

# NATION BUILDING TASK: INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS OF UNIVERSITY OF COMPUTER STUDIES, YANGON

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## Abstract

*In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the demand of experienced and educated workers has increasingly become in working environment and higher institutions like universities play a central role in nurturing the qualified students. In this context, the students from University of Computer Studies, Yangon, need training to apply efficiently their soft skills as well as hard skills. They are expected to construct the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) if they realise the contrast of theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience before they hunt job in the real world. It means that before completing their Bachelor Degree, the university makes the internship program for them. Students are sent to the industries or companies and they are really engaged to the business fields or workplace. On this occasion, the engaged learning programme, as a theoretical background, is required not only for the students but for the faculty members of the university who involves teaching-learning situation. For language teachers especially those who are teaching English need to change their curriculum in order to meet the current situation. In previous semesters, the IELTS was prescribed starting from the first year level to the final year level, but since 2016-17 academic year, the 21<sup>st</sup> century communication skills have been conducted in the final year. It can be found that students become interested in communication skills and they also motivate in their English language learning. Communicative Language Teaching method has been used to teach authentic texts and to converse about learners' personal experiences. Students are grouped in discussion and debates, which promotes their four skills. The students can also utilize the communication skills in their report writing and project after they complete intern programme. The aim of this paper is to enhance the students' performance by developing curriculum that can support in their learning and provide real needs. In other words, by means of engaged learning and intern programme, the capacity of human resources can be effectively built and it can be said that*

*curriculum development is associated with the development of a society, a community, or a country.*

**Keywords:** working environment, internship programme, engaged learning, hands-on experience, curriculum development, capacity building

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century demands the efficient, educated and experienced people especially in developing countries like Myanmar. In order to meet this requirement, University of Computer Studies, Yangon has been developing the Internship Programme for the final year students who are going to seek their jobs and hunt for job opportunity.

In other words, it can be said that the university is strengthening the capacity building for our country. In this situation, the engaged learning is essential to our university and students should be aware of the transition from schools to working environment.

In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are *learning* or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to *learn* and progress in their education. ([1] edglossary.org> student-engagement)

Moreover, "Engaged learning is the process in which students actively participate in their learning. Students are involved, beginning on the first day, in the decision making of the course of their study. Students vigorously research, discuss, create projects, and use technology to make discoveries based on their choices." ([2] ozpk.tripod.com>oooengaged)

## 2. WHAT IS ENGAGED LEARNING?

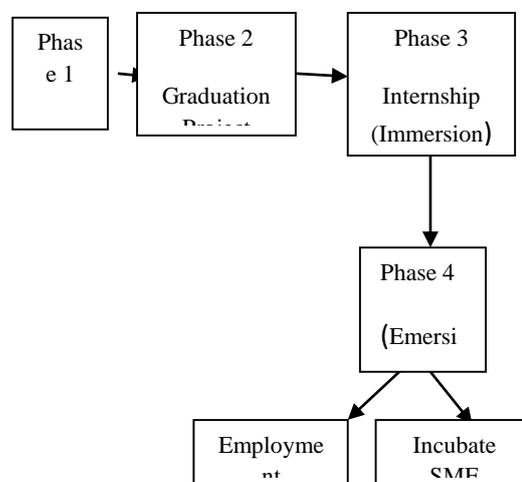
**Engaged Learning means** a part of a curriculum and it can change the way we can serve the students to their career path smoothly. Engaged Learning is to develop, coordinate and promote accessible, transformational, high-impact educational opportunities with and beyond the traditional classroom and curriculum. It can also be said that EL

is the new way of doing the same thing but in different way. The following are the features of engaged learning with its discussions and examples. [Dr. Saleem 's lecture]

