc. Therefore, it must be an experienced person who know your work and convey to students not only facts and technical skills, but attitudes. So, students could learn from him/her how to face and solve problems, to analyze the reason of a process, to go ahead of the needs of the service, to understand the role of the center in the frame of a larger organization, and so on.

To a great extent, the success of the internship depends on its advisor and other staff at the center; they can control that the stage be adapted to the profile of the student and be carried out making the most of the student idiosyncrasy. The degree of satisfaction about the internship, and the perception that it has been profitable depend, to a great degree, on the relationship between the student and the advisor. So, if this relationship is good, internship centers with less material possibilities --where, in principle, the student might be less satisfied than in a large center with a lot of resources--, could give excellent results. Students, then, involves themselves much more in the center and in its learning process; through the internalization of the attitudes observed, students could follow their advisor's example, that becomes a model to be emulated in a similar environment.

Though it is a desirable outcome, there is a danger: the student could get to identify excessively with the center and, therefore, he lose objectivity in his analysis (a kind of Stockholm syndrome):. Observation, then, becomes uncritical and tries to justify any action (right or not) with the same arguments used by the center staff, setting aside the distance needed to evaluate the problem.

In any case, as often happens in any work environment, the quality of the relationship between the student and their new colleagues is crucial to the success of the experience.

4. ADDED VALUES: “THE WINNER IS EVERYBODY”

Relations established among these three participants (students, professors and advisors at the center, each with his expectations), and the educational process itself are of advantage to everyone of them.

The pre-professional nature of internship programs makes the student to face it with a good predisposition. The period when a student is going to do his internship is usually an awaited time. Often, it is the student's first work experience; he sees a chance to live --at the hearth of a center-- what will be his professional life in the near future: a first contact with work reality in which he may prove the validity and usefulness (often criticized) of all what he has learned. The student may know a kind of center that perhaps has a special interest for him, and he can check his ability and competence to develop his working life in a similar center. As a secondary factor, the experience of working in a particular center, even with a relative value, could help the student to complete a curriculum vitae or, in any case, to give him the opportunity to continue later working there.

For the internship center, receiving students is a way to keep in touch with the academy. This fact allows it to track the evolution of the profession education, and to update their learning. From a practical point of view, it allows the center to know the present students profile, as well as to meet potential future employees at the center, which can be hired when it need to cover any workplace. In addition, the center is known among students, not only among those who do their internships there, but also among those who, through these students and internship programs, know its existence and activities. Likewise, it becomes visible to the university community, not just to students but to professors of other subjects, that could take account of the center for some activity.

The center also can "self-assess" itself through each interns. In a way, when the center accepts an intern, has to prepare a series of procedures and materials that, even if there are no interns, will be useful. The fact that the advisor must explain to the intern what is done in the center, implies that this advisor wonder if the operation is

right, or that he be questioning procedures. The same evaluation and comments made by students while working at the center can help to warn problems that, otherwise, would have been overlooked. When students ask, question or evaluate different aspects of the center are doing something like an external audit that may be useful to the center responsible staff.

Finally, for the university, apart from the importance of the internship as an educational resource, it shows itself as an appropriate way to have contact with the professional reality. Through information provided by students (in meetings and written works) and direct contacts with advisors, academy professors may trace the evolution of some aspects of the profession. This direct knowledge of reality will mean higher quality of the teaching in other subjects.

5. LOCATION IN THE CURRICULUM AND RELATIONS WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

We are introducing now our internship program, as it is planned at the Facultat de Biblioteconomia i Documentació in the Universitat de Barcelona. It is explained according to two different curricula: the current one (to be terminated in 2012), and the new (to be initiated the year 2009-2010). This new curriculum is adapted to the ECTS system and the Bologna process. According to the new curriculum, the current *diplomatura* (three-year degree, similar to a Bachelor Degree), with 180 credits, and the following *llicenciatura* (two-years degree, as a Master Degree) with 120 credits, will became a single four-years degree, named *grau* (i.e. degree) and with 240 credits.

The internship program is named *Practicum*. In the current curriculum, it represents 12 ECTS credits and 300 hours of minimum time of dedication by the student. 205 hours are for work at the internship center; 80 are for autonomous learning (consulting literature, doing visits, preparing essays or meetings, etc.); and 15 hours are devoted to meeting and tutoring with professors and other students.

