

Practical Attachment Program: Achievements and Constraints

Mekelle University

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Mekelle University in Brief

- Mekelle University was established through a merger of Mekelle Business College (MBC) and Mekelle University College (MUC).
- MBC began accredited diploma program in 1991 in the fields of business, while MUC started as College of Dry land Agricultural and Natural Resource (CDANR) in 1993.
- MBC enrolled 150 first batch of diploma students while CDANR enrolled 42 degree students in its first batch.
- Mekelle University currently enrolls close to 20,000 students in its regular, continuing and distance programs.

Mekelle University in Brief

- The yearly student population for the last fourteen years is shown in Table 1.

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Male	129	483	788	509	567	1498	2010	2489	2364
Female	21	199	285	140	145	448	472	589	630
Total	150	682	1073	649	712	1956	2482	3078	3094

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Male	5214	5648	4764	10231	13377	15619
Female	1381	1548	998	2621	3514	4159
Total	6585	7196	5762	12852	16891	19778

Mekelle University in Brief

- Currently Mekelle University has six academic Faculties and one College.
- Overall the University runs 40 academic departments offering undergraduate program and 5 departments offering graduate programs.
- Staff profile

Faculty	No. of staff
FDANR	115
FBE	158
FST	125
FOL	26
FED	198
FVS	11
CHS	44
Total	624

Background of Practical Attachment Program (PAP)

- Mekelle University has a motto which says “Higher Education with Practical Emphasis”.
- The University began its PAP in line with the motto for the first time under the Faculty of Dry land Agriculture and Natural resources.
- Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Business and Economics and Faculty of Law followed in introducing PAP in their curriculum.
- The PAP at Mekelle University is designed as part of the curriculum that a student should fulfill before graduating.

Background of Practical Attachment Program (PAP)

- The program has two to four credit hours with clear objective, tasks to be carried out by students and method of evaluation.
- The duration of practical attachment program varies with Faculties. In Faculty of Dry land Agriculture and Natural Resources the duration is three months while for the Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Business Education and Faculty of Law the duration is two months.

Background of Practical Attachment Program (PAP)

- Students are evaluated on their performance of the program by their respective departments. The evaluation process generally is based on three stages:
 1. evaluation by host institution,
 2. supervision during the program, and
 3. report and presentation of their work.
- Mekelle University incorporated Practical Attachment Program as one of its objectives in the 20 years strategic plan. In line with this plan the University established PAP offices at each Faculty and appointed coordinators.

Objectives of the Program

- The general objective is to produce graduates with practical orientation, competent, and confident to carry out their jobs. The program enables students to understand the existing situations of the community, organization or industry.
- The course is designed with the following major objectives:
 - To orient students with their field of profession,
 - To enable a good career development for students,
 - To identify potential employers through networking,
 - To enable students understand the livelihood of the rural community, work procedures of organizations and industry.

Objectives of the Program

- In addition to fulfilling their academic requirement students benefit from PAP:
 - Identify practical problems for their senior essay or final year projects,
 - Attain practical skills,
 - Change attitude and behavior,
 - Test their theoretical knowledge and professional competence,
 - Develop and instill confidence,

Objectives of the Program

- Host institutions will benefit because they will:
 - Get areas of interventions identified in their activities,
 - Get feedback on the performance of their developmental activities,
 - Identify research priorities,
 - Fill man power gaps during the program period,
 - Have opportunity to asses potential employees,

Objectives of the Program

- The University will benefit because it can:
 - Produce practically trained, skilled manpower,
 - Gather information for practical and problem solving researches,
 - Get feedback for curriculum review,
 - Establish partnership with institutions,
 - Analyze current situations in communities, organizations and industry.

Achievements of the Program

- The University conducted annually the PAP during the summer season in collaboration with host institutions. It has successfully conducted ten rounds with all students hosted in different institutions.
- The feedback from students who participated in the program and host institution was very positive. Students have benefited from the program and many have been employed in institutions where they were initially hosted for the PAP.
- Institutions have also positively responded to the objectives of the PAP.

Achievements of the Program

PAP cycle	Faculties				Total
	FNDAR	FST	FBE	FOL	
1st - 1996	28				28
2nd -1997	38				38
3rd -1998	42				42
4th -1999	48				48
5th - 2000	53				53
6th - 2001	101				101
7th - 2002	84		191		275
8th -2003	118	145	186		449
9th - 2004	196	132	198		526
10th-2005	606	117	257	34	1014
Total	1314	394	832	34	2574

Constraints of the Program

- Even though the program was successful and benefited all stakeholders there is difficulty to accommodate all students to potential sponsors with the increasing number of students.
- Due to sponsorship problem students were forced to complete the program by their own (self-sponsor) and resulted in not objectively designed practical works.
- Due to the significant increase in number of students since last year, the university was unable to secure placement of all students.

Constraints of the Program

- The main constraint of the program is lack of budget to run the program. The University has made some efforts to close the gap:
 - Through encouragement of students to sponsor themselves,
 - Soliciting sponsorship by projects under Mekelle University,
 - Arrangement of placement of students close to their homes,
 - Through encouragement of students to work in their localities.

Conclusion and recommendation

- Practical attachment program will equip students with appropriate tools to be competent citizens in their field of profession. This program should be strengthened and given attention by all stakeholders.
- Therefore, the government, funding institutions, private institutions and organizations should actively get involved to overcome the budget problem to accommodate the increased number of students.
- This conference which aims at transforming University-Industry-Government relations is an opportunity to create awareness about the problems associated with PAP and pave ways to bring about solutions.

Conclusion and recommendation

- Recommendations:
 - The relationship between higher education, government, non government and private organizations has to be strengthened,
 - Higher institutions have to work towards involving more non governmental and private institutions in the program,
 - Encourage students to sponsor themselves,
 - Funding organizations should support the program until sufficient awareness is created in all stakeholders,
 - The government has to allocate budget to partially cover the expenses of the program, which may be included in the cost sharing scheme.

Mekelle University – Main Campus



Mekelle University – Adi Haki Campus



I wish you all a successful conference!