

Conference Paper

Internship Program As a Strategy for Employability in Bahrain

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Abstract

This article discusses the available literature on the human capital theories and that are related to vocational education and training in some of the developing countries. Issues and concerned were discussed. Although University College Bahrain (UCB) is not an institution that solely runs on VET but the idea of VET is related. UCB introduces courses that applied internship practice in its degree program as a major strategy for employability as presented in this article. It also took into account the concerned and the challenges faced by the institution.

Keywords: Internship Program, VET, Empowering Education

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1. Introduction

The discussion on the development of human capital [2] provides us with an interesting understanding on how education has been used to promote intellectual agenda (competencies, knowledge and skills) and recently has become precious commodities worldwide. Experienced in some of the develop and developing countries worldwide are alike on these issues.

In many countries, the concept of vocational education and training (VET) are an integral part of a broad base education system gearing for employment as recorded by [1]. Their study under the National Educational Survey by the Center for Development Management carried out by the Indian Institute of Management Udaipur, India, pointed out that VET is a popular strategy for human capital development. In other industrialized countries like China, Germany, Japan and Korea, it has been reported that this link to vocational educational and training (VET) ran high in their national strategy. Their percentage could run as high from 68–96% [9].

Baker (1964) in his pioneering work on ideas of human capital makes a distinction between two types of skills needed. Both the *general* and *specific* skills needed to enhance the productivity skills of a worker. While others, like Lazear (2009) and Lengermann (1996) argued for only a *specific human capital* skills needed rather than general skills that could enhance human capital productivity of a worker to fulfil the

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current needs of organizations. They argued only the specific training skills, were needed most. Companies, will be reluctant to invest on general or transferable skills because they fear that, after completion of general training skills, the likelihood that workers once acquired these demanded skills, would leave their original company’s job for higher paying job, and would switch to the other competing companies because workers now had additional skills commensurate with their knowledge [22].

Literature on the development of other educational human capital variables in Europe revealed that human capital has been expanded into include wider spectrum of worker’s skills. Human capital is most widely known to include factors on knowledge, skills and competencies of a person has, which will affect the readiness of him to perform productive labour. These skills are all gained from education and training. Some scholars argued that human capital has two features on the same coin. It can be both appreciates or depreciate or becomes obsolete.

In Europe human capital has expanded to include the benefits on cultural capital, intellectual capital, and social capital (Cedefop’s Report 2008, [4, 5, 8]). Since this article is not focusing on the other types of human capital such as (*social capital* – value of social relations or network, corporations and thrust), (*cultural capital* – process of socialization), (*intellectual capital* – competencies, knowledge and skills) thus, these ideas will not be discussing at length here. In short, education has been associated to the other types of skill development of human endeavours as it is illustrated in the following diagram:

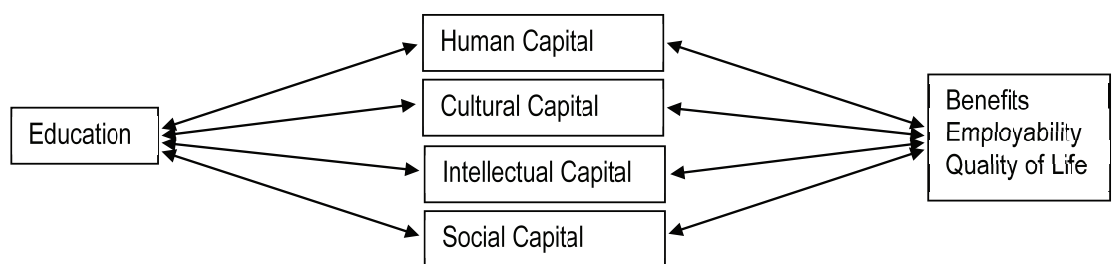


Figure 1: Review on education investment toward human capital and its benefits.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) refers to the skill based programs that focus on specific trades and imparting practical skills of individuals to help engage in specific occupational activity to secure employability in the competitive economy (Van den Berg, Meijers and Sprengers 2006, [23]). It has extended to include intellectual capital as well, that is training for competencies, knowledge and skills.