The internship program is at the end of the degree courses, specifically the third course: it could be done in the fifth or sixth semester. Under the new four years curriculum, it remains in the final year, when the student has already acquired the most of the concepts and skills needed to thrive in a center. However, it is not in the very end: following the internship, students could take advantage of the experience in a new semester. The new curriculum places internship at the seventh semester, but relating it to theoretical and practical works done during the sixth and eighth semesters, as well as linking it to the

final project done in the eighth semester, too. So, the internship comprehensive nature is emphasized, by the connection with other more theoretical subjects.

This situation increases the thinking about and working on some competencies. So, during the next semester students could consolidate what have learned in the internship, and carry out essays based on this experience. Now, with the internship at the very end of the courses they do not take advantage of this experience in subsequent subjects.

Table 1: Current internship (1999 curriculum)

6 semesters curriculum, 3 years		
Internship	5th or 6th semester	12 cr (240 h) (210 h for stage and 30 h for visits)

In the current curriculum, the subject has 12 credits, for a stage in an (or exceptionally, in more than one) center during eleven weeks (20 hours per week). Under the new curriculum, the stage is extended to 18 credits, 14 weeks. In both cases, the stage is 20 hours per week. The programming of 12 elective credits during the internship semester implies that the stage, in order to have time to do these classes, will be five hours for four days a week. The existence of a "free" day per week allows students to have more time to prepare essays and meetings; in addition, the center is "released" for a day from its dedication to the student.

The linking to the other disciplines is reflected in the inclusion of 3 credits in one of the subjects of the sixth semester: *Planning, Management and Evaluation of Information Units*. This course, compulsory and with six credits, will have three additional credits where, from the contents taught, students will prepare reports on an internship center (it may or not coincide with that chosen after by the student in order to do his internship there). In this report, the student will work in-depth competencies as: analysis of the environment, diagnosis and evaluation, and written communications skills.

It will be a first "trial" that will allow students to become familiar with a work environment. If their internship

stage in the next semester is at the same place, they will have previous knowledge about it and the experience will be enhanced. If not, the knowledge of a different environment may supplement the internship. In addition, students have practised environment analysis and, when they are doing internship, could focus on other aspects of the center, as this kind of analysis is already done.

Table 2: New internship (2008 curriculum)

8 semesters curriculum, 4 years		
Planning, Management and Evaluation	6th semester	6 cr + 3 practical cr analyzing a center
Internship	7th semester	18 cr (280 h)
Evaluation and Quality	8th semester	6 cr (essay based on the internship center)
Final Project	8th semester	18 cr (it can be based on the internship center)

After having finished their internship, students can take advantage from the experience in some compulsory and elective subjects during the last semester. Specifically, the direct linking is done in:

-- The compulsory subject *Evaluation and Quality* (6 credits), where they work contents on evaluation of resources, processes, services and products, and models, techniques and tools of quality management. In this course is proposed that these evaluation and quality models and techniques be applied to the center where each one has carried out its internship.

-- A *Final Project* (as an undergraduate thesis), with 12 credits. Although the topic of the project can be chosen, there is the possibility to develop some project related to the internship center, or to do a research project based on this.

So, the current essay (a description, analysis and evaluation of the center, done simultaneously with the stage in a three or four-month period), will become different essays, done over the course of three semesters (sixth, seventh and eighth). A greater degree of depth and

reflection could be achieved in each of these essays, and the internship practical experience becomes a conducting thread that allows to recoup part of the time spent in the internship and to obtain higher quality results.

6. CENTERS, A KEY FOR THE SUCCESS

Internship program, as practical activities in general, also have a complementary role to the elective subjects in the curriculum: it allows students, depending on the professional profile they wish to develop, to choose a center where they could work that profile in depth. Therefore, the selection of centers must match the variety of possible profiles.

To ensure the educational value of the subject, internship centers have to be selected by professors, according to rigorous criteria. So, centers must be considered appropriate (for personnel working in, services they offer, the global interest of the center, being representative). Each center must have a planning for the student stage and one or more persons who are able to act as advisors: professional staff working permanently in the center.

