

Join an Internship Course or not? Evaluation from the Perspective of College Students in Taiwan

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Abstract: - Even as Taiwan's higher education is growing, graduation from college or university is not a guarantee for employment. Therefore, more and more schools are establishing relationships with enterprises to offer internship opportunities to students. These days senior college students are asked (as a matter of course) whether they are going to choose an internship course or not. What is the key determinant? Do the incentives provided by the enterprise and school work? The aim of the paper is to propose a Multiple-Criteria-Decision-Making (MCDM) evaluation model on the internship decision from the college students' view in Taiwan. According to the result, the weight ranking is: (1) Enterprise factors; (2) Financial factors; (3) School factors and (4) Non-financial factors. Among the 20 criteria, the top three as ranked by the respondents are "the enterprises provide salary"; "approving the internship report equal to special topic report" and "the provided internship work that fits me". The results indicate that the incentives provided by the enterprise and school do matter. Such an MCDM model serves as a decision-making mechanism for the schools, students and enterprises.

Key-Words: - internship, Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), college students, Multiple-Criteria-Decision-Making (MCDM)

1 Introduction

As Taiwan's high education is growing, entering into college or university is not a dream come true: graduation from college or university is not a guarantee of employment. Therefore, many students are aware that their academic achievement is just one aspect of obtaining employment. Related working experience before graduation is another helpful aspect in obtaining employment. Therefore, many vocational school and technological universities have established relationships with industrial firms to offer internship opportunities to students. These internship courses place students within the firms where they take part in the commercially productive activities of the enterprise. And there are more and more enterprises willing to provide internship opportunities. This kind of cooperation, known as "student internship outside school of course" in Taiwan, provides students the opportunity to work hands on, and help them accumulate practical experience in the appropriate enterprises. Student internship course equips students with capabilities over and above the academic qualifications to be valuable productive members of contemporary society after graduation. In addition to creating an advantage to the students,

internship also benefits employing enterprises and sponsoring schools. In view of this, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan has established "student internship outside school" as an important policy, and encouraged college schools to add internship courses since March of 2009. The internship regulation based on this policy helps schools and enterprises understand the process and gives directions towards running a coordinated internship course.

Researches and surveys on student internship have pre-dated its application in Taiwan. Literature reviews show that most studies recognize the positive effects of student internship [1, 7, 18, 22, 32]: internship offers benefits to three entities: students, employing enterprises and sponsoring schools. However, Pavesic and Brymer [20] and Fox [15] emphasize its negative effects. Some authors focus on the performance of student internship [2, 10, 12, 31]. However, little attention is paid to the discussion and evaluation of a student internship course, from the college students' view.

All in all, issues concerning internship are diverse and this topic is not only emphasized by the school, but also by the industry and by government. Exploring this issue involves the factors to be dealt

with by the previously mentioned parties: when there are at least three objectives it can be classified as a Multiple-Criteria-Decision-Making (MCDM) problem. MCDM techniques have been used in recent years to solve a variety of decision-making problems involving evaluating and selecting multiple criteria among alternatives. The practical applications reported in the literature have shown advantages in handling quantitative and qualitative data with this technique, and they have obtained pretty reliable results [6, 16, 27]. This study applies the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) to develop an MCDM evaluation model on the student internships decision from the college student's point of view. The results provide a reference for school, students and the enterprises.

According to the result, the weight ranking of the evaluating dimensions of student internship is: (1) Enterprise factors; (2) Financial factors; (3) School factors and (4) Non-financial factors. Among the 20 criteria, the top three as ranked by the respondents are "the enterprises provide salary"; "approving the internship report equal to special topic report" and "the provided internship work that fits me". The results indicate that the incentives provided by enterprise (salary) and by school (approving the internship report equal to special topic report and credit points) do matter.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 is the review of literature on student internship. Section 3 proposes an AHP evaluation model and Section 4 presents the result. Finally, conclusions are drawn from the findings.

