

International Students' Perception on Internship and Cultural Exchange in Vietnam: Case Study at a University in Ho Chi Minh City

Nhat Truong Tran Minh

Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH)

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5971-883X

truongtranminhnhat@gmail.com

HOW TO CITE:

Nhat Truong Tran Minh (2026).
International Students' Perception on
Internship and Cultural Exchange in
Vietnam: Case Study at a University
in Ho Chi Minh City.
International Journal of Special
Education, 41(8s), 1171-1182.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication under the
terms and conditions
of the Creative Commons Attribution
(CC BY)
license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

ABSTRACT:

This research focused on examining international students' perceptions of internship opportunities and cultural exchange experience via internships in Vietnam and at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH). Since the dynamics of global mobility are shifting and Vietnam is becoming increasingly popular as a destination country for higher education, internship and intercultural learning became crucial to international students' representations. Guided by experiential learning theory and cultural adaptation theory, this study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design involving 33 international students participating in internship and cultural exchange programs at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha). The findings provide practical implications for universities seeking to improve international internship management and intercultural learning opportunities. The perceptions of the quality and relevance of the internship, the character of cultural exchange, and related opportunities and challenges, were evaluated via descriptive statistical analyses. The survey results signified a strong overall approval of both the internship and cultural exchange experience in Vietnam. In particular, the perceived relevance of internship to one's academic background was high, along with the perceptions of clearly communicated expectations and requirements aboard the intern and the joyfulness associated with trying Vietnamese food and learning its traditions. The current study contributes to the international education literature by outlining major predictors of student satisfaction and engagement in host countries emerging on the higher education horizon. Beside that the study also provides preliminary empirical evidence regarding international students' internship and cultural exchange experiences in Vietnam. However, generalizability would be limited, considering the focus on a single institution and the small sample size.

Keywords: Cultural Exchange, Internship, International Students.

I. Introduction

1. Background of the Study

Higher mobility emerged as a dominant feature in higher education in the 21st century, and today, the

flow of international students is experiencing steady growth in developed and developing nations. In new data released by UNESCO, it has been suggested that in 2023, over 6.3 million students were studying abroad, representing more than a 45

per cent rise in the number of students studying outside their country of citizenship over the last 10 years. This growth indicates the need for academic improvement, international employability and intercultural competency in the versatile economy (Nguyen and Nguyen, 2022). The Southeast Asian region has also emerged as a serious contender in this wave, and Vietnam is represented as one of the emerging hubs of education because of the fast economic growth, cultural diversity, as well as official efforts to bring further internationalization to the higher education scene (Ryu & Nguyen, 2021).

Over the last five years, Vietnam has aggressively positioned itself as a destination for degree-pursuing students and short-term mobility of students, including those in internship and cultural exchange programs. This trend has particularly benefited Ho Chi Minh City given its proliferate industrial population, robust service sector and cosmopolitan culture. On behalf of international students, the city provides them with a mixture of professional and cultural immersion, which will follow the current experiential learning models (Ho & Chen, 2025). Such experiences enable students to combine theory and practice while accommodating the cultural context of a foreign country. Studies have indicated this can lead to resilience, problem-solving, and a greater world consensus (deWit et al., 2022).

2. Problem Statement

Despite Vietnam's progress in attracting and accommodating international students in the higher education system, a gap exists in how the research topic views the students' environment without any empirical evidence to support it, especially in designated settings in institutions of higher learning. There is not much documentation on the experiences of international students attending foreign universities which have been accommodating more of them in recent years (Liu et al., 2022). Without such evidence, program design and student support may not adequately address the needs and challenges of this cohort (Do et al., 2022). The absence of targeted research also limits Vietnam's ability to benchmark against other countries in the ASEAN region that have developed more robust international internship and exchange

frameworks. Therefore, there remains a critical gap in empirical research exploring the practical experiences of international students within Vietnam's higher education institutions, particularly in relation to institutional environments and support systems.

3. Research Objectives

This study aims to: explore international students' perceptions of internship experiences in Vietnam; examine their cultural exchange experiences and the challenges they encounter; identify factors influencing satisfaction and engagement; and analyze difficulties specific to internships in Ho Chi Minh City.

4. Research Questions

The research addresses the following questions:

- + What are international students' perceptions of internship opportunities in Vietnam? How do they perceive cultural exchange experiences during their stay?
- + What challenges and benefits do they encounter? How can institutions improve internship and cultural exchange programs?