- (1) **Educational Opportunity:**  
It means recognizing the diversity and individualized needs of students and providing support and resources for students diagnosed with learning differences. The university can hold placement examinations, mathematics competitions, science fairs, and studying abroad in computing, engineering fields.
- (2) **Develop Accessible Educational Opportunity:**  
It means innovations in education to improve teaching and learning because we are now in the digital world. We can change traditional printed-based instructional material to digital content. Examples of this are offering digital educational material and resources (e- book); digital learning materials such as videos and movies from You Tube and formative assessments; refining the old material and creating the new material course.
- (3) **Coordinate Accessible Educational Opportunity:**  
It refers to providing equal educational opportunity and full participation in and outside the classroom for students. The instances are publishing textbooks or supplemental material; offering online class programme, etc.
- (4) **Promote Accessible Educational Opportunity:**  
It means innovations in education like digital teaching and learning which make students stronger. The example is the Internet access course. However, it sometimes face acute funding.
- (5) **Transformational Accessible Educational Opportunity:**  
This means creating independent, self-directed, self-motivated learners who are capable of directing their own work and who have strongly developed higher-order thinking skills. Students can also have high-level skills in interpretation analysis and communication. Examples are giving critical thinking skill like debate, giving assignment before / after teaching lessons, giving case studies that involve real world problems and real life data.

- (6) **High-impact Accessible Educational Opportunity:**  
It means students get self-conscious as effectiveness in their learning. They can know how to learn, how to distinguish good information from bad, how to solve complex problems, and how to work with others especially when they are in work environment. The examples are teaching communication skills; studying abroad programme affiliated with another university; cross-cultural programme.
- (7) **Within the traditional Classroom and Curricula:**  
It implies students attend the lecture on course content that includes powerpoint slides and then students practise with the course concepts by completing homework from the textbooks outside the classroom. The example is making students power point presentations.
- (8) **Beyond the traditional Classroom and Curricula:**  
It means the way to engage students, deepen understanding, and help create the conditions that enable students to transfer what they have learned to new contexts. In other words, students are sent into their communities or workplace to apply their knowledge to real-life situations and to prepare for the challenges they may face after graduation. Examples are Internship programmes and work placements; service learning; simulations and role-playing.

**2.1. Phases of Engaged Learning Programme**



**Figure 2.1 Phases of Engaged Learning Programme**

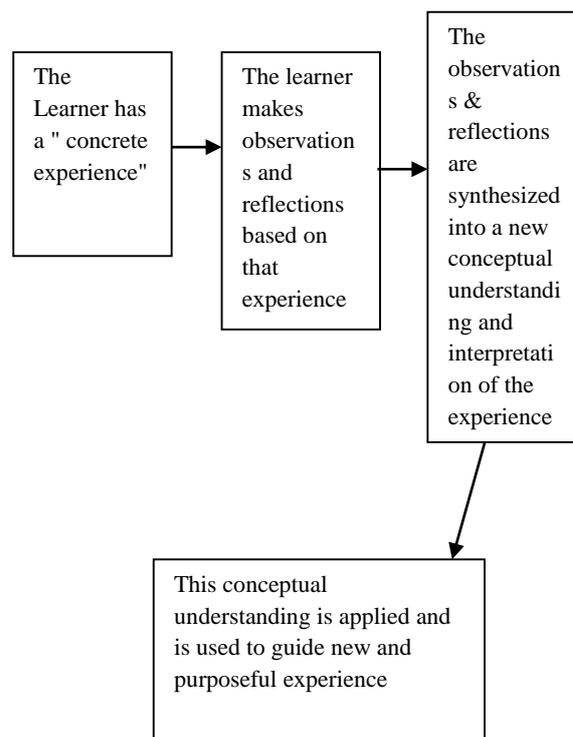
In **phase 1** SoTL refers to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The Scholarship of Teaching Learning involves faculty (sometimes in partnership with their students) undertaking systematic inquiry about student learning - informed by prior scholarship on teaching and learning - and going public with the results. SoTL also involves "faculty bringing their habits and skills as scholars to their work as teachers--habits of asking questions, gathering evidence of all different kinds, drawing conclusions or raising new questions and bringing what they learn through that to--students learning.

