

Creating Internships in the Absence of the Private Sector

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Abstract

The differentiation of the higher education sector in Ethiopia has created a new sector of Higher Education Institutions: Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). Its focus is on educating academically trained experts for regional industries. Close cooperation between industries and UAS is set as a key requirement. However, Ethiopian industries in many regions are not developed enough that those could be considered as active partners for UASs and able to accommodate interns or to provide expert teachers to UAS classes.

European UAS structures serve as benchmarks for the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE). Therefore, UAS curricula of study programmes in building-construction, electro-engineering and economic/business/tourism from different European countries build a common ground for Ethiopian UASs. But, due to the lack of industries in the regions, Ethiopian UAS are not able to mirror the European counterparts, where study programmes at bachelor level comprise 70 credits out of 210 credits as practical works, internships and bachelor thesis. - The question is, how can Ethiopian UASs in the absence of companies offer practice-oriented education in their study programmes?

This paper refers to the ongoing research, on how to integrate UAS (academic and non-academic) departments at UAS campuses to create internship placements for students in the absence of internship placements in the private

sector. Kotebe University of Education (KUE) - as one of the newly founded UAS in Ethiopia - has agreed to act as subject of this try-out.

Keywords: university of applied sciences, internships, in-campus internships

Background

The differentiation of the higher education sector in Ethiopia has created a new sector: the Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). Its focus is on educating academically trained experts for regional industries. Close cooperation between industries and UAS is set as a key requirement. However, Ethiopian industries in many regions are not developed enough that those could be considered as active partners for UASs and able to accommodate interns or to provide expert teachers to UAS classes.

European UAS structures serve the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE) as benchmarks. Therefore, UAS curricula of study programmes in building-construction, electro-engineering and economic/business/tourism from different European countries build the common ground for Ethiopian UASs. However, the Ethiopian industries in the regions are not able to mirror European counterparts and to provide practical trainings and internships in the extend of 70 credits out of 210 or 240 credits.

Insight to the macro-economic situation provides the Report on Large and Medium Scale Manufacturing and Electricity Industries Survey (Statistical Bulletin 2017, p. 57) where the distribution of large and medium scale manufacturing industries – both, public and private by regional state and industrial group are indicated. A total number of 3,596 large and medium scale manufacturing industries is reported in 2015/16 (2008 E.C.). About 37% of the manufacturing industries were located in Addis Ababa followed by Oromia with more than 27% of the industries. More than 23% of the manufacturing industries are aligned in the category of food products and beverages followed by non-metallic mineral products with about 18% and the furniture industry with more than 12%.

The Ethiopian large and medium scale manufacturing and electricity industries as well as the hospitality industries face the request of 251,000 students (student number in 2020/21 at from year 1 to year 4 at universities differentiated as UAS and reported by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education), who are looking for internships.

The question is, how can Ethiopian UASs in the absence of companies offer internships - practice-oriented education - in their study programmes?

This research will work on the macro-economic structure of Ethiopia and considerations, on how to provide a practice-oriented education, while companies are not available in the number to accommodate students for a one-semester internship.

Literature

a. Definitions of Internships

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), "an internship is a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting. Internships give students the opportunity to gain valuable applied experience and make connections in professional fields they are considering for career paths; and give employers the opportunity to guide and evaluate talent."

The Bellevue College adds that "it [the internship] is structured and supervised professional experience, within an approved agency, for which a student earns academic credit. It is guided by learning goals and supervised by both academic and agency personnel." In contrary to the internships outside of the college there is the Academic Internship Program at Bellevue College (BC), which is described as follows: "that [the internship] allows students to earn course credit while working and learning in a professional environment. Students are able to apply the knowledge they have gained in the classroom in a work setting, thus enriching their learning experience."

The Edgewood College refers to an internship as "a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional or community setting. Internships provide resources, equipment, and facilities that enable students to gain experience in a professional work environment and provide students with skills or knowledge that are transferable to other settings.

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American Association of Colleges and Universities defines internships as “an increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.”

In Great Britain WikiJob presents the internship understanding in the following: “an internship is an opportunity offered by an employer to potential employees, called interns, to work at a firm for a fixed period of time. Interns are usually undergraduates or students, and most internships last between a month and three months. Internships are usually part-time if offered during a university semester and full-time if offered during the vacation periods. Summer internships usually last for eight weeks. Some internships may include periods spent abroad, on secondment, or in more than one office. An internship should give [interns] practical skills, experience and greater knowledge of an industry, in exchange for the employer benefiting from your labour. With the emphasis firmly on training, internships give students real-life experience of the workplace and field they hope to break into.”