2 Literature review

2.1 What is internship?

The meaning of an internship and its operational definition differs somewhat around the globe. Just as various types of training in the work environment have developed differently, so the terminology in the field varies as well [4]. In the UK, the most frequently used term for the period of internship is "sandwich placement" [5], which can be defined as "a temporary period of student employment as part of a student's course — which is effectively planned and managed and takes in the negotiated requisites of the student, employer, and higher education institution". McMahon and Quinn [19] called internship a "supervised work experience" and the students are under special guidelines and attention during their internship instead of working alone by themselves in the industry.

2.2 Benefits of an internship course

An internship course offers benefits to three parties: students, employing enterprises and sponsoring schools.

2.2.1 Benefit to students

Internships frequently enhance students' prospects of receiving job offers before graduation [12]; these assignments expose them to the real world experiences and allow them to get a realistic preview of the organizations they are considering for full-time work upon graduation [24-26]. According to Feldman, Folks and Turnley [13] and Beard [1], the following are the benefits to students: it improves job opportunities after graduation, creates relevance for past and future classroom learning, develops work place social and human relation skills, provides the opportunity to apply communications and problem solving skills, provides training on the latest technology, contributes the financial benefits of paid employment, and provides individualized curriculum opportunities. From internships, they not only recognize the importance of gaining "real world" experience, obtaining technical skills, and earning tangible evidence of the value of such experiences for portfolios, but internships also improve prospects for entry-level jobs, obtaining mentors, acquiring a new appreciation of the relevance of coursework, for attending professional seminars, and this experience further refines their professional attitudes, and their organizational and interpersonal skills [10].

During the internship period, students acquire new talents, gain practical knowledge and vision in order to help solve problems they are likely to encounter during their working life, in a most appropriate manner, and in a time-efficient way within the framework of logic and information. Meantime they get to understand the importance of team-work; and their ability to use time optimally and responsibly develop at the same time — hence they grow in self-confidence and acquire more courage [2, 32]. Throughout the internship process, respondents perceived themselves to be competently instructed across a range of domains: managing workload, displaying care, interpersonal skills, time management and working in a multidisciplinary team [8]. All in all, the benefits to students include financial and nonfinancial factors.

2.2.2 Benefit to enterprises

An internship course can provide host enterprises with energetic students who can help meet critical staffing needs. Internships not only help the enterprises identify potential qualified employees

but also allow the enterprises to learn about the capability of an intern in a temporary work arrangement before making a permanent hiring decision. Additionally, internships can improve retention [24]. According to Beard [1], enterprises derive the following benefits: more effective recruitment and selection of future employees, being provided needed part-time and special project employees, a way to develop linkages with universities/colleges, and this sort of co-operation enhances the company's image in the community, improves educational opportunities available in community, reduces training cost, and injects new ideas into the organization.

Internships do not require long-term employment commitment on the employers' part, thus enterprisers can use internships as an excellent "try-before-you-buy" method of staffing, and assessing the prospective future employee's competencies, work ethics, and fit in a relatively longer probation period. Thus, internship is a relatively safe and low-risk approach for enterprisers to attract and select prospective employees [29].

2.2.3 Benefit to schools

Benefits to sponsoring schools are the following: it enhances placement opportunities of graduates, and the process reinforces classroom learning, develops industry support for an internship course, provides feedback concerning the aptness of an internship related curriculum, extends learning style options for students, provides "real world" insight to the faculty supervisor, and identifies potential advisory committee members. Besides, from a public relations standpoint, internship courses can facilitate better relations between schools and potential employers of their graduates [1, 3].

3 Methodology

3.1 Analytic Hierarchy Process

The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) is a tool decision analysts use to aid decision makers in making multi-criteria decisions. Since it was first introduced by Saaty in the 1970s, it has been widely applied in various decision areas. AHP serves as a framework for people to structure complex decision problems; to provide judgments based on knowledge, experience or feelings by using pairwise comparisons; and to derive a set of priorities considered as a reasonable solution to a decision problem [23]. In this study, the decision-making problem relates to deciding whether to choose an internship course. The AHP is used to structure the evaluation model on student internships with

decision elements hierarchically and to obtain the weighting values of the respective decision factors on the basis of experts' knowledge and experience.