**Phase 2** Graduation Project is based on such work done in Phase 1. Based on this discipline-specific excellence, we can promote cross-disciplinary fluency. Every student is expected to be engaged with the curriculum, acquire and display particular key attributes. Graduate project will continue to guide the researcher's institutional policies, learning environment and broadening the curriculum. By providing a strong disciplinary learning experience combined with the broad curricular, students will be positioned to think and communicate well with their full engage in critical thinking and response intellectually to the real world problems.

**Phase 3** is the internship programme for the students. In this phase, students will continue to refine their skills as they facilitate their own workshops, as well as personal identity development. Their workshop is tailored to the needs of the group throughout the immersion internship, interns receive feedback from other peer interns in the programme, their supervisors, and from workshop evaluations to help them enhance their skills. Training is also conducted in small and large group. Before implementing a workshop the interns perform "rehearsals" with other interns to boost their confidence and maximize workshop effectiveness.

**In Phase 4** "emersion" means "emerging". Students participating and volunteering in an internship are the best employers of future success in the workplace. They can have the opportunity to start the career path and gain a competitive edge. They can run their own business as SME. In other words, emerging programme is a way for companies to bring new talent and yields positive results for many employers.

## 2.2 The classical model of the engaged learning



**Figure 2.2 The Classical Model of the Engaged Learning**

## 3. ENGAGED LEARNING PROGRAMME FOR THE STUDENTS OF UCSY

The University of Computer Studies, Yangon has now been developing the Internship Programme for the final year students, starting from the 2016-17 Academic Year and it has now been entering into three-year period. According to the internship programme, the final year students do not need to attend two semesters fully as usual. After completing the first semester (four-month-course), they will be sent to the work environment for three months during the second semester. Before they enter their real life working environment, they need to master their hard skills like how to maintain the computers, fix the networking, make the programme successfully, write the correct software programme, etc. Apart from this, they also need to recognize the ethics of business field.

### 3.1. The feedback of the intern students of UCSY

When the internship programme have finished, the students have to come back to school and made response on their interns. They filled up the questionnaires and gave feedback on their respective fields. Their feedbacks have been attached in the appendices.

The following tables are the intern summary of the students of UCSY in 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years.

**Table 3.1. 2016-2017 Academic Year, UCSY Intern Students Summary**

Sr. no.	Country	no. of Companies	no. of students
1	China	2	12
2	India	1	9
3	Indonesia	1	4
4	Japan	11	49
5	Myanmar	10	31
6	Norway	1	7
7	Singapore	4	35
Total		30	147

**Table 3.2. 2017-2018 Academic Year, UCSY Intern Students Summary**

Sr. no.	Country	no. of Companies	no. of students
1	China	1	22
2	India	2	18
3	Italy	1	3
4	Japan	10	32
5	Malaysia	1	3
6	Myanmar	16	89
7	Singapore	3	7
8	Switzerland	1	2
Total		35	176

### 3.2. The role of English Language Teaching in the intern programme

In the previous years, the curriculum of the English was based on the IELTS, which involves improving four skills. Textbooks on IELTS have been conducting from the first year to the final year, but since 2016-17 academic year, the 21st century communication skills are emphasized, especially, in the final year course. The students of the final year have already learnt the four skills throughout their four-year-period and they may have reached a high level of proficiency to some extent. What they need to learn in their final year is their communication skills before they go to the intern program and they find jobs in the real world.

Therefore, as the English Department, which usually supports every corner of UCSY, soft skills – interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, writing CVs, cover letter, business letters, reports, answering interview questions, telephone interview, negotiating terms and conditions of service are taught to the final year students to develop the English language and communication skills they need to get the job they want. Moreover, the students are asked to write the project paper on their respective fields with group or individual.