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (2017) structures internships into three models:

- the “apprenticeship” model: learning to perform the practiced activity is itself the intended outcome, and the activity is conceived as something that can only be learned fully and adequately by doing.
- the “application” model: work-based learning as an application of a body of knowledge or a discipline that should be learned first in an academic environment.
- the “service-based” model, internships intersect importantly with the objectives of public service, civic engagement and service-learning.

The University of Bremen in Germany states that “the term internship usually refers to a temporary employment which students complete as part of their curriculum in order to gain practical experience. ”

The CBS International Business School advocates internships by indicating that „for many students, internships are both mandatory and valuable. They [the internship] show you what the professional world is like and what you can expect later. Here you can already gain your first work experience during your studies and also make useful contacts in professional life.“

b. Impact of Internships

b.1 Students

The NACE (2018) Student Survey shows that “Students feel that their experiential education assignments have a positive impact on their career readiness competencies “.

Galbraith and Mondal (2020) refer to the 7 NACE criteria which need to be considered for internships. These criteria demonstrate the benefits for the students to apply for internships:

- The experience must be an extension of the classroom: a learning experience that provides for applying the knowledge gained in the classroom. It must not be simply to advance the operations of the employer or be the work that a regular employee would routinely perform.
- The skills or knowledge learned must be transferable to other employment settings.
- The experience has a defined beginning and end, and a job description with desired qualifications.
- There are clearly defined learning objectives/goals related to the professional goals of the student’s academic coursework.
- There is supervision by a professional with expertise and educational and/or professional background in the field of the experience.
- There is routine feedback by the experienced supervisor.
- There are resources, equipment, and facilities provided by the host employer that support learning objectives/goals.

b.2 Organisations

The benefits for the hosts of interns the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) lists as the following:

- Interns can complete project work and increase organization's productivity.
- Begin training the organization's future workforce.
- Internship programs are cost effective.
- The presence of interns provides an opportunity for mid-level staff to learn to manage since they are typically responsible for day-to-day direction of interns.
- Interns can bring the newest technology from the classroom into your company or organization.
- Interns can be another source for the recruitment of diverse employees into your company or organization.

Methodology

This research is based on the results of a 1st survey at the Kotebe University of Education and focuses on whether in-campus internships is an idea that should be explored in a wider extend for Ethiopian UAS.

Macro-economic data applied in this research derives from internet research. Interviews with 7 heads of department who see potentials to offer internship placements were conducted face-to-face at the Kotebe University of Education, Addis Ababa/Ethiopia. The interviews followed a structured questionnaire that allowed more than one answer and included questions such as:

- What is your understanding of the Internship Programmes?
- What kind of activities your unit could undertake to implement/Initiate this program
- Will your department be able to take in interns?
- What tracking methodology are you applying to monitor the quality of implementing assigned work?
- How can you improve what are you doing within the internship programme?
- What and how does the unit contribute to the development and growth of the institution?

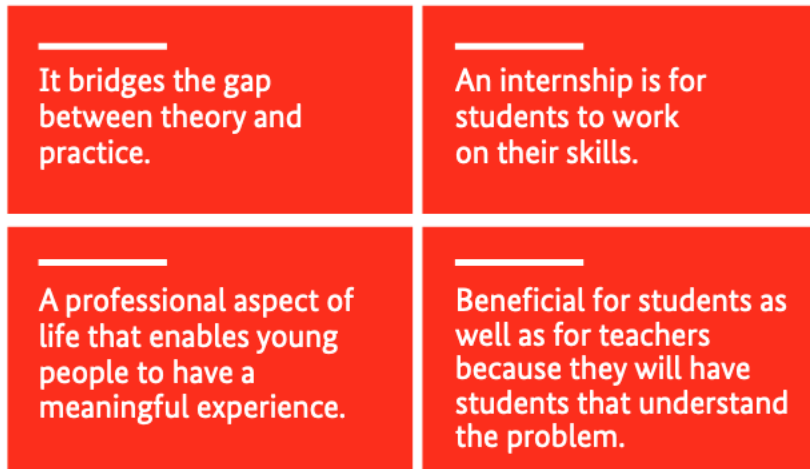
Results and Implications

a. Survey Answers

The following is an overview of answers collected and edited to the given questions.

What is your understanding of the Internship Programmes?