Currently, there is a stable centers list that comes to 160 different centers of various types, plus two networks of public libraries². In the list presented on the web, they are grouped according to generic types:

- Public and school libraries
- Special and research libraries
- Academic libraries
- Historic and government administrative archives
- Archives of other organizations
- Information services and centers related to mass media and audiovisual materials
- Companies providing information services.

It is a conventional but effective classification, though it presents problems to classify some centers belonging to different categories: in these cases, they are offered in several groups (archives and special information centers,

for example).

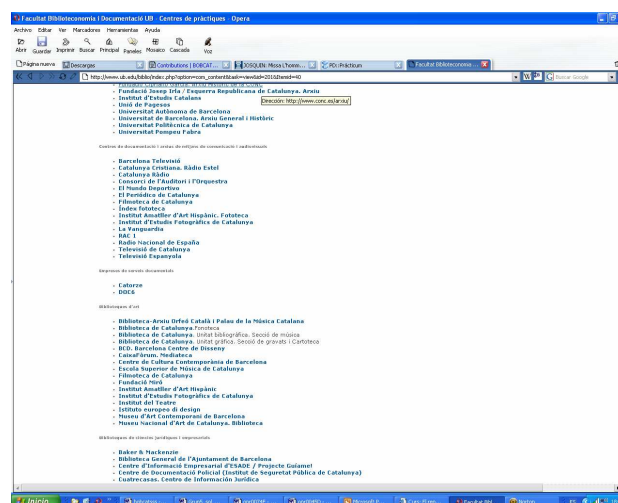


Figure 1: Centers list

Considering new professional profiles, a new classification would be more adequate. At the moment, the need is a system that allows to search information about centers according to different criteria, as the type of tasks carried out in the center.

In this sense, a centers database has been created. In addition to descriptive or contact information, it also has fields for including discipline or matters worked by the center, types of material, tasks carried out by students, requirements or student profiles more suited to the center.

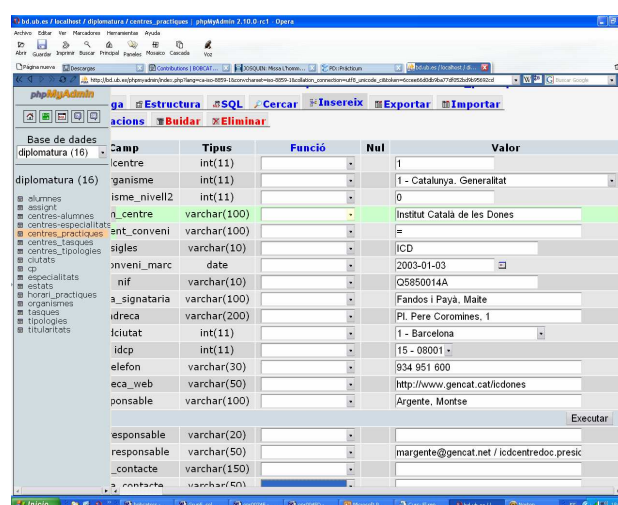


Figure 1: Database: information on a center

² The number of students doing internships simultaneously is 40-50 per semester.

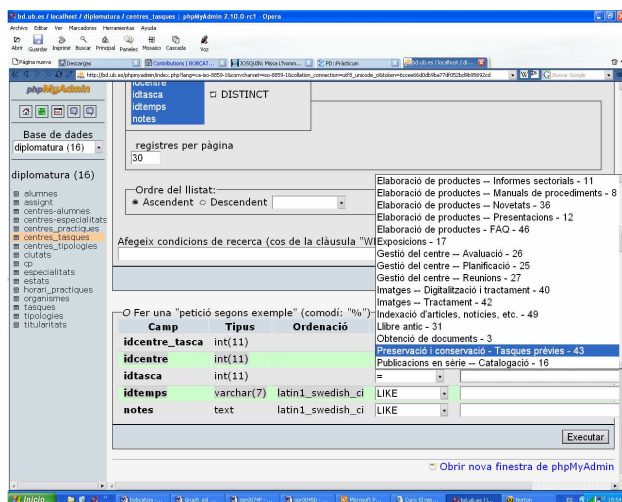


Figure 2: Database: search of tasks

At the time of writing this paper, the database is not public and only works internally as a searching device. We are now working in a public consultation interface, which offers and sorts results.

