

PROJECT OVERVIEW

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Project Background

The project “German-African University Partnership Platform for the Development of Entrepreneurs and Small/Medium Enterprises” started in 2015 within the framework of the program “University-Business-Partnerships between Higher Education Institutions and Business Partners in Germany and in Developing Countries”, funded by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). It is carried out by Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg, University of Applied Sciences in Germany (H-BRS), the University of Cape Coast (UCC) in Ghana, and the University of Nairobi (UoN) in Kenya.

The partnership assists African universities in increasing employability opportunities and acquiring entrepreneurial skills for their graduates. This partnership ultimately promotes the development of start-ups and SMEs and hence provides employment opportunities in Africa.

The focus is on building capacities for practice-oriented teaching and research in the field of entrepreneurship and SME development in Africa. In Germany, H-BRS wishes to increase awareness for Africa’s potentials as a market and a partner for business ventures.



Figure 1: Project partners and goals GAUP

Project Objective: The objective of the project is building capacity in practice-oriented teaching methodologies as well as raising the awareness of German, Kenyan, and Ghanaian teaching methods. It is based on the notion that offering team teaching opportunities for German and African guest lectures at their respective universities would foster common teaching practices and facilitate the mutual transfer of teaching methodologies.

As a further step, trilateral practice-oriented courses with relevance to entrepreneurship and SME development have already been established and are taught at all three partner universities where faculty and students communicate across borders. The joint courses will be developed into a showcase for unilateral practice-oriented learning.

Collaborative Teaching and Learning:

Business Bridge – An Intercultural Student Project is one example of a joint teaching project that was initiated in 2013. By 2016, the University of Nairobi joined the collaborative course. Coastal Carolina University (CCU) also joined. The project was therefore renamed to include the cross-continental aspect of the student exchange. In 2018, Portugal was also included in the program.

Building Bridges Across Continents – An Intercultural Student Project (BBAC) is now one of the most successful contributions to GAUP by extending its scope to other partners not directly involved in the project funding. BBAC promises to continue its mission of giving students of different countries an opportunity to connect and work online with students in Africa.

Faculty Exchange and Assistance

The German-African University Partnership Platform (GAUP) also supports developing human capacity in applied research along the successful model of German universities of applied sciences, which is also accomplished by joint German-African pilot projects in applied research. The project also creates opportunities for UCC and UoN faculties to work on their doctoral thesis and conduct research in Germany. Furthermore, it offers H-BRS lecturers to engage in research in Africa.

Overall, these activities assist partners in their current strategies to improve their faculty's academic profile as well as increase the share of PhD holders.

From	H-BRS (Germany)	UCC (Ghana)	UoN (Kenya)
To			
H-BRS (Germany)	/	7 students 13 professors/lecturers	7 students 13 professors/lecturers
UCC (Ghana)	8 students 11 professors/lectures	/	10 professors/lecturers
UoN (Kenya)	8 students 13 professors/lecturers	17 professors/lecturers	/

Table 1: Faculty and student exchange between H-BRS, UCC and UoN

Final Statement

It is well accepted that entrepreneurs and SMEs are significant drivers for economic development. In many African economies, an inflated public sector and challenging conditions for the private sector prevent the exploitation of growth opportunities. Entrepreneurs are often “necessity-driven” instead of “opportunity-driven,” resulting in informal, micro-scale, and family-based enterprises. While these may contribute to the very modest livelihood of a family, they fail to bring about the required and targeted economic growth.

A growing middle class is demanding provision of more varied and better-quality products (“latent demand”). At the same time, universities in Ghana and Kenya, with a tertiary education on a good theoretical level, churn out graduates in quantities which cannot be absorbed by the labor market. The bottleneck is the lack of entrepreneurial and practical skills which are required not only from entrepreneurs but also from the employees of SMEs (“intrapreneurs”). The project therefore aimed at building the capacities for practice-oriented learning and applied research as well as the growth ambitions to generate a class of entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs who can take advantage of the diverse opportunities offered by African markets. Thus, university graduates were to be transformed from job seekers to job creators. The project’s yearly business plan competitions played a significant role in achieving this goal.

