Journal of Medical Education Development, 2018, Vol 11, No 29,54 - 65
http://zums.ac.ir/edujournal/

Zanjan University of Medical Sciences

Evaluation of the Experiences of Health Service Management Students at the Faculty of Management and Information in Tabriz, Iran Regarding Field Internship: A Qualitative Research

Ali Jannati[1], Fariba Dehghani Milagh[1], Mohammad Reza Narimani[1], Masoumeh Gholizadeh[1], Neda Kabiri[1*]

[1] Department of health services management, Iranian Center of Excellence in Health Management, School of Management and Medical Informatics, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Tabriz, Iran

Article Info

Article Type:
Original Article

Article history:
Received 14 May 2017
Accepted 11 Apr 2018
Published 21 Jun 2018

Keywords:
Field Internship
Health Service Management
Qualitative Research

Abstract

Background & Objective: Recognition and elimination of weaknesses in the internship courses of health service management are essential to improving their quality and efficacy. The present study aimed to evaluate the viewpoints of health service management students toward the challenges in the design and implementation of internship courses at the Faculty of Management and Information in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Iran.

Materials and Methods: This qualitative research was conducted on the health service management students at the Faculty of Management and Information in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in 2014. Data were collected via focused group discussions attended by 8-10 individuals per session. Data analysis was performed using content analysis.

Results: Challenges in internships 1-4 for bachelor's degree students were assessed in three areas, including the problems relating to instructors, internship courses, and cartable from the perspective of the students. In total, 8 main themes and 30 subthemes were extracted in each area.

Conclusion: According to the results, the internship curricula of health service management students should be completely modified to eliminate the weaknesses. These changes must include the correction of the course design and syllabi and essential revision of the cartable based on the latest information on health systems and labor market needs.

[*] ***Corresponding author:*** Neda Kabiri, ***Email:*** Kabirin@tbzmed.ac.ir

This article is referenced as follows: Jannati A, Dehgani Milag F, Narimani M, Gholizadeh M, Kabiri N. Evaluation of the Experiences of Health Service Management Students at the Faculty of Management and Information in Tabriz, Iran Regarding Field Internship: A Qualitative Research. J Med Educ Dev. 2018; 11 (29) :44-53

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]
[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

Introduction

Universities play a pivotal role in the scientific promotion of the community with respect to their goals to educate researchers, scholars, and students. In addition, medical universities have a great responsibility to train skilled human resources and specialists as required by the community (1). Learning practical and communication skills, along with theoretical contents, is one of the foremost features of medical education (2). Internship is an educational system based on a student-professor model, which has been applied since the emergence of industrial occupations (3).

In the educational curriculum of health service management, internship is essential to achieving the educational goals of the field (4). The main goal of internship courses in management fields is to familiarize students with various sectors of the health network, from local health departments to hospitals (5). Inadequate professional skills and low efficiency of students in providing healthcare services are mainly due to poor educational planning (6). As the receivers of educational services in internship courses, students are the most reliable sources for detecting the potential and actual educational problems of the course (7). Identification and elimination of the weaknesses in internship courses are essential to improving the efficacy of these courses. Therefore, the present study aimed to evaluate the viewpoints of health service management students toward the challenges in the internship courses at the Faculty of Management and Information of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Iran in 2014.

Materials and Methods

This descriptive qualitative research was conducted on the homogeneous subjects selected via purposive sampling from the students of field internship courses 1-4, who had the most enriched information on the course at the Faculty of Management and Information of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Iran in 2014.

Data were collected through focused group discussions. To this end, four focused group discussions were held in the presence of 8-10 individuals per session (total: 36 students). Each session continued for 2 hours, and the experiences of the students about their field internship and its challenges were collected through semi- structured interviews until data saturation or not receiving any new opinions or experiences.

Interview questions were provided based on

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

the opinions of experts in health service management field internship regarding the challenges in internship courses in three areas, including the problems relating to the instructors, internship field, and cartable. At the beginning of each discussion session, research objectives were explained to the participants, and informed consent was obtained to record their voice during the discussions.

Data analysis was performed manually using content analysis. At the end of each focused group discussion, the recordings were immediately transcribed word by word. Afterwards, the notes taken during the sessions were arranged, and the collected data were organized while being completed. This process continued until complete data saturation. Finally, the notes were coded and classified, and interview themes were extracted.

