What is the perception in Academia to graduate internships within the Creative Industries?

Cormac O'Kane

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Presented to:

Research Supervisor Dr Padraig Gallagher

School of Business

Letterkenny Institute of Technology

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Abstract

This study looks at the proliferation of unpaid graduate internships within the creative industries and asks if they are worthwhile or are graduates being taken advantage of? Do they perpetuate the cycle of privilege where only those graduates who can afford to work for free receive the benefits? Why are internships necessary? Are Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) failing the students in their readiness for work following graduation?

Ethical considerations regarding the use of unpaid labour have been dismissed by HEIs as a personal matter for the graduate while ignoring research that shows the inequality surrounding internships. There has been a recent backlash against unpaid internships, both in Ireland and abroad. JobBridge has received criticism for replacing paid positions with jobseekers earning an additional €50 per week while leading Art Colleges in London have banned advertising unpaid internships. Reports from the Untied States of America and United Kingdom highlight the disparity between future earnings of those who took unpaid internships versus those who had either undertaken paid internships or no internship with unpaid internships devaluing the currency of the graduates qualification.

Using semi-structured interviews with Academic Programme Leaders and Heads of Department at HEIs throughout the Republic of Ireland, the study concludes that there is a lack of academic leadership in HEIs in Ireland. There are no systems in place regarding advertising or vetting of job opportunities and internships. Unpaid work is seen as a means of getting that first step on the career ladder and most programmes offering work placements on creative programmes are located far from the areas where clusters of companies are based making placement opportunities only available to those financially well off.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

The importance of work-based learning and experience has been emphasised by employers, policy documents such as the Hunt Report (Department of Education and Skills 2011) and educational policymakers over the past number of years. An ever-increasing number of programmes include a work-based learning module. However, it appears that more and more creative arts graduates are required to undertake internships following graduation before securing paid employment within the creative industries.

The study will look at the proliferation of unpaid graduate internships within the creative industries, investigating if they are worthwhile or if recent graduates desparate need for a 'foot in the door' is being exploited. It will examine the literature around the need for internships. Do internships perpetuate the cycle of privilege where only those graduates who can afford to work for free receive the benefits? It will examine the rise in internships in Ireland and ask if Higher Education institutes are failing the students in the readiness to work following graduation. It will seek to examine if unpaid internships are a necessary evil for graduates in the Creative Industries or if there an ethical way to bridge the gap between Academia and the world of work.

Many Institutes of Technology and Employers dismiss ethical considerations regarding the use of unpaid labour leaving it up to the student or graduate to choose if they wish to work for free (Lyit 2014, Walker 2012). However, There has been a recent backlash against unpaid internships, both in Ireland and abroad. In Ireland, JobBridge has received criticism for replacing paid positions with jobseekers earning an additional €50 per week (McHugh, 2016) while in the UK a number of leading Art Colleges including the University of the Arts London and Goldsmiths College have banned advertising unpaid internships (Page 2014). In the Untied States of America, interns have attempted to sue employers such as Fox studios over unpaid work while surveys from both the UK and the USA highlighted the disparity between future earnings of those who took unpaid internships versus those who had either undertaken

paid internships or no internship with unpaid internships devaluing the currency of the graduates qualification (Weissmann 2013, InternAware 2015).

The study will also attempt to explore why it is the creative industries which seem to contain the bulk of the advertisements for unpaid internships. Accountancy and IT firms appear to offer paid internships yet there appears to be the belief that creatives will work purely for the exposure or the love of their craft. The rise of groups on social media such as 'Stop Working for Free', 'InternAware' and 'InternWatch' have led to a greater awareness of the spread of unpaid internships and immoral and illegal work practices amongst the creative industries.

1.3 Description of the Research

The aim of this research is to investigate current practice in the Instiute of Technology sector in Ireland regarding advertising of graduate and non module-embedded work placements and internships within the creative industries.

The study will investigate if Institutes have policies or procedures surrounding the area of unpaid internships and if there is concern that these unpaid internships are devaluing the currency of their degrees. The intended output of this research will be to inform best practice as to how internships and work placements are advertised to students and recent graduates.

The primary data collection strategy for this study involves a series of semi-structured interviews. The selection criteria for the interviews will be purposeful sampling selecting Heads of Art and Design Departments in Institutes of Technology based on geographical location with Institutes surveyed in both rural and urban locations.

I am interviewing Academic Heads of Department, as I believe the issue of graduate internships has an academic leadership element. I believe the Institutes and in particular those Heads of Department responsible for producing graduates for the creative industries have a moral obligation to ensure the new graduates are not taken advantage of. I will hope to discover if Academia have an awareness of the scale of unpaid work within the creative industries.

This study will examine the following areas:

- The Institute of Technology's position and policy surrounding placements and internships.
- The benefits and problems of internships.
- How the practice might be improved.

2. Literature Review

2.1 History of Internships

The Chambers Dictionary defines an intern as

> "**intern** */in-tûrn' /n* a resident assistant surgeon or physician in a hospital, hence, also a trainee gaining practical experience in any profession."
>
> (Chambers 2003)

Internships and unpaid work experience are increasingly being seen as necessary steps on the path to full-time employment. Figiel (2013) suggests they have seem to become essential in boosting the contemporary art-culture-service worker's chances of getting the relevant experience so valued by potential industry employers. However, while internships at galleries or other cultural institutions have become a necessary step for a career in the arts, Beverungun et al (2013) discuss how Figiel highlights the "vacuity of many of the promises of value-added for the CV that internships make." (Beverungen et al. 2013)

Up until the 1990s, the word was used primarily in the United States to refer to a medical practitioner training in a hospital. It has now come to mean anyone undertaking work, often unpaid in order to gain experience in a particular field or industry (Hope & Figiel 2012).

The idea of spending a period of time learning the ropes of a trade is nothing new. There have been apprentices since the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the creative industries - painting and sculpture, had a very clear and distinct apprenticeship system. An apprenticeship was generally seven years long, to allow time for the Master to recoup the investment and ensure the apprentice was properly skilled and not just exploited as cheap labour. The apprenticeship not only imparted the artistic skills but also the myriad of other skills needed to survive in business from dealing with clients to pricing and dealing with time pressure (Campbell 2012).

In the Middle Ages, the various Trade Guilds in a town ran the apprenticeships and could limit access to a particular trade. The English Apprenticeship system was established in 1563 with the Statute of Artificers, one of the first documents to attempt to set out the terms and conditions of apprenticeships (Commons Select Committee 2012).

While apprenticeships were the traditional entry point to many trades in Ireland for hundreds of years, The Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) submission to the Department of Education and Skills on the future of apprenticeship in Ireland notes that currently, apprenticeships are not desirable in Ireland and only the Education and Training Boards in Dublin, Cork and Dun Laoghaire currently offer apprenticeships (ETBI 2013).

McGuire (2016) notes that Tony Donohoe, Head of Education policy at IBEC believes "Irish people tend to define educational attainment in terms of CAO points scored and third-level entry. We have one of the highest third-level entries in the EU, but we tend to only value higher education, whereas for a lot of people – from all backgrounds – experiential education and vocational training is more appropriate." (McGuire 2016)

While young people may be choosing higher education rather than an apprenticeship, for many of them, a new unstructured apprenticeship, otherwise known as an internship is vast becoming their only route to employment.

2.2 What is an internship?

> "An intern is someone whose uncompensated efforts primarily provide that person with tutelage and experience that are transferable in serving other persons or entities and do not to a material degree give value to the source of the tutelage or the source of the opportunity for experience that is greater than is the value of the intern's enhanced learning."
>
> (Ogden & Kordecki 2013)

In Ireland there is no legal definition of an internship. An internship exists in a no-man's land between volunteering and employment, and also shouldn't be confused

with work experience. Work experience is usually a short placement where a student will observe a workplace or shadow an employee. They experience the workplace but generally do not do any crucial tasks. An internship is longer, often between one and three months and the intern usually has more responsibility. As Page (2013) notes, if the intern is doing real work that would otherwise be done by an employee then they should be paid in line with minimum wage legislation. An exception to this is if the student is doing the internship for a module credit. Volunteering is different to working. A volunteer helps out on their own terms and there is no obligation for them to turn up, do any work or maintain set hours. Volunteers help out for the cause, not for money or the enhancement of their CV.

In 1959 the High Court in Dublin ruled that arrangements resembling pupil-teacher relationships did not qualify as an employment. This was aimed at medical and legal trainees. The 1967 Industrial Training Act does not include apprentices as employees while workers on Fás schemes are also not considered employees (Boughton 2014).

In 2011 the JobBridge scheme was introduced under the Social Welfare and Pensions Act - 2011. This act specifically provided that an intern under the JobBridge scheme is "deemed not to be an employee" (Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011). Clearly the Oireachtas felt there needed to be a specific statutory exemption to what would otherwise be deemed an employment situation. This would appear to indicate that an intern is, by their very nature, an employee.

