

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: STRONG INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS IN THE NEWSROOM: A SURVEY OF PRACTICES IN THE FIELD AND ANALYSIS OF TOOLS FOR IMPROVEMENT

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Accredited journalism schools acknowledge the need for strong internships, and provide basic guidance for newsrooms on administering internship programs. However, most newsroom intern supervisors begin with few other resources to build or improve a program. A survey of newsroom intern supervisors was undertaken to explore a range of internship environments, identify common practices and gauge interest in tools for improvement. In addition, a review of published literature pertinent to building, improving and running such a program was sought in order to provide a coaching framework to assist the newsroom supervisor. Most surveyed said they invented their program along the way and expressed an interest in other tools for improvement, but other production duties don't leave much time for research. These modest survey results offer a peek through a doorway into a new field of internship research that offers much promise for future investigation.

STRONG INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS IN THE NEWSROOM:
A SURVEY OF PRACTICES IN THE FIELD AND ANALYSIS
OF TOOLS FOR IMPROVEMENT

By

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Introduction

I began coaching interns at the *Baltimore Examiner* without training or any curriculum, assessments or other tools to guide the experience. I had worked alongside interns in a previous assignment, but had no formal responsibility over their work. The process forced me to think critically about all the skills I relied on as a reporter to find, gather and report news, including arranging and synthesizing information, facts and quotes into a cohesive story. Most interns already have these basics. But in order to help interns report and write daily news, often one or two stories a day, I realized that I had to delve into the mechanics of writing, to help them improve their information gathering and especially writing processes, so that they could thrive under constant deadline pressure. Meanwhile, I also needed to produce my own two to three stories a day. Each question brought to me by a student—and this happened multiple times a day--became a puzzle, a chance to pull my head out of the stream and think critically and in the abstract about the general and generalizable approaches to their concrete issues. I was deep into the “seat-of-the-pants” model of learning to teach (Peirce & Martinez, 2012) before I knew what was happening.

Once I began to see common problems—such as interns with varying abilities to hear their own voices in their written text – I developed a curriculum to address those bigger-picture issues and to the particular demands of the *Examiner* newsroom. I analyzed student copy to try and find ways to overcome sloppy habits and encourage productive ones.

What I arrived at organically corresponds most directly to the writing coach movement that became popular in some newsrooms before it moved to classrooms in the 1990s (Wiist 1997). “A coaching method by definition involves extensive interaction with students during the writing process, not just at its end” (p. 72). I have employed this approach in two additional newsrooms at Corridor Inc. business newsmagazine and the local, volunteer-run Greenbelt News Review. Today I coach student science writers for the Office of Communications for one of NASA’s primary spacecraft design, testing and operation centers, the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.

From that experience I collected a set of coaching tools, including a curriculum, texts, definitions, assessments and thought exercises I found useful for helping students develop or improve an awareness of their voice and the writing process. Internships offer many opportunities to synthesize theory, skills and discipline developed in the classroom into a fluid, daily routine – writing editing and publishing on a daily rather than weekly or monthly rate. However, I had little way of knowing how effective those efforts were in educating students. Our Goddard program seemed to be in demand, and feedback was highly positive; but we had no way of knowing what went on in other newsrooms. I wondered if any better tools and assessments were available. I realized I had much more to learn.

In this paper, I will discuss the state of academic research into the practices and tools that could be helpful for intern coaches and improve the educational value of interning in the working newsroom as well as identify gaps that exist in the literature. I will next discuss a survey of other newsroom intern managers conducted to see what tools, processes and

assessments are in use in the field. I will discuss the variables in newsroom internships revealed by this survey and my past experience. I will also discuss in more detail research helpful for establishing and improving newsroom internship programs and adapting coaching tools and assessments adaptable to different settings and even from student to student. My goal is two parts – to identify opportunities for further study and investigation and to outline a practical, adaptable framework for coaching interns that could benefit newsroom internship managers or supervisors of other kinds of journalism opportunities.

Literature Review

The literature on internship programs over the last 50 years has seen attention to the field experience blossom in the 1960s and 1970s and mature in the next two decades. What has been published focuses overwhelmingly on academic institutions' obligation to ensure a quality educational experience and to prevent abuse, both by employers looking for free labor and students seeking to avoid class time. These analyses rarely employ the perspective of the newsroom, though some papers contain bits of helpful information. Journalism Educator – later named Journalism and Mass Communication Educator, published 513 articles containing the word “intern” since it first published in the spring of 1967, most employing the educational institutional perspective. “The majority of journal articles dealing with internships, while indicating that both practitioners and academics generally agree such programs are a valuable component of the curriculum, devote little attention to the mechanics of operating an internship program and assessing learning outcome,” wrote Linda McDonough, Lulu Rodriguez and Marcia R. Prior-Miller (2009, p. 141). Andrew Ciofalo, who has written extensively about internships, including a book, at times characterizes and at other times exemplifies the institutional wariness of giving academic credit to field experience. “Credit is uneasily extended for activities that seem unrelated to the objectives expected of traditional classroom-based learning. “Giving ill-considered academic status to internship courses increases the vulnerability of the communications discipline to outside criticism (1989, p. 25).