To ensure the consistency of the data, the participant review technique was used. After obtaining all the experiences of the students, the researcher expressed his understanding of the provided statements, which were considered as the experience criteria upon the approval of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Written informed consent as obtained from all the participants. Moreover, the objectives of the research were explained to the students prior to the study. It is notable that the participants were allowed to withdraw from the research at any given time.

Results

Challenges in the field internship courses 1-4 were determined in three areas, including the problems relating to the instructors, field internship, and cartable.

A) Problems Relating to Instructors

In this area, three main themes and 13 subthemes were obtained. The main themes were the problems relating to the instructors, problems associated with internship in the educational system, and executive barriers associated with educational planning. The main themes and subthemes of the field internship problems relating to instructors are presented in Table 1.

1. Problems relating to instructors, which consisted of 5 subthemes about the strengths and weaknesses of the instructors.

Inability of instructors to interact with the authorities of the internship field units: In the first group discussion, participant 7 stated: "*Some instructors have no communication skills. They must justify the personnel in the field that the students only want to learn and*

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

have no intention of intervening in the processes."

Lack of education planning based on the course design: In this regard, a participant stated:

"Instructors are very biased. They only emphasize on the parts of the cartable that attract their attention, turning those into the most important parts of the cartable."

Instructors as obstacles against communicating problems to the faculty: In this regard, one of the participants remarked:

"Honestly, some instructors will not let the problems in the field be communicated to the department."

Poor sense of responsibility toward students: A student commented:

"Some instructors in the internship course are not yet justified that their presence is for solving the problems of students and not taking care of their own duties."

Weakness of instructors in identifying the requirements of internship fields: In this regard, one of the participants stated:

"Some instructors lack the necessary ability to recognize the problems of the field and attempt to meet the requirements in this respect."

2. Problems of the educational system relating to internship, which consisted of 5 subthemes regarding the challenges in the education and evaluation systems of students and instructors.

Low payment of instructors: In this regard, one of the participants affirmed:

"Some new undergraduates and graduates become instructors to obtain certificates without receiving any payment, which leads to their inadequate performance."

Inconsistent guidelines for training: One of the participants asserted:

"There are no educational guidelines to be used by the instructors for the training of interns."

Lack of meritocratic screening in selecting the instructors: In the first group discussion, one of the students remarked:

"There are no specific criteria for selecting instructors based on their level of skills and knowledge."

Lack of indicators for student assessment: One of the attendees stated:

"Skills are not essentially considered in student assessment, which completely undermines the dynamics of the internship course."

Weakness of the educational system in field internships: In this regard, one of the students commented:

"Some instructors cheat on the educational

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

system by giving the exam questions to their students, so that no one would fail the course and the reputation of the instructors would be maintained."

3. Executive barriers against field internship planning, which consisted of 3 subthemes regarding the problems associated with the lack of proper internship course planning.

Lack of monitoring of instructors' activities: In the discussions on this subtheme, the participants pointed out the problems associated with the absence of the instructors in field internship. For instance, participant 6 affirmed:

"Our instructor only introduced us to the unit and left."

No permanent instructors recruited for internship courses: One of the participants asserted:

"If the field instructors are permanent, communication would be easier, and the knowledge of instructors would be updated as well."

Overlap of the internship schedule with the working hours of the field personnel: In this regard, one of the students declared:

"The internship course was held from 8 AM to 1 PM, which are the peak working hours of the personnel."

B) Problems Relating to the Location of the Field Internship Course

In this dimension, three main themes and 11 subthemes were extracted (Table 2).

1. Weakness in the management system of field internship, which consisted of 6 subthemes.

Not laying the groundwork for the management discipline in the health system fields: In this regard, one of the students commented:

"The presence of nursing students reduces the workload of the personnel in the field. While these individuals are considered as an opportunity by the staff, we are regarded as a threat, which is due to not recognizing the duties of the management students in the fields."

Lack of permanent locations for internship: In this regard, one of the participants noted:

"The location of fields constantly changes. For instance, the pediatrics hospital is one of the locations this year, while it will not be among the fields next year and will be replaced by another location."