The promotion of VET programs remains a subject of continuous debate for many developing countries [16, 17]. It had been argued that the labour market outcomes experienced for VET holders are not good for several Asian countries. The outcome

of the vocational graduates is characterized by lower earnings and less promising employment prospects than those of the academic graduates [20].

The VET educational system in many Asian countries face many challenges, as the linkages between institutes offering the VET providers and the industry are lacking (Agrawal 2013; World Bank 2008). In addition, there is also a negative perception associated with VET program and trainers which dissuade people from pursuing VET. Many of the VET programs aims at creating self-employment opportunities or entrepreneurship and impart suitable skills needed for employment.

There are two major problems with the existing work force. *Employability* and *skill mismatch* [13]. In the case of India, it was reported that more than 60% of all vocational graduates remained unemployed up to three years after completion of the course (World Bank 2008). While on the other side, there has been a growing demand which has remain unfulfilled due to the shortage of skilled and well-train manpower. There is a mismatch between the technical skills available and the market demand due to weak linkage between training providers and the industry. Employers do not find the skills they want among the current employees. The whole idea of linking education, employment and employability suffers from a 'skills crisis' rather the 'job crisis'. As these countries experience economic growth, this mismatch becomes more apparent.

Another major issue that are often link to vocational education is the stigma suffers with VET. The extent that VET program pays off higher dividends compared to general education. Contrary to ones believe, studies in countries like Thailand [14], Egypt [6], Tanzania [15], Singapore [18] finds that the vocational education yield higher returns than the same from general education. Their findings suggest that providing general education to the work force should be followed by on-the-job training would be more beneficial to students.

2. Perceptions of VET

Although VET appears to be a good solution in enhancing students' employability, it often suffers from negative social perceptions. It has low perceived value among students and their guardians and among employers. Often VET is considered as a 'second class' education, individual who could not progress through the general education are more likely to opt VET program [19]. Most students would prefer to continue higher education rather than entering the labour market with VET. Even employers think that they would be better by recruiting young individual from non-vocational stream. Furthermore, employers face difficulties finding employees with the right skills (World Bank Report 2008). The World Bank Report calls for revamping the whole system to

make VET system more responsive to the needs of labour market and suggest major reforms are needed of the existing system.

Another interesting observations from the Indian experienced [1] noted that while their results suggest that 66% of trainers are employed in occupations related field of training the requirement for skill manpower in the country has remain unfulfilled due to shortage of skilled workforce. At the same time, high unemployment rate of vocational trainees reflects under-utilized human resources, and therefore imparting necessary skills to them would be crucial to meet the shortages.

Perceptions of VET must be changed and raised as successfully illustrated in countries like Germany and Singapore because of positive perceptions associated with it.

3. Employer's Value-aided Skills

In a broader context employers value, not only job specific skills but also 'soft skills' such as communication, decision-making, problem-solving and leadership. Students should be encouraged to acquire soft skills during the course as it would complement their hard skills, providing more opportunities for facilitating and stimulating, experimenting, exchanging feedback, will not only developing their individual performance but team performance including entrepreneurship education [21].

In addition, it had been suggested that employers should provide incentives to promote VET. A strong link between the training institutes and industry must be created. Industry-education sector would be proven beneficial if training institutes training leading to qualifications that is well recognized and rewarded by the labour market [7]. It's been argued that the country would be most beneficial if opportunities of trapping of its potential young workforce may not be realized unless the workforce is skilled. It is imperative that young people have right skills for the job market. We have to recognize new opportunities and prepare the supply side according to the labour market needs.

4. Data

Department of Communication and Multimedia, University College of Bahrain is a non-profit private university located in Manama, Bahrain. Based on the student's performance for the past three years offering B.A. in Communication and Multimedia, the following data showed that there had been an increased in the number of excellent students' performance from 15.8% (2014) to 20% (2016). This increased had been made possible because of improvements made in program offering and quality of students. These increments in graduate performance are reflected by the incremental

improvements in curriculum offering and in teaching and learning including the internship program.