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), the organization responsible for the evaluation of professional journalism and mass communications programs, developed nine standards for internship programs published in 1996 on their website. These identify minimum standards schools must consider in their administration of such a program, however, Objective 9 can also provide guidance for newsroom coaches to ensure their program aligns with qualities universities consider valuable in internship opportunities. ACEJMC suggests having an assessment plan, defining goals, keeping connected to alumni and defining a statement of competencies students should demonstrate at the beginning and end of their internship. The objectives were specifically designed to be flexible so as to preserve the “unique situation, cultural, social or religious context, mission and resources” of the educational institution in question. If possible within the scope of their charter, the council might consider expanding a similar comprehensive set of standards for the newsroom.

Communication between the classroom and newsroom is crucial. McDonough et al (2009) consider the institutional effort in assessing the quality of individual internship opportunities or newsrooms to be a function of a three-way communication among journalism schools, interns, and workplace supervisors. “However, there is a lack of reliable instruments with which to assess the quality of internships and the relative importance of various predictors in assuring successful internships and their tripartite benefits” (p. 141). The method McDonough et al prescribed to assess the internship is for both intern and supervisor to complete a written assessment of four skill sets at the mid-point and conclusion of an internship to see how well students improved those skills. The skill sets were, “students' (1) general abilities and skills in the work- place, (2) specific

job-related skills, (3) interpersonal communication skills, and (4) general professional conduct” (p. 141). Analyzing discrepancies between how the student and supervisor rated the student can identify significant issues that need to be addressed either on the part of the student or the newsroom’s program. However effective, there may be barriers to implementing this method. ACEJMC requires schools to assess internship opportunities, but does not specify the method, meaning one newsroom coach may experience a variety of methods to assess their program, possibly including this one. While administering the assessments may be adapted simply, the analysis portion presents some questions.

To be more specific, ACEJMC’s approach does not address the questions of who will complete the analysis and interpretation and how much training this will require and who will provide the training. Can coaches both assess their students’ work and compare that with the students’ self- assessments, or is the objectivity of an outside observer required? Finally, McDonough et al encourage journalism school administration of these assessments on the basis of a claim that these are useful in strengthening the tripartite communications relationship. It may be beneficial to incorporate a skills self-assessment into a newsroom internship program. In the discussion section, I will identify several assessments currently in use or that may be tailored to a newsroom’s individual program.

Fred Beard and Linda Morton (1999) developed six predictors of student’s success in adapting to the demands of field experience: (a) academic preparedness, (b) proactivity/aggressiveness, (c) positive attitude, (d) quality of worksite supervision, (e) organizational practices and policies and (f) compensation (p. 42). They also discussed factors a newsroom manager might use to establish a program and qualities that

supervisors should demonstrate. While many newspaper internships remain unpaid, Beard and Morton found that while researchers differ on whether monetary compensation or academic credit are given, students tend to rate the success of an experience more highly when they are compensated.

Whether the person undertaking supervision of the internship program in a newsroom setting is called a supervisor, mentor, manager or other term, the nomenclature is messy in the literature. W.M. Wiist (1997) describes coaching as talking with a reporter to help them write more accurately, quickly and confidently; discussing problems and solutions; using “the voice of a fellow craftsman having a conversation about a piece of work,” (p. 97). Wiist, drawing on earlier work by the Poynter Institute’s Roy Peter Clark and Don Fry suggests that a coach’s approach focuses on giving positive feedback and positive examples and defining “ideals” of journalism rather than pitfalls of “journalese” or other negatives to avoid. David Thornton Moore (2013) defines coaching as direct and hands-on supervision, formative or teaching rather than rendering judgment or grading.

A successful intern coach should be a natural teacher who enjoys helping young people grow professionally and has the time to work with them Ciofalo wrote in *Internships: Perspectives on Experiential Learning* (1992). This book explores the powerful cognitive impact that immersion in the work environment can have on the student, based on “the structure of the on-site program and the dedication of the on-site supervisor” (page 35). He suggests that this supervisor should meet the qualifications of an adjunct professor and that the internship experience be enhanced and supported through the use of a syllabus and other traditional academic accoutrements. Ciofalo acknowledges that

requiring adjunct status or similar qualifications might limit the number of internships available, but he is arguing for highly-qualified supervisors. He suggests schools might compensate the certified adjunct as well as offer those adjuncts periodic training. While Ciofalo explores and characterizes a variety of internship settings across different fields of work, an in-depth comparison of journalism internship opportunities across different newsroom settings could be helpful in establishing norms for internships in this field.

While Ciofalo appears to highlight the academic ambivalence towards field work in journalism, Moore's book, *Engaged Learning in the Academy* (2013), lays the foundation for interpreting internships as valid educational opportunities. Moore delves into the philosophical and educational foundation of what he calls a "pedagogy of experience: the naturally occurring social organization of activity and resources that makes it possible or difficult for learning to occur" (p. 14). Moore says that he knows no one who has empirically tested whether this pedagogy expands upon academic knowledge. The discussion section of this paper will elaborate on Moore's guidance on developing curriculum and a coaching style in greater detail.