The faculty members also give the students opportunity to do workshops and invite people from business environment to share their knowledge to the students. Occasionally, incentive programmes like choosing the best student paper for writing programme, holding IT camps, programming contests locally or internationally as the extra curriculum activities are initiated from time to time.

In other words, curriculum enhancement can lead to develop students' performances. It can also be said that if the students are qualified in their respective fields, they can execute the task satisfactorily or have job satisfaction. This may reinforce the capacity building or human resources for our society and community.

### 3.3. The expected outcome of the engaged learning programme

At the end of the internship, students should have satisfactorily completed an intensive period of the respective fields that effectively inducts them into the nature, structure and organization of schools and the work, rules and responsibilities of employees and employers. They come to know the values and cultures of the working environment. They may also

have the ability to plan, implement, and evaluate the difference between theoretical and hands-on experience.

The University of Computer Studies, Yangon has now been planning and developing the internship programme for the final year students starting from in 2016-17 academic year. Since it was the first-ever programme of the UCSY, the result would not be said assuredly but it was assumed that the students were able to realise that knowing the theory is not enough, knowing how to solve the problem is good. It is expected that the programme will promote the coordination of experiential learning programme and the integration of experiential into the total curriculum – when the students come back from their internship programme, they have realized their needs and the faculty members also explore the new material and refine some of the current curriculum which is applicable to the real life situation.

### 3.4. The pros and cons of the internship programme

Every coin has two sides. Likewise, the internship programme has its advantages and disadvantages.

As a bright side, internships provide real career and educational benefits to undergraduate and graduate level of students. Terms and conditions vary but most internships have positive impacts on educational outcomes which are as follows:

- i. *Gaining real world experience:* By means of going internship, students are able to understand better and apply the theories they learn in their classroom. During the transition of their academic career to the job market, they will have demonstrated a level of expertise that they cannot get from classroom instructions or research.
- ii. *Getting a taste of their chosen field:* Sometimes the application of what we learned is just not as fulfilling as the process of learning a discipline in school. It is better to find out early-on whether we want to stick with the career path we have chosen. Internships might open students' eyes to other employment avenues which they have not considered.
- iii. *Getting a head start on developing a professional network;* Internships offer students the opportunity to build relationship that can benefit them throughout their career.

If the performance of the student impresses the company sponsoring the internship programme, this student stand a better chance of being hired –on as a regular employee after complete the education or the internship.

However, from the dark side, it has some disadvantages:

- i. *Low or No pay:* Most college students are financially challenged, relying on at least part-time jobs to get by. It will be convenient for them if they get some wages from their volunteering. However, some profit-companies are pretty tightly regulated where internships are concerned and they pay a significantly lower wage than regular employees would earn.
- ii. *Some internships actually cost the student money:* Some management internships are taken the credit, putting students in the position of having to pay tuition and fees to participate.
- iii. *Nothing is guaranteed:* Sometimes the company or organization has no obligation to offer students employment at the end of the internship or upon graduation.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Engaged Learning is not an excellent one if we do not put it in a scientific way. It is important to learn how the learners behave the learners in their working environment. To develop the internship programme effectively, the combination of faculty members and entrepreneurship is necessary: if possible, the university should make joint-venture with the business sector to establish a special foundation to take care of engaged learning nationally.

To be an effective internship programme, the university or the authority needs to develop the two documents: the policies and the guidelines and recommendations. It is necessary to distinguish

the do's and don'ts of the engaged learning that the university would adopt as policy and regulations. Apart from the beginning of the action plan, guidelines and recommendations are laid on how to proceed in making an internship programme successful.

At the present time, in our university, the concerned administrators and faculty members are trying to improve the intern programme for the final year students than ever before and students are also enthusiastic about the internship. In other words, it can

be said that our university is helping to develop the nation building task for Myanmar, which is marching to the democratization and building capacity for human resources.

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