The purpose of exempting JobBridge participants or Fás workers is to ensure that while interns are protected under health and safety law, the extensive employment legislation; minimum wage, minimum notice of dismissal, limit on working hours, does not apply. JobBridge has come under severe scrutiny with reports than unpaid interns were teaching (Gartland 2015) and an audit questioning how many actual jobs were being displaced by free labour (Clarke 2016).

O'Rourke (2014) points out that it is the charity / non-profit / NGO sector that pioneered unpaid internships / working for free in Ireland and while some organisations could not do the good work they do without the vital work of

volunteers, she questions if it is right that highly educated young people have to be willing to work for nothing to get a foot in the door.

2.2.1 Can Interns be Employees?

Boughton (2014) believes that if a graduate is taken on as an unpaid intern for three months but given travel and lunch expenses, being expected to work a normal working week and carry out entry level work, then they should be considered an employee. He argues that if the employer can charge for the work produced by the intern or if the intern is carrying out the work of a regular employee then the terms of the internship are likely exploitative.

Boughton concludes that the employer should consider why they are taking on an intern. If it is an educative process to allow voluntary workplace experience then it should be short, clearly defined and not involve the person performing services of value. If the employer wants short-term low cost workers, then employ them on those terms and be mindful of the legal rights and employers responsibilities. In Ireland the only legal way to hire an intern who provides work of value without paying them very much is through the JobBridge scheme.

Hynes (2013) warns employers that interns in Ireland are employees with the same basic rights as other employees. She raises the Vetta v London Dreams Motion Pictures case in the UK where the Tribunal held the intern was a worker in regard to minimum wage legislation as they were given responsibilities and jobs similar to full-time employees. She cautions "Employers should be careful to ensure that the tasks carried out by their interns have an emphasis on training and learning and are not just a way to get low cost or no cost labour" (Hynes 2013). O'Rourke (2014) notes that someone doing a full-time unpaid internship is not eligible to claim income support or unemployment benefit as they must be actively seeking paid work.

2.2.2 The legalities of an internship

The difference between an intern and an employee is not defined in Irish legislation. Solicitor Zelda Cunningham (2014) notes that the definition of employee is set out in the Terms of Employee (Information) Act 1994. An employee is someone who has

entered into or works under the contract of employment. This definition is important as only employees, as opposed to contractors or agency workers are covered by employment protection legislation such as the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977-2007, the Payment of Wages Act 1991 and the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

> "Employers are obliged to ensure the safety, health and welfare of employees at work, apply fair procedures during disciplinary situations, allow employees the statutory minimum annual leave entitlement, and ensure employees do not work more than an average of 48 hours per week." (Cunningham 2014)

Goodbody (2011) notes that the Irish National Minimum Wage Act (2000) does not make any reference to interns. However they argue that while an intern may not be considered an employee, in any case coming before an employment tribunal, he would consider " that the Irish tribunals would be cognisant of the extent to which the internship was truly voluntary in nature or whether it was simply a ruse or an attempt to obtain free labour."

Unpaid Internships hit the headlines in 2013 when two former interns sued Fox Searchlight Productions following working on the movie The Black Swan (New 2015). A judge found that the tasks they were required to undertake; copying and scanning documents, tracking purchase orders, fetching items for the director were deemed not to meet the criteria of a legal unpaid internship. While the case is ongoing, some see that in future, the job spec of the internship will have to align more with the intern's academic career.

> "It is a stretch to say that his (Eric Glatt – lead plaintiff) duties, which primarily consisted of copying, scanning and filing documents, tracking purchase orders, and transporting paperwork and items to and from the *Black Swan* set, had anything to do with his educational course work."
>
> (New 2015)

2.2.3 The ethics of an internship

It is perhaps ironic that while Article 23 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declares that "everyone has the right to work… to just and favourable conditions… to equal pay for equal work… ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity" several of the UN (United Nations) secretariats offers unpaid internships (Rogers 2015). This resulted in 2015, in one intern David Hyde being forced to sleep in a tent, as he could not afford to live in Geneva, Switzerland, before resigning from the internship.

Hyde acknowledged he was not forced to do the internship. In a statement to reporters he acknowledged, "The UN was clear about their internship policy from the start… No wage or stipend, no transport help, no food allowance, no health assistance. I understood this, and in that regard I have to take responsibility for accepting the internship in the first place." (Rogers 2015)

Executive Secretary of the UN's Geneva Staff Council, Ian Richards acknowledged that the graduate internship programme "prevents the UN from attracting the top candidates, who choose paid internships from other groups to offset the high cost of living" (Rogers 2015). He concluded that this left some of the UN agencies with interns who are overwhelmingly from developed countries. In 2015 there were only two out of 162 interns from developing nations.

As Kendzior (2013) highlights, while the auctioning of a six-week unpaid internship at the United nations with a bid of $22,000 may have been an accident, the only thing distinguishing it from normal UN practice is that the class discrimination of unpaid internships is more blatant. The group UnPaid is Unfair petitioned the UN to stop using free labour in 2012. In their petition they argue, "internships have also become an easy way for organizations to access free labour. It is troubling that the United Nations, an organization that stands for equality and justice, is no exception." (UnPaid is Unfair 2012)

2.3 Cycle of Privilege

The 'cycle of privilege' is one of the main arguments against unpaid internships (Thompson 2012, Borwick 2016, Walker 2016). The reality is that only those graduates who can afford to work for free are able to take up these internships which are becoming a necessity to get ahead.

Siddique (2015) notes that 72 percent of privileged young British students have used family connections to get a work placement and those attending private schools were twice as likely to get an internship in London than students from state schools. Siddique also notes that the 2015 survey also found that "just under half of all young people from underprivileged backgrounds said they had not applied for placements away from home that they really wanted because their family could not afford the associated living and travel costs" (Siddique 2015).

Walker (2016) argues that there is a "need to break a cycle that allows privilege to go to the privileged through internships". He believes that the internship system is flawed when promising young people with limited financial means are being denied the chance to rise as high as their talent would take them if there were a level playing field.

He maintains that the result of this is that employers do not get the wealth of talent available and entire sectors "engineer long-term deficits of much needed talent and perspective". Internships can create a shallow pool of 'talent' consisting only of those who can afford it and is a form of class division and highly inefficient. Bright (2011) argues that ending unpaid internships is not just about social justice but about spreading the talent pool, "We have to ask ourselves if it is healthy for some of our most high-profile industries to be recruiting from such a shallow talent pool" (Bright 2011).

Borwick (2016) concedes that recent discussions around lack of diversity in arts organisations staff had concluded that access to work experience or internships was a significant factor. He states that, "While I had been subliminally aware of the fact some students had trouble finding internships for this reason, its full impact had not been in the foreground of my thinking until the last few years".

Kendizor maintains that unpaid internships result in millions of talented young people around the world being locked out based simply on class. Unpaid internships send out the message that "work is not labour to be compensated with a living wage, but an act of charity to the powerful, who reward the unpaid worker with 'exposure' and 'experience' "(Kendizor 2013).

Borwick argues that no one intended to create barriers to internships for students of limited financial means, "it was simply result of focusing on maximizing the number of opportunities"(Borwick 2016). Walker (2013) concludes that by paying interns, it eliminates the barriers preventing low-income graduates from pursuing those opportunities.

2.4 Education and Training

The notion that education should service the economy is being stressed more and more (Hancock 2014, Thornhill 2009) But Hope and Figiel question "How does education service employers when so many graduates, especially in the creative industries, are self-employed?" (Hope & Figiel 2015)

The OECD (2013) caution that, "Driving economic development is only one of the roles of higher education institutions and must be balanced with other priorities, including quality research and knowledge production". They argue that it is important to achieve a balance between the demands of the labour market and the relevance of the curriculum.

Borwick (2016) recounts how when student internships were initially set up where he worked in the 1980's, "my college even insisted that internships be unpaid on the theory that the school did not want to give college credit for jobs". He continued that the unpaid internship continues to be the default position. Yet for students who had to work during the summer to pay bills, those without access to other funds, these opportunities were outside their reach.

While students have campaigned for an end to unpaid work, Colleges and Universities have been slow to back them. This is now beginning to change. Several of the leading

Art colleges in the UK, including University of Arts London, Goldsmiths College, Kingston and University for the Creative Arts had decided not to advertise any unpaid work positions as they believe unpaid internships were exploiting students (Page 2014). However, as Page notes "However good the official line on unpaid internships is, if individual lecturers are still encouraging students to work for nothing, it can make it difficult for them to get out of the cycle of working for free." For colleges to help to end unpaid work, there needs to be a shift in mindset of educators as well as employers" (Page 2014)

Allen et al (2013) argue that Higher Education institutes need to be more focussed on the diversity of their student cohort and put in lace policies and procedures to ensure fairness surrounding work placements and internships. They note, "While students are strongly encouraged, if not expected, to undertake work placements, some students experience inequality of access to opportunities to undertake formally supported placements" (Allen et al 2013). They state that there are deeply embedded notion of the ideal student for placement is white, middle-class, male and non-disabled. They conclude that, "Locating a 'good' placement and getting the best from it depends on students' access to social, economic and cultural resources, such as access to industry networks, the money to undertake unpaid or lengthy placements, and knowing how to 'sell yourself' to employers" (Allen et al 2013).