This brings us to the question of how a coach knows what students need to learn in order to become proficient reporters. Moore (2013) mentions Russian education scholar Lev Vygotsky's work in assessing what students are ready to learn in context of their personal psychological and social development. Well-known in education, Vygotsky can be difficult to read and is widely mis-interpreted. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" describes those tasks a student can accomplish with the help of a "more knowledgeable other." Moore simplifies this to, "the intern could do more – and learn

more – with the support of others at a higher level of skilled knowledge use” (p 116).

Vygotsky’s theories shed light on the practices newsroom coaches often must develop intuitively. For the coach seeking to better understand what happens in their daily interactions with interns growing towards proficiency, Vygotsky’s methods of interview, leading questions and increasing levels of task complexity can be immeasurably helpful. These will be unpacked in the discussion section.

To get a sense of what other newsroom coaches are doing in the field, a survey was determined to get a sense of different organizations’ internship programs, their structure, methods and to find out whether they use assessments or other tools.

Methods

In seeking to shed light on tools and practices that might be useful in administering a sound and educational internship program in the newsroom, I wanted to sample the types and structures of internship programs in existence and get a sense of their operations as well as to gauge their internship coaches' interest in getting more support and information. I distributed a survey to various newsrooms that use interns to assess the variety of methods, tools and assessments the coaches used in administering journalism internships from a newsroom perspective. A close review of published research findings did not reveal any kind of similar study regarding internship work experiences. A survey questionnaire was used to establish a consistency of information requested about the scale of each newsroom's internship program, the structure of supervision, organizational structure and policies, existence and type of study programs or curriculum, and scope, scale and complexity of the work students undertake. It also asked about methods of getting feedback from both students and coaches and how organizations stay in touch with former interns.

Newsrooms were identified after polling several journalism schools about where their students intern and asking for contacts. I reached out to 81 newsrooms across the country and received replies from 15 coaches, supervisors or recruiters. Of those, eight chose to participate, either by filling out the survey questionnaire or by telephone interview. Two of the eight telephone interviews offered an extensive overview of their operations. It is unclear why so few chose to participate, however several interviews had to be

rescheduled and one backed out altogether due to the respondent's work-related commitments, suggesting a heavy workload. Some contacts either no longer worked with interns or worked for an organization that no longer took interns. The largest group of individuals identified never responded to any communication. Telephone interviews typically took about 25 to 35 minutes. Notes were transcribed and returned to the coach or recruiter for review. All respondents were provided an IRB-approved consent form as well as a verbal guarantee of anonymity and explanation of their rights, including the right to withdraw from this research project at any time without consequences. Finally, responses were anonymized and synthesized question-by-question.

Survey Results

The survey results do not constitute a robust sample, but offer a limited view into the workings of a variety of internships illustrating key facets of issues addressed within the literature. Respondents either directly supervised interns, were recruiters with extensive knowledge of their programs, or recruited for other newsrooms with little input or oversight. Almost all respondents engage in this work in addition to regular duties writing, editing and/or managing within their organization; that is, their internship work is not their only responsibility or sometimes even the main part of their work. Their identities and organizations remain anonymous in order to encourage participation, but they agreed to be characterized as follows – in chronological order of their interviews:

- 1) Recruiter/supervisor for an online sports news site with 12.6 million views per month who works under a program coordinator, but develops a lot of the program himself. He takes four interns per semester, including summer, who work under him and other editors.
- 2) Editor of a local affiliate business newspaper who manages two interns per semester recruited by the corporate office. Circulation is more than 26,000 copies with about 250,000 monthly views online; response emailed.
- 3) Intern training and development lead at a nationwide chain of broadcast outlets. This survey respondent recruits students who are then managed at individual stations.
- 4) Recruiter for a Washington, DC, regional “clearinghouse” vetting 350 interns per year with demonstrated leadership experience, who are then placed with a variety of organizations in journalism or other communications fields.
- 5) Recruiter for a major US newspaper with 1.4 million print circulation and almost as much online, who recruits 30 students per year and oversees their supervision.
- 6) Recruiter for an online national news site with 4.2 million monthly viewers who takes 2 full-time paid students per year and up to three part-time, unpaid students per semester.
- 7) Editor for a local niche market magazine with 3,000 paid subscribers and total circulation of 13,000, who recruits, trains and works directly with two interns per semester.
- 8) Recruiter with a national sporting organization who takes 30 interns a year in various writing and communications roles; response emailed.

A synthesis of their replies to individual questions follows.

How many interns do you take at a time?

Survey respondents range from the editor of a local niche market magazine supervising two interns at a time to a recruiter for a top-tier national newspaper overseeing a program that takes 30 interns throughout the year on more than one continent. Another program recruits up to 350 students per year, but the respondent did not have direct knowledge of their placements.

How are interns chosen?

