Enhancing Graduate Employability Through Li2U: A Digital Platform for Talent-Industry Alignment

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ABSTRACT

In today's rapidly evolving job market, a significant gap has emerged between the competencies developed in higher education and those required by employers. This mismatch has led to underemployment and a lack of industry-relevant experience among graduates. To address this challenge, we propose a strategic shift towards a competency-based system in higher education. In recent years, the utilisation of mobile devices among college and university students has escalated. The utilisation of mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets, improves communication between lecturers and students as well as class activities. Mobile devices has considerable potential to transform education by enhancing the interactivity and engagement of traditional classrooms. This study introduces Li2U, a mobile application prototype designed to assist university students in efficiently locating internship opportunities, recognising that internships are crucial for professional success. There exists a correlation between internship experience and obtaining employment post-graduation. This prototype application has been created to supplant the existing manual administrative process. The significance of this research resides in the potential to expand these applications or their foundational prototypes, enabling the development of practical applications tailored to specific settings.

Keywords: Internship, mobile application, prototype, usefulness.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, many graduates have viewed internships as a necessary and even desirable rite of passage. In fact, university students will now be required to complete an internship as part of their coursework at a higher education institution (Qu et al. 2021). Although the fundamental purpose of an internship is to serve as a transitional phase between the world of academia and the working world, the intense level of competition that exists in today's labour market has transformed internships into a valuable currency that can help graduates land jobs (Mansor et al., 2019). The main objectives of the internship programmes were to facilitate a smoother transition into professional roles for recent college graduates by providing them with a constructive and encouraging working environment (Baum, 2019; Garrett & Jackson, 2006). Nevertheless, internship programmes will act as mentors to interns during the duration of the programme in order to impart knowledge, attitudes, skills, and career development.

Internship placement can be arranged by the students themselves or by the university where they are enrolled. A focus on learning outcomes that are aligned with transferable workplace competency-based skills and applied knowledge, analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a workplace application process is of utmost importance for future internships (Gault et al., 2010). These learning outcomes should be developed in an environment that is tailored to the occupation. It has become a rite of passage for young people and is viewed as a requirement for future employment (Layton et al., 2021). Consequently, internships are advantageous for students because they offer exposure and experience, thus improving their work employability.

In order to assist students in locating and securing the best internship opportunities, we have developed the mobile application Li2U in order to provide students with an efficient means of securing and matching internship placements. The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, to introduce and discuss the first prototypes of the Li2U application. Second, to analyse how users-specifically, students- perceive the usefulness of this Li2U for further improvement and enhancement. Usability is taken into account because it encompasses numerous characteristics of apps, including design, user-friendliness, usability, adaptability, accessibility, availability, and interactivity. Additionally, other elements, such as functional needs and user interface elements, further determine accessibility.

This paper is organised as follows: Section 1 is an introduction. Section 2 discusses mobile applications. Section 3 presents the features of Li2U. Section 4 describes the research methodology. Section 4 discusses the findings. Section 5 contains a brief discussion, including limitations, and Section 6 contains the paper's conclusion and future recommendation.

MOBILE APPLICATIONS

The introduction of technology for smart devices and mobile applications provides educators with new venues to engage students with course material and support classroom discussions. The use of mobile internet and mobile applications has increased dramatically in recent years and is expected to continue in the foreseeable future. The continued adoption of smart gadgets by students as a vital component of their educational experience compels educators to alter teaching methods to incorporate this new technology (Baran, 2014). New opportunities have become available for lecturers and instructors to engage students with the content of the courses they teach and to lend support to classroom discussions thanks to technological advancements that enable smart devices and mobile applications. Educators are required to

modify instructional practises in order to accommodate new forms of technology as a result of the widespread acceptance of the use of mobile devices by students as an essential part of their overall educational experience. The connection between educators and students can be greatly enhanced by using mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Apps and software designed specifically for mobile learning have proliferated at an accelerated rate in recent years thanks to the proliferation of new mobile technology.