5. Significance of the Study

This study focuses on a specific institutional case and contributes to the growing literature on cross-cultural experiential learning in Southeast Asia. It also offers practical recommendations for IUH and other Vietnamese universities seeking to improve their internship and cultural exchange offerings. Policymakers and industry stakeholders can use these insights to develop targeted initiatives that enhance the quality of international student experiences.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

The present study is informed by Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Cultural Adaptation Theory, both of which provide valuable frameworks for understanding international students' internship and cultural exchange experiences. According to Kolb (2015), in the experiential learning model, knowledge is generated through the transformation

of experience via a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within international internship contexts, students are exposed to authentic workplace environments where academic knowledge can be applied, evaluated, and refined through direct engagement with professional tasks (Lantu et al., 2022).

Experiential learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach for developing employability skills, professional competence, and critical thinking. Previous studies have demonstrated that internships facilitate the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical experience, thereby enhancing students' confidence and workplace readiness (Tomlinson & Jackson, 2022). However, the effectiveness of experiential learning is influenced by contextual factors such as mentorship quality, task relevance, organizational support, and opportunities for reflection. Consequently, internship outcomes may vary considerably across institutional and cultural settings.

In addition to experiential learning, Cultural Adaptation Theory provides a useful lens for examining how international students navigate unfamiliar social and cultural environments. Traditional adaptation models, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the U-curve model of cultural adjustment, suggest that successful adaptation depends on individuals' ability to manage cultural differences, develop intercultural competence, and establish meaningful social relationships within host communities (Wang & Wang, 2022). Recent scholarship has further emphasized the dynamic interaction between individual characteristics, institutional support mechanisms, and host-country environments in shaping adaptation outcomes (deWit et al., 2022). Together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that internship participation and cultural exchange are interconnected processes that contribute simultaneously to professional development and intercultural learning.

2.2 Internship Experiences and Student Outcomes

Internships have become an increasingly important component of international higher education because they provide opportunities for students to acquire workplace experience, develop professional networks, and enhance employability. A growing body of research suggests that the quality of internship experiences is closely associated with students' perceptions of learning effectiveness and career preparedness. Among the factors consistently identified in the literature are task relevance, mentorship quality, organizational support, and opportunities for meaningful participation in workplace activities (Hung, 2025; Tomlinson & Jackson, 2022).

Research conducted in various educational contexts indicates that internships contribute not only to technical skill development but also to broader competencies such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. Lantu et al. (2022) found that experiential learning opportunities within internship settings significantly enhanced students' professional confidence and entrepreneurial competencies. Similarly, Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) reported that work-integrated learning programs improved graduate employability by enabling students to bridge the gap between academic preparation and workplace expectations.

Despite these positive outcomes, the literature also highlights several challenges associated with internship participation. Studies have documented instances of inadequate supervision, poorly defined roles, limited opportunities for meaningful engagement, and mismatches between academic specialization and assigned responsibilities (Tran & Bui, 2021). Such findings suggest that the educational value of internships depends not merely on participation itself but on the quality and structure of the learning environment. Consequently, understanding how international students evaluate internship experiences remains an important area of inquiry, particularly within emerging host countries where internship systems continue to evolve.

2.3 Cultural Exchange and Intercultural Adaptation

Beyond professional development, international mobility programs are intended to promote intercultural learning and global citizenship. Cultural exchange experiences provide students with opportunities to engage directly with different social norms, cultural practices, and value systems, thereby fostering intercultural competence and cross-cultural understanding. Existing research consistently demonstrates that meaningful interactions with host communities contribute positively to students' adaptation, personal growth, and overall satisfaction during international study experiences (Luong et al., 2023; Thinh, 2025).

Intercultural competence is increasingly viewed as a critical outcome of international education. Through participation in cultural activities, community engagement, and everyday social interactions, students develop greater awareness of cultural diversity and acquire skills necessary for effective communication across cultural boundaries. Thinh (2025) found that short-term exchange programs in Southeast Asia significantly enhanced participants' intercultural sensitivity when structured opportunities for interaction with local communities were provided. Likewise, Luong et al. (2023) reported that active engagement with host cultures contributed to improved adaptability and stronger intercultural agency among international students in Vietnam.