Recruiters travel and perform significant work to find the best internship candidates to help reduce problems that might arise if less-prepared students working in their newsroom. Some survey interviews were postponed due to recruiting trips. Recruiters said they work with supervisors to identify students suited for particular roles, beats or duties. A recruiter/supervisor for an online sports news site with 12.6 million views per month called it a competitive process, on both sides:

We solicit applications from a lot of DC-area universities. We go out and speak with classes. We're interested in expanding into community colleges – maybe Gallaudet – to try and get in a little more diversity. We get about 50, 55 applications every class, and we grade each one of them. They give us two paragraphs about why they want this internship, three writing samples and a resume. We interview 12 to 16 for each class; it's a 30-minute interview. Their interviews are graded on prior knowledge of the industry, things they want to work on, readiness, professionalism. After that we make six offers. We end up taking four, and usually we have one or two we offer to who go with someone else.

Most said they look for a combination of grades, published work and writing prompts or consider other experience like campus leadership or blogging.

How are they compensated?

Four respondents said interns are paid, either a weekly stipend or hourly rate, one news site said they have a combination of paid interns with limited benefits who may participate in the employee health plan, and unpaid interns. Two organizations do not pay, and one recruiter finds interns for other organizations, which make their own policies about pay.

What roles do they fill?

Respondents from five newsrooms said students work the same types of assignments as regular writers or photographers. “They are treated as part of the staff with similar expectations,” said an editor at an affiliate business newspaper.

Three respondents said students rotate through various assignments during the semester. “They kind of do a little bit of everything. Sometimes we have projects underway like a ranking. When we have a ranking project, they help gather data, sort data. Sometimes they do web production with our web team. Often they’ll do quite a bit of writing,” said the recruiter for an online national news site.

One national newspaper, which takes up to 11 students in a summer, embeds them as writers, “they’re treated like reporters. They’re doing everything our reporters do. They’re working on stories from the moment they walk in the door. We don’t have training; we don’t have orientation – we put them with the team they interviewed with.”

On the other hand, a recruiter for nationwide broadcast affiliates said their students “cannot do work that otherwise paid employees can do. They can write scripts but can’t

go on air. They can't write scripts that will go on air. They can write scripts as practice. They participate in meetings, contribute ideas."

Please describe how interns are supervised in your organization.

In larger organizations, interns recruited by one individual often work directly under someone else, "When they start, I'm their main confidant, but as it goes on, I'm quickly forgotten and that's what I want." All said supervision occurs directly at the level of the role students fill – writers with desk editors, photographers with the photo staff, etc. "We realize they still have a lot to learn, but we feel that's the best way to learn," one said.

The sports league places students with full-time writers for daily supervision. "Closest supervision comes from the beat reporters who work side-by-side with them." Some programs provide a short orientation at each assignment or put students directly to work.

One online sports newsroom employs a new and developing program with a fully-realized curriculum. "We have a framework. They're given a full curriculum and a map. Weekly discussions are two hours long, over lunch. The first hour will be a general talk about an industry topic ... the second hour is more instructional focused," said the recruiter, who also manages interns. "We have assessments; they're often based on what they are writing or what the discussion is that week."

At a niche magazine, they meet once a week for a few hours and the bulk of their communication with the editor/recruiter happens by text or email, "rarely by phone." In one online newsroom, supervision is less stable:

They work very closely with their editors, whoever the day editors are. If they're working for a section, they'll work with whoever is doing that kind of content on different days. We try to get former interns who are working with us to give them a

little mentoring, provide an orientation – these are our workflows. Here’s how it works. We don’t have any formal supervision or structure for everyone.

The recruiter said that once, they had a more formally structured program but that staffing had declined and they lost the capacity to maintain that structure. He said he is working with the organization’s human resources department in an effort to improve the program and add more structure.

What are your expectations of student work and performance (roles, number of hours worked, etc.)?

Some expect students to be capable of the same work as beginning full-time writers, others said that work might be done more slowly, at least at first. Other than that, specific expectations vary dramatically. “We expect them to participate, we expect them to bring ideas to the table,” said the broadcast recruiter. “We expect them to not be disruptive, especially when they go out in the field with the public at large. You expect them to represent not just their school, but the station with professionalism and respect.”

Time commitments range from 20 to 40 hours per week in the office or on assignment.

One paper, which paid students weekly instead of hourly, did not specify.

“We don’t tell them how many hours to work. We tell them to figure out what is best for them. Our reporters don’t work on the clock. To do the job well, they don’t want to be on a clock. The more work they do, the more stories they get, the more bylines they get and the more editing they’ll get.”

The sports web site with a developed curriculum has more specific expectations for student development based on that structure. “Over the course of the internship, we expect them to get better and pick up some of the things we’re teaching,” the respondent

said. “Coming in, we expect them to be able to know our industry, what our business is and how it’s different from everywhere else.” More specifically, he looks for interns who knew their site. “Because we’re a digital outlet, there’s a difference of voice. We’re looking for that familiarity,” he said. “We want them to have an idea of what they want to do and have a way they want to write it.”

At the online news site, however, there seemed little indication that students were expected to improve during their internship unless self-driven.

We have pretty high expectations. You can kind of tell more or less from day one what levels of output or performance you’re going to get. You have some people who come in needing a little more hand-holding, and some never try, never step up to the next level. They don’t have the drive. Then you have people who come in like rock stars out of the gate. They’re pitching stories, they’re writing, it can be a little hard to keep up with them. You know that almost immediately, it’s a gut instinct. You talk to them.

