CASE STUDY: LIVING AND STUDYING IN GERMANY AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

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Introduction

German African Universities Program (GAUP) is a partnership of three universities encompassing Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg, University of Applied Sciences in Germany, University of Nairobi in Kenya, and University of Cape Coast in Ghana. Every year, a number of students from each university are competitively selected to take part in the exchange program in a foreign country for three months in the sponsored project. I participated in the exchange program in Germany during the winter semester 2016/2017. The experience was excellent and the benefits cannot be underestimated. The objective was to integrate with the university community in Germany and learn first-hand from their teaching approaches and experiences by attending classes and interacting in- and outside the classroom. It provided an opportunity for cross-cultural learning, hence preparing us to live and work in different parts of the world. Besides the classroom experience, learning was reinforced by exposure tours in the industry including the Coal mine industrial complex in Essen (UNESCO world heritage since 2001) and Rheinbach.

Teaching Methods

The education system is designed to give students control over their learning process. Teaching is done through student presentations, case studies, research projects, workshops, and industry practical learning tours. At the beginning of the semester, lecturers introduce their units and give learning materials. Students are requested to form groups and group assignments assigned. Presentation schedule is generated to guide students in research and reports. While groups present their work in class, the lecturer and the students give instant feedback and insights on how to improve their work.

Case studies are used as a method for delivering course content. Case studies help students better understand real-life problems and develop models for solving similar problems in related contexts. Each group of students is assigned a specific industry case to analyze. After analysis, the groups present their work to the class. The lecturer evaluates individual groups based on how they analyze their case and award them points.

The research project is designed to enable students learn by doing and finding out facts through a collection of secondary and primary data. The lecturer asks students to come up with a research topic related to current and future business opportunities. Individual groups book appointments with the lecturer for review and guidance on how to write a good research paper. At the end of the semester, students present their project findings in class and turn over their papers to the lecturer for assessment. The research skills are further
developed by organizing workshops to train students and expose them to research design typologies, tools, data collection, analysis, and communication. For instance, I was privileged to attend a 3-day workshop organized by the university at Gummersbach where we were taught research methods and how to write a good project. We also interacted with students of Business Psychology who helped us understand how to formulate a good questionnaire, carry out a survey, conduct an experiment, and manage data collection and analysis using various tools. It was a very interactive and productive workshop enabling us to confidently carry out research for a Pakistan textile company that intended to introduce its products in the German market.

**Conclusion**

The teaching methods were credible in exposing students to learning business concepts and knowledge and skills for solving real-life business problems. The exchange program exposes students to different cultural contexts, making them able to learn how to analyse challenges, identify opportunities and develop strategies for entrepreneurial ventures across continents. The international exposure builds confidence and enables students to communicate better and build business relations in foreign markets. The nature of the program prepares the participants for future global positions in management and leadership. In addition, students who participate in the exchange program are awarded a certificate that impacts positively on their academic achievements. However, I recommend that the contents of levels III and IV for German business students need to be reviewed to scrap some essential content. Evaluation of students in Kenya should be spread out across a variety of assessment and should not be tied only to the final examination. Lecturers should consider more of class presentations as they help increase students’ public speaking capability and confidence. Seminars and workshops should be considered in the curriculum as methods for content delivery.