2.5 The Creative Industries

While there are unpaid internships in many industries, they are particularly common in cultural and media work (Low Pay Commission 2011). According to the UK organisation Creative Skillset, the proportion of workers in the creative industries doing unpaid work grew from 38 to 45 per cent between 2005 and 2008 with almost half of all entrants having to spend some time in unpaid positions (Skillset/UK Film Council 2009). By 2014 this had risen to 48% of respondents (Creative Skillset 2014). 77 percent of workers in the creative industries who have undertaken work experience have not been paid for it.

Creative Skillset's Creative Industries Work Placement Guidelines recommend work experience placements should last between two and eight weeks with a maximum of 40 days with around 25 to 30 hours work per week (Creative Skillset 2014). The

average number of days work experience was higher than the recommended maximum at 43 days. This was a sharp rise from the average of 34 days just four years previously.

In sectors of the creative Industries such as Animation, Games and Visual Effects, over 85 percent of the workforce are graduates. The average across the creative industries is 78 percent, showing that third level education is a requirement before entering the industry.

Sibert and Wilson (2013) found that graduates in the creative industries expected to have to work for free before they could find permanent work. However this is not a guaranteed outcome and this causes problems within the company where the graduate is working for free such as undermining the position of existing workers, leading to replacement of existing workers on temporary contracts with unpaid interns. They found that there was an "erosion of trust between unpaid workers motivated by a desire to enter the industry, freelance workers already in the sector and the employers" (Sibert & Wilson, 2013). They argue that by focusing solely on the benefits of unpaid work experience for an individual the wider context of the practice is ignored, and the impact that this practice has on the sector can be detrimental.

Randle (2015) notes that as the prospect of a 'good job' or permanency declines within the creative industries with rising casualisation and freelancing, together with increasing student debt, it remains to be seen if the numbers coming out of universities will continue to grow or how the social composition of those who choose to study subjects within the creative industries changes.

2.6 The race to the bottom

Sibert and Wilson (2013) also question whether an individual should be allowed to work for free through their own free will, regardless of the impact on others. The argument goes that someone is always willing to do it for less and in an era where all businesses are looking to remain competitive and cut costs by paying people the minimum they are willing to work for, why would a business turn down someone willing to work for free? (Burger 2014). Burger argues that supply outstrips demand

in many of the creative industries, with more and more graduates desperate to get a foot in the door.

While online groups such as InternAware and Stop Working for Free attempt to raise awareness of the damage to the industry as a whole that working for free creates, there are daily postings of adverts seeking creatives to work for free for the thrill of getting their name in the credits or being associated with an organisation or event.

> "Every time you work for free for a company that could and should pay you, you set up a paradigm whereby you in turn become replaceable. The rolling exploitation of unpaid workers and perpetual interns is based on a false notion of deferred reward."
>
> (Stop Working for Free Manifesto 2016)

When Dick Powell, chairman of British Design charity D&AD, in a speech to graduates at the New Designers Exhibition in London in 2013, suggested that young people should offer to work for free, the response from those new design graduates was bitter and vocal (Dezeen Magazine 2013). Many pointing out the difficulty of working for free while paying for rent, clothing and food while others questioned how they can get the general public to respect the time and cost of creativity when their own profession tells them they should work for free. "Interns often rely on an extended support network of parents who provide subsistence, or friends who offer accommodation, so that free labour here means that organizations can feast on unpaid labour and the social wealth it draws on" (Beverungen et al. 2013).

As Burns (2016) notes, while internships are held up as the first step on the career ladder, they are just as frequently seen as a particularly humiliating form of labour exploitation.

In 2009, when challenged why he was advertising for an unpaid intern, British Conservative MP Philip Hammond responded "I would regard it as an abuse of taxpayer funding to pay for something that is available for nothing," (Bright 2011). Perhaps the most worrying aspect of this is the suggestion that paying people to do work is an abuse of public money.

2.7 A foot on the ladder

Internships are often justified by employers and educators as a means of getting your first job. However recent surveys from both Britain and the United States of America examining the correlation between internships and full employment produced surprising statistics. The 2014 YouGov survey (InternAware 2015) in the UK found that unpaid internships are less likely to lead to a job with only 36 percent of unpaid internships but 47 percent of paid internships leading to a job.

In the United States, NACE (the National Association of Colleges and Employers) asked graduating students for 3 years if they had received a job offer and if they did a paid or unpaid internship and found that unpaid internships do not give young people much of a leg up the ladder. In 2013, after surveying more than 9,000 students, they found 63 percent of graduates who did a paid internship had received at least one job offer but only 37 percent of former unpaid interns had a job offer. This was almost identical to those 36 percent of graduates who had not done an internship at all receiving a job offer. (Weissmann 2013). NACE's 2015 survey revealed that 72 percent of paid interns at private for profit companies received a job offer compared to only 43 percent of unpaid interns. (NACE 2016)

InternBridge also ran a survey of intern salaries in the United States and their 2012 results also found that graduates were twice as likely to receive a job offer following a paid internship as from an unpaid internship (Weissmann 2013). The spread of graduates was across several disciplines including Accounting, Engineering, Business, English and Psychology with similar percentages in each discipline. Intern Bridge also examined the distribution of interns by GPA and found it was not the cleverer students who were securing the paid internships. The fact that this disparity is spread across all disciplines refutes Burger's (2014) argument that unpaid internships are congregated in fields with more supply than demand.

What could well be a more depressing conclusion is that articulated by Stop Working For Free (2016), who argue that if a graduate sets their worth at nothing by being willing to work for free, then that is what other people and businesses will value your contribution and net worth as... worthless.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

There is very little literature surrounding internships within an Irish context. Most newspaper articles are opinion pieces, often critical of the JobBridge scheme. Surveys on internships and employability are either from the UK or USA. This does not mean that unpaid internships are not an Irish problem. An online search for unpaid internships on www.indeed.com in January 2016 found 47 unpaid internships. These included a six month full-time unpaid internship for a marketing graduate, an unpaid role lasting six to nine months for a Graphic Designer and a media and communications intern to work unpaid 35 hours per week for six to nine months.

I believe there is a role for academia to provide some leadership on this issue and to see the connection between practices within their Institutes and programmes and the issue of unpaid internships within the creative industries.

3.2 Aim of Research Questions

The aim of the research questions is to establish the current practice within Higher Education Institutes, the issues from Academic Management perspective regarding placements and internships how those practices could be improved.

My research questions are
• The Institute's position and policy surrounding placements and internships.
• The benefits and problems of internships from both the students and academics perspective.
• How the practice might be improved.

3.3 Research Strategy

Research strategy can be broadly broken down in Quantitative and Qualitative research. Quantitative research normally includes the collection of large amounts of generally numerical data. As Babbie (2010) notes, "Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon."

Qualitative research on the other hand focuses more on the quality and in-depth nature of the data, rather than the quantity. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue, "qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured". According to Shaw and Holland (2014) attempting to list the shared characteristics of qualitative research is difficult but agree that the list put forward by Miles and Huberman (1994) is comprehensive.

"• Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact with a ''field'' or life situation. These situations are typically ''banal'' or normal ones, reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations.

• The researcher's role is to gain a "holistic" (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study: its logic, its arrangements, its explicit and implicit rules.

• The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors ''from the inside,'' through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding (Verstehen), and of suspending or "bracketing'' preconceptions about the topics under discussion.

• Reading through these materials, the researchers may isolate certain themes and expressions that can be reviewed with informants, but that should be maintained in their original forms throughout the study.

• A main task is to explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations.

• Many interpretations of this material are possible, but some are more compelling for theoretical reasons or on grounds of internal consistency.

• Relatively little standardized instrumentation is used at the outset. The researcher is essentially the main "measurement device" in the study.

• Most analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, broken into semiotic segments. They can be organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare, analyze and bestow patterns upon them."

(Miles & Huberman 1994)

For the purposes of this research paper, a qualitative approach will be taken. The subject under investigation does not have large amounts of numerical data to analyse. To gain an understanding of the issues, practices and policies involved will involve having that holistic view that Miles and Huberman identify. As Tewksbary (2009) concludes, "Qualitative investigations is more informative, richer and offers enhanced understanding, compared to what which can be obtained via quantitative research".

3.4 Rationale for case study research

According to Gratton and Jones (2009) there are four main research methods; exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and predictive.

- Exploratory research takes place where there is little or no prior knowledge of a phenomenon and attempts to gain some familiarity with concepts.
- Descriptive research describes a particular phenomenon, focusing on what is happening, or has happened, rather than why it is happening.
- Explanatory research is involved in explaining why something happens, and assessing causal relationships between the variables.
- Predictive research is involved in forecasting future phenomena, based on the interpretations suggested by explanatory research.

I will be taking an exploratory method since the area of unpaid internships is broad and there is currently very little research on internships and the creative industries in Ireland. I will be guided by the case study form of qualitative research.