Lack of educational mediators in the fields: In the third group discussion, participant 10 asserted:

"We would ask the staff of the field our questions, but they do not answer us, saying

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

that we should ask our seniors that have passed the course."

Lack of a feedback system for the personnel and fields: In the second group discussion, participant 9 stated:

"We would refer to the personnel of the ward regarding our issues with the course, but they tell us that they used to cooperate with the seniors of the course without any positive results."

Non-observance of the hierarchy of the learning contents in field internship: In this regard, one of the students signified:

"While learning the budgeting skills is an important element of the internship course, none of the students in internship 4 have mastered these skills."

Weakness of the department in signing contracts and memorandums of understanding: In the first group discussion, participant 8 mentioned:

"If the head of the faculty was able to express his expectations by signing contracts with the fields, we could increase their cooperation."

2. Limited facilities of the workplace in the fields, which consisted of 2 subthemes about the limitations of the students' workplace in the field.

Lack of welfare facilities: In this regard, one of the students remarked:

"There is no locker room for the management students, and students have to enter the ward with bags, coats, and scarves."

Lack of an educational space for the field interns: In this regard, one of the participants complained:

"Instructors teach students in the halls of the hospital."

3. Problems relating to the field personnel of internship, which consisted of 3 subthemes.

Inadequate skills of some staff in the fields: Students complained of the inadequate skills of the personnel. In this regard, one of the students stated:

"In internship 2, the staff had no knowledge of the differences between the processes of serving, supporting, and managing to teach us."

Lack of awareness of the personnel regarding their educational responsibilities: One of the participants stated:

"The personnel do not realize that this is a teaching hospital, and education is the foremost priority among their professional responsibilities."

Considering management students as administrative authorities: In the third group discussion, participant 4 asserted:

"Since management students deal with

administrative sections, the head nurses imagine that they come to the ward to monitor the nursing tasks."

C) Problemsrelatingtothecartable provided in the field internship, which consisted of 2 main themes and 6 subthemes (Table 3).

Table 1: Themes of Student's Perspectives about Clerkship Problems in the Field of Educators

Themes	Sub-themes
Problems related to educator	Inability of educators to communicate with unit officials in the field of clerkship
	Inability to plan training in accordance with the lesson plan
	The educator's obstruction in reflecting problems to faculty
	Lack of responsibility in front of students
	Weakness of educator in identifying needs of clerkship fields
Education problems of clerkship	Lack of rights of educators
	Lack of same guides for training
	Non-compliance with meritocracy in selecting educators
	Lack of indicators for evaluation
	Weakness of educating system
Execution obstacles related to clerkship planning	Lack of supervision on the activities of educators
	Do not use fixed educators
	Correspondence of clerkship times with personnel work time

Table 2: Themes Related to Problems about field of Clerkship .

Themes	Sub-themes
Weakness in management system of clerkship	Lack of placement of the health management in clerkship fields
	Variation in fields of clerkship
	Lack of link in the fields
	Lack of feedback system to field's personnel
	Failure to adhere to the hierarchy of learning in clerkship
	Weakness of department in concluding contracts
Lack of facilities in the fields	Lack of welfare facilities
	Lack of training space for trainees in fields
Problems related to field's personnel	Insufficient skill of some personnel in some fields
	Not justifying the personnel in relation to their educational tasks
	The wrong imagination about management syudents

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]
[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]
[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

Table 3: Themes related to problems about portfolio.

Themes	Sub-themes
Content of portfolio	Stationary type of portfolio content
	Simple and primary type of portfolio content
	Nonconformity type of portfolio content
	High volume of portfolio content
Evaluating by portfolio	Inattentiveness of some educators to portfolio content in evaluation
	Paying attention to portfolio quantity , not quality

1. Cartable contents

Inconsistency in cartable contents: In the third group discussion, participant 6 commented:

"The cartable lacks sufficient consistency. Students do not know where to start and how to pass the course."

Non-dynamic cartable contents: In the fourth group discussion, participant 7 stated:

"The cartable chapters are not designed based on the field requirements. We need to know what is required in the wards and learn the skills based on these needs."

Simplicity of the cartable contents: In the fourth group discussion, participant 6 said:

"We refer to the ward and enquire about the names of the processes from the head nurse, who does not value our position."