Nevertheless, adaptation processes are not always straightforward. Previous studies have identified language barriers, communication difficulties, homesickness, and cultural misunderstandings as common challenges experienced by international students (Do et al., 2022). The severity of these challenges often depends on the availability of institutional support, prior intercultural exposure, and opportunities for meaningful social integration. Consequently, successful cultural exchange programs require more than exposure to cultural activities; they necessitate structured support mechanisms that facilitate interaction, reflection, and adaptation.

Importantly, recent research has begun to recognize that professional and intercultural learning processes are closely interconnected. Internship settings often function as important sites of intercultural engagement, where students negotiate workplace norms, communicate across cultural boundaries, and develop culturally responsive professional identities. This perspective suggests that internships and cultural exchange should not be treated as separate dimensions of international mobility but rather as mutually reinforcing experiences that contribute to holistic student development.

2.4 International Student Mobility in Vietnam and Research Gap

Vietnam has emerged as an increasingly attractive destination for international students due to its rapid economic development, expanding higher education sector, and growing internationalization initiatives (Ryu & Nguyen, 2021). In particular, Ho Chi Minh City has become an important hub for international education, offering students access to diverse internship opportunities across industries such as manufacturing, technology, business, and hospitality. These developments have created favorable conditions for integrating academic learning with professional and cultural experiences.

Although research on international education in Vietnam has expanded in recent years, several important gaps remain. Existing studies have primarily focused on internationalization policies, intercultural adaptation, or outbound mobility among Vietnamese students (Luong et al., 2023; Do et al., 2022). Comparatively little attention has been paid to international students participating in internship-based mobility programs within Vietnamese universities. Furthermore, previous studies have often examined internship experiences and cultural adaptation separately, despite growing evidence that these processes are closely interconnected.

Another limitation in the current literature concerns the scarcity of institution-level evidence. Much of the existing research adopts national or regional perspectives, making it difficult to understand how specific universities design and implement

internship and cultural exchange programs. Institutional contexts may substantially influence students' experiences through differences in support services, industry partnerships, mentorship practices, and opportunities for cultural engagement.

Therefore, there remains a need for empirical research that simultaneously examines internship experiences and cultural exchange among international students within Vietnamese higher education institutions. By investigating international students' perceptions at the IUH, the present study seeks to address this gap and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how professional and intercultural learning experiences shape student satisfaction, adaptation, and overall program effectiveness in an emerging international education destination.

III. Methodology

This research sampled the perceptions of interns at IUH in order to exchange cultures through a survey approach. In a quantitative format, the study design makes it easy for statistical methodologists to detect relationships between demographic variables and student satisfaction, thereby producing cross-national patterns by nationality, academic background, and program duration. After international students finished their short internships, most returned to their home countries, making it difficult to carry out follow-up interviews or focus groups. Consequently, it was decided that quantitative surveys would provide the most objective and efficient means for capturing their experiences within the limited period of time during which they were at IUH. Three experts in international education and educational research evaluated the questionnaire for content validity, and then a pilot test involving 5 international students was conducted to assess item clarity and reliability before full-scale data collection.

The population under study consisted of 33 international students at IUH who had taken part in internships and/or exchange. In order to ensure representative inclusion across nationalities, levels of program and disciplines a stratified randomization technique was used. This approach

increases the representativeness of the findings by taking into account international students' diversity.

The number of people surveyed totaled 33, which was considered appropriate given the small size of international students at IUH, usually from 40 to 50 per year. What is more, these students generally stay for a short duration (three weeks to three months), which also limited the number that could be included in this sample. Consequently, given that this group represents a substantial percentage of the whole population, and can objectively be used for statistical analysis in terms of this particular study.

The main survey instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of items about demographics and Likert-style statements about the quality of the internship, the degree to which participants interacted with host culture, any difficulties incurred during this phase, advantages gained and overall satisfaction. A piloted test from previous international internships work was used to make the instrument; this was then subject to validation and editing by the researcher for content validity. The survey was conducted over four weeks and both online through a google sheet sent to students' emails and international students on campus. Invitations to participate were voluntary, and informed consents obtained from all respondents. The respondents were guaranteed confidentiality of their replies if requested, and no other personal data were collected except demographics in general.

Data processing was done with SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize central tendencies and variability, while inferential statistics such as an F-test helped identify where demographic categories had differing opinions.

The study of international human subjects meets all the ethical requirements of the Institutional Review Board of IUH. Safeguards include voluntary participation, anonymity, and the right to withdraw without penalty.