Yin (2009) suggests that while the case study is one of several ways of doing social science research, others include surveys, experiments, histories and archival analyses, they are the preferred method when either the main research questions are 'how' or 'why' questions, the researcher has no control over behavioural events or when the focus of study is a contemporary phenomenon.

Creswell (2003) defines a case study as "researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals".

3.4.1. Case selection

In an effort to find out the current situation around the country, I intend to interview a number of academic leaders in a range of academic institutions, both urban and rural. Purposeful sampling is necessary as I am targeting a discrete group of Heads of Department of Art and Design departments in Institutes of Technologies across Ireland.

The proposed sample size was five. There are 12 Institute of Technologies and five would give me a large enough spread. In the end I was only able to interview four respondants. The sample will be distributed between Institutes in large urban centres and rural areas. Given the timescale of the Project with ethical approval only given in March and the final submission due in August, four was a realistic number of interviews to schedule and complete. Guest et al. (2006) took an empirical approach using a set of 60 interviews and concluded that saturation occurred within 12 interviews, with broader themes apparent after merely six, numbers much lower than some of the suggested estimates of numbers needed that they reviewed. Recent guidelines for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) categorise suggestions by the type of data collection and the size of the project. For small projects, six to ten participants are recommended for interviews, while in IPA studies, using purposeful sampling, between three and six is recognised as enough. (Reid et al. (2005)

As I want a snapshot of the situation around the country, I approached Heads of Department or Programme leaders at a variety of Institutes across the country from the North-West through the Midlands and down to the South of the country while Institutes in the large urban areas were also approached.

Institute A is in the North West of Ireland. Participant A is Head of Department in a Design department with approximately 220 students undertaking a number of programmes in the area of the creative industries.
Institute B is located in a rural area in the midlands. Participant B is a Head of Department which includes programmes in a number of the Creative Industries. There are approximately 250 design students within the department, which also includes programmes not related to the Creative Industries.

Institute C is in the Dublin area. Participant C is a Course Leader in a creative programme within a department containing 250 students.

Institute D is in a large urban area in the south of the country. Participant D is a Course Leader in a creative programme within an art and design department with approximately 200 students.

3.5 Data collection & Recording

There are a number of different ways of collecting data depending on the type of research; questionnaires, observations, surveys, focus groups and interviews. For the purpose of this study interviews were chosen. As Gill et al (2008) note "Interviews are, therefore, most appropriate where little is already known about the study phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from individual participants."

Interviews can range from formal structured interviews with set questions to informal unstructured interviews with no set agenda. According to Gill et al (2008), interviews can be broken down into three types:

- Structured – a series of set questions that the interviewer does not deviate from with little interaction between interviewer and subject. In essence a verbally delivered questionnaire.

- Semi-structured – the interviewer has a list of questions which the interviewer can deviate from as needed; omitting some questions or asking new ones as necessary.

- Unstructured – often referred to as in depth interviews. The subject is allowed to talk freely with the issue or topic for discussion not tightly defined.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews for this study. This seems the most appropriate format. The list of questions will give me a road map for the interview to follow but allow for additional questions to be asked or new avenues to follow should the interview lead in a particular way. As Robson (2002) notes,

> "The semi-structured interview has predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanation given;

particular questions which seem inappropriate with a particular interviewee can be omitted, or additional ones included."

<div align="right">(Robson 2002)</div>

As Gill et al (2008) suggests, the subjects were informed about the study in advance and given assurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity. They were provided with an information page outlining the research and a consent form. (Appendix 8.1)

A pilot test was carried out to check if the questions I had devised for the semi-structured interview were appropriate and would get all the information I needed. As Cohen and Crabtree (2006) note, "questions are developed, tested, and then refined based on what one learns from asking people these questions."

The pilot test resulted in the tenor of some of the questions changing. I found I needed to be more specific regarding the creative industries as during the pilot interview, some of the discussion was more general, discussing areas such as social work and nursing rather than specifically about the creative industries. The list of indicative questions is attached as Appendix 8.2.

The interviews were carried out as telephone interviews or via skype. The reason for this was logistical. While working full-time, I did not have the time to traverse the country to carry out the interviews in person. It also allowed for more flexibility as some of the interviews were carried out at a time outside the normal working day.

The interviews were taped using a digital voice recorder and transcribed afterwards. The transcript of one interview is attached in Appendix 8.3. As Gill et al (2008) note, "All interviews should be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim afterwards, as this protects against bias and provides a permanent record of what was and was not said."

3.6 Data Analysis

After gathering the data, the transcripts were analysed to identify the basis on which conclusions are reached. The interview questions were structured around three key themes:

- What is the Institute's current practice regarding internships?

- What are the benefits and problems of an internship, for the student and from an academic perspective?
- What can be done to improve the practice?

The findings are grouped around these themes with the contributions from each participant grouped together around each theme rather than outlining what participant one said followed by participant two's answers and then participant three's views being recorded.

As Miles (1979) observes, qualitative data has problems and weaknesses. Collecting and analysing the data is labour intensive but for Miles, the main problem is that the methods of analysis are not well formulated. He cautions, "the analyst faced with a bank of qualitative data has very few guidelines for protection against self-delusion, let alone the presentation of 'unreliable' or 'invalid' conclusions to scientific or policy-making audiences". (Miles, 1979)

3.7 Limitations

There are limitations to the phone interview; the person is unseen so it is harder to read the subject and adjust the line of questioning as easily. In one interview there was breakup on the phone on some occasions during the interview. This slowed the process down and disrupted the flow of conversation. It also made transcribing the interview afterwards more difficult.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using interviews as a research tool. While you have the opportunity to probe further and deeper in an interview, this can result in a longer interview with more to transcribe and analyse. Interviews take a long time to set up and undertake. I may have got more data from sending out a questionnaire to a larger population. However, the non-completion rate of online surveys and questionnaires could be much greater than undertaking a smaller number of targeted interviews. As Lowe and Zemliansky (2011) note, interviews allow for follow up questions and non-verbal communication to be used. Also, interviewees will say much more in an interview than written down on an email or online survey.

This is a small exploratory case study so generalisations are being made based on a small sample. With more time, more Institutes could have been surveyed and other parts of third-level academia could also be surveyed. For instance the role of the Careers Office has not been examined properly in this study. It is apparent from the responses of a number of academic managers that job opportunities and internships are something they tend not to deal with or is even on their radar, passing all requests over to the careers office as a matter of course in two institutions. I did follow up with the Careers Office in one Institute which gave me a fuller picture of how internships are advertised.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews were broken down into three areas:

- The Institute's position and policy surrounding placements and internships.
- The benefits and problems of internships from both the students and academics perspective.
- How the practice might be improved.

4.2 Policy and Procedure surrounding placements / internships

When asked if there was an Institute policy regarding how job opportunities were advertised to recent graduates, there was no clear uniform position. In Institutes A and B, the Careers office was the primary avenue for distribution.

> "The careers office advertises any positions on their website and the students Union also has their facebook page."
>
> Respondent B, Institute B

> "I'm not too sure if there is an official policy I suspect anything that arrives at the Careers office is advertised."
>
> Respondent A

I followed up with the Careers Office in Institute A directly and was told

> "any fulltime/part-time/ or graduate internship vacancies notified to us by employers in writing are posted on our Careers Facebook page, which is viewed by all students."
>
> Careers Officer, Institute A

Respondent A stated that anything that comes into the Department directly is forwarded to all alumni, put on Facebook and forwarded to the Careers office. They acknowledged that there is not a formal alumni network in Institute A and this makes distribution harder.

At Institutes C and D, the various programme leaders will email the student body or put the advert on Facebook. Facebook is the primary vehicle for distribution of job opportunities throughout the Institutes of Technology. (figure 4.1)

> "if someone in admin gets a telephone call and they say 'yeah send me an email', they will distribute that to the student body or programme."
>
> Respondent C

> "Anything we get in is put up on our Facebook page and emailed around to everyone."
>
> Respondent D

Respondent C stated that each programme within their Department had it's own unofficial policy. Within the programme they are most involved with, the policy was not to engage with companies looking for students to work for free. Respondent C also stated that there was no Institute policy and each programme makes up it's own rules. They felt this was a sector wide problem.

> "Because there is no formal structure of the IoTs talking to each other, between programmes in IoTs or departments in IoTs or IoTs in general, it points to a larger problem within the sector."
>
> Respondent C

At Institutes A, B and D, the official line is that it is the student's decision to choose to do an unpaid internship whereas at Institute C, unpaid internships are frowned upon in some programmes but other programmes do advertise unpaid internships.

> "It is up to the student to decide if they want to undertake an unpaid internship or not."
>
> Respondent A

> "I don't see any difference between a paid or unpaid internship. It's a foot on the ladder"

> "In [our programme] we have a policy and we would be reasonably tight about it but there is no formulated [Insitute] policy. We wouldn't contemplate advertising unpaid internships but I know other programmes do."
>
> <div align="right">Respondent C</div>

> "Our main concern is getting the student's foot on the ladder. It's tough for our graduates to get a job. Most jobs are still got by word of mouth."
>
> <div align="right">Respondent D</div>

At Institute A, the Careers office will question a company as to why it is an unpaid internship rather than a job with the result that they usually offer to pay a stipend.