Centers offered, as has been said, are varied: from public libraries and administrative to business information centers (law firms, football clubs or web portals, for instances) or companies providing information services. The selection is based on different criteria. On the one hand, the number of centers of each type has to be sufficient to meet demand. An annual or semi-annual turnover of some centers is advisable, allowing them “to rest” for a semester in order to avoid that the internship program becomes a burden. It is intended that the range of center types has to be representative of the professional reality: so, we are offering not only “classic” information services (as public, national or parliamentary libraries, or administrative archives), but others who respond to profiles not so familiar to students: web portals, search engines services, hospital, justice court, television and radio, or museum information centers, and so on.

The most of the centers are located in Barcelona and nearby towns. However, an important part of students at the faculty come from other Catalan towns. When they are doing their internship at the end of the degree, some of them prefer choosing to carry out it in their place of residence or near it. The networks of public libraries and regional or municipal archives, as well as some university libraries and few special services, are usually enough to meet these students needs.

Exceptionally, some students ask to do their internships outside Catalonia: at the National Library in Madrid, for instance, or other places. In these cases, professors study the case and reach an agreement with the demanded center, if possible: so it could receive students in the same conditions as other centers. Administrative procedures are often more complex, because these “new” centers are not used to having interns; therefore, a more extended monitoring of its development has to be done.

Since the past year, the Bibliothèque publique d’information-Center Pompidou in Paris is added to the list. This chance arose from some summer stages done by students in voluntary placements. In this case, the center offers a comprehensive training program with a very good supervision of students: this ensures a successful experience.

The possibility of doing internships abroad is conveyed through university mobility programs, as ERASMUS Program. Students, when go to a foreign university, can enrol there internship programs as any other subject in the curriculum, as long as they may be validated and have a similar structure and purpose than ours. Once enrolled in the destination university, the student follows its standards and guidelines. And viceversa, foreign students enrolling internship program in Barcelona are students like any other, and follow the development of the subject in the same conditions.

Possibilities are, thus, many and varied. However, the basic condition for accepting a new internship center is that its leaders understand the educational dimension of the stage: they have to assume that the center will work in the academic education of students through their participation in the development of a subject provided outside of the academy. This will involve a commitment of advisors in the center; according it, they supervise students work, solve doubts, explain procedures, and so on. In return, students perform tasks that could be useful for the center everyday routine.

In addition to this predisposition, the center has to have professionals who can supervise the student with full knowledge of the facts, and working in the center. Sometimes, request are received from centers (usually small ones) with a responsible that is physically in another place and goes to the center only several days a week, or several hours a day. Although the center could run well, this is not an ideal situation for an intern: he will remain alone in the center, without monitoring, for a great extent of the time. This kind of internship programs

is not accepted.

Similarly, the center must have a defined timetable of attention to their users (sometimes, there are centers opened only a few hours a day) and the advisor timetable has to coincide with those of the intern. A sufficient variety of tasks has to be offered; so, students could learn how to operate in them and how to manage each one. An internship planning is asked. Although it may vary according to service needs, it must be enough indicative of the type of work that the student will do, and, essentially, of the skills and concepts that could be learnt there.

The center is actively involved in the education of students. In fact, this will lead to the benefit of the profession itself: the education and training of future professionals has to be carried out within the same profession, too; and not only in the academy.

7. WHAT DO STUDENTS CHOOSE?

Student interests are diverse, concerning to internship options. In principle, one might think that they prefer larger and technologically advanced centers. The experience shows, however, that student motivations are of various types.

A small percentage of students have already chosen a career profile: throughout the degree courses, especially in the second year, has evolved, through elective subjects, a career choice: archives, public library, a more technical or more technological profile... Internship program offers him the possibility to work at a center fitting that profile.

By contrast, another part of students had no clear their future career profile. When they hesitate, see the internship as a chance to test whether he likes or not a given area of the profession; to confirm an option (when they choose a center with the characteristics of that they would like to work in) or to discard another.

There also are students who, being sure their preference for working in a kind of center, are choosing a totally different option: simply as a last chance to work in and to experience how it works a center where they do not work later. Often, this happens with students who are already working and know they will continue working at the same place. So, a student working in a public library may ask to do internship in an archive or a television in order to know how runs such a center, because he is sure that if

not, he cannot test it later.