AHP is a theory of measurement for handling both quantifiable and intangible criteria. It has been applied to numerous areas, including decision theory and conflict resolution [28]. The approach is based on the following three principles: decomposition, comparative judgments, and synthesizing priorities [22]. AHP starts by decomposing a complex, multi-criteria problem into a hierarchy, in which each level consists of several manageable elements. These elements are then decomposed into another set of elements [30]. The second step is to use a measurement methodology to establish priorities among the elements within each level of the hierarchy. The third step in using AHP is to synthesize the priorities of the elements to establish overall priorities for the decision alternatives. AHP differs from conventional decision analysis methodologies in that it does not require decision makers to make numerical guesses. Instead, subjective judgments are easily included in the process and the judgments can be made entirely in a verbal mode [14].

3.2 MCDM model

MCDM problems are classified into two categories: multiple-objective programming and multiple-criteria evaluation. A typical multiple-criteria evaluation problem examines a set of feasible alternatives and considers more than one criterion to determine a priority ranking among alternatives. To formulate the criteria, five principles are considered: completeness, operations, the decomposition, non-redundancy, and minimum size [17].

According to the principles of the AHP, the first step in the analysis is to identify the criteria on internship before students make decisions whether join or not. Based on a review of previous studies, we initially chose more than 25 relevant factors. Factor items with a low loading were then deleted by using a 7-point Likert scale. The criteria are then structured into a hierarchical form to represent the relationships between the identified factors. The key dimensions of the criteria for internship determinants were derived through consulting with 12 representative experts who had experience with internship counselling, mentoring and supervision. These experts included 5 professors and 7 students who had internship experience ranging from 6 to 12 months. These individuals were asked to rate the accuracy, adequacy, and relevance of the criteria and dimensions and to verify their content validity in terms of considering whether to choose an internship course. They identified four

main aspects of importance for “student internship outside school of course” and which had to be included in the analysis: enterprise factors, financial factors, non-financial factors, and school factors. To reach an adequate level of detail in the analysis, these four dimensions were further divided such that each included 5 criteria. Thus, an MCDM evaluation model on student internship is classified into 4 dimensions and 20 criteria. The hierarchical structure and the dimensions and criteria are shown in Figure 1 and Table 1.

In AHP, multiple paired comparisons are based on a standardized evaluation scheme (1 = equal importance; 3 = weak importance; 5 = strong

importance; 7 = demonstrated importance; 9 = absolute importance). The AHP uses a method of comparing n elements pair-wise under given conditions. Verbal responses are converted into a 9-point linguistic scale, and the results of the pair-wise comparisons are used to construct a judgment matrix. Then, the normalized eigenvector corresponding to the maximum eigenvalue (λ_{max}) is calculated. The consistency index (C.I.) serves as the indicator of “closeness to consistency”. $C.I. = (\lambda_{max} - n) / (n - 1)$, with λ_{max} as the eigenvalue for the pair-wise comparison matrix of size n . In general, if the $C.I. < 0.1$, the judgment may be considered as appropriate.