> "I would query why it is not being advertised as a fulltime job opportunity and on such rare occasions, employers usually agree to offer a stipend."
>
> <div align="right">Careers office, Institute A</div>

All the respondents felt there had to be free will on the part of the student in choosing whether or not to do an unpaid internship. However, only Respondent C discusses the issues surrounding unpaid work experience with the students as a matter of course and explains the reasons why they as a course do not condone unpaid internships.

> "Well it is absolutely up to the student but we are not going to promote something we don't believe in… And we also talk to our students about it."
>
> <div align="right">Respondent C</div>

Overall, No institute has any guidelines regarding how job opportunities or placements are advertised or whether a decision is made to advertise unpaid internships or not. When I looked at the careers sections of the Institutes of Technology found that while the Institutes have a dedicated careers section to their website but not all advertise vacancies there (Figure 4.1). Facebook posts are the primary means of conveying information for some institutes. It is perhaps ironic that

one Institute has blocked Facebook from computers within the Design department when this is the primary avenue for distribution of job opportunities.

Institute of Technology	Careers office website listing	Facebook	Twitter
Athlone IT	✓		
Blanchardstown IT		✓	
Carlow IT	✓		
Cork IT	✓	✓	✓
Dundalk IT	✓	✓	✓
IADT		✓	
IT Tallaght		✓	
Letterkenny IT		✓	
Limerick IT	✓	✓	✓
Sligo IT	*		
Tralee IT	✓	✓	
Waterford IT	✓	✓	

* Students sign up to online portal to access vacancies

Figure 4.1: Distribution of job opportunities by Careers office at Institutes of Technology August 2016

4.3 Benefits and Problems of Internships

Respondents A, B, C and D all felt internships were not the same as job opportunities. An internship, in their eyes is a short period of work experience.

> "No I don't think they are the same. An internship is s short period of training or work experience."
>
> Respondent A

"An internship should be a leg-up the employment ladder. They shouldn't be doing internship after internship before getting a job."

<div align="right">Respondent B</div>

"An internship is there for a young person to garner experience. they are vulnerable to take an opportunity where they will end up working for nothing. And this is the problem… I mean nothing. Not even bus fare or lunch money in many cases. And that's not what an internship is. It's a quid pro quo situation. You are gaining experience by being onsite with the company and that's great but you are giving them your time which is more valuable to them and yet there is no return.. like zero and that is a huge problem "

<div align="right">Respondent C</div>

"I think an internship is seen as work experience. It is a vehicle to get your foot in the door of a company and a chance to show what you can do, with the hope of being kept on afterwards in a paid position."

<div align="right">Respondent D</div>

At Institutes A and B, the respondents felt the size of the company was also a factor. While Respondent A felt getting the chance to work on a large-scale production such as 'Game of Thrones' for instance could be worth the expense to the student or graduate of working for free but working in a small company doing entry-level work wouldn't be. However Respondent B felt that if a company were recruiting a number of interns it would seem to indicate they are staffing positions with interns rather than paid employees. Respondent D felt that the Creative Industries were not taking the internships seriously. They felt the industry in Ireland was not set up yet to deal with the number of students looking for internships.

"If an unpaid internship arose to part-take in a substantial project such as Game of Thrones, I believe this would benefit a journey-man producer / designer for a couple of months. However, I do not believe that this can be compared with a two-person design studio engaged in repetitive daily tasks."

<div align="right">Respondent A</div>

"If a company is only taking on one intern then you think there might be a chance of a job at the end of it. But if a company is taking on nine or ten interns then you know there isn't a hope of a job at the end. That's abuse."

<div align="right">Respondent B</div>

"We met with most of the major companies in designing the degree year and they were all for internships, but when it came down to it, they weren't interested."

<div align="right">Respondent D</div>

The general consensus was the rise in unpaid internships was a consequence of the economic downturn rather than the graduate's skillset. All the Institutes have industry links and ongoing engagement with Industry partners when designing or revalidating programmes within the creative industries. There was a belief expressed that companies will look to cut costs wherever they can and if someone is willing to work for free then certain companies are going to exploit that.

"A certain level of 'on the job' training will be required. This is not reflective of the graduates' academic achievement but rather on the unique approach to creative team activities in a particular company."

<div align="right">Respondent A</div>

"Graduates should be entering the workforce at entry level positions at a minimum, and should be getting paid entry level wages. They shouldn't have to work for free to demonstrate their skillset."

<div align="right">Respondent B</div>

"In Ireland its not something that is very well organised or regulated. It's being used as a tool for free labour and it's coming in more and more over the past 5 years."

<div align="right">Respondent C</div>

"Working for free for a few months is about getting noticed. Hoping that you will be kept on afterwards. Of the few graduates we have had doing internships, they haven't been kept on afterwards."

<div align="right">Respondent D</div>

There seemed to be little if any concern amongst academics regarding research from both the USA and UK indicating that those students who undertook unpaid internships were less likely to get jobs than those who had paid work experience. Some questioned the validity of the research while others felt it depended on the individual graduates.

"I expect it's up to the individual graduate. If an unpaid internship arose to part-take in a substantial project such as Game of Thrones, I believe this would benefit a "journey-man" producer / designer for a couple of months. However, I do not believe that this can be compared with a two-person design studio engaged in repetitive daily tasks"

<div align="right">Respondent A</div>

"I find it hard to believe that that is the case. I can see there may be a risk in starting to work for free but other factors must come in to play too. There are so many contributing factors to what makes someone fly or not."

<div align="right">Respondent B</div>

"The issue is more that most jobs are short term. You spend six months at one studio then three months at another. You move from job to job often getting recruited through word of mouth so any experience will help."

<div align="right">Respondent C</div>

"The problem is that most jobs are not advertised. It's word of mouth and if you don't have the studio experience it can be hard to get noticed. Even an unpaid internship can be that foot in the door."

<div align="right">Respondent D</div>

4.4 How might the practice be improved?

All the Institutes have industry engagement embedded into their practice around course development and revalidation. However work placements are not always a distinct accredited module. There are numerous problems with trying to find placements for 20 or 30 students in a specialised area of the creative industries at the same time.

"I think we're moving in the right direction – building relationships with companies / organisations through which students may gain work experience – and potentially employment on graduating. However, we don't want to be seen to be training students for a particular company – it is best to have projects being issued from a variety of companies."

Respondent A

"The new [programme] recently validated was the first to have proper industry consultation looking at graduate attributes and what our graduates needed to be able to do."

Respondent B

"Ok, that's the inevitable question. The Achilles heel for everyone. We do not have a work placement module or a particular time in a 4 year programme where this is your time where you are out for six months or whatever but what we do do is… if a student comes in with a really valuable opportunity that they really want to take we will validate the students experience and can offset the time that they don't spend with us."

Respondent C

"Industry experience is the key. With the new degree, we have included the option of a work placement but no one has been able to take up this option yet."

Respondent D

As mentioned, the respondents felt the rise in unpaid internships was linked to the economy and recession rather than just because there are more graduates in the

creative industries. Students' demands and expectations have changed. Students now see the degree as a path to getting a job. Some felt that the industry needed to be more involved and better educated about the rules and legalities of internships.

"Perhaps we need to ensure that our graduates take risks... and set their own career paths - rather than rely on being employed by others. It is a worrying trend that students enter a programme with a view to securing 'a job'."

Respondent A

"Yes there is an over supply in some areas… it's supply and demand… employers cherry pick... It's not good practice but is going to happen."

Respondent B

"It is more a case of trying to get a foot on the ladder under any circumstances. I see it as a misused tool by young companies who really don't have a HR policy or anything like that but see what other companies are doing and try to do it themselves. No I think it is a misdirected tool by the companies rather than students trying to get their foot on the ladder due to overpopulation of graduates."

Respondent C

"I don't think there are too many graduates in some industries... When you listen to Animation producers, they say there are jobs for anyone who is in any way half decent but for other fields such as film and television or graphic design, there are more and more graduates being produced every year."

Respondent D

One issue highlighted by Respondent D was that the industries are not spread evenly around the country. There are animation programmes in places like Donegal and Kerry when there is no local industry to support it. This puts pressure on the courses who are unable to provide that work placement experience without their students relocating to Dublin.

Offering proper work placements is a difficulty for all the programmes. For those programmes in a rural area, location is a difficulty with the Institute being located far away from suitable employers. Fulfilling placements at the same time for a whole cohort of students is also a problem for Dublin based Institutes. The Academic's view is that the industry is not aligned with education. A company may not be able to take the students at the time the Institute has scheduled the placements. One institute allows the student to take up a work placement at any point during the programme if they see it as more beneficial to the student than the modules currently running.