Figure 1:

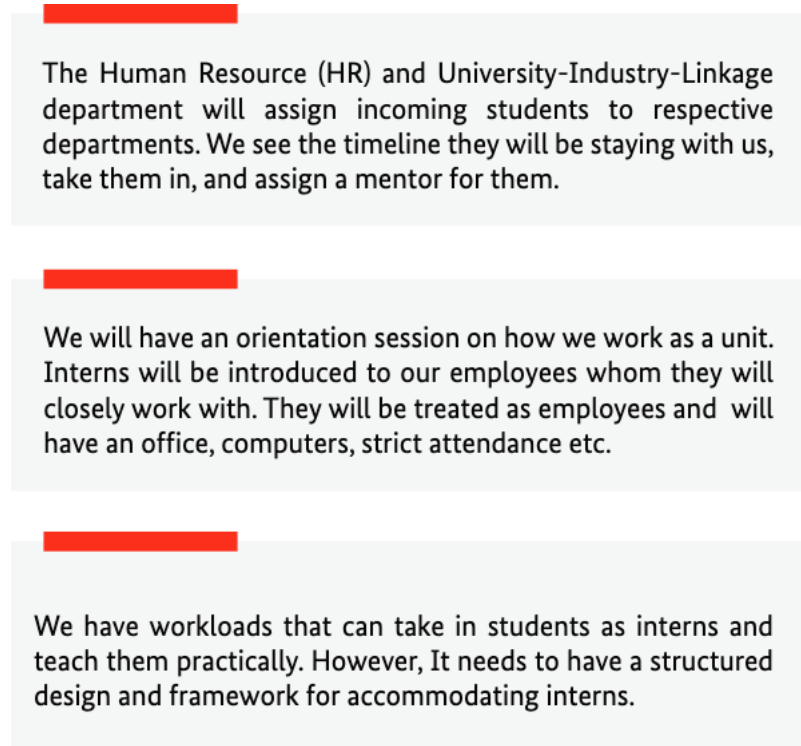


Source: Survey Data on In-Campus Internships, 2022

What kind of activities your unit could undertake to implement/initiate this programme?

Note: Some Departments at KUE have experience from incoming students doing an internship from other colleges. So far, KUE students are not applying for in-campus internships.

Figure 2:



Source: Survey Data on In-Campus Internships, 2022

Will your department be able to take in interns?

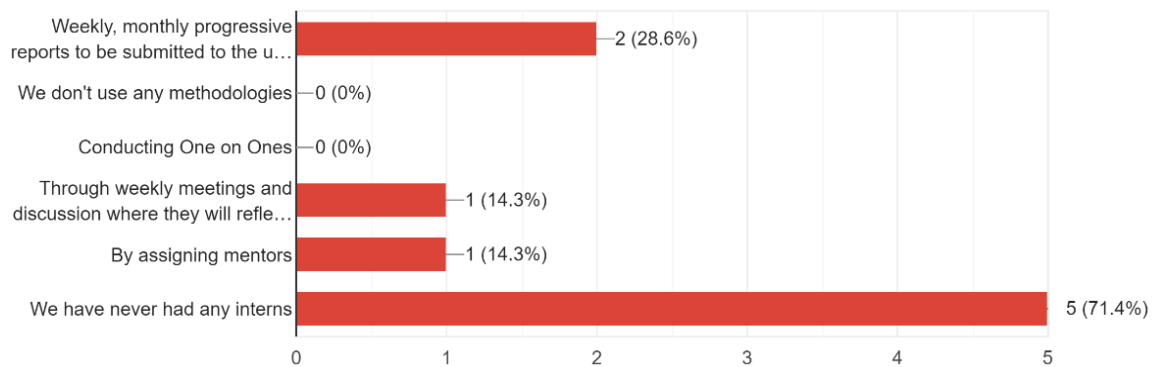
All department heads are welcoming the possibility to accommodate interns.

What tracking methodology are you applying to monitor the quality of implementing assigned work?

- Incorporate the interns in the weekly and monthly reports which are shared with the sending colleges.
- Mentors are assigned for the interns.
- Weekly meetings with the interns to reflect on their learning and experiences.

How can you improve what are you doing within the internship programme?

Figure 3:



Source: Survey Data on In-Campus Internships, 2022

What and how does the unit contribute to the development and growth of the institution?

- Bringing the best talents to the university.
- Contributing to the development of the institution by laying-out how "we" can deliver quality education

b. Implications (theoretical and practical/managerial implications)

The interviewees are seeing the idea of organising internships for students as very beneficial and are prepared to cooperate in such an endeavour. However, guidance and structure are requested. Additionally, there is the

suggestion that the internships will be conducted during the academic year that students could use the campus facilities.