The average, which varies from time to time, is now about 40-50 interns each semester. Of them:

- 45% choose special and research centers
- 20% mass media or audiovisual information centers
- 17 %, public library
- 13 % archives
- 5% academic libraries

We can generalize and say that internship students could be split in: those who have already chosen their profile and those who have not. Usually, the choice of an internship center is clearer (or, at least, the generic type of center). Many of them tend to choose public or academic libraries or archives.

Generalizing again, students choosing special and research centers or mass media information centers, are not so sure about the kind of center where they wish to work in future. In their doubt, they tend to choose those centers more appealing: special, research or mass media information centers. Possibly, reasons for these preferences are twofold.

Mass media have a great appeal, possibly related to external factors as the perception of the journalist career as an exciting job, transmitted by the same media, movies or novels. There also is a certain idealization of the information professional in a mass media information service, always rushing but resolving questions. Expectations about this kind of center are great, perhaps too high on the part of students. It is logical that the most attractive part of the work in such a service is precisely the most complex; it requires a full knowledge of the profession and much experience. An intern, in three months, is not able to carry it and has to do other more routine tasks, similar to those in other centers: the result could be a bit disappointing, but interesting too.

In the case of special or research centers, we will discuss some of the declared reasons for choosing such a center.

One is the topic with the center works on. The variety of centers allows students with an interest in any discipline to work in a center associated with it: art, medicine and health, law, boating, sports, business, linguistics, etc. In this sense, students tend to have a misperception of their role in the center. Often they choose internship centers

related to humanistic disciplines (art, music, literature) at the expense of scientific or technical disciplines such as law or medicine; they believe they do not know enough about these disciplines: "I know nothing of law" is a recurring argument.

Students just do not understand that the discipline is secondary and that their primary job is to apply concepts acquired in their degree courses, not the concepts (related to other disciplines) studied in other degrees by center users. Possibly, lack of experience causes this feeling, in spite of professors insist on the contrary, and students deem essential to know the discipline the center is specialized in. Paradoxically, the same person who does not choose a law firm because he "knows nothing on law", choose, for instance, a library in a contemporary art museum. If we ask this student about Jackson Pollock or Vieira da Silva, the most likely is that he was not aware what we are speaking about. Students have a misperception those "humanistic" disciplines are easier to manage than other more technical.

Actually, one of the aims of the internship stage is, precisely, putting things in their rightful place: students will realize that what make them different to other careers are, precisely, skills and knowledge related to information profession, which may be applied in different contexts regardless of the disciplines worked by the center. They realize that a deeper knowledge about other disciplines will come later and, in a great extent, because of the practice and use of sources (where the student has to be an expert).

Another reason (sometimes hidden, but obvious) in the selection of the internship center, is the possibility to continue working in after obtaining the degree. This makes more frequent the choice of private centers (many special centers, businesses, mass media centers, etc.) than that of public centers. It is assumed that public organisms do not have the ability to recruit a worker directly (usually, workers, as government employees, must sit an examination for public competition). However, private companies may offer more career opportunities: internship is seen as a first approach to a center with better employment possibilities. Certainly, the student can open doors for himself and, with some time, a certain amount of students have been called from centers where they had done internships with good results. In this sense, is a logical motivation. However, perhaps in some cases this factor becomes too crucial and the student creates false expectations.

Possibly, this is the reason why the less demanded

category is that of academic libraries. They, which ten years ago were one of the most popular center types, is today very little chosen, with semesters in which no student select them. On the contrary, professors insist that academia libraries are a good choice, especially when the student just cannot decide for one: he may learn a lot, work in many varied tasks and see how different services are running. On the one hand, job vacancies in academic libraries haven decreased considerably (ten years ago, when new universities were open, academic libraries were an emerging labour market) and the most are public institutions, very limited to recruit new staff. On the other hand, students often use library at the university, and they have also visited them, and used as learning resources in other subjects. This fact creates a false perception resumed in "we already know how such a library is" and, therefore, their interest is lesser. The knowledge of academia libraries as a user is deemed enough: so students choose other "more innovative" centers.

