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Learning Through Work: An AI-Assisted Framework for Work-Based Learning

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Abstract

Internships are becoming an integral part of higher education, with students undertaking them across diverse settings—from manufacturing and software to business, management and services. This raises an important educational question: does participation in an internship necessarily result in learning? Beyond completing stipulated hours and assigned tasks, how can students connect workplace experience with relevant knowledge, improve their skills, and develop the ability to apply their learning in different contexts?

This paper presents an AI-Assisted Internship Framework developed by Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited (MKCL), India, around the premise of learning through work. Its philosophical foundation can be traced to Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Nai Talim, where socially useful and productive work becomes a medium for the acquisition of knowledge. In contemporary higher education, this principle finds expression through Work-Based Learning (WBL), where the workplace becomes an extended learning environment and authentic work becomes the starting point for learning.

The framework follows three connected stages. First, the learner's actual work becomes the source of learning.Students periodically submit reports describing the work performed and their learning from it. AI analyses these reports, connects workplace experiences with relevant theoretical concepts from the curriculum as well as other knowledge sources, identifies skills and character qualities demonstrated through work, and provides personalised feedback and resources for improving workplace practice. Second, the connected theoretical concepts are tested for mastery, enabling students to strengthen the knowledge underlying their work. Third, students respond to new workplace scenarios that require them to apply the skills and theoretical understanding acquired during the internship in a different context. This provides an opportunity to develop and assess transfer of learning and transferable skills.

The framework thus creates a progression from Work ? Knowledge ? More Profound Practice. Instead

of treating internship and academic learning as separate experiences, it uses AI to build connections between workplace practice, theoretical understanding, skill enhancement and application in new situations.

The paper examines the implementation of the framework in the Indian higher education context, drawing on its use across varied internships, disciplines, organisations and workplace settings. It explores how AI can make learning from these diverse workplace experiences more visible, personalised and assessable, particularly when internships are implemented at scale. The central proposition is that the educational value of an internship lies not simply in workplace exposure, but in enabling work itself to become a systematic medium for acquiring knowledge, developing skills and improving subsequent practice.

Keywords: Work-Based Learning, AI-Assisted Internships, Transferable Skills, Higher Education Transformation