This is made possible for several reasons, mainly: (a) because students and instructor ratio is relatively small allowing more effective teaching-learning interaction, (b) students are talented as reflected in the annual students' exhibition shows and show cases from which professional in the industry are made juries to assess students' work, (c) curriculum is designed and benchmark following guidelines provided by the professional practice.

Department of Communication and Multimedia Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes

5. Department Aims

1. Provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills to develop appropriate communicative form across media and formats.
2. Provide students with the knowledge and skills required for critically and solving communication problems using specific applications to respond to a variety of audiences and contexts.
3. Enable students to develop a global perspective and adapt to dynamic international issues in communication concepts.
4. Empower students to join workforce and/or pursue them for the further graduate studies.

6. Department-intended Learning Outcomes

A. Knowledge and Understanding

- A1. To be able to expose to the theories and principles of design, multimedia and public relations.
- A2. To be able to understand the different process and procedures in production in graphic design, multimedia and public relations.
- A3. To be familiar with the importance of social, technological and historical background in graphic design, multimedia and public relations.
- A4. To be able to recognize the added value in visual, oral and written media practices.
- A5. To be able to integrate the function of communication in response to globalization.

B. Subject Specific Skills

B1. To be able to communicate the relevant output in graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

B2. To be able to institutionalize and execute the relevant processes and procedures pertaining to graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

B3. To be able to use the current industry standard technology in graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

B4. To be able to function in multi-lingual environment in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

C. Thinking Skills

C1. To be able to observe, analyse and synthesize relevant applications in graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

C2. To be able to solve problems related to graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

C3. To be able to adhere to the ethical concern in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

C4. To be able to activate relevant research environment in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

D. Transferable Skills

D1. To be able to communicate professionally in oral, visual and written communication in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

D2. To be able to practice proficiency in academic writing and reporting in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

D3. To be able to have a multi-tasking skills and team work in carrying out projects in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

D4. To be able to inculcate positive attitudes in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations.

7. Internship Course

In the Department of Communication and Multimedia in UCB, an internship course is a compulsory course that is linked with participation of related industries and practitioners in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (Appendix A). The internship course is conducted during Summer semester (May – July) each year for students who pass 90 credit hour of total study plan in addition to extra pre-requisite courses applicable to certain concentration (Appendix 1.2).

The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for internship course are as follows:

- To understanding the workplace, operational procedures and organizational structure.
- To improve specific skills, analyse design problems and concept development
- To use design industry software to implement the design concept required by the design agency.
- To work on personal development: values, confidence, assertiveness, and decision-making.
- To work successfully independently and as part of a group
- To learn about workplace environment, and explore the different graphic design positions ranking.

The following policies are written in the Internship course specification.

- Internship placement procedures:
 1. Placement should take place in a design firm: that is established and active not less than 5 years, has a portfolio that contains different range of designed materials, and the number of employees in the firm should not be less than 5 and minimum 2 in the design section.
 2. Students have to submit internship request to the approached design firm, upon acceptance offer letter should be filled and returned to the course instructor.
 3. Complete a minimum of 160 hours of internship work experience.
 4. Regularly keep in contact with the instructor

Internship course requirements (Report and Presentation)

- Complete a minimum of 160 hours of internship work experience.
- Regularly keep in contact with the instructor
- Write a report 2000 words on the following topics:
 - What do I want to learn from my internship and how will it help me prepare for my career? What goals do I want to accomplish during my internship? How has my college education prepared me for this internship?
 - Write about the organization you are working for. What type of design industry is it? Who are their competitors? What are their goals and objectives? What product and/or services do they provide? What do they do well? What don't they do well? How does your position fit in within other positions in the organization?

- An evaluation of your internship experience. What did you learn about yourself? What skills did you acquire? What did you learn about the industry/business? What did you learn about the company’s clients? Did you accomplish your goals? How would you rate the overall experience?