How is the internship program structured?

In most newsrooms, the beat editor directly supervising the student provides the structure, with some degree of meetings or in one case curriculum applied in addition to daily work.

In one program students attend three or four group events. They meet the paper’s editor in chief and have a practicum on writing leads and nut graphs. In one mission-driven organization that recruits interns with leadership experience for other newsrooms, students are required to take an economics course at the organization’s university affiliate. “We’re trying to train future leaders in all aspects of society.” The magazine editor has students bring their finished copy to the weekly group meetings. Her two students then trade papers and edit each other before she does a final “light edit.”

What methods do you use to get feedback from the students or their mentors in your organization?

Most employ some combination of questionnaires or forms and verbal feedback. Some have students fill out an end-of-term evaluation or conduct an exit interview. Most recruiters said they have one or two conversations with each student during the semester, and often talk with the mentors. Any discrepancies uncovered in those conversations are addressed quickly, a newspaper recruiter said. At the end of the session they have mentors fill out a shared-document form, “because they know who did the best work, who to keep an eye on in the years ahead.”

What methods do you use for delivering criticism or ensuring student success?

In one response, a program manager works with both the supervising editor and student to resolve conflicts early. “There have been times when I’ve stepped in and said, look your editor is really unhappy with the work you’re doing and here’s what needs to happen. I tell the editors, ‘you should be as critical with them as you would to a reporter.’” She said that kind of situation is rare, maybe once or twice a year she intervenes.

At the sports site, the manager of the program talks with all editors an intern works with, and “if there’s any specific issues, the manager will talk it over with the intern.” In the respondent’s individual coaching, he uses a combination of digital and verbal tools to deliver day-to-day feedback on students’ work. “We’re fortunate in that our [system] allows simultaneous edits so that writing can be a collaborative process,” he said. “I’ll pull up a chair and sit right next to them with my laptop, so we’re writing together in the system, but we’re talking all the time.” He said that level of interaction helps better than

just making edits and sending copy back. “I do like to know people’s thought process and how they attack a problem. It’s really slow, but effective.”

Do you use formal assessment tools?

Respondents that use assessment tools do so in large part to keep a record of performance for future hiring decisions. Some responses showed evidence of assessments administered by college intern coordinators. Two said they do not use assessments, and some expressed curiosity about what assessments are available to help tailor coaching for individual interns. One uses a shared online spreadsheet for supervisors to directly input observations on performance – especially kudos. A news website editor said those managing their Medill School of Journalism students get a formal questionnaire to fill out and send back to the school.

The recruiter at the sports site said in addition to their curriculum, students are graded on a progressive scale. “We grade them based on their background and what we expect from that background. We might look at someone from a community college differently from a major university.”

Another recruiter who does not supervise students requires site supervisors to fill out an evaluation on each student.

While many use some form of assessment, at least three used a mid-term and final assessment like that proposed by McDonough et al. The magazine editor described the process in detail from her work with the Philip Merrill School. She said the school’s intern coordinator sends a two-sided evaluation sheet she completes at the mid-term and

the end of their experience. “One side is evaluated by a rating system, about 10 or 12 different skills. The other side is open-ended evaluation questions.”

What kind of follow-up communication do you have with former interns?

All said they keep in touch with former interns – particularly for recruiting. Many said interns initiate contact periodically with information about their new projects or jobs. “They stay in touch with me. They stay in touch with other people in the newsroom,” one recruiter said. “Usually it’s by email. Sometimes if I’m out working in the field, we’ll meet for coffee.”

The national news website recruiter said in one department, one in three employees came from their internship program. The magazine editor said social media was the most common way she stays in touch. “I’ll send a clip or something or a link if I use their story or quote them in the future from a piece that they’ve done. occasionally I’ll receive reader feedback on something that they had done and I’ll forward that on to them.”

What kind of resources, help, tools would you find helpful to make supervising interns more productive?

Most respondents expressed some interest, especially in help recruiting and assessing top candidates or in predicting success, or even keeping in touch with former interns. One suggested help considering a curriculum would be useful.

“I’m open,” said the newspaper recruiter. “I’m curious as to what others are doing. Basically I’ve invented it here. I’m sure there are others doing what I do, but I don’t know their processes.”

The notion of inventing things independently was seconded by the sports site supervisor. He developed their curriculum on the fly under a “director of development” broadly responsible for their internship program. “It’s changed a couple of times since we started the program. We’re in our third round of our internship class,” he said. “I’m not embarrassed to say it was a lot of intuition at first.”

Discussion: Developing a Coaching Framework for Newsroom Intern Mentoring

This section will elaborate on some of the examples revealed by this survey as well as productive practices uncovered both through experience and the literature review. The goal is to establish a framework to guide newsroom coaches or supervisors seeking to build, improve or assess an internship program from the ground up. This will begin with a consideration of the educational value and value added to a newsroom by a successful internship program. The discussion will then examine

- (a) internship structure
- (b) choosing a coach
- (c) considering class time or a curriculum
 - a. types of knowledge to be addressed
 - b. the educational context of a newsroom
 - c. factors that might shape that curriculum
 - d. alternatives to a regularly scheduled class time
 - e. how we learn in the newsroom
- (d) the value of reflection
- (e) the value of assessments
- (f) how education happens at a psychological/social level
- (g) how a coach can promote development
- (h) team teaching
- (i) face-to-face feedback vs. marked up pages
- (j) and teaching voice.