DEVELOMENT STAGE OF Li2U

The creation of the Li2U mobile application adhered to a systematic and iterative methodology based on the Bizagi process management framework. This procedure guaranteed the engagement of pertinent stakeholders, compliance with competency-based development methodologies, and ongoing system assessment to assure usability and sustainability. The development process of LI2U is shown in Figure 1. The process workflow is described as follows;

i. Step 1: Engagement of Stakeholders
The process began with stakeholder participation, including lecturers, industry partners, internship unit, and students. This step was essential to identify expectations, challenges in current internship placement methods, and desired features of the Li2U system. Preliminary involvement facilitated the alignment of the application's objectives with actual user requirements and institutional aims

ii. Step 2: Development of a Competency Framework
This phase entailed the identification and integration of a competency-based framework to facilitate internship matching and assessment. Competency mapping guaranteed that the application conformed to the graduate qualities and employability abilities required by industry. This framework constituted the foundation for the development of functionality such as resume creation, employer specifications, and student profiling.

iii. Step 3: System Design
Informed by the competency framework and stakeholder consultations, the system design phase concentrated on delineating the system architecture, user interface (UI) components, and the comprehensive operational flow. Mock-ups and wireframes were developed to illustrate user journeys for students, employers, and administrators.

iv. Step 4: System Development
Upon acceptance of the design, the rsystem development commenced. This encompassed programming, database setup, and feature incorporation for functionalities including user registration, internship application monitoring, employer dashboards, and notification systems.

v. Step 5: Pilot Test
The designed system was subjected to pilot testing with a restricted cohort of users from designated internship programs. Usability testing concentrated on assessing perceived ease of use, accessibility and user happiness. Quantitative input was obtained using surveys employing a Likert scale to assess initial system adoption.

vi. Step 6: Field Test
Following enhancements informed by pilot feedback, the system was implemented for extensive field testing. The field test sought to evaluate scalability, functional stability, and integration with institutional systems, such as academic calendars and internship clearances.

vii. Step 7: Training
Structured training sessions were conducted for end-users, including students, lecturers, and administrative personnel, to facilitate effective system implementation. Instructional manuals, and online support were established to streamline onboarding and reduce resistance to change.

viii. Step 8: Implementation
Following successful field tests and training, Li2U was deployed for comprehensive implementation. The program supplanted earlier manual or semi-digital processes and emerged as the official platform for overseeing internship assignments.

ix. Step 9 : Evaluation & Improvement
After implementation, ongoing assessment methods were integrated to assess system performance, user input, and system errors. Usage metrics, user recommendations, and institutional key performance indicators served as feedback mechanisms for continuous enhancements.

x. Step 10: Scaling and Sustainability
The concluding phase concentrated on expanding the system, improving compatibility (e.g., iOS version), and strategizing for long-term sustainability via system maintenance, data protection rules, and funding models. The objective was to create Li2U as a sustainable digital platform for internship placement and career advancement.
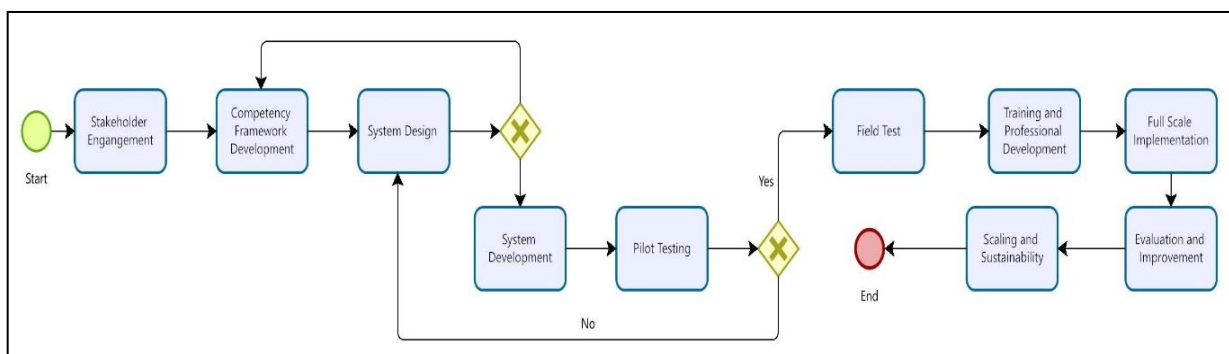
Figure 1: Development Stage of Li2U

Features of Li2U
The traditional method of searching for job placement has been superseded by the Li2U platform, which has been developed. Li2U is developed to be compatible with all versions of the Android operating system, so making it readily available is not an issue. Figure 2 depicts a screen capture of the Li2U prototype.

Figure 2: Screenshots of Li2U

Figure. 2 ; Screenshots from the Li2u app, from left to right: (a) the front screen or main screen of Li2U; (b) the employer, student, and admin screen; (c) student resume screen or personal information of the user, such as name, academic qualifications, working experiences, skills, (d) tracking applications status e) list of employers; and f) a closing screen or logout command.