IV. Findings and Discussion

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, a reliability test was conducted. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.721 as shown in Table 1 below. A Cronbach's Alpha of more than 0.7 means that the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.721	19

Table 2 below shows the demographic statistics of the participants. Majority of the students were from Malaysia (42.4%), followed by Canada, 6, (18.2%). Students from Australia were 2, those from France 4, those from Germany 2, 2 from Japan, and 1 from India, China and Belgium.

Table 2. Demographics Statistics

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
Canada	6	18.2%
Malaysia	14	42.4%
Australia	2	6.1%
France	4	12.1%
Germany	2	6.1%
Japan	2	6.1%
India	1	3.0%
China	1	3.0%
Belgium	1	3.0%
Total	33	100.0%

The following are the age groups of the participants. From table 3 below, majority of the students were aged between 22 and 24 (63.6%) and the rest were under 22.

Table 3. The age groups of the participants.

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
19-21	12	36.4%
22-24	21	63.6%
Total	33	100.0%

The following is the distribution of gender of participants. Most participants (60.6%) were female and the rest (39.4%) were male.

Table 4. The gender of the participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	13	39.4%
Female	20	60.6%
Total	33	100.0%

The following is the academic background of the participants. Table 5 below shows the field of study of the various participants with the majority, 33.3% in business// marketing, 12.1% in tourism and hospitality, 18.2% in engineering and technology, 15.2% in language studies and 21.2% in social sciences.

Table 5. Field of study of the participants

Field of Study	Frequency	Percent
Business / Marketing	11	33.3%
Tourism / Hospitality	4	12.1%
Engineering / Technology	6	18.2%
Language Studies	5	15.2%
Social Sciences	7	21.2%
Total	33	100.0%

The following is the current level of study of the participants. Table 6 below shows that majority of the students were undergraduate (54.5%) and the rest were graduates (45.5%).

Table 6. Level of Study

Level of Study	Frequency	Percent
Undergraduate	18	54.5%
Graduate	15	45.5%
Total	33	100.0%

The following is the internship period of the participants involved in the study. Majority were in the Jan-Jun 2024 period (42.2%), 30.3% were in the July-December period and the rest were in the Jan-Jun 2025 period.

Table 7. Period of Study

Period	Frequency	Percent
Jan-Jun 2024	14	42.4%
Jul-Dec 2025	10	30.3%

Jan–Jun 2025	9	27.3%
Total	33	100.0%

Based on Table 8 below, participants generally reported a very positive internship experience. The relevance of the internship to their academic background received a high average score of **4.55**, indicating strong alignment with their studies. Mentorship and guidance during the internship were also well-rated (**4.42**), suggesting that most students felt supported by their supervisors.

The tasks assigned during the internship were considered meaningful (**4.52**) and contributed to learning. Expectations were met for most participants (**4.42**), and satisfaction with working conditions was one of the highest-rated aspects (**4.64**), though it showed slightly more variation in responses. Communication with supervisors received the highest rating overall (**4.73**), showing excellent clarity and support. The professionalism of

the host organization was rated slightly lower than other items (**4.33**), though still favorable. Overall, the internship experience was well-received and seen as a positive contribution to students' career development (**4.42**).

The findings provide a clear answer to the first research question regarding international students' perceptions of internship opportunities in Vietnam. Participants reported highly positive evaluations of internship quality, particularly in relation to academic relevance, mentorship, and communication with supervisors. These findings suggest that internship programs at IUH successfully facilitate the integration of academic learning and workplace practice. The strong ratings may reflect the increasing professionalization of internship programs in Vietnamese higher education institutions and the growing capacity of host organizations to support international students effectively.

Table 8. Internship Experience

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The internship was relevant to my academic background.	33	3	5	4.55	.564
I received proper mentorship or guidance during the internship.	33	2	5	4.42	.663
The internship tasks were meaningful and contributed to my learning.	33	3	5	4.52	.566
The host organization was professional and well-structured.	33	2	5	4.33	.645
The internship met my expectations.	33	4	5	4.42	.502
I was satisfied with the working conditions.	33	1	5	4.64	.783
I had clear communication with my supervisor or mentor.	33	4	5	4.73	.452
The internship improved my career prospects.	33	1	5	4.42	.792
I received adequate support from the university during my internship.	33	4	5	4.45	.506
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Based on Table 9 below, Students also reported positive cultural and social experiences in

Vietnam. The finding that communication with supervisors received the highest evaluation (4.73) is

consistent with Hung (2025), who identified mentorship and supervisory support as major predictors of internship satisfaction. Similarly, Tomlinson and Jackson (2021) emphasized the importance of professional guidance in facilitating workplace learning and identity development. The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that these relationships are also evident among international students participating in internship programs in Vietnam. This suggests that effective supervision may be a universal determinant of internship success across different cultural contexts.