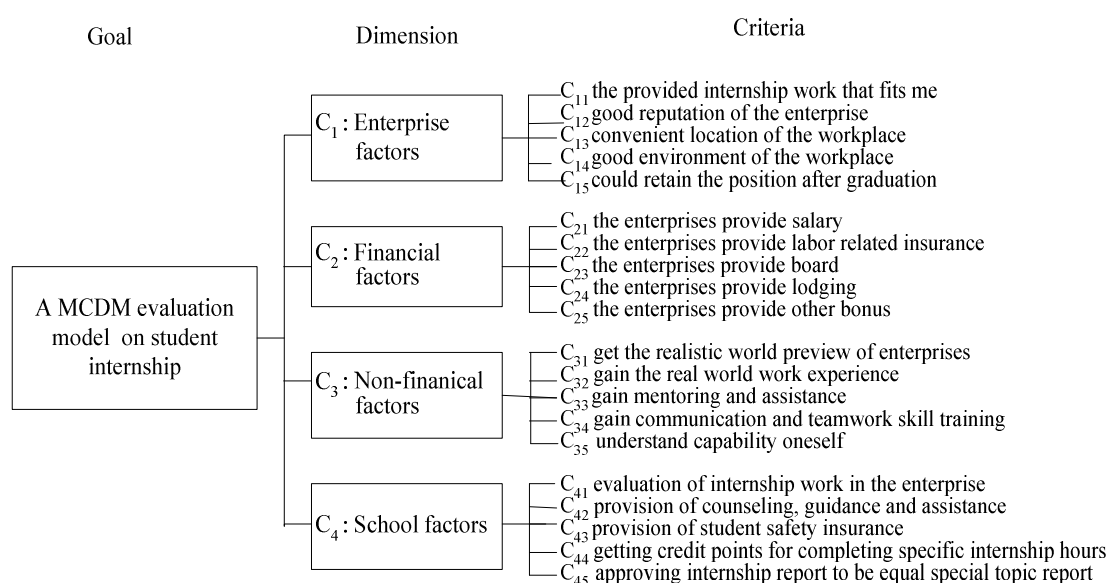


Figure 1. A MCDM evaluation model on student internship

Table 1. The dimensions and criteria of the MCDM evaluation model

Dimension	Criteria
C ₁ Enterprise factors	C ₁₁ the provided internship work that fits me C ₁₂ good reputation of the enterprise C ₁₃ convenient location of the workplace C ₁₄ good environment of the workplace C ₁₅ could retain the position after graduation
C ₂ Financial factors	C ₂₁ the enterprises provide salary C ₂₂ the enterprises provide labour related insurance C ₂₃ the enterprises provide board or subsidy C ₂₄ the enterprises provide lodging or subsidy C ₂₅ the enterprises provide other forms of bonus
C ₃ Non-financial factors	C ₃₁ get the realistic world preview of enterprises C ₃₂ gain the real world work experience C ₃₃ gain mentoring and assistance C ₃₄ gain communication and teamwork skill training C ₃₅ understand capability oneself
C ₄ School factors	C ₄₁ evaluation of internship work in the enterprise C ₄₂ provision of counselling, guidance and assistance C ₄₃ provision of student safety insurance C ₄₄ getting credit points for completing specific internship hours C ₄₅ approving the internship report to equal a special topic report

4 A case study of internship evaluation

4.1 Background

“Student internship outside school of course” has been functioning operationally for many years in vocational schools and some technological universities in Taiwan. In some Taiwanese vocational schools, students must complete part of their education at industrial companies for specified working hour duration, such as the departments as childcare, nursing, hospitality, cosmetic and hair care, automobile repair, engineering, and so on.

Taking M technological university for example, internship courses all belong to elective course. Students usually choose an internship course during the third or fourth year in campus. After completing the 6 months or 960 working hours of internship, the interns obtain 9 elective credits points. In order to courage the program, many departments of management institute approving the internship report to equal special topic report (which is an obligatory course). To help us investigate students' viewpoints on “Student internship outside school”, 48 students completed the questionnaire among the 60 students from the institute of management in M university in Taiwan. After an initial examination of the data, three further responses were deleted for C.I. >1. Thus, 45 usable surveys were collected. The respondents are from five departments: international business (IB), business administration (BA), financial management (FM), information management (IM) and industrial engineering management (IEM). A valid response rate is 75%. The research period covered is from 2011/08 to 2012/02. The respondents had all chose and joined the internship course for the first time.

4.2 Data collection

The demographic profile and description of the 45 surveys is as follows:

- (1) Sex: the number of males is 21 (47%) and 24 are females (53%).
- (2) Age: the respondents are all senior students and their age is about 21-22.
- (3) Department: the number of IB is 15 (33%), BA is 6 (13%), FM is 9 (20%), IM is 8 (18%) and IEM is (16%).
- (4) Industry: the number of students who did their internship work in the service industry is 28 (62%), and the number in technological industry is 17 (38%).
- (5) Working hours per day: 9 students (20%) worked 7 hours, 21 (47%) worked 8 hours and 15 (33%) did 9-10

- (6) Overtime work: the number who answered “Yes” is 15 (33%), and the number of “No” answers is 30.
- (7) How were they rewarded for overtime work? Among the 15 respondents, 5 persons got extra vacation, 3 persons received extra salary and the other 7 got none.
- (8) Did they retain a desire to do the same kind of work as during internship after graduation? 21 answered “Yes” and 24 “No”.