Each section will be supported by references a coach can use to more fully elaborate these concepts.

The educational value of field experience

Newsroom internships by their nature possess the elements of a high-quality educational experience according to Moore (2013). There can be many solutions to a problem, with none set in advance – much like how reporters tackle writing in a newsroom or real-world setting. Like writing, editing is, by nature a one-on-one examination of a synthesis of ideas, research, reporting and composition. There can be enough repetition to reinforce lessons, but not on the same topic or article, providing new and challenging ways to increase autonomy and prestige.

Internship structure

Beard and Morton (1999) also discussed factors a newsroom manager might use to consider establishing a program, including:

considering the length and appropriate terms of internships, establishing basic expectations, and conducting weekly intern meetings (Bourland-Davis et al., 1997). Managing internships includes: (a) providing interns with the physical and other resources needed to accomplish assigned work (Beard, 1997), (b) providing interns with an experience that approximates that of a full-time employee (Verner, 1993), (c) providing students with the opportunity to work on projects from inception to completion (Beard) with little "busy work" (Campbell & Kovar, 1994; BCrasilovsky. & Lendt, 1996), and (d) providing appropriate study programs for the site (Bourland-Davis et al., 1997). (Beard & Morton, p. 44)

Choosing a coach

As for the qualities that could guide selection and training of a coach or program supervisor:

Beard (1997) found that good supervisors manage the relationship with their interns by providing specific direction and examples, some autonomy and independence, and positive and constructive work-related feedback. Similarly, Taylor (1992) notes that good supervisors are supportive, increasing, rather than lowering, the intern's self-esteem. Such supervisors "demonstrate high work standards and competence, provide frequent feedback, develop the individual through coaching" (Taylor, p. 56), evaluate interns, and help interns to "understand how the isolated activities and encounters fit within the scope of an

entire . . . program" (Bourland- Davis et al., 1997, p. 31). (Beard & Morton, p. 43)

A supervisor should be a natural teacher, Moore said (2013). Nonetheless, the educational focus shifts from one of assessing and grading work – summative teaching – to a more formative, encouraging role. There are many situations, in and out of classrooms, Moore said, where the conditions underlying summative evaluation are not necessarily relevant.

Considering class time or a curriculum

Students admitted to a newsroom internship should perform educationally-sound and professionally-regarded work (Ciofalo, 1992).

Survey respondents varied as to whether they include any class time or curriculum in their program, with some considering it vital and others feeling it detracts from the more visceral teaching opportunities of writing, editing and publishing. Most commonly, when included, class time is treated as a brown-bag style discussion over lunch to avoid taking students away from their work.

Moore (1981) wrote extensively about how internships relate to educational goals and how this might guide development of a curriculum for the newsroom. Moore draws from Kant – “Human beings perceive reality in an active process, not a passive one,” (1988) – and William James – “One learns best through one’s own activity; sensory experience is basic to learning; effective learning is holistic, descriptive and specific” (Moore, p. 24)

Moore found many types of knowledge (2013) created in the workplace, including:

- facts and information
- skills and competencies – These tend to be not generic and socially constructed and defined.
- social and organizational knowledge – how things get done, hierarchies and roles
- personal development – reading emotional context, regulating feelings, constructing an identity
- values and ethics

Building a curriculum to address these forms of knowledge should consider the dimensions on which they might vary in ways crucial to the student's learning and modes of thought, according to Moore. A curriculum should consider the social meaning of the learning activity in the context in which it occurs, its centrality to the mission, how in demand the work is to the organization and the prestige of the tasks assigned. What is the student's learning trajectory or expected "changes over time in the content, complexity and importance of her work and in the degree of autonomy and status that she achieves" (p. 112). Finally, the writer of the curriculum should take into consideration ordering – the sequence in which a newcomer gains exposure to various elements of curriculum, as well as the classification and division of knowledge forms.

Factors shaping the curriculum, Moore wrote, will depend on the personal educational history of the students, experience with different media and their prior knowledge; internal features of the organization, including classification of duties and whether students in one area, say photography, will cross over and work in writing or video, and established workflows and sequences of operations unique to that newsroom; and finally

the external environment or market in which the newsroom operates, including competition and changes in technology.

With or without set aside class time or brown-bag sessions, total immersion in news production can be seasoned early with an overview of the organization and its goals. “There are ... corporate internship programs that pull students out of the production process,” Moore said, “to expose them systematically to broader information about the larger organization, but they are the exception.” (p. 87) However, in exit surveys at Goddard, nearly all students rated this overview as one of the most valuable class sessions they experienced in their internship curriculum.