- Presentation covering all the points you’ve mentioned in your report, also including the work/designs you’ve done during your internship.
- After you finish your training you have to get a letter from the company where you interned showing the start and end date of your internship.
- Your internship supervisor will hand in the evaluation form - which has to be filled by your direct supervisor or manager where you interned - during his visits to your workplace. Your direct supervisor will give you back the evaluation forms in a sealed envelope. You are not allowed to look at the evaluation form or change any information.

7.1. Internship course assessment criteria

Student Name: ID:									
University College of Bahrain/Graphic Design concentration/GRD 440 Approved Professional Experience (Internship)									
Report (table of assessment criteria)									
	100	30	Assessment style	0–59%	60–69%	70–79%	80–89%	90–100%	Total 30
Report information	84%	25	Summative	The report brief content's information none or poorly used. Did not write in proper English, references not included.	The content's information were ordinary and covered some elements of the report brief. Used acceptable English, and references not included.	The content's information were fair and covered some elements of the report brief. Used proper English, and included some references sources information.	The content's information were good and covered most elements of the report brief. Used correct English, and used references sources in detail.	The content's information were excellent and covered all the elements of the report brief. Used formal English sentences that were easy to comprehend, and used references sources in detail.	
Report cover page and layout	17%	5	Summative	Research cover page is not available. Research information is randomly written.	Research cover page information is poorly structured. Research information is poorly organized.	Research cover page information is available in incoherent structure. Research information is not well organized.	Research cover page is structured in a good manner. Research contents are easy to follow in general and have a coherent structure.	Research cover page is well structured. Research contents are easy to follow and have a coherent structure.	

Student Name: ID:									
University College of Bahrain/Graphic Design concentration/GRD 440 Approved Professional Experience (Internship)									
Report (table of assessment criteria)									
	100	10	Assessment style	0–59%	60–69%	70–79%	80–89%	90–100%	Total 10
Presentation	50%	5	Summative	Presentation is not done (no grade is assigned)	<u>Information:</u> Information does not address topic.	<u>Information:</u> Inaccurate and inadequate information.	<u>Information:</u> Accurate and adequate information.	<u>Information:</u> Accurate and complete information.	
	50%	5			<u>Slides layout:</u> Unsatisfactory, hard to read and irrelevant.	<u>Slides layout:</u> Satisfactory, readable and relevant somewhat.	<u>Slides layout:</u> Adequate, easy to read and relevant.	<u>Slides layout:</u> Excellent, easy to read and relevant.	
					<u>Presenter skills:</u> Omits key information, appears tense, and body language, voice, and eye contact are inappropriate	<u>Presenter skills:</u> Does not stay on topic, appears tense, and body language, voice, and eye contact are inappropriate	<u>Presenter skills:</u> Adequate and mostly relaxed, good body language, voice, and eye contact.	<u>Presenter skills:</u> Relaxed, good body language, voice, and eye contact.	

8. Key Skills Challenges in the Department of Communication and Multimedia

According to the Higher Education Council of Bahrain report (2014) there are lack of skills required for the industry of Public Relations and Media as follows:

- Lack of soft skills related to communication, media relations, business writing, client management, people management.
- Lack of multi-skilled applicants who understand different technology platforms particularly around social and digital media.
- Work ethic is often a problem as the industry does not work to normal working hours.
- Poor command of written and spoken English and Arabic.

The Higher Education Council of Bahrain report (2014) was conducted by analysing a total of 51 interviews with advertising agencies, public relation companies, printing and publishing houses and media production companies in Bahrain. The report mentioned that the careers opportunities that might be in demand in the upcoming years are web developers, cameraman, visualizer, photographer, 3D animators, public relation officers, multimedia designers, MAC operator, video editor and production manager. The same report also recommend training for current students through ‘internship programme with companies that will give them an insight into the operations of the industry and enable them to make the right choice’.

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Appendix A

List of companies that employed students as interns for three different concentrations (2012–2017).

Appendix B

Study plan of B.A. communication and multimedia (internship offered during summer semester).