> "We cant offer a dedicated work experience module at a dedicated time as frankly it is unworkable., it just cant happen. The integration between industry and education is not at that point."
>
> Respondent C

> "It would be our intention but as we know from experience, not all students can travel to avail of best opportunities"
>
> Respondent A

> "We felt a six month work placement was appropriate for the new programme but there will be logistical challenges in placing 20 students at the same time around the country."
>
> Respondent B

> "We don't have a work placement programme or a specific time in the programme when they go out but we would validate their experience at any time during the four years if they come to us with a proposal."
>
> Respondent C

> "The ideal scenario would be to be in and out of the studio, like in pharmaceutical science or something where you are doing placements throughout the programme."
>
> Respondent D

"It's a larger problem in terms of connectivity between institutes and industry. To run placements is a dedicated role. You can't just say to 30 students, "You are off between January and May, go and find a placement." Most of them don't land a placement and then what do you do? It needs supported by the institutes and it's not."

<div align="right">Respondent C</div>

When asked if there was pressure on the programmes to become more industry focused, the consensus seems to be that it is desirable for the programmes to have strong industry links. For students in programmes linked to the creative industries, they want the industry connections and knowledge of industry techniques and practices. There is an expectation amongst students that doing the degree will help them get a start in the industry.

"I think this focus has arisen from students and parents expectations… I would personally view a general design degree to be a more sustainable option but the majority of our intake currently want to be skilled in a specific area"

<div align="right">Respondent A</div>

"The pressure is coming from the students. They want to get a job at the end of the degree and will expect the institute to assist them in that, be it through work placement or industry contacts."

<div align="right">Respondent B</div>

"I think all the programmes have an industry focus. I don't think there are any programmes out there whose sole purpose is training in software or pipeline for one or two companies. You need to keep an eye on the industry. The companies would tell you they are not industry focussed enough."

<div align="right">Respondent C</div>

"To be honest, the kind of production line animator the studios look for... it isn't a graduate, it should be an apprenticeship programme. They don't want thinkers, they just want someone to animate."

<div align="right">Respondent D</div>

The Job Bridge programme was brought up by a number of respondents with different views. While some argued it was little more than exploitation, one felt that the fact it was Government run gave it a validation. Job Bridge has serious flaws, as highlighted by the recent audit by the Department of Work and Pensions (McHugh, 2016). McHugh also quotes SIPTU leader Jack O'Connor who stated, "The sad truth is that there is an unscrupulous element among employers that will exploit any opportunity to turn a quick buck" (McHugh 2016). These sentiments were echoed by some of the respondents.

> "An unpaid internship is fine as long as it is centrally governed and overseen, like the Job Bridge scheme was."
>
> Respondent B

> "You have the JobBridge programme that was run recently where companies.. which is a pervasive problem throughout lots of industries which was used to take professionals on and keep them on rubbish money and keep them there for 18 months.."
>
> Respondent C

> "Job Bridge did a lot of damage. You could see people were being exploited. Studios were looking for people with years of industry experience and then didn't even need to pay them."
>
> Respondent D

Overall, the Institutes primary concern is getting their graduates started in their chosen careers. There is no joined up thinking or discussion between Institutes that could lead to similar courses of action to those taken by the leading art colleges in the UK surrounding unpaid internships. The ethics of unpaid work do not seem to be at the forefront of concerns at most Institutes. Their primary concern appears to be in helping the students get a foot on the ladder and gain some industry experience, whatever the cost. A sentiment expressed by Borwick (2016).

5. Discussion

Following the interviews I am left with the impression that Academia had not caught up with what is happening outside their Institutes. The whole ethical dimension to working for free is not on their radar. This would echo the views of Borwick (2016) who didn't think about the financial aspect of unpaid internships but only about maximising student numbers or getting that 'foot on the ladder,' a phrase that was heard from a number of the interviewed Academics.

It is currently difficult in Ireland to envisage getting to a stage similar to in the UK where the ethics of unpaid work are discussed with industry and there is a refusal to advertise these unpaid internships.

Among the recommendations put forward by Allen et al (2013) when looking at work placements in the arts and cultural sector, the key one was "For HEIs (Higher Education Institutes) to develop more inclusive and effective work placement practices and policies, there is a need for collaborative working and reviewing of procedures" (Allen et al 2013). The lack of collaboration makes developing best practice policies all the more difficult.

Allen et al also note, "Great value is placed on self-directed placements, accompanied by an expectation on students to be self-motivated and driven in both finding placements and making the most of them. Not all students can take up such an approach" (Allen et al 2013). Not one of the Institutes interviewed assists the students by finding the placements for them. At Institute A, the student is told to make contact with potential employers to see if there are any work placements available while at Institute C which doesn't have a work placement module, they will validate any work placement the students find themselves.

The general consensus from Academia appears to be that it is worth working for free to get a foot on the ladder. The financial considerations had not been considered by the academics. To them, the foot on the ladder was the goal. The reputational damage to their programmes should their graduates all end up working for free was also not considered. Work placements have been introduced in a number of programmes in

Institutes that do not have a large number of companies within the creative industries in the surrounding region. This leaves students at a serious disadvantage when looking for a placement. If it is a short placement of one or two months, they would have to keep on their rented accommodation in the vicinity of their home institute while either staying with relatives or friends or paying a second rent in the area where the placement is located.

The Institutes of Technology appear to underestimate the dangers of exploitation of their students and recent graduates. It appears that the tendency is that it is up to the student to choose whether to work for free or not without taking cognisance of the myriad factors at play in the students' lives. Only one of the Institutes surveyed spoke to the students directly about the implications of working for free and why they didn't condone unpaid work. For the rest, it is a case of caveat emptor. As Allen et al (2013) notes, Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) should "increase students' awareness of their legal rights and acceptable practices regarding pay, hours and fair treatment in the workplace, HEIs should include this information in seminars and tutorials. Simply posting information on careers websites and in placement packs is not sufficient to prepare students."

The advertising of job opportunities varies greatly from Institute to Institute. For some, utilising social media such as Facebook is seem as more beneficial than advertising on the official Institute website. While it could be argued that students will spend more time on Facebook than the Institute website, the lack of a static job opportunities page on a number of Institute of Technology websites is worrying.

In an age of austerity with cuts to higher education funding, rising college fees and the rate of unemployment among young people currently at around 8.4 percent (Taylor 2016) though this must also include the statistic that 30,000 young people are leaving Ireland every year (McAleer 2016), there is a drive from the students to get the links with industry, to get the work experience, to make themselves job ready.

President Higgins questioned if this the role of Higher Education when he argued that universities are under increasing pressure to produce graduates solely for the labour

market (O'Brien 2016). He argued that this leads Higher Education down a precarious road at the expense of critical thinking and creativity.

One of the respondents stated that they felt the creative industries didn't want thinkers and creatives coming out of art school but wanted button pushers and highly skilled professionals in one small industry-ready area. They believed that the apprenticeship scheme could operate alongside Higher Education. Another respondent felt that a level 6 graduate was more at a technical level while a level 8 graduate was a creative thinker. It is outside the realms of this study to look at whether the drive for degree programmes throughout the art and design sector in third level education has blurred the boundaries between what the art and design programmes are producing and what the industries need.

This study is too small and focussed to get a proper picture of the disparate elements involved. With more time, the Careers office in each Institute should also have been interviewed. Also missing is the Industry point of view. Of-the-record anecdotes included companies flouting employment laws and having a business plan that revolved around cheap or free student and graduate labour. The student's voice is also missing from this study. This study has approached the issue of unpaid internships from a negative viewpoint, arguing that they are intrinsically bad. This comes from my own bias but while there is plenty of anecdotal evidence from groups such as InternAware and Stop Working for Free about the problems surrounding unpaid work, there is no primary research in this study from those students who have undertaken internships, be that paid or unpaid.

I believe this study has reinforced the beliefs I had when I began this area of study. There is nothing in the literature that argues why we should have unpaid internships effectively. From a legal or ethical viewpoint they are wrong. They perpetuate the cycle of privilege and yet Higher Education Institutes see it a personal choice for vulnerable young adults to take.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The impression I am left with is that internships are not something the Higher Education Institutes consider and there is a lack of academic leadership around the whole issue of unpaid work for students and graduates.

A work placement on a programme is proudly displayed and highlighted in the prospectus of one Institute, Industry links to programmes are valued above all else and Institutes appear to bend over backwards for Industry contacts, designing bespoke programmes for companies to train their workforce.

I do not believe that the Institutes consider the well-being of their graduates and do not see the detrimental effects of having to work for a substantial period of time for free, without access to benefits following three or four years of Higher Education. While the current Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom, Philip Hammond, believes that paying people to work is an abuse of public funds, it appears that the Institutes of Technology follow a similar ethos. It is against the rules at a number of Institutes of Technology to pay visiting lecturers to come and speak to the students.

Senior Management in publicly funded education establishments believe that if a professional gives up a substantial part of their day to come and educate, elucidate or entertain a body of students for an hour or two, they should do so without payment. At one Institute, they may be given a gift from a selection of items such as a pen, notebook or painting.

The expectation that a new graduate would work for free on a project is spreading. Musicians, journalists, photographers, film extras, actors are all being asked to work 'for the exposure'. Advertisements appear online daily looking for someone who has invested years of their life perfecting their craft to work for free with the promise of potentially more work on the back of this unpaid job.

