

Teaching Experience

Visiting Würzburg and working at the Professorship of
Adult and Continuing Education
Institute of Education
Julius-Maximilians-University Würzburg

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1. INTRODUCTION

I had the privilege of being invited twice as a DAAD Visiting Professor to teach the master student of Julius-Maximilians University, Wurzburg- one of the oldest and well-reputed universities in Germany. The visit materialised mainly due to the initiative taken by Professor Regina Egetenmeyer, who is deeply interested in promoting internationalization. With the support of DAAD and the India Centre at Wurzburg, she has been quite successful in promoting cooperation between India and Germany.

2. SEMINARS AND EXCURSIONS

During my visit in November 2016, I designed and taught the following course:

International Networks and Organizations in Adult and Lifelong Learning

During my earlier visit of three month duration, I designed and taught the following three courses.

A: International Perspectives on Adult and Lifelong Learning;

B: Global Perspectives on Innovations in Adult Education;

C: Asian Perspectives on Participatory Lifelong Learning and Information and Communication Technologies.

I noticed that universities in Germany prefer to use the term seminar in place of course.

From the beginning, I could feel that the entire teaching -learning process is planned in a professional manner at the J.M. University. Unlike India, where some broad topics and a reading list is given for different courses, in Germany the learning outcome for each seminar is spelt out so that the students could know in advance how they would be benefitted from the seminar. The schedule of lecture is prepared in advance specifying the topic of different lectures, date, time and class room where the lecture would be held. All these details and materials related to the seminar are uploaded on the university website three months in advance so that the students could decide about the choice of seminar depending on their interest and convenience. A brief CV and the photo of the teacher are also given so that the students get to know the academic background of the teacher. Questions related to the course can be asked in the question-forum on the university website

Each seminar comprises of 12-16 lectures of two hours each per week. Since I had offered three seminars during the three months, the classes were held every alternate day. Sometimes, two lectures are held in continuity depending on the convenience of students who are generally employed.

Instead of following the traditional method of lectures, I had negotiated the transaction of curriculum with the students with a view to seeking their opinion. All of them did not want long lectures which they considered to be monotonous. As per discussion, the following methodology was adopted to teach the topics. After I introduced the topic with the help of power points for about 30-40 minutes, the students were given 15-20 minutes to read some basic reading material comprising of not more than 10 pages already uploaded on the website so that they could get more clarity and I could be sure that the students have read some basic text in the class. This was followed by a relevant video presentation where an expert in the field would discuss some aspects connected with the topic. While the written matter introduced the students to the scholarly publication, the video familiarised the students with the experts in the field and gave them an opportunity to see and listen to them. This was followed by group discussion where 4-5 students formed a group and discussed various issues identified in the topics. This was done to enable the students practice peer group discussion and working in a group. Subsequently, group reports were presented and followed by open discussion in the class. Since all the students had laptops with them and class rooms had Wi-Fi and technologically well equipped, teaching learning process was very smooth.

During the last ten minutes students were asked to write down the main points covered in the topic based on recapitulation. After the class, the students could refer other reading materials available in the library and prepare detailed notes. As a teacher, I intervened whenever necessary and helped the students acquire relevant knowledge and in the process helped them develop different competencies of listening, reading, writing, discussion, working in groups, and presentation during the session.

The students appreciated this methodology and reported that it helped them derive maximum benefits within two hours of attending a session in an interesting and participatory manner. Examination was based on the submission of 15-20 pages essay on a topic selected in consultation with the teacher. The students are given detailed guidelines on writing the essay and its evaluation. Each student is required to submit a certificate of self-declaration that the essay is self-written and not plagiarised.

The assignment is uploaded on the university website. I had introduced book review as an important assignment to enable the students develop the competency of critical reading and reflection and make sure that they are familiar with at least two recent publications related to the seminar. I selected the two recent publications of the UNESCO –viz. *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* and *Rethinking Education* which are rated highly by scholars in the field of lifelong learning. Although all the students submitted the reviews, I found the reviews written by two students worth publishing and accordingly forwarded them for publication in the *Indian Journal of Adult Education*. I have noticed that the students were regular in attending lectures and came well prepared. Since they were employed and self supporting, they were very serious and committed to studies. I never saw them in a hurry to leave the classroom.

I was quite happy to see the involvement of students in administrative work. The maintenance of attendance sheet and providing technical support to the teacher was entrusted to one of the student who is employed on part time basis by the university. One of the striking features of German university system is a very lean administration. In Germany the Head of the Department is assisted by two or three students who worked on hourly basis attending to several administrative tasks. In some of the Departments of the university, there is only a part time Secretary to manage the office work unlike India where the Head of the Department is assisted by two or three full time staff members.