5 Results and discussions

5.1 General analysis

The weight of the response obtained from each surveyed respondent is calculated by Expert Choice 9.5 (2005) [9]. The rank of dimension and criteria within the complete evaluation criteria hierarchy is also obtained. The average C.I. of weight factors of evaluation dimensions (C_1, \dots, C_4) and criteria across dimensions (C_{11}, \dots, C_{45}) is 0.036 and 0.047, respectively; that is, C.I. < 0.1, indicating that the judgment of consistency index is satisfied. The weight factors and rank of the 20 evaluation criteria from the surveyed respondents are listed in Table 2.

The results are described as follows. The weight factors affecting the dimensions of evaluating the student internship course are:

- (1) Enterprise factors ($C_1=0.279$);
- (2) Financial factors ($C_2=0.260$);
- (3) School factors ($C_4=0.252$) and;
- (4) Non-financial factors ($C_3=0.209$).

This result indicates that for the respondents, “Enterprise factors” is the key dimension, while “Non-financial factors” is the least important dimension when they evaluate whether to join the student internship program or not.

Among the “Enterprise factors” dimension, “the provided internship work fits me” ($C_{11}=0.060$) is the respondents' first concern, “good environment of the workplace” ($C_{14}=0.057$) is the second and “convenient location of the workplace” ($C_{13}=0.056$) comes the third. The result indicates the respondents care more about the fitness of the internship work, environment and location of the workplace.

Among the “School factors” dimension, “the enterprises provide salary” ($C_{21}=0.076$) is clearly the respondents' first concern, “The enterprises provide other bonus” ($C_{25}=0.059$) ranks the second, and “the enterprises provide labour related insurance” ($C_{22}=0.051$) comes the third. The result means the respondents care about the pay from the enterprises. Besides, if their performance is good, it

would be possible to obtain another bonus; this is also a financial reward.

Among “School factors” dimension, the school “approving the internship report to equal special topic report” ($C_{45}= 0.064$) is the student respondents’ first concern, “Credit points for completing specific internship hours” ($C_{44}= 0.060$) ranks the second, and “provides counselling, guidance and assistance” ($C_{42}= 0.046$) comes the third. The result means when they evaluate the internship program, “approving the internship report to equal special topic report” could be an incentive because it would reduce their loading on writing special-topic reports. Clearly the school authority

encourages and supports the internship program; they agree that if the interns complete the specific internship hours required by the department, they could get the related credit points.

Among the “Non-financial factors” dimension, “gaining real world work experience” ($C_{32}= 0.049$) is the respondents’ first concern, “Gain communication and teamwork skill training” ($C_{34}= 0.044$) and “understanding own capability” ($C_{35}= 0.044$) ranks the second and the third respectively. Besides, they care not only about hard/professional skills but also about acquiring soft abilities. Thanks to the process of internship, they came to understand more about themselves

Table 2. The aggregated results on weight and rank of the MCDM model

Dimension/ Criteria	weight of dimension	weight of criteria	ranking of dimension	ranking of criteria
C_1 Enterprise factors	0.279		(1)	
C_{11} the provided internship work that fits me		0.060		(3)
C_{12} good reputation of the enterprise		0.054		(8)
C_{13} convenient location of the workplace		0.056		(7)
C_{14} good environment of the workplace		0.057		(6)
C_{15} could retain the position after graduation		0.051		(9)
C_2 Financial factors	0.260		(2)	
C_{21} the enterprises provide salary		0.076		(1)
C_{22} the enterprises provide labour related insurance		0.051		(10)
C_{23} the enterprises provide board or subsidy		0.040		(16)
C_{24} the enterprises provide lodging or subsidy		0.034		(20)
C_{25} the enterprises provide other bonus		0.059		(5)
C_3 Non-financial factors	0.209		(4)	
C_{31} get the realistic world preview of enterprises		0.034		(19)
C_{32} gain the real world work experience		0.049		(11)
C_{33} gain mentoring and assistance		0.038		(18)
C_{34} gain communication and teamwork skill training		0.044		(13)
C_{35} understand capability oneself		0.044		(14)
C_4 School factors	0.252		(3)	
C_{41} evaluation of internship work in the enterprise		0.039		(17)
C_{42} provision of counselling, guidance and assistance		0.046		(12)
C_{43} provision of student safety insurance		0.042		(15)
C_{44} getting credit points for completing specific internship hours		0.060		(4)
C_{45} approving the internship report to be equal special topic report		0.064		(2)