Overall, the UAS curriculum foresees 30 credit hours for practical (experiential) "learning/teaching". This time budget is formally set. On the other side there is the situation that currently Ethiopia has not enough industries able to accommodate interns for "experiential learning". Due to the fact that Ethiopian industry structure counts 115,200 micro- and small-sized enterprises in 2020/2021 (New Business Ethiopia, 2022) with an average of 5.08 people as well as 3.596 large and medium-sized enterprises with in average 76.88 people on their payrolls - there are not enough "quality" internship placements available in companies. In the academic year 2013 Ethiopian Calendar (2020 Gregorian Calendar) 53,533 students have started in the 1st year in one of the 15 UAS. Taking this number and assuming that some study programmes foresee the internship in semester 5 and others in semester 6, overall, 26,000 (some students might drop-out) internship placements are requested per semester. In this calculation there is no consideration about the different kind of disciplines. This paper is focusing primarily on the numbers of placements needed for UAS students, while students from research and comprehensive universities are also competing for the same internship placements. In a next step the research will focus on internship placements for the different economic sectors. - If in-campus internships at UAS are possible, this would ease the situation and take-off the stress from the shoulders of the university-industry-linkage managers.

With reference to the general understanding of "internships" as "experiential" learning interns are learners and should not take over the responsibilities of employees. Micro- and small-sized enterprises might not have the expertise working with interns and would need guidance in how to accommodate "learners". While the large and medium-sized enterprises might have already a certain experience in working with interns and screening interns as potential labor force in the future.

UAS departments might step in as alternative partners of the private sector for "experiential learning" and mirror the private sector on the campus. However, this implicates that UAS department heads need to start thinking like managers from the private sector. International Universities are reporting that university managers started with projects for the department that interns from different cohorts and disciplines have designed, implemented and eventually managed. In general, interns are conducting desirable work, for which the employed staff never has time.

Managerial-wise the UAS should work on the benefits for the organization when working with interns. Like many USA universities and internship promoters such as the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) have elaborated a handbook and published that on the Townson University website under the title “Developing an Internship Programme – Step-by-Step customized approach”. The presented GBC internship process can be structured in the following:

1. The needs assessment with the question for assistance - preferably to work on topics, which the department sees as interesting or important, but has not the human resource available to work this specific topic.
2. The job description and recruitment process which will not differ much from the regular recruitment process with the committee composed of a human resource expert, the head of department, often future mentors and supervisors are joining the recruitment committee.
3. The selection of interns and preparation of their contracts.
4. The preparation of the workplaces. From the first day onwards, the mentors are the key persons for the interns. The supervisors are in charge of the work-related issues and will set jointly the goals, the intern should/wants to achieve during the internship.
5. The cooperation agreement (goals to be achieved during the internship) signed by supervisor and the intern.
6. The assessment processes on the improvement of knowledge, skills and attitude during and at the end of the internship.
7. The final evaluation that also includes a self-assessment by the intern in order to see the learning process.

Conclusion

Curricula of UAS incorporate practical sessions in the extend of 30% of the credits. This internship is part of the curriculum in all UAS study programmes and is widely understood as an experiential learning process that exposes learners to the real world of work. Interns apply for internships in the same way as potential employees based on a call for applications. Companies and organisations recruit interns based on job descriptions prepared by the respective

departments together with the human resource and university-industry-linkage departments. Chambers of commerce should be invited as advisory bodies in order to define the job descriptions, recruitment processes and the assessments of the interns' learning as well as the UAS departments' performance as the providers of the internships in the notion of the private sector.

For each intern a mentor and a supervisor should be assigned to guide the intern through the internship and the experiential learning challenges.

In case of UAS in-campus internships, the situation of the interns should not differ much from the situation in a private sector organization. However, the UAS administration will face changes. Guidelines and structures for accommodating interns need to be elaborated and implemented. Departments have to create job descriptions for potential interns in the way to meet the requirements of private sector-like internships. University managers require business-like thinking in order to mirror the private sector.

It is widely mentioned that interns should not take over the work of regular employees but should primarily work on topics not captured by the regular staff. They should work on topics such as re-organization/re-engineering of processes in laboratories, on projects for community collaboration, on innovative ideas for the department, on potentials for industry collaboration or in international projects as assistants or as assistants in proposal writing for national and international funding, etc.

Overall, UAS in-campus internships would allow UAS students to get exposed to the real world of work during their education, while companies don't have the potential to accommodate the requested number of interns. However, internships in companies still should be seen as the 1st choice for UAS students' internships.

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