Large volume of the cartable: In the fourth group discussion, participant 8 affirmed:

"The large volume of the cartable forces students to create data due to time constraints. For instance, students are asked to collect 60 data in internship 2."

2. Evaluation by cartable

Lack of attention of some instructors to the cartable contents in evaluations: In this regard, one of the students pointed out:

"The cartable is not evaluated at the end of the semester. The instructor only looks at the cartable and grades the students."

Attention to the quantity of the cartable without considering the quality: In this regard, one of the participants stated:

"The aim of internship is to complete the cartable and nothing more. We only fill in the cartable to gain scores."

Discussion

In the viewpoint of the health service management students in the present study, one of the major challenges associated with

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

field internship is the barriers relating to the course instructors. In a study in this regard, Harvey et al. claimed that the inefficiency of clinical instructors, incompetence of internship executive managers, and theoretical gaps were the inhibitory factors in the field internship for nursing students, which is in line with our findings (8). Therefore, attention must be paid to the proper selection and education of internship instructors.

Insufficient payment of internship instructors was another barrier in internship courses from the perspective of the students, which is in congruence with the results obtained by Toulabi et al. In the mentioned study, insufficient payment was considered to be the main cause of lack of cooperation on behalf of experienced instructors (not faculty members), as well as the inefficiency of educational programs in the viewpoint of nursing undergraduates (9). Lack of attention to developing an appropriate motivational system for internship instructors in universities could be considered as an influential factor in this regard.

Another issue in the internship courses was the lack of monitoring of the instructors' activities. In this respect, Raman et al. reported that instructing, feedback, and supervision were not properly carried out in medical internship courses (10). Therefore, it is necessary to perform periodic monitoring and evaluations on the activities and presence of instructors, as well as the type of education and the associations with students.

Another problem in the internship field was the lack of laying the groundwork for the position of management field in the health system and unfamiliarity with the field. According to Tabrizi et al., inadequate knowledge of the healthcare personnel and authorities about health service management was one of the main challenges in the internship courses, which is consistent with the present study (11).

Another research by Tabrizi et al. indicated that the personnel of the internship fields had no knowledge of the management discipline and educational requirements of these students (12). In this respect, briefing sessions and training the staff on the field of health service management seem necessary.

Lack of welfare facilities and educational spaces for the field interns was another issue mentioned by the participants, which disrupted the education process. In this regard, Delaram has claimed that weaknesses in health and education systems in the provision of proper welfare facilities are

among the major challenges in the field internship of midwifery (6).

According to Bahrami et al., insufficient welfare facilities, lack of proper educational spaces for internship, no application of educational aids in clinical settings, and inadequate facilities in educational centers are among the main barriers in clinical settings (13). Moreover, Dehghani et al. considered the lack of proper educational facilities and opportunities for practicing skills to be another major issue in internship courses (14). According to Abedini et al., most clinical education problems in field internship were associated with welfare facilities, insufficient educational spaces, no application of educational aids, and inadequate facilities in educational centers (15). In a study by Cupburg, insufficient facilities and equipment was considered a major barrier to clinical education (16). The mentioned findings are consistent with the results of the present study.

In the current research, the participants complained about the lack of motivational mechanisms for the personnel, whose lack of knowledge about their educational responsibilities was another problem relating to the field personnel. In this regard, Javadi et al. reported the lack of cooperation and knowledge of the personnel as the challenges in internship courses (17). Therefore, it is recommended that briefing sessions be held for the personnel in the beginning of internship course to increase their motivation in this respect.

With regard to the cartable used for the education and evaluation in the internship course, the participants in the present study complained about the volume and dynamics of cartable, as well as the unfamiliarity of the instructors with the cartable; consequently, the cartable of health service management students required fundamental revisions. According to Vaghei et al., use of cartable increased the cooperation of students in the learning process and their satisfaction with the course owing to their independence in self-assessment (18). These results are inconsistent with our findings, which might be due to the evaluation of different educational fields.

Conclusion

According to the results, the curriculum of the internship course of health service management must be revised thoroughly. Modifications in this regard should include the changes in the course design and syllabus and revision and correction of the cartable

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]
[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]
[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

based on updated information on the health system, so that the students could be successful in the job market through using the acquired skills in the internship course. Furthermore, creating an encouragement system and rewarding the instructors and field personnel based on their performance is inevitable for the educating of motivated students. Therefore, it is also suggested that evidence-based evaluations be conducted to impartially assess the internship course.