Public Relations	Graphic Design	Multimedia
Central Bank of Bahrain	Gulf Marcom Advertising Agency	Rotary Club Bahrain
Abbas Biljeek & Sons	Beedesign Advertising Agency	Al Ayam Publishing B.S.C. (c)
Al Manzil Hotel Bahrain	DDB Bahrain	Blooms Events Bahrain
The National Oil and Gas Authority (NOGA)	Vahid Associates – Brand Futurists	Bicycle Film Production
Al Sabaya Ice Cream Factory	VII Tech Design Agency	Gulf Marcom Advertising Agency
The Bahrain Defense Force	Yaquby International	
Tomato Creative Design Studio	Unisono	
Gulf Business Machines (GBM)	JWT Bahrain	
Ahmed Zayani & Sons W.L.L.	Design Plus/Saudi Arabia	
Speedy Motor Service (SMS) W.L.L.	Miricals	
The General Group Company (Pirelli)	TBWA/RAAD Advertising Agency	
Survey & Land Registration Bureau Bahrain	Memac Ogilvy	
Retroban Worldwide W.L.L.	Aramco/Saudi Arabia	
Safa Poultry Farm Bahrain	Hilal Corporate Communication	
Information Affairs Authority Bahrain	Al Moayyed Advertising	
Bahrain Southern Area Municipality	Boxonvision Design Agency	
Gulf Petrol Chemical Industries Company (GPIC)	Promoseven	
Information and Government Authority Bahrain	United Advertising Co./Saudi Arabia	
Arab Shipbuilding & Repair Yard Company (ASRY)		

1st Semester (First Year)					2nd Semester (First Year)				
No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.	No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.
1	ENG101	English I	3		6	ENG102	English II	3	ENG101
2	CSC101	Computing Essentials	3		7	ARA101	Arabic	3	
3	GRD151	Art History I	3		8	GRD152	Art History II	3	GRD 151
4	GRD101	Foundation Studio	6		9	GRD133	Illustration	3	GRD131
5	GRD131	Basic Drawing	3		10	GRD132	Colour Fundamentals	3	
					11	GRD134	Digital Photography	3	
			18					18	

3rd Semester (Second Year)					4th Semester (Second Year)				
No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.	No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.
12	ENG201	English III: Technical Writing	3	ENG102	17	WCS201	Cultural Studies I	3	ENG201
13	GRD202	GD I Studio	6	GRD101 + GRD131	18	GRD203	GD II Studio	6	GRD202
14	GRD211	Typography I	4	GRD101	19	GRD212	Typography II	4	GRD211
15	GRD221	Digital Media I	3	CSC101 + GRD101	20	GRD222	Digital Media II	3	GRD221
16	SBS155	Human Rights	2						
			18					16	

5th Semester (Third Year)					6 th Semester (Third Year)				
No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.	No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.
21	GRD304	GD III Studio	6	GRD203	26	GRD305	GD IV Studio	6	GRD304
22	GRD323	Pre-Press Production	3	GRD222	27	GRD324	Motion Graphics	4	GRD222 + GRD203
23	GRD353	Graphic Design History	3	GRD152	28		University Elective	3	
24	SBS206	Bahrain Modern History	3	WCS201	29		Free Elective I	3	
25		University Elective	3						
			18					16	

Summer Semester				
30	GRD440	Approved Professional Experience (Internship)	3	GRD222 + GRD304 and complete 90 credit hour

← Internship Course Offering

7th Semester (Fourth Year)					8 th Semester (Fourth Year)				
No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.	No.	Code	Title	Cr. Hrs	Pre-Req.
31	GRD406	Final Year Research	6	GRD305	35	GRD407	Final Year Project	6	GRD406
32	GRD425	Interactive Digital Media	4	GRD324 + GRD305	36	GRD441	Professional Practice	3	GRD425 + GRD305
33		University Elective	3		37		Free Elective III	3	
34		Free Elective II	3		38		Free Elective IV	3	
			16					15	
								TOTAL	138