The center election takes place in two phases. The first one is the choice of a generic type of center: archive, public or school library, special or research library, mass media or audiovisual information center, or academic library. After this first choice, different student groups are formed and tutors assigned to each group. In a second meeting, every student proposes an internship center. The proposal is always appreciated by tutors: they have previous experience and may guide the students according to their demands and tastes, but also according to their skills, background, and so on. Often, especially when the student does not have made a decision, he let professors advise him.

In any case, the contact is between student and professor, not with advisors in the center: a direct contact would distort the relationship and cause inconvenience to centers receiving queries from students interested in learning particularities of the center to evaluate it as a potential internship choice.

Students have enough information (organization websites, information given by professors, etc.): it is expected the student use it.

8. RELATIONSHIP WITH CENTERS

Internship program is based on the good relationship and coordination among centers and the faculty. This relationship is established from the first moment that cooperation is agreed. A visit of some professor to the center is always made in order to talk with its managers, clarify doubts and set the terms of the cooperation agreement. Contacts with the center are continued: so, when a student chooses the center, it is consulted in

advance, and while the student is doing his internship, new contacts are required: usually, another visit, at the end of the internship period, made easier the evaluation of the experience.

At the very beginning of each semester, interns visit some centers to increase their knowledge on different kinds of centers. For these visits, in order to maintain the relationship, professors choose centers not selected by students for some time.

Every two years, a general meeting of internship center advisors is maintained, convened by the faculty, whose professors coordinate this meeting. In this meeting, are reported to the centers about new developments relating to internship programs, new internship centers, academic activities related to, and so on. Above all, these meetings are suitable for the different internship advisors who could meet and share experiences and know-how: projects, evaluation criteria, ways to enhance internship, ideas, and so on. These meetings show that, really, advisors believe in what they are doing and appreciate clearly the pedagogical and educational dimension of their work.

Actually, these centers are a link between the professional and academic worlds, and maintain and strengthen it is interesting for both parts. As a courtesy for their cooperation, these centers have priority in educational and cultural events organized by the faculty. We should emphasize that the Faculty, from historical times when it was the Librarians School (Escola de Bibliotecàries, since 1915), has maintained a close contact with the professional world, a world that the academy largely has contributed to create. Many of the current professionals were, in the past, students in this institution and found a professional center where they were did their internship course. Today, they have the opportunity to contribute, as professionals, to the feedback between profession and university. It is the reason of the involvement of internship centers and the importance of this relationship for the faculty.

One of the petitions arising in these meetings from the centers is the possibility to bring to students, directly, his internship offer. They wish to be revealed, or rather, to reveal to the student what kind of internship (tasks, etc.) could he do there. They think that students, in many cases, do not know exactly what is offered at the center. Although they could consult websites of centers, they are not able to know what kind of tasks can be carried out what peculiarities has the center. Therefore, it is interesting that centers might explain it to students, without intermediaries. The proposal is interesting: nowadays, this explanation is indirect, done by professors at the time when student do their selection. The

possibility to do periodical informative meetings with advisors and students has been evaluated, but the amount of centers, requirements of mobility and advisors time-tables, make it difficult to carry out such a meeting.

One proposed solution is to allocate brief notices of the centers in an area of the internship page at the faculty website. These notices could be brief, three or four sentences, indicating what the center offers to the student. From this idea, we have proposed as a more more feasible mean a blog where, weekly or with another frequency, students could read news about centers, incorporation of new internship centers, interviews with advisors from centers explaining their internship, interviews to students who have done their internships, or brief reports about a particular center. Thus, centers will have a mean to express themselves and, without an additional effort by their part, a more direct relationship among them, students and professors will be created. In addition, the visibility of the internship program to students of other years will raise; so, they will be able to “live” the “internship experience” from much earlier, and they will have more information in order to make a better decision choosing a center.

9. INTERN STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Internship is, after all, one subject in a curriculum. As such, it requires an assessment. The assessment, as currently is done, and understanding internship as a comprehensive subject at the end of the curriculum, incorporates elements of various kinds, in order to evaluate different skills, characteristic of core and cross competencies.

On the other hand, the fact that internships are based on a continued stage in a center, requires the evaluation of some competencies (core, cross and, above all, attitudes) in the very center where students have developed these skills. It is, therefore, a shared assessment.