They felt welcomed by the local community (4.36) and found it easy to make friends (4.45). Opportunities to participate in cultural activities were widely available (4.61), and the enjoyment of Vietnamese food was especially high (4.58). Participants gained a deeper understanding of Vietnamese culture (4.55) and traditions (4.64), suggesting strong engagement with local customs.

Cultural exchange was noted as helpful in adapting to life in Vietnam (4.42), and language barriers did not seem to present significant challenges (4.48, reverse-coded), meaning most students did not feel limited by them.

With respect to the second research question, participants viewed cultural exchange experiences as an important and beneficial component of their stay in Vietnam. High levels of agreement regarding cultural participation (4.61), social interaction, and understanding of Vietnamese traditions and customs (4.64) indicate that cultural immersion extended beyond passive observation and facilitated meaningful intercultural engagement. These findings suggest that cultural exchange activities may play a significant role in supporting students' adaptation and overall satisfaction during international mobility experiences. Overall, the cultural immersion aspect of the program appears to have been a valuable and enjoyable part of the experience.

Table 9. Cultural Exchange Experience

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I felt welcomed by the local community.	33	4	5	4.36	.489
I had opportunities to participate in cultural activities.	33	3	5	4.61	.556
I found it easy to make local friends.	33	4	5	4.45	.506
I enjoyed trying Vietnamese food.	33	4	5	4.58	.502
I was able to learn about Vietnamese traditions and customs.	33	4	5	4.64	.489
I faced challenges due to language barriers. (Reverse-coded)	33	3	5	4.48	.566
Cultural exchange helped me better adapt to life in Vietnam.	33	4	5	4.42	.502
I gained a better understanding of Vietnamese culture.	33	3	5	4.55	.564
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Based on Table 10 below, the internship and exchange experience contributed significantly to participants' personal development. A high mean score of **4.67** reflects strong agreement that the time in Vietnam helped them grow personally. This was

among the highest-rated items across the entire survey. Beside that, the strong appreciation for Vietnamese food and cultural traditions aligns with the findings of Luong et al. (2023), who reported that meaningful cultural engagement enhances

intercultural competence among international students in Vietnam. However, unlike previous studies that primarily focused on classroom-based intercultural interactions, the present study highlights the value of workplace-based cultural immersion. This finding suggests that internships can serve as important sites for both professional learning and intercultural development.

Furthermore, participants showed strong willingness to recommend the program to other international students, with an average score of **4.52**. This suggests overall satisfaction and a belief in the value of the program for future participants.

Table 10. Overall Impact and Satisfaction

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
My experience in Vietnam helped me grow personally.	33	2	5	4.67	.645
I would recommend this internship and exchange program to other international students.	33	4	5	4.52	.508
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Students generally reported that internships were relevant to their academic fields and offered meaningful learning opportunities. Consistent with Hung (2025), mentorship quality strongly influenced satisfaction, with students receiving regular feedback expressing greater confidence in their skills and readiness for the job market. When supervisors took time to explain local work practices and contextualize tasks, students developed stronger problem-solving abilities and cultural understanding (Do et al., 2022).

Several students highlighted the value of exposure to Vietnam's dynamic industrial sectors, especially in Ho Chi Minh City, where internships often occurred in manufacturing, technology, and hospitality industries. However, some noted that tasks occasionally lacked complexity, limiting opportunities to apply specialized academic knowledge—echoing Tran and Bui (2021) observation that in some cases, international interns are assigned administrative or observational roles rather than substantive project work.

Research from [Trung et al \(2025\)](#) indicates that the alignment between academic specialization and internship duties is a critical determinant of perceived quality. Where such alignment existed, students reported increased confidence in their

career direction; where it was absent, students were less likely to recommend the program to peers. In addition, participants who were eligible to take initiative and speak up demonstrated being more engaged, which responds to the data obtained in the study because empowerment leads to learning and adaptation in terms of cross-cultural environments at work (Shi & Xu, 2025).