The value of reflection

Moore devotes considerable attention to the question of how interns learn. Establishing a task, accomplishing the task and processing – this loop repeats during an internship, though not always in that order. Processing requires time to reflect on experience, to consider how things went and what could be done better or how different approaches would result in different results. “Much of the learning happens, or at least is extended, deepened, consolidated” in processing or reflection (Moore p. 112). “This evaluative function may in fact appear in natural settings, but in forms unfamiliar to classroom teachers. Indeed the interactionist conception of social encounters suggests that participants continually provide information for each other concerning situated definitions of competence, that is criteria by which members will assess each others’ performance” (p. 113).

A basic discussion-style interview between the coach and student on each story before editing can “teach students to react to their own work in such a way that they wrote increasingly effective drafts” wrote Donald Murray (1979, p. 16) These questions provide a venue for reflection and reinforce efforts at helping writers develop a sense of their voice. He asks:

- What did you learn from this piece of writing?
- What do you intend to do in the next draft?
- Where is this piece of writing taking you?
- What surprised you in the draft?
- What do you like best in this piece of writing?
- What questions do you have for me?

Time to reflect and “reconstrue” – consider alternative approaches and solutions enhances learning through experience-- wrote Moore (p. 115), drawing from John Dewey. Processing reminds us to see the ongoing task work as evolving. Who facilitates the processing? What form does it take? Written or verbal? Whatever form it is better than no reflection.

The value of assessments

Self-assessments of critical skills provide a valuable venue for reflection. McDonough et al point to the value of assessments (2009), whether just once to get students thinking strategically or again near the end to measure growth. Newsroom coaches could incorporate a simple self-assessment rubric such as those used by McClatchy and Michigan State’s School of Journalism (Coté, 1992), or the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ more sophisticated rubric for measuring levels of competency through a variety of habits of mind (AACU, 2016). The latter is more assessment than

any newsroom will need, but of the 16 habits examined, a coach could choose three to five or so to focus on aspects useful to their operations.

How education happens at a psychological/social level

Looking deeper into how education happens in the field setting, Moore defines the field of pedagogy in internships on two axes. Vertical elements define the hierarchy of work, starting at the bottom with the task item, moving up to the set of tasks, the role and finally the work environment. Horizontal elements establish the evolution of tasks and roles over time. Where the social organization of knowledge-use does change, learning happens.

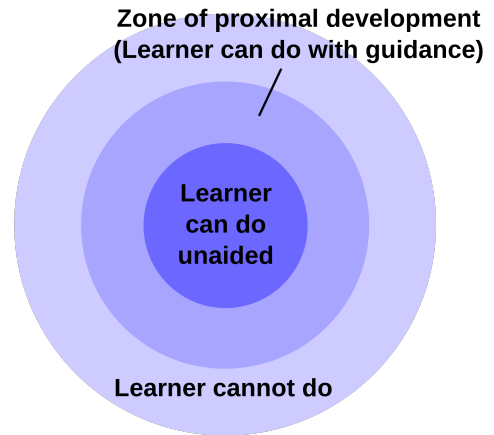
“Where the student, a) encounters new tasks that are progressively more interesting, demanding, or prestigious and b) interacts with supervisors and others in ways that are more responsible and autonomous and competent, education is taking place” (p. 126).

While that provides a clear and concise way to evaluate a program in function, delving into Vygotsky can help a coach develop tools for the day-to-day instruction, including assessing individual students, their readiness for the next challenge and the ground they must cover to achieve proficiency. Vygotsky starts with the assumption that the human organism is a social learner.

Through an interview involving leading or open-ended questions, or by challenging assignments or the scrutiny of text involved in one-on-one editing, a coach can identify where their student operates in their comfort zone – the tasks they can complete unaided – where they are totally over their head and the “zone of proximal development.”

Vygotsky describes this zone as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as

determined through problem solving... in collaboration with more capable peers” (1978, p. 86, emphasis in the original) or “what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow” (Vygotsky, 1934/1987, p. 211, see also, 1934/1998b, p. 202).



Of course while Vygotsky explicitly wrote about the development stages of a young child, his theories have been widely adapted outside that context and can serve our purposes as well.

Seth Chaiklin (2003) wrote that Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development depends on an objective stage of development – for our purposes, the growth from trained journalism student to a competent journalist. The individual’s subjective development can be defined as that formation of “maturing functions” the student needs in order to achieve that growth (2003). The student engages in actions that serve to develop the psychological or sociological functions needed for a required activity or competence.

Vygotsky said learning and development were socially driven, and that when placed into a group of more-advanced journalists, a student will strive to “imitate” their practice, or step up to first imitate, and eventually realize the level of those more knowledgeable practitioners (Chaiklin, 2003).

How a coach can promote development

The more knowledgeable other as coach uses open or leading questions, and suggests resources to guide a student to solutions, and present tasks that will reveal their

competencies (Chaiklin). The selection interview gives the first opportunity to assess the zone of proximal development for each student. In asking open-ended interview questions, the coach analyzes the student's response through their language use and logic. When discussing concepts within the student's comfort zone, their language will be coherent and their understanding without gaps. In the zone of proximal development, their language may be more tentative, their logic will include some gaps. Once those logical gaps become insurmountable, the coach has found the upper limit of that which the student can do with assistance.

News assignments and the raw copy provide another opportunity to assess the student's language and logic. This can be a powerful tool to reveal not only how well they completed the immediate task, but insights into the intern's capabilities and what they can be expected to perform with assistance, and eventually independently. That development over a 10-week internship, when multiple stories are completed each week, can be quite transformative.