Advisors at the center assess students filling a form and doing commentaries. Assessed skills go from student knowledge adequacy to those required at the center, to attitudes as the capacity for teamwork, personal initiative or its ability using information tools. Especially valuable for students are the advisor comments on interns.

The weight of advisors assessment is important, but not decisive. It is about 35% of the final qualification. In any case, from assessment and comments, written or oral, this qualification is adjusted, in accordance with the advisor. This adjustment could be necessary sometimes: it is not strange to observe a bias in qualifications, usually in favour of students. Maybe, after a relationship for three months, advisors could find difficult to appreciate a student, and qualifications may tend to overestimate

them. When this gap is very clear to professors, a talking with the advisor usually is enough to reset or maintain this qualification. In general, qualifications tend to be high: internship is a subject where students are particularly motivated and “biased” to do it right; the results are generally consistent with this attitude.

The rest of the assessment, in the current subject syllabus, is responsibility of tutoring professors in faculty. The assessment takes into account three factors more:

- A written essay on the internship center and the training period (30%)
- An oral presentation of the internship period, before an examination board (15%)
- Preparation and intervention in the three meetings during the internship period, in visits prior to the internship, and individual tutorials (20%).

The aim is evaluating different competencies at the end of the courses, when students are obtaining their degree. So, are evaluated: oral and written communication, ability to debate, capacity to write an essay, and so on.

The new curriculum will change the weight of these elements. As internship program will be at the seventh semester (in a eight-semester curriculum) and will be preceded by a descriptive essay (in the Planning subject) and continued for another (related to Evaluation subject), the new essay on the internship will not have the same meaning nor the same structure. In addition, the role of final degree project that currently is this essay will disappear, as student will have to do a real final project.

The new assessment scheme, yet not established, will not be very different to the current one, since the skills to be evaluated will be the same then, as nowadays are. In any case, the differences will be in the essay approach, and in its linking to essays in other subjects, and, optionally, to the final degree project.

From the experience of recent years, we are able to do some comments on this assessment scheme, in order to better apply it when the new syllabus be implemented. Concerning the essay, we, professors, have noticed that students, even after a three year degree, are severely struggling to write a research project by themselves; the voluntary lack of a previous scheme is a true problem for a lot of students. The conclusion is clear: students need to exercise this skill more often along the courses. Possibly, the practical nature of many subjects in the degree implies that written essays, based on the wording and structure of contents, are not so many as in other degrees.

It is a type of work whose weight along the curriculum has to be increased.

In addition, the student writing skills level has visibly decreased in the last years, in a great extent because of the arrival to university of those students who have finished their secondary education according to the Spanish educational reform curricula (in force from 1990 to 2006). Their essays wording is, with some exceptions, correct but poor, with a widespread mediocrity. This defect has to be also evaluated along the degree, and not only when students reach the last year. In every time, students must need to improve their standard of written expression.

The level of association of ideas, or linking between practice and theoretical concepts, the reflection and abstraction level is also, in general, low. Students know how describe a service or activity done at the center, but they find difficult to think about it, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, or develop a coherent speech in order to value them properly. Often, when essays include a SWOT analysis, this method seems to be the goal of the essay, when it would have to be only a step to reach other type of conclusions. Students, in general, stay at a level of descriptive analysis, and fail when try to go from the specific to the abstract concepts, or when try to synthesize concepts into a new discourse. Work and essays for enhancing these skills have to be done more often.

With regard to the oral presentation before an examination board, established four years ago, it has proved to be a revealing innovation. Before, students did more informal presentations at classrooms, before their teacher and classmates. However, the internship presentation is a very formal statement before a board consisting of three professors, internship tutors themselves or not. So, professors have a chance to see how their educational task is running at the very end of the degree. We are considering, now, to incorporate to examination boards advisors from the internship centers. So, they could also see how students explain the stage, as well as the educational role of advisor is emphasized.

The result is mixed: in general, few students have sufficient mastery to make a high-level oral presentation. Nerves are often a distorting factor. In some cases, this is the first presentation they do, at least with a so formal

nature³.

We can conclude that students have done few public presentations. A proposal for new curricula is the planning of a minimum number of oral presentations or activities, distributed along the eight semesters: an expected result will be that students become more familiar with and be used to do them, as they will do later in their career.