Within the framework of the DEG Young Entrepreneurs Business Plan Competition, seed money of 15,000 euros is sponsored generously by DEG invest bank every year. A total of fifteen start-ups were founded in Ghana and Kenya. In 2018, three more business ideas will receive an award which will ultimately lead to three more start-ups. The nature of businesses varies from snail, fish, and grass-cutter farms to food and beverage service provider like Baomilk Company Ltd and Executive Koko, designs of bags, dresses and jewelry with local material by FanbaPack Designs to IT-based services.



Figure 2: Faustina Abena Nti-Boakye, Founder and CEO of FanbaPack Designs, picture by Bernadett Yehdou

Also bestowed in Ghana was the Green Entrepreneurship Award whose implementation and start-up capital was generously supported by the German Development Cooperation, known as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), between 2015 and 2017.

All business plans focused on sustainable business ideas such as waste management (Plastic Waste Management Ltd.) and bio-solar dryers (Evergreen). Altogether, three businesses registered with the support of this business plan competition.

Furthermore, one of the project's specialties is the inclusion of German companies wanting to explore and enter African markets. By connecting them with partner universities, students and teachers learned about the requirements, and work methods, of companies from a developed economy. German businesses getting involved in African markets are in need of African partners, entrepreneurs, and companies, and it is in their self-interest to develop their value-chain partners to the level of professionalism they require. Thus, foreign trade and investment will help the Ghanaian and Kenyan economies develop, and it is a university partnership like ours which provided the platform for businesses on both sides to overcome obstacles, connect, and develop.

This was one of the reasons why the **Center for Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprise Development (CESED)** was founded by the University of Cape Coast and is part of the School of Business. CESED provides applied market and personnel services. With this entrepreneurial focus, the School of Business has become one of the leading public universities in Ghana in the area of applied research and teaching.

CESED consists of three units:

- UCC Business Incubator
- Applied Research and Consultancy
- Entrepreneurship Education

CESED is a core unit of the School of Business by connecting academics, students, and businesses to conduct applied research, education, and training. It develops structured partnerships with businesses to bring about a regular practice-oriented curriculum and offers opportunities for applied research.

CESED's activities are spread throughout the School of Business and faculty students from all departments within the school. All other departments and schools of UCC also benefit from CESED's activities as they can enrol in a number of entrepreneurship courses offered by the Center. It is interesting to note that the project's success has motivated university leadership to make entrepreneurship courses mandatory for all study programs of the university from academic year 2014/15 on.

The project's focus on the center's development constituted a focus that helped to streamline and interlink all project efforts, generated synergies and made project results more sustainable beyond the duration of the project.

Within the framework of the student exchange program, students from H-BRS conducted research in Africa as part of their final bachelor's or master's thesis. Such research stays were financed by the project and enabled the students to gain very practical experience in applied research. In Ghana, the students were supported by CESED. For example, one master student examined the furniture sector in Kenya for a German office furniture manufacturer, and another student developed a business model for discarded refrigerators in Ghana as part of her master's thesis. This student exchange program and the faculty exchange not only resulted in exciting research projects and joint teaching courses (*Business Bridge* and his follow-up course *Building Bridges Across Continents*), but also new project ideas were developed and implemented such as the project "Partnership for Applied Sciences - PASS", in Ghana or "Collaboration for Entrepreneurial Universities - CEPU" in Kenya.

Also, the project has created strong working alliances and friendships. We are very grateful for the generous funding of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as well as all our project partners, whose expertise and commitment have contributed to the excellent results of the project.

Such programs strengthen the dialog between Africa and Germany and raise awareness for shared interests and different needs. We can therefore definitely recommend similar business-university partnerships in Europe and Africa.