Field Visit to the UNESCO Institute of Adult and Lifelong Learning (UIL), Hamburg was an interesting aspect of the seminar on *International Networks and Organizations on Adult and Lifelong Learning*. Since the students had already learned about the role of the UIL, the field visit was aimed at providing them an opportunity to observe its functioning and role in the promotion of lifelong learning and to meet the specialists working at UIL. Students spent a whole day at the Institute listening to presentations by the faculty members on various ongoing programmes and research projects. Students also got a chance to visit the UIL library and Documentation Centre and browse through recent publications. They were also briefed about the UIL scholarships, provision of internship and other research facilities. Subsequently, two students applied and received scholarship. The visit in fact helped the students establish personal contact with some of the staff members of the UIL. During the visit some of the students could also visit the Ethnology Museum located adjacent to the UIL.

Photograph of students during the Field visit to UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg.



Front Row (right to left): Professor Arne Carlsen, Director UIL, Prof. S.Y. Shah and Ms. Lisa Krolak, Head of Documentation Centre who coordinated the field visit at UIL. The ten students are at the back row.

Following are the details of the three seminars:

Seminar 1. International Networks and Organizations in Adult and Lifelong Learning: Aims, Main topics and Learning outcomes.

The course aims at providing an overview of important international organizations and networks in the field of adult and lifelong learning in different countries focusing on their programmes, researches and publications. A brief discussion on theoretical perspectives covering different theories of globalization and the emergence of knowledge society will help the students analyze the functioning of different global networks and develop a comparative perspective. The course would also discuss selected innovative projects undertaken by these organizations with a view to motivating the students to undertake comparative studies and learning from other countries and cultures. It is expected that the course would not only help the students to acquire a broader global perspective on the developments in the field of adult and lifelong learning but also motivate some of them to undertake further studies related to these organizations. An important part of this course will be a field visit to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg with a view to familiarizing the students with actual functioning and programs of the Institute and providing them an opportunity to personally meet and discuss with specialist working on different country projects and explore the possibilities of internship at the UIL.

I have found that the students in Germany were regular in attending lectures and came in time and well prepared. Since they were employed and self-supporting, they were very serious and committed to studies. They were never in a hurry to leave the classroom after the lecture

Main topics:

A. Theoretical Perspective on the Study of Global Organizations & Networks - discourse on cultural theories of globalization

B. Networks & Organizations having primary interest in Adult & Lifelong Learning

1. Adult Learning Documentation and Information Network (ALADIN) of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
2. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)
3. The ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning
4. European Society for Research in Education of Adults (ESREA)
5. World Literacy of Canada
6. Institute for international cooperation of the German Adult Education Association. (IIZ/DVV)
7. European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)
8. The Asian South Pacific Association of Basic Education (ASPBAE)

C. Networks & Organizations having limited interest in Lifelong Learning

9. OECD
10. UNESCO
11. WORLD BANK
12. ACTION AID
13. Commonwealth Foundation
14. Commonwealth of Learning

Note: Each of the above networks/organizations will be discussed in terms of their objectives, programmes, researches, publications and role.

D. Field visit to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Hamburg.

E. Reflections on field visit.

Learning outcome:

It is expected that at the end of the course, the students will be able to:

- acquire knowledge and understanding about the programmes of different international organizations and networks
- analyze selected activities of international networks in the light of globalization theories
- identify areas of further study and research
- explore the possibilities of future association with some of the institutions and develop a global perspective on adult and lifelong learning

Seminar 2. Global Perspectives on Innovations in Adult Education: Aims, Main topics and Learning outcomes.

This seminar aims at providing an analytical framework for the study of innovations in adult education. Promoting creativity and incentivizing innovations through our educational institutions is a first step towards broadening and deepening the impact of innovations in our society and economy. Diffusion of Innovations offers valuable insights into the process of social change: What qualities make an innovation spread successfully? Why do certain innovations spread more quickly than others? And why do others fail? The course will not only help the students understand the discourse on innovation and change but also develop an analytical insights into various dimensions with reference to selected case studies from the regions of Asia, Arabia ,Africa, Latin America , Europe and North America.

Main Topics:

- A. Innovation theory & diffusion of innovations.
- B. Concept of Innovation & Empirical Models.
- C. Discourse on innovations.
- D. Role of technology in innovations.
- E. Challenges of adoption of innovations.

Selected case studies of innovations in adult education from different regions of Asia, Arabia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America.

Learning outcome:

After the course, the students are expected to:

- have an understanding of innovation, selected innovative programmes of adult and lifelong learning in different countries;
- develop comparative perspectives on adult education in Europe, Africa, Arabia, Asia, Latin America and North America.
- draw insights to evolve new strategies towards tackling the problem of illiteracy in Germany

Seminar 3. Asian Perspectives on Participatory Lifelong Learning and Information and Communication Technologies.

This course aims at providing an introduction to those students who are interested in having a non-European perspective on adult and lifelong learning policies and programmes with a special focus on a developing country in Asia—India. As a prelude to discussing different themes, the course will cover brief discussion on theories of social change and development discourse. This may help students understand the dynamics of social transformation through educational interventions.