It is a spiralling race to the bottom as there is always someone who will work for less. With unpaid internships, that has flipped so far that now, they are paying to work to

gain the experience in the hope that some day they will get a job that will actually pay them.

It appears that while the Higher Education Institutes are not complicit in this, they do not see it as anything to do with them as long as the next batch of students are rolling in through the doors of Admissions.

It would be my recommendation that The Institutes of Technology and in particular those departments preparing graduates to work in the creative industries to be more vocal in their opposition to unpaid internships. If Academia took on a leadership role in educating their students in the reasons why they should not work for free and gave the legal, financial and ethical reasons why they should refuse to work for free. Their graduates would be more equipped to negotiate a fair wage for their craft.

If Academia took on more of a leadership role in educating the creative industries of the harm that unpaid internships does, both to the interns an the reputation to the industry, not to mention the legal issues of not paying workers, then the industry's mindset could be shifted too.

If Academia fails to take on more of a leadership role in this area, there is the risk that applications for the courses in those areas will decline and they will passively bemoan the drop in applications as no one will want to work in an industry that can't afford to pay them a living wage.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Information Page and sample consent form

8.1.1 Information Page

Information Page

Project Title:

What is the perception in academia to graduate internships within the creative industries?

Are they a necessary evil or is there an ethical way to bridge the gap between college and the workplace?

Researcher: Cormac O'Kane

The aim of this research is to investigate current practice in Art and Design Departments throughout the IoT sector regarding advertising of graduate and non module-embedded work placements.

The importance of work-based learning has been emphasised by employers, policy documents such as the Hunt Report and educational policymakers over the past number of years. An ever-increasing number of programmes include a work based learning module. However, it appears that more and more graduates are required to undertake internships following graduation before securing paid employment.

The issue of study is looking at the proliferation of unpaid graduate internships within the creative industries – are they worthwhile or are graduates being taken advantage of? Do they perpetuate the cycle of privilege where only those graduates who can afford to work for free receive the benefits? Why are internships necessary? Are 3rd level institutions' failing the students in the readiness to work following graduation?

Many Institutes and Employers dismiss ethical considerations regarding the use of unpaid labour stating it is up to the student or graduate to choose if they wish to work for free. However, There has been a recent backlash against unpaid internships, both here and abroad. In Ireland, JobBridge has received criticism for replacing paid positions with jobseekers earning an additional €50 per week while in the UK a number of leading Art Colleges including the University of the Arts London and Goldsmiths College have banned advertising unpaid internships. A report from the Untied States of America highlighted the disparity between future earnings of those who took unpaid internships versus those who had either undertaken paid internships or no internship with unpaid internships devaluing the currency of the graduates qualification.

Are unpaid internships a necessary evil for graduates in the Creative Industries or is there an ethical way to bridge the gap between Academia and the world of work?

I plan to investigate if Institutes have policies or procedures surrounding the area of unpaid graduate internships and if there is concern that these unpaid graduate internships are devaluing the currency of their degrees.

The output of this research will be a code of Best Practice for Letterkenny Instiute of Technology regarding how internships and work placements are advertised to studnets and recent graduates.

The primary data collection strategy involves a series of semi-structured interviews. The selection criteria for the interviews will be purposeful sampling selecting Heads of Departments based on geographical location with a selection of Institutes surveyed in both rural and urban centres.

The identity of subjects will remain anonymous and information used for the purpose of the research only.
The interview will be recorded and all data gathered will be stored securely and accessed only by the researcher and supervisor.

8.1.2 Consent Form

Consent Form

Project Title: What is the perception in academia to graduate internships within the creative industries?
Are they a necessary evil or is there an ethical way to bridge the gap between college and the workplace?

Principal Investigator: Cormac O'Kane

The aim of this research is to investigate current practice in Art and Design Departments throughout the IoT sector regarding advertising of graduate and non module-embedded work placements. I plan to investigate if there is a lack of academic leadership surronding the area of unpaid graduate internships and if these unpaid graduate internships are devaluing the currency of their degrees.
The output of this research will be a code of Best Practice regarding advertising of internships and work placements.

The primary data collection strategy involves a series of semi-structured interviews.
The selection criteria for the interviews will be purposeful sampling selecting Heads of Departments based on geographical location.

The identity of subjects will remain anonymous and information used for the purpose of the research only.
The interview will be recorded and all data gathered will be stored securely and accessed only by the principal researcher and supervisor.

Declaration: I _____, acknowledge that:

• I have been informed about the research and have an opportunity to ask questions

• I consent to partake in this study

• My participation is voluntary

• I can withdraw at any time

• I consent to the publication of results.

Participant's Name: _____

Contact Details: _____

_____

_____

8.2 Indicative questions for semi-structured interview

Does the Institute of Technology have a policy regarding advertising of job opportunities to recent graduates?

Is it a formal policy or an informal custom and practice policy?

Are jobs submitted to the Department for distribution to graduates distributed widely?
Are they posted on Institute website, facebook page, twitter feed, email list
Do all graduates receive email alerts? or only graduates who sign up to a service?
Or are graduates selected depending on their grade, area of expertise?
Or is it left to individual lecturers to decide themselves?

Do companies look for recommendations rather than wanting to advertise?
If so, are company wishes followed?

Does the Institute have a policy regarding advertising internships?

Are Internships viewed as different from Job opportunities?

Is the decision to distribute conditional on duration of internship or other conditions?

Are only paid internships advertised or are unpaid internships also advertised?

Would there be any concern than the rise in unpaid internships is a reflection on the job readiness of art and design graduates?

Do you think your graduates have the work-readiness deficiency that employers claim as a justification for an unpaid internship?

Are there measures you would like to introduce into your programmes, if you had more time or resources that would improve the job readiness of your graduates.

Would research from America and UK showing that while graduates who do a paid internship generally secure a well paid job afterwards, graduates who do an unpaid internship fair worse, on a par with those who do no internship at all give the Institute any cause for concern regarding the devaluation of their degrees.

Would you say a possible cause of the rise in internships is the rise in the number of graduates coming out of more and more programmes across the island?

In your opinion, are there too many graduates for the Creative Industries to support?

Do you have accredited work placements within the programme? How is this monitored?

Is there pressure to make programmes more industry focussed and do you think this contributes to the rise in internships?

Do you feel the programmes should be less industry focused?

Does your Institute pay Visiting lecturers who come into the department to give talks, workshops etc.?

What is your personal view on unpaid internships? Are they a fact of life in the creative industries or should they be stopped?

8.3 Sample Interview Transcript

**Transcription of Telephone Interview with Respondent C
carried out on 16 June 2016**

Interviewer
The first thing I want to find out is does [Your Institute] have a policy regarding advertising of job opportunities to recent graduates or students for summer placements?

Respondent C
No. No centralised policy

Interviewer
So it's up to each individual lecturer?

Respondent C
Yes, if someone in admin gets a telephone call and they say yeah send me an email they will distribute that to the student body or programme. And the same thing happens to individuals, people get emails and various different things and it is up to them if they want to send them out or not. In [our programme] we have a policy and we would be reasonably tight about it but there is no formulated [Insitute] policy.

Interviewer
That's much the same as it seems to be everywhere else. They don't really think about it. Now regarding advertising internships. Would internships be a concern within [the Institute]?

Respondent C
Well again I can't speak for the institute but I can speak for a programme. Like most of them we get is a cold call email and if it s a cold call email and we don't think it comes up to our internal policy in the programme we wont even answer it however if there is something that is interesting and sort of sits where we think an internship should be we would certainly follow up back to them and have a conversation and tease it out and then get it out to the student body if we feel that is the right thing to do.

Interviewer
So would you advertise unpaid internships?

Respondent C
No! No, not something we would advertise, not even something we would contemplate. We wouldn't contemplate advertising unpaid internships but I know other programmes do

Interviewer
So would other departments or programmes within the institute advertise them?

Respondent C
Yeah.

Interviewer
So what is your policy you mentioned?

Respondent C
We wrote a paper and circulated it round [the Institute] and also circulated it round our industry partners, if you want to call them that, to say if they are interested and want to see what we believe in. and we give it to the students as well. However we don't have any say in if our students choose to organise their own internship, if it is paid or whatever. But we wrote

a paper discussing what an internship was and could be and should be what it should be to a student of 1 year experience, what it should be to a student of 2nd or 3rd year and certainly then what it should be to a graduating student. And we also talk to our students about it and we also don't want to take any opportunities that they might benefit from but they sort of buy into what we believe in as well and industry, of the people who engage with us, sort of know that we are not hugely politicised or anything but we do have an opinion about it and don't like to see our students being taken for a ride.

Interviewer
That's good because you are one of the few people who do not advertise unpaid internships. Other institutes say it is up to the student to decide.

Respondent C
Well it is absolutely up to the student but we are not going to promote something we don't believe in, however it is totally individual. There are benefits of an unpaid internship but for us then that becomes the norm and we wont advertise something we don't want to become the norm.

Interviewer
So if you get a request for an unpaid internship, would you contact the company and ask why they are not paying?