Among the 20 criteria, the respondents rank “the enterprises provide salary” ($C_{21}= 0.076$) as the most important; “approving internship report to be equal special topic report” ($C_{45}= 0.064$) the second important; “the provided internship work fits me” ($C_{11}= 0.060$) is ranked the third important criteria; while “the enterprises provide lodging or subsidy”

($C_{24}= 0.034$) is ranked the last. The results indicate that salary, special topic report or credit points, and the aptness of internship work are the three most important factors considered by the student respondents when they evaluate whether joining the internship course or not.

5.2 Individual analysis

The individual result on weight and rank of the MCDM model is shown as Table 3 and briefly described as follows.

According to the results, the respondents of IB put emphasis on “School factors” and “Financial factors” when they evaluate whether to join the internship program. The “special topic course” belongs to the obligatory courses. If the school authority could “approving the internship report to carry equal weight as a special topic report”, it is an incentive for them. Because they should stay at the internship workplace for 6 months, there is no spare time to do the special topic report. Over and above that they would also obtain 9 selective credit points if they complete the 6 months or 960 working hours required by the internship contract. That is, joining the internship program could serve two purposes at the same time. Of course, they care about the salary. As for “mentoring and assistance” that this is not taken account of is likely because the content provided is

not too complicated for them to understand and learn.

The respondents of BA and FM put emphasis on “Financial factors” and “Enterprise factors” when they evaluate whether to join the internship program. They are pragmatic; they consider the practical aspects - salary, location, and the credit points of obligatory courses in place of the “special topic”. As for “provide evaluation on internship work/enterprise”, it is not taken account of. This is likely because that most of the enterprises contracted with the school have good reputations.

The respondents of IM are also pragmatic; they value — salary, obtaining credit points and fitness of the work. Among the students of five departments, the respondents of IEM care about the content and environment of work. As for “provision of counselling, guidance and assistance” is not taken account of, it is likely because that most students are inclined to learn doing their best to face and solve encountered problems by themselves. Teachers just play a support role behind the scenes.