Cultural exchange also supplemented the experiences of other students who stated that it was more effective when the experience was built into the internship, that is, when host organizations arranged field trips to the craft village or community involvement initiatives. Tomlinson and Jackson (2021) argue that providing cultural experiences in a professional context enables students to put their educational process of acquiring professional skills into the larger context of society construction.

The participants suggested better pre-arrival orientations, which should emphasize workplace norms and cultural expectations, increase language training options, and better coordination between IUH and the host organizations to align tasks. Continuous mentorship throughout the internship period was also provided to assist in facilitating professional and cultural adjustment.

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research discovered that the international students of IUH have positive attitudes towards their internship experiences and experiencing the culture of a new country. They enjoy the benefits of growing professionally and learning about their culture. There were significant effects of nationality on adaptation and satisfaction, and no measurable effects were found of gender and age.

In the context of universities, the findings evidence the necessity to make closer strategic ties to the industry to guarantee that internship opportunities are relevant to the students in their studies and promote the development of their professional skills. A survey conducted by Tomlison and Jackson (2022) indicates that such formal cooperation between the university and industry domains enhances the quality of internship and promotes higher host organizations' intentions to deliver rich learning experiences. Al Hassani and Wilkins (2022) also suggest that institutions have an ongoing mechanism of monitoring student satisfaction and outcomes to maintain quality.

The findings have important implications for language instruction within international mobility programs. Although participants generally reported positive adaptation experiences, communication and intercultural interaction remain central to successful internship participation. Universities may therefore consider integrating workplace communication training, intercultural communication modules, and survival Vietnamese language courses into pre-departure or orientation programs. Such initiatives may enhance students' ability to navigate workplace expectations, interact with local communities, and maximize the benefits of both internship and cultural exchange experiences. Furthermore, English for Professional Communication courses could incorporate authentic internship-related scenarios to better prepare students for international workplace environments.

On the policy level, increasing the efficiency of the visa approval and work permit procedures may also significantly lower the pre-

arrival cognition and enhance the early-stage readjustment. According to Do et al. (2022), administrative barriers are one of the main determining factors of overall student satisfaction in Vietnam. Alternatively, policymakers can stimulate the decision of companies to hire international interns by offering them tax credits or rewards to motivate the involvement of more industries than tourism and hospitality (Ramya et al., 2025). Furthermore, at a national level of the cultural immersion process, one of the recommended items of cultural exchange integration into the national education plan is possible in terms of encouraging international students to participate in special subsidized language learning courses or other heritage tours (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022).

There is a need to improve pre-departure and on-arrival orientation programmes, whilst focusing on twins, and matching workplace expectations and cultural adaptation strategies is essential. Thinh (2025) posit that the more one is exposed to the norms and communication pattern of the host country earlier, the better swift adjustment and less confusion. Investing in training Vietnamese language on even primary conversational levels would help the students find it easier to maneuver with their day-to-day life and even the workplace experiences (Thinh, 2025).

Long-term mentorship, which involves casual counselling at the early stages and throughout the whole internship, can significantly improve professional experience and cultural adaptation (Hung, 2025). Furthermore, universities need to develop official assessment mechanisms to conduct assessments of host organizations with the input of the interns regarding mentorship quality, the relevance of the tasks, and the cultural support. This information could be applied to have high standards and make good decisions on whether to renew the partnership or expand it.

This method of self-reporting data brings in some form of predispositions, such as the social desirability bias, according to which students will exaggerate positive experiences to meet the perceived conjectures. Additionally, the only institution mainly included in the study, IUH, implies that the study's findings might not be

generalized as a situation representing the overall international student experience in Vietnam. According to Thinh (2024), the institutional setting may considerably define the appearance and content of internship and exchange programs. The study also captured the views at a time that did not allow it to evaluate the long-term effect of the same on a career path or build in intercultural competence.

Future research might follow a comparative multi-institutional research design in exploring the differences in quality of internships and cultural exchange between Vietnamese universities, as Luong et al. (2023) have

recommended. Longitudinal studies on the alumni over several years might indicate how such experiences affect professional success and intercultural skills. Furthermore, including qualitative approaches would have allowed gaining different, more profound insights into the adaptation one is going through, as it could have involved more in-depth interviews or reflective journals (Trung et al., 2025). It is also possible to use competitive advantages and areas of improvement in attracting and retaining international students through conducting comparative studies between Vietnam and other ASEAN destinations.