Respondent C
It would depend on the company and who they are. If it was someone like IBM or Google advertises an internship programme, in those cases it would be done right. They have a proper facilitated internship programme than runs yearly. But to answer your question Do we contact them,.. no, unless it is someone regular and then you'd go hold on you are looking for 10 interns for the summer and it is free and I would pick up the phone and certainly if I knew them and say "you really want me to advertise that?" and they'd say "yeah yeah" and I'd say "No, we won't be doing that you can advertise it on your website but you wont be advertising it on our website."

Interviewer
That's interesting as again, you are the only ones with that kind of statement. Whereas the art colleges in London have all banded together to say they wont advertise unpaid internships but it doesn't seem to be a concern as far as the colleges here go.

Respondent C
Well to be honest, that points to something larger as a problem within the IoTs. Because there is no formal structure of the IoTs talking to each other, between programmes in IoTs or departments in IoTs or IoTs in general, it points to a larger problem within the sector.

Interviewer
Often employers would claim graduates lack a work readiness and that is a justification for unpaid internships as it is training.

Respondent C
No I don't agree with that at all. Show me the statistics and show me the proof. If they want to sit down and measure it by some matix I will happily take their word for it but it goes against the history of what they have done. Because an internship is there for a young person to garner experience. In 1st or 2nd year yeah why not, but a 3rd or 4th year can easily drop into a starting position. Colouring something in for christ's sake. I've seen too much of it, where they are taken on as a 6 month internship and they are in a pipeline within a week, within a day... there's the button you click, and they are cleaver kids they can work it out. Are they hard-nosed professionals? No, but who is when they are starting off.

Interviewer
Are there more unpaid internships being advertised, is it a growing problem?

Respondent C
In Ireland its not something that is very well organised or regulated. It's being used as a tool for free labour and its coming in more and more over the past 5 years. It's a way of taking in 10 people over the summer putting them on desks, 10 people over the summer period of 3 months is 30 months which is the best part of 3 years worth of labour… so they are getting 3 years of low end creative labour, starting position stuff. Where they have a project on and the next thing is within a week they are colour artists or composite artist or whatever You take 10 on for 3 months, looking at 3 years worth of free labour, with starting position at 25 grand that's a 75gand saving to a company. And a lot of them have utilised that as a tool in terms of their production. And ive seen it… you get 2nd and 3rd years coming back in working for free for the summer and they have all been on pipeline,. So yes it is something that is becoming more pervasive.

Interviewer
Is that linked to the rise in the number of graduates as more and more creative programmes are producing graduates every year and they are all fighting for the same jobs, there is excess supply?

Respondent C
No, no I wouldn't see that at all. It is more a case of trying to get a foot on the ladder under any circumstances. I see it as a misused tool by young companies who really don't have a HR policy or anything like that but see what other companies are doing and try to do it themselves. No I think it is a misdirected tool by the companies rather than students trying to get their foot on the ladder due to overpopulation of graduates.

Interviewer
Would research from the UK and USA that graduates who do unpaid internships receive less job offers than those who do paid internships cause any concern.?

Respondent C
 Well, I don't know. I'd be interested to see the data and how that conclusion was reached. For me the issue is more that most jobs are short term. You spend six months at one studio then three months at another. You move from job to job often getting recruited through word of mouth so any experience will help. The issue is more you don't get bedded in at one studio and rise up the ranks.

Interviewer
Is there pressure coming to make the programmes more industry focused and do you think this contributes to the rise in internships?

Respondent C
I think the new programmes as well as the more established ones have an industry focus, some more than others and rightly I think that they should. I don't know of any programmes out there that are just dedicated to pipeline activity of 1 or 2 or 3 companies. That the sole reason they exist is as training. But you need to keep an eye on industry. You need to have young creative artists who are capable that are going to be part of it. I don't think it is a huge problem at the moment. In fact the companies would tell you they are not focused enough.

A young graduating student or student in 3rd or 4th year is looking for the experience. The really good ones, the sharp ones, are headhunted. Companies are after them. They will get opportunities but the other ones, maybe not so polished, they are vulnerable to take an

opportunity where they will end up working for nothing. And this is the problem… I mean nothing. Not even bus fare or lunch money in many cases. And that's not what an internship is. It's a quid pro quo situation. You are gaining experience by being onsite with the company and that's great but you are giving them your time which is more valuable to them and yet there is no return.. like zero and that is a huge problem . You have the JobBridge programme that was run recently where companies.. which is a pervasive problem throughout lots of industries which was used to take professionals on and keep them on rubbish money and keep them there for 18 months.

Interviewer
Do you have a work placement module within the programme?

Respondent C
Ok, that's the inevitable question. The Achilles heel for everyone. We do not have a work placement module or a particular time in a 4 year programme where this is your time where you are out for 6 months or whatever but what we do do is we completely validate a student at any time during the 4 years but certainly within 3rd or 4th year when if a student comes in with a really valuable opportunity that they really want to take we will validate and we have written into the programme structure that we can validate the students experience and can offset the time that they don't spend with us they have to value that educationally. The have to give a presentation when they are finished and show all the different things they have done out there.

They come to us, saying I have something between November and February in 2nd year, we will look at it and say ok, yeah, go for it, you have our full permission. We have never said no to someone who came in with an opportunity to. We have even had someone spend the whole of 4th year in a company. In their particular circumstances, the students and the company finding out what they were supposed to do in 4th year and we said yeah it has great value. We are prepared for industry, we will shut the module down and say no this industry engagement has more value than in here. There have been really valuable opportunities that have been dotted over different timelines.

However we cant offer a dedicated work experience module at a dedicated time as frankly it is unworkable., it just cant happen. The integration between industry and education is not at that point. Now there might come that day when it is at that point where like a Vborg student might go out for 9 months at the end which is like their 4th year and go to different companies in the US and Europe but we aren't at that point so we cant write that as that will work against us as there will be a piecemeal response to what they are doing by going off and working in a hairdressers and saying it is work experience but it's not purposeful work in the sector they are being educated in or training for.
So no we don't have a dedicated module but however we fully endorse and ask them to go out and come back with initiatives, proposals regarding that at any part of their 4 year timeline but certainly in 3rd or 4th year and we'll let them do it.

Interviewer
Yes, we have the problem here that we have a work placement module but it is at a set time in semester 4 and it doesn't work. You can't place everyone at once.

Respondent C
Work placement is a larger problem in terms of connectivity between the institutes and industry. It's a dedicated role. If you really want someone to do that.., you can't say, lads here to 30 students…you are off between January and May and tell them in September. Most of them don't land anything so what do you do? So even within that it needs to be supported at the institute level and its not supported because it is a dedicated role you need someone organising this and scaffolding it so the students then go into a pipeline of what has been

predetermined for them in term of connectivity with your industry planners. But that role isn't there. I mean, education is on its knees so these peripheral contextual things just aren't there to make these things happen.

So the answer is no, no dedicated module but absolutely, I'd say 25% of them go out yearly into education time not summer time education time work experience… and we just cut them loose. We'll say Okay you are going to miss half of this module and 6 weeks of the next module and we'll just make sure the learning is the same and we try not to miss out on what is going on.

In 3rd and 4th year for us there are no specific modules to do with software, it is much more exploration modules where they choose to specialise in different pathways, 2d 3d so they are developing that knowledge as they go along just in different modules. The modules are very generic but allow them to build their skillets in the pathway they want so if they go out to industry and they basically mirror that skillset on the opportunity thy have been given in industry if they are a 2d person, they are working in a 2d pipeline, they are out there and getting stuck into it, as opposed to just photocopying. That we would look at in a different way. That doesn't measure up in terms of the outcomes of the module. But we are completely open to it and cut them loose whenever we can.

Interviewer
Ok, this is the final question, slightly tangential but still looking at the whole ethics of unpaid internships ad working for free, when you bring in visiting lecturers, would you pay the Visiting Lecturers to come in to talk and share their knowledge?

Respondent C
Yes we would. We don't have any visiting lecturer budget but what I do have is about 15 to 20% of hours are still part-time so with my colleagues I will align most of those hours so out of 1000 hours I will align 800 to teaching staff but the rest are floating at the discretion of the programme so any lecturer can bring in someone for 3 days for skillet of software for a particular module or whatever.

That is down to the programme lead to look after these things. All the lecturers are involved in this so when their module is coming up they know they want 2 or 3 different people in there with different skillsets for 2 days each, the money is there.
We don't have a VL budget but we are lucky enough we still have a part-time budget as part of our budget and still se it the best way we can. We would have 15 to 20 people a year coming in doing anything from a half day to a week.
I don't call them Visiting lecturers they are part of the lecturing team. I mean we need this every year. We need a TV Paint expect, so we bring someone in for 5 days every year. We will do various different things. They don't just come in and talk about their life experience, this is necessary lecturing activity for niche skills.
We are lucky we can do that but I understand the restrictions that are in place in other institutes.

Interviewer
Ok that's great. Thanks very much.

Respondent C
Do you want me to give you a really interesting piece of information, off the record?

Interviewer
OK, hold on until I stop the tape then.

[Interview recording ends]