Main topics:

- A. Theories of social change
- B. Development discourse
- C. Definitions, terminologies & basic concepts related to literacy, adult education, lifelong learning and information and communication technologies.
- D. Global context and challenge of literacy & impact of literacy on development
- E. Society, literacy and development in Asia
- F. A case Study of development of adult education in India-1:Historical Perspective,
- G. Case study of development of adult education in India-2. Policy and Planning of Adult and Lifelong Learning Programmes
- H. Innovative programmes-literacy campaigns & *Mahila Samakhya*(Women's Empowerment
- I. Training of Adult Educators
- J. Role of Information & Communication Technologies in adult education in India
- K. Participatory research method
- L. Review of two films on literacy campaigns followed by discussion

Learning outcome:

After the course the students are expected to:

- have better understanding of the magnitude and problem of illiteracy in developing countries specially India
- acquire knowledge and understanding of the policies and innovative programmes of adult and lifelong learning in Asia with special focus on India
- develop comparative perspectives on adult education in Europe and Asia
- draw insights to evolve new strategies towards tackling the problem of illit-

Elaborate reading list is provided for all the seminars and it was in two parts. While part one formed essential readings of not more than 30-50 pages per topic, the second part had books covering further information. To facilitate easy access, the reading materials are given in Pdf files which the students can download in their laptops and read at their convenience.

3. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF LIVING IN WÜRZBURG

The experience of teaching at the J.M. University not only enriched me professionally but also personally. The opportunity provided me a chance to interact with the students and academics from Germany and other European countries and experience the campus life, familiarise with German culture and taste local cuisine. A visit to X mas market in the company of the Head of the Department -Professor Regina, and the staff and students and tasting hot wine was memorable. It was a pleasant surprise to meet Professor Bruckner , Head of the India Centre, who not only spoke chaste Hindi but also organised the Deepavali festival. My stay at Wurzburg was made.

The university has an excellent guest house in the city. Since the room had a high speed internet connection, I could work uninterruptedly and stay connected with friends. I enjoyed my stay on the twelfth floor room of the guest house which provided a breath taking view of Wurzburg and the historic monuments, cathedrals, chapels and the sprawling wine yard. Wurzburg being the capital of the German wine region Franconia , it was not surprising that the university owns wine yard which produces high quality wine sold at the university store. Although some of my friends who had been to Wurzburg told me that I may have problem with food, I did not face any issue as the Mensa (university cafeteria) served wide variety of high quality food at a nominal charge. I observed that the Mensa gave further discounts to the students and teachers. Although I visited most of the restaurants in the city, I really liked the Cafeteria on the top floor of Galleria Mall which had a buffet serving a wide variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, delicious pastries and variety of beverages. I was quite surprised to know that a small place like Wurzburg has three Indian restaurants and whenever I visited, I found lot of local people enjoying food. It seems that Germans have developed a taste for Indian cuisine.

While the quality of food was quite good, it was modified to appeal to European taste by making it less spicy and oily.

Being a small place one could walk around the city visiting several historic monuments like the Marienberg Fortress, Princes' Building, Hofgarten - Wurzburg Court Gardens, Wurzburg Residenz, Museums and churches and leisurely stroll on the banks of the Main river or sip wine on the old Main Bridge which seems to be the most sought after meeting place for many. Some of the cathedrals have special prayer rooms in the basement where one could pray or meditate. The serene atmosphere in the elegant churches provided a peaceful place and time for reflection. Although I regularly visited in most of the churches for meditation, I felt special vibrations in Kapelle Würzburg which is a picturesque chapel located on a hill top and known as a pilgrimage centre because of its healing powers.

Since I had free weekends and X Mas holidays, I travelled extensively in Germany by purchasing the German Railway Pass available for non-Germans at a highly subsidised rate. As suggested by a student, I travelled to Rome and spent the Xmas day at the main church where Pope delivers X mas sermon. I also visited Prague which is a historic place bustling with tourists. Since I travelled by bus from Prague to Wurzburg, I could see the beautiful countryside and on the way, had a stopover at Nuremberg, another historic place worth visiting near Wurzburg.

Although most of the local people understood English, the taxi drivers were not conversant in English and hence I always showed a slip on which the address of the place where I wanted to go is written so that they had no difficulty in understanding. The availability of bus near the guest house made my travel to university very comfortable. Travelling around the city was no problem because of the availability of Tram which invariably was on time as mentioned in the time table. With a monthly pass one could travel around the city. Hardly the pass was checked by the driver or anybody. During my three month stay, I never saw any inspector checking the pass. Honesty and punctuality seems to be an integral part of German culture. Though a new place, I felt quite safe walking around the city even late night unlike many cities where one may not dare to go out at late hours. I found Wurzburg to be very safe, beautiful and clean city.

I appreciate the professional and personal support provided by Professor Regina Egetenmeyer and her students especially Ms. Stefanie Kroner and Ms. Clara Kuhlen who were always happy to help me which made my stay at Wurzburg very comfortable.