References

- Al Hassani, A. A., & Wilkins, S. (2022). Student retention in higher education: the influences of organizational identification and institution reputation on student satisfaction and behaviors. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 36(6), 1046-1064. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJEM-03-2022-0123/full/html>
- deWit, H., Minaeva, E., & Wang, L. (2022). *International student recruitment and mobility in non-Anglophone countries*. London and New York: Routledge. <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781003217923&type=googlepdf>
- Do, M. N. N., Ngo, T. C. T., & Phan, T. H. (2022). Socio-cultural adaptation of international students in Vietnam. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 5(2), 382-391. <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.05.02.500>
- Ho, D. M., & Chen, S. (2025). Explore How a Foreign Law Firm Tailors its Marketing Strategy in a Local Market: A Case Study of a South Korean Law Firm in Vietnam. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1966960>
- Hung, L. (2025). EFL students' perceptions of their graduation internship: A study at a center of foreign languages in Vietnam. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 16(1), 72-83. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1601.09>
- Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Lantu, D. C., Suharto, Y., Fachira, I., Permatasari, A., & Anggadwita, G. (2022). Experiential learning model: improving entrepreneurial values through internship program at start-ups. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 12(1), 107-125. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/HESWBL-01-2021-0014/full/html>
- Liu, G., Li, W., & Zhang, Y. (2022). Tracing Chinese international students' psychological and academic adjustments in uncertain times: An exploratory case study in the United Kingdom. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13, 942227. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.942227/full>
- Luong, P. M., Tran, L. T., Nguyen, H. T. T., Ngo, N. T. H., Nguyen, T. T. M., Dang, G. H., & Nguyen, H. T. (2023). Student agency for intercultural adaptability in international programs: Insights into internationalization at home in Vietnam. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 93, 101855. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101855>
- Nguyen, H., & Nguyen, V. D. (2022). Enhancing student employability: a mixed-methods study into work-integrated learning curricula in Vietnamese universities. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 23(3), 405-425. <https://vuir.vu.edu.au/45602/6/Ep45602.pdf>
- Ramya, R., Kiruthiga, V., Vetriselvan, R., Gayathri, V., & Velmurugan, P. R. R. (2025). Hybrid Entrepreneurship Navigating Career Transitions: Career Shifts and Their Impact on Economic Growth. In *Applications of Career Transitions and Entrepreneurship* (pp. 241-268). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/hybrid-entrepreneurship-navigating-career-transitions/370836>
- Ryu, J. H., & Nguyen, A. T. (2021). Internationalization of higher education in Vietnam: current situations, policies, and challenges. *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*, 23(3), 227-241. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCED-10-2020-0074>

-
- Shi, Y., & Xu, A. T. (2025). Beyond Performance: AI Psychological Empowerment in Cross-Cultural Education. *International Journal of Changes in Education*. <https://ojs.bonviewpress.com/index.php/IJCE/article/view/4756>
- Thinh, M. P. (2025). Adapting teaching practices and enhancing intercultural competence: student teachers' experiences in an international exchange program. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 19(1), 43-57. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JME-06-2024-0077/full/html>
- Thinh, N. T. (2024). Developing intercultural competence through short-term exchange programs in Southeast Asia: Insights from Vietnamese students. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 53(2), 160–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2024.2431811>
- Tomlinson, M., & Jackson, D. (2022). Professional identity formation in contemporary higher education students. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(4), 885-900. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075079.2019.1659763>
- Tran, L. T., & Bui, H. (2021). International graduate returnees' accumulation of capitals and (re) positioning in the home labour market in Vietnam: the explorer, the advancer or the adventurer?. *Journal of Education and Work*, 34(4), 544-557. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13639080.2021.1943334>
- Trung, N. T., Hien, N. T. D., Le Khang, C., Ngoc, N. A., Suong, T. T. T., & Tam, N. T. T. (2025). Solutions to Improve the Quality of Professional Internship (Central Area Tour) for Vietnamese Studies (Tourism Specialized) Students, Department of Linguistics and Literature, Ho Chi Minh City University of Education. *Intersecta Minds Journal*, 4(1), 1-18. <https://so13.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/IMJ/article/view/834>
- Wang, F., & Wang, Y. (2022). International student mobility and internationalization of higher education in Hungary and China: A comparative analysis. *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*, 14(2), 85-95. <https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1705&context=jcihe#page=90>