METHODOLOGY

Consequently, the primary purpose of this process is to determine how users perceive the usefulness of Li2U. Since Li2U is currently in the prototype phase, it is crucial that the apps be assessed to determine their usability and suitability for student use. The study reported in this paper employs quantitative data that was collected and analysed simultaneously. Students from programmes with a required internship, specifically in year 3 (semester 5) choose to be respondents in order to focus on students' experiences in internship application placement. In this study, 350 undergraduates of a degree programme in the Faculty of Business and Management at the University Teknologi MARA, Malaysia, were chosen to evaluate the Li2U application. These respondents were selected as they fulfilled the criteria needed for the evaluation.The framework that Davis (1989) developed for evaluating user acceptance of individual system functionalities served as the basis for the questionnaire that was used for the

survey. The questionnaire included 7 statements that were rated using the Lickert scale, with 1 representing "completely disagree" and 5 representing "entirely agree." The data obtained from the Lickert scale rating statements were analysed in accordance with each construct's specific definition, namely perceived ease of use.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Usability is taken into account because it encompasses numerous characteristics of apps, including design, user-friendliness, usability, adaptability, accessibility, availability, and interactivity. Sub-parameters such as functional needs and user interface elements further determine accessibility. The interaction is designed further by considering the user's actions. This characteristic is included in the app evaluation criteria since the vast majority of apps include it. According to Davis et al. (1989), the concept of "perceived ease" refers to the extent to which an individual believes where they think that using certain technology might enhance the effectiveness of their work. In a nutshell, it refers to the degree to which a user believes that the system is simple to navigate or is how much users think they won't have to do anything when they use a certain system. This concept was evaluated using seven different items that were included in the questionnaire. The results of these items are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Perceived Ease of Use of Li2U

NO	Statements	Mean
1	I am happy with the features & interface of Li2U	5
2	I would say positive things about Li2u to other student	4
3	Mobile Li2U very useful and user friendly	4
4	The app made it easy for me to update and register for job placement	5
5	I can access Li2U anywhere at any time	5
6	Li2U helps me to find internship placement efficiently	5
7	Li2U very practical and provide information that I need	5
	Mean	4.7

Majority of respondents had a favourable impression of Li2U, giving it a mean score of 4.7 out of 5 for the perceived ease of use. This indicates that the prototype service is widely accepted. Every single one of the items obtained a score between 4 and 5. As can be seen from the table, majority of respondents believed that the most recent version of Li2U was superior to the prior one in terms of ease of use, practicality, and convenience.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The vast majority of students are attempting to complete simple tasks using mobile devices and applications rather than desktop software. The number of people using mobile applications is gradually expanding to match the number of people using desktop applications. According to this finding, there is significant potential for Li2U to be utilised as a tool that assists students in their search for internship placement and in matching with possible employers. Li2U, which is a tool that makes use of mobile applications, has big potential platform for supporting students in properly managing their time because of the widespread availability of technology applications and the ease with which they can be utilised. Li2U mobile applications have the potential to provide information that is dependable, detailed, and relevant if proper attention is paid to the apps' technical features, their ease of use, and their respect for users' privacy.

Although the vast majority of respondents were pleased with the content and features of Li2U, the researchers still had a few suggestions for how the application may be improved and believed that these suggestions could be beneficial. They have several noteworthy platform challenges and limitations in addition to the interesting usability of their mobile applications. We are attempting to discuss the restriction. First in terms of privacy: As mobile apps collect sensitive user information; they request permission to access and control the user's phone and may become main barrier. It must be assured that the application uses data without disclosing personal information and in a secure and safe manner. Second, in terms of performance, this is an essential metric for evaluating mobile applications. Communication, connectivity, and feedback can be used to characterise the performance of mobile Li2Us. user interface that was more "friendly," which would involve making the various components larger so that navigating could be simplified. In particular, future research of ours will focus on the features of applications, including efficiency, efficacy, and contentment, which have been shown to be among the most important factors influencing users' impressions of mobile apps. At this stage of development, when the prototype's functionality is the primary focus, it is premature to assess if Li2U could operate properly. The creation of the prototype has revealed the great application potential of Li2U. For the development team to plan future versions of the programme, the present prototype input is crucial. Not only did some feedback contribute to the enhancement of the user experience, but also to the development of additional app features. A pilot version of the Li2U mobile application will be developed and tested with an emphasis on its usability in collaboration with end users. Our future research will focus on application aspects such as efficiency, effectiveness, and user happiness, which have been identified as the most influential factors leading to the perceived usability of the Li2U mobile application.

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