Acknowledgements

This article was extracted from a bachelor's thesis in health service management. Hereby, we extend our gratitude to all the students for assisting us in this research project.

References

1- Mehdipour Y, Ebrahimi S, Bastani P. Comparative study of the goals of training programs related to the professional needs from the viewpoint of health information technology graduates. *J Health Biomed Inform*. 2016;3(1):29-37.

2- Khoshrang H, Salari A, Dadgaran I, Moaddab F, Rouh-Balasii L, Pourkazemi I. Quality of education provided at the clinical skills lab from medical students' viewpoints in Guilan University of Medical Sciences. *Res Med Educ*. 2016;8(2):77-83.

3- Sadeghi F, Sharifzadeh A, Movahed Mh, Moridsadat P. A study of strengths and weaknesses of internship course in agricultural faculty at Tehran University. *Iran Agricultural Extension and Education Journal.* 2008;4(1):108.

4- Zahiri M. Assessment of field training programs in graduates of health services management in Ahwaz Jondishapour University of Medical Sciences. *Iran J Med Educ.* 2011;11(2):183-90.

5- Javadi M, Raeisi A, Golkar M. Comparing views of educators and students in health services management in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences about clerkship course in 2006. *Dev steps Med Educ*. 2007;4(2):84-91.

6- Delaram M, Tootoonchi M. Comparing self and teacher assessment in obstetric clerkship course for midwifery students of Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences. *Iran J Med Educ.* 2010;9(3):231-8.

7- Rajabpour-Nikfam M. Experiences of nursing students and clinical teachers about clinical pharmacology course: a qualitative study. *Res Med Educ*. 2016;8(3):52-9.

8- Heravi M, Rejeh N ,Anoosheh M, Alhani F. Nursing students' comprehension of community health nursing training in field: a qualitative research. *Iran J Med Educ*. 2011;11(5):526-38.

9- Toulabi T, Alhani F. A comparative study of educational programs' objectives for professional needs from the viewpoints of nursing graduates in three periods of three years. *Yafteh.* 2010;12(2):53-66.

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]
[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]
[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]

10- Remmen R, Denekens J, Scherpbier A, Hermann I, Van Der Vleuten C, Royen PV, et al. An evaluation study of the didactic quality of clerkships .*Med Educ*. 2000;34(6):460-4.

11- Tabrizi JS, Azami-Aghdash S. Perspective of health service management master students about methods of holding clerkship and internship courses: a qualitative study. *Res Med Educ*. 2015;7(3):1-10.

12- Tabrizi JS, Mardani L, Kalantari H, Hamzehei Z. Clerkship from the perspective of students of health services management and family health in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences. *Iran J Med Educ*. 2011;10(4):439-51.

13- Bahrami T, Sadati L ,Golchini E, Mahmoudi E. The status of clinical education from the perspective of surgery students in Alborz University of Medical Sciences. *Journal of Alborz University of Medical Sciences*. 2012;1(3):143-50.

14- Dehghani H, Dehghani K, Fallahzadeh H. The educational problems of clinical field training based on nursing teachers and last year nursing students view points. *Iran J Med Educ.* 2005;5(1):24-33.

15- Abedini S, Aghamolaei T, Jomehzadeh A, Kamjoo A. Clinical education problems :the viewpoints of nursing and midwifery students in Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences. *Bimonthly Journal of Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences*. 2009;12(4):249-53.

16- Kapborg I. The nursing education programme in Lithuania: voices of student nurses. *J Adv Nurs*. 2000;32(4):857-63.

17- Javadi M, Shams A, Yaghoobi M. System-Integrated education: useful experience in health management clerkship. *Iran J Med Educ.* 2012;11(9):1104-11.

18- Vaghee S, Salarhaji A, Karimi Moonaghi H, Soadatjo S, Banezhad A. Effect of portfolio application on satisfaction and educational achievement of nursing students in psychiatry clerkship. *J Med Educ Dev*. 2016;9(23):112-21.

[Downloaded from edujournal.zums.ac.ir on 2026-11-25]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.22519521.1397.11.29.5.2]

[DOI: 10.29252/edcj.11.29.44]