As many newsroom coaches will also be full-time production writers or editors as in addition to recruiting or supervising interns. A coach, being constantly available to discuss story treatment, handle roadblocks or even develop story ideas required an openness, mental flexibility and ability to transition smoothly from one task to another. Also useful are a positive attitude towards addressing these issues.

Team teaching

A team-teaching approach, when possible (Auman and Lillie, 2008), pulls in more knowledgeable staff with varying talents to deliver micro-units on topics in their skill

sets: photography, video or organizational communications strategy. Further assistance from the team enables successful execution of photo or video assignments. In a coaching framework, team members also serve coaches. Team teaching and exposure to more knowledgeable specialists on topic areas creates bridges for interns who show an aptitude for photo or video, or passion to learn, to work more closely with multimedia staff. Even if they don't take those opportunities, all students get a basic primer.

Face-to-face feedback vs. marked up pages

Editing feedback provided face-to-face, rather through copy marked up with comments or edits can more effectively eliminate common errors, and guide students toward AP- or organizationally-specific language (Murray 1979). Most survey respondents have iterated some variant on this theme, with or with technology including live documents that both the editor and student can work in while talking together. While students have said this exposure and critique of their work can be uncomfortable, none has questioned the efficacy, and many expressed appreciation of the explanations. Further, Vygotsky said learning doesn't have to be pleasant (Chaiklin, 2003).

Wiist's experience was that marked-up pages are often not reviewed closely, if at all, especially if the work is done for the student. "Whatever standards of good writing a journalism instructor holds forth for his or her students and however their work is to be assessed and graded, a coaching method by definition involves extensive interaction with students during the writing process, not just at its end" (p. 72). Wiist cites The Poynter Institute for Media Studies' Don Fry and Roy Peter Clark as promoting this coaching approach for its value in working with reporters to help them work more accurately, quickly and confidently. Fry and Clark also discussed the role of coaching throughout the

reporting process in terms of helping student reporters develop strategy, trouble-shoot and solve problems (Wiist 1997, pp. 70-71).

Teaching voice

One frequent developmental hurdle in students with such diverse backgrounds and limited experience remains how to hear their own voice in the text. Writers often complain, “I’ve spent so much time on this story I can’t even see the words,” especially when they are aware that problems exist, but not how to fix them. The problem can hide while students work on easier assignments, emerging in a challenging piece. At other times, it’s easy to see from a quick read-through that a student extensively revised without hearing the effect on flow or feeling the meter break down.

When writing is particularly difficult to edit, one possibility that has shown to be an effective solution is to ask a student to find a conference room, close the door, and read the text out loud before making another revision. This can help overcome the feedback loop between typing and reading their own text on screen. With exercise or experience, this can be simplified to some mind-clearing exercise before a re-read/re-write: getting a drink of water or getting up to stretch or walk. “The goal is for students to learn to be their own writing coaches” (Wiist p. 70). These tools help a writer eliminate the overwhelming majority of first-draft edits before the editor sees the text, allowing precious face-to-face editing time to be applied to higher-order issues of flow, narrative and the completeness of a story or appropriateness of a metaphor or approach.

Limitations

The small sample size of the completed surveys, in addition to limiting the generalizability of this data, makes it likely that exemplary or remarkable programs were missed here. One question – it began by listing a sample of potential or current practices and assessments – ran too long and received little interest. Some questions evoked overlapping responses, though it seemed better to approach the same situations from multiple angles rather than risk missing some useful information. Additionally, this study by its nature cannot be used to assess the educational quality of individual newsroom internship programs, as that would require more intimate access to the newsrooms during the course of an internship.

Conclusions

The literature shows that aids exist, and the coach willing to dig to find these aids can benefit from them. The survey has shown a wide variety of organizational strategies in use in an admittedly small sample of field sites.

The importance of a qualified coach and a high-quality interaction with the student(s) cannot be over-emphasized. On his or her shoulders, everything else hangs. That said, in well-organized programs of various sizes, usually another supervisor, or recruiter is available to provide balance, oversight and assistance to both the coach and student. Almost all respondents said they would like to see what tools, assessments or other resources exist for running internships. Many said they would consider improvements to their programs if resources were available. Nevertheless, many of these same individuals expressed confidence in their programs and in the educational quality of the work students performed.

This is a beginning, and it is clear that the field is a bit messy, with lots of variables in setting, organization, background, etc. While this survey has been helpful in establishing a limited range of possibilities, the small response hints that a wider variety of possible successful variants – not to mention programs facing issues – may be out there. I want to join in the academic conversation by helping identify, define and eventually qualify and/or quantify the role of a good coach, assessments, and structures for providing a high-quality, professionally-regarded field experience. The answers for what makes a good coach lie beyond personality and should be adaptable for a wide variety of people

and organizations. The conversation ultimately may yield new instruments and means of analysis to ensure and improve upon the quality of internship experiences for the journalism student, the school and the news organization. This is a fairly new line of inquiry. I hope to continue the dialog about internship best practices in future investigations.

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