Table 3. The specific result on weight and rank of the MCDM model

Dimension/Criteria/Department	IB		BA		FM		IM		IEM	
	weight	rank	weight	rank	weight	rank	weight	rank	weight	Rank
C₁ Enterprise factors	0.244	(3)	0.269	(2)	0.259	(2)	0.271	(1)	0.376	(1)
C ₁₁ the provided internship work that fits me	0.043	(12)	0.043	(11)	0.055	(6)	0.062	(2)	0.088	(1)
C ₁₂ good reputation of the enterprise	0.054	(8)	0.037	(14)	0.040	(17)	0.049	(11)	0.068	(5)
C ₁₃ convenient location of the workplace	0.055	(7)	0.078	(2)	0.065	(2)	0.053	(7)	0.073	(4)
C ₁₄ good environment of the workplace	0.048	(9)	0.057	(6)	0.052	(8)	0.055	(5)	0.083	(3)
C ₁₅ could retain the position after graduation	0.045	(11)	0.055	(7)	0.046	(10)	0.052	(8)	0.064	(6)
C₂ Financial factors	0.249	(2)	0.284	(1)	0.308	(1)	0.265	(2)	0.272	(2)
C ₂₁ the enterprises provide salary	0.076	(2)	0.110	(1)	0.088	(1)	0.075	(1)	0.083	(2)
C ₂₂ the enterprises provide labour related insurance	0.048	(10)	0.059	(5)	0.062	(5)	0.053	(6)	0.053	(8)
C ₂₃ the enterprises provide board or subsidy	0.032	(17)	0.052	(9)	0.053	(7)	0.046	(14)	0.040	(11)
C ₂₄ the enterprises provide lodging or subsidy	0.030	(19)	0.027	(19)	0.042	(14)	0.036	(18)	0.033	(17)
C ₂₅ the enterprises provide other bonus	0.062	(5)	0.037	(16)	0.063	(4)	0.056	(4)	0.063	(7)
C₃ Non-financial factors	0.197	(4)	0.196	(4)	0.194	(4)	0.221	(4)	0.191	(3)
C ₃₁ get the realistic world preview of enterprises	0.037	(16)	0.035	(18)	0.029	(20)	0.033	(20)	0.029	(18)
C ₃₂ gain the real world work experience	0.064	(4)	0.036	(17)	0.040	(16)	0.042	(17)	0.040	(10)
C ₃₃ gain mentoring and assistance	0.025	(20)	0.037	(14)	0.038	(18)	0.046	(15)	0.039	(12)
C ₃₄ gain communication and teamwork skill training	0.040	(14)	0.040	(12)	0.044	(12)	0.048	(12)	0.037	(15)
C ₃₅ understand capability oneself	0.032	(18)	0.049	(10)	0.042	(15)	0.051	(10)	0.045	(9)
C₄ School factors	0.309	(1)	0.251	(3)	0.239	(3)	0.242	(3)	0.161	(4)
C ₄₁ evaluation of internship work in the enterprise	0.040	(14)	0.027	(20)	0.036	(19)	0.043	(17)	0.024	(19)
C ₄₂ provision of counselling, guidance and assistance	0.057	(6)	0.054	(8)	0.043	(13)	0.047	(13)	0.024	(20)
C ₄₃ provision of student safety insurance	0.040	(13)	0.069	(13)	0.045	(11)	0.043	(16)	0.038	(14)
C ₄₄ getting credit points for completing specific internship hours	0.076	(3)	0.064	(4)	0.065	(3)	0.058	(3)	0.036	(16)
C ₄₅ approving the internship report to be equal special topic report	0.097	(1)	0.067	(3)	0.050	(9)	0.051	(9)	0.039	(13)

6 Conclusion

The aim of the paper is to study the evaluation on internship decision from the students' view. Based on the above results, we draw the following conclusions:

First, the basic data of the survey states that all the respondents are joining the internship course for the first time, and they are all senior students. 53% of respondents are female. 62% of the respondents work in the service industry, including financial services, information service and tourism service, and so on. 47% of them work 8 hours and 33% of them work over 8 hours per day. Among those who work over time only one-third receive a subsidy for the overtime work.

Second, according to the result of AHP, the weight ranking of the evaluating dimensions of student internship is: (1) Enterprise factors; (2) Financial factors; (3) School factors and (4) Non-financial factors. Among the 20 criteria, the top three as ranked by the respondents are "the enterprises provide salary"; "approving the internship report equal to special topic report" and "the provided internship work that fits me". The results indicate that salary, get credit points of obligatory courses or elective courses, and the fitness of internship work are the most important factors considered by the student respondents when they evaluate joining the internship program. That is, the incentives provided by enterprise (salary) and by school (approving the internship report equal to special topic report and credit points) do matter. Third, from individual department results, there is some difference among departments. It is found that the respondents of departments IM and IEM emphasize enterprise factors; BA and FM pay attention to financial factors; while IB respondents emphasize school factors. However, they have the same opinion on criteria, such as salary and credit points.

In the past, when asked why a student chooses to join an internship course, most students' answers would have depended on their experience, knowledge, and information, which is difficult to define or describe precisely. Most previous research studies have focused only on the motivation and benefit, paying little attention to the behaviour of student interns from an integrated perspective. This study develops an MCDM model on student internship evaluation using a combination of subjective and objective criteria. This approach contributes to the literature by providing an aggregate, comprehensive, and scientific framework for evaluating student interns' behaviour on internship courses. This framework, which includes

four dimensions and 20 criteria, provides a reference for the decision-maker when evaluating an internship course where there are many variables. We encourage further research applying our model to other internships from different departments or schools, so as to better understand the practice, thereby obtaining more generalized suggestions for students, enterprises and schools – when all three of the sides are involved.

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