Despite monitoring meetings at faculty, the fact that students spend the bulk of the semester in other center distances them from the learning center. This rift may lead students to "forget" they have a tutor at the faculty. Possibly, individual tutorship during the internship period has to be reinforced, at least in some cases where students may need it more.

10. OPINION POLLS AND SUBJECT EVALUATION BY STUDENTS

As internship program is a "different" subject in the curriculum, where students play a much more active role; with special relations among advisors, professors and students, and with a developing and assessment methodology totally different to other subjects, but closely to them. Because of it, internship professors are especially interested in evaluating how it runs and how it could enhance.

Therefore, at the very end of the process students are required to assess the internship program and its educational approach. They should answer an opinion poll, filling an anonymous form. It not only gathers views about internship centers, but, above all, on the development and learning of the subject. In general, results often are coincident, but some comments might be present and they could be interesting.

The poll asks about student previous experience: if he has worked, or have carried out some type of job. After, questions are divided into blocks, where several aspects are valued:

- Organization of the subject (centers variety, allocation in the curriculum, information

received previously on the internship...)

- Content and assessment system (usefulness of the previous visits, opinion about meetings and debates, extent of internship period, type of evaluation...)
- Internship center (organization of the program there, advisors tutorship, done work...)
- Tutorship by professors (tutors' guidance, tracking...).

The final valuation tends to be high: on a range from 0 to 3, the most assigned values are 2 and 3. Some frequent comments concern the length of the stage period: somebody found that there is little time; somebody feels this time too much. Generally, this perception is linked to the type of center and the variety of different tasks carried out in each of them.

Maybe we might detect in some comments that students forget that the internship experience is not a working one, but academic. Its aim is not working, but learning. Sometimes, they comment that do not feel the internship as a good method to acquire work experience (it is, they say, too unreal, as it is monitored), as if it was a defect in the approach –when, at the contrary, it is a characteristic. So, there are students thinking internship as a mere work experience and maybe miss (apart from payment) to be treated exactly like a worker more. In any case, it is a misperception of the subject academic nature: we have to remark this educational value and differentiate it from working-oriented placements.

Students feel that information about internship received prior the internship year is too limited. As the university has a web-based educational platform (based on access to a website where subject materials are grouped) where all the facts about subject can be found, professors have reduced other ways to inform students, such as briefings (among other things, students attendance to them had a very low rate) during the previous year. On the other hand, the available information in the student guidebook, the web or "virtual campus" (the web-based platform) is permanent, clear and very complete, but student do not look up it. Possibly, information about internship is enough, even more than necessary, but students do not perceive it as such.

11. CONCLUSIONS

So, an internship program is a subject that indirectly molds the students making them mature and grow up. While a student is at internship place, monitored but without permanent guidelines for action, and "released"

³ We have to remark that in Spain, primary and secondary education has left out (deleted, in most cases) oral methods for assessing as recitation, reading aloud or oral examinations. Only some schools, more recently, consider a kind of final project, at the end of the last year, that has to have an oral presentation, or with some computer tool as PowerPoint. The lack of previous background makes problematic the experience in university.

from his academic activity, he begins to rule his career. He is only required to prepare essays and other elements in order to be assessed; works prepared almost on his own. Making decisions and taking initiatives are important components in this educational process, and they will affect student comprehensive education.

It is a kind of subject that really force the student to make links among different concepts learned along the courses and to think about facts and activities he is doing. Its assessment has also to be comprehensive, evaluating elements as cross competencies or personal attitudes, usually not assessed in other subjects.

More than professors, now is the student the main actor playing in his own learning process and through internship he may aware of it.

However, we could find several problems that cause worse results in assessment. These problems are connected to lack of maturity or background: dissociation of theoretical and practical issues, difficulties in preparing essays or thinking about a process like internship, and so on.

Precisely because these problems are now occurring in internship, at the very end of the degree, we may take advantage from them and propose corrective elements to be introduced in the proposal for a new degree curriculum. If these corrective elements run well, we could warrant a greater quality in future results of internship assessment. Because it is so comprehensive, and representative of the whole of the degree, it will mean a greater quality in the educational process of the degree as a whole.

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