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Participated in the Train the Trainer Program between October and December 2014
Went to the International School of Design (KISD) at Cologne University of Applied Sciences

On the Road to the German Approach

Me As a lecturer in the Design and Visual Communication Department, I was mainly interested in getting familiar with the education system of design schools in Germany given that my students attend our partner universities for a semester or more while I don't have a good knowledge yet of how the German approach and mechanism of design pedagogy is like. And as a designer, I was interested in a first-hand experience that would connect me to the German school of thought in design.

As a start, I looked up all the partner universities of our School of Architecture and Built Environment and was intrigued by the design program at Köln International School of Design (KISD) which graciously agreed on hosting me as a visiting lecturer. I contacted them pointing out the courses I teach at the Design and Visual Communication

Department at GJU and the related courses they have at their school.

Prior to my arrival to Cologne, I was in contact with Lisa Janßen, the International Relations Officer at KISD, as well as Professor Philipp Heidkamp, Interface / Interaction Design Professor and Head of the Integrated Design MA program at KISD, who both provided me with information about the system of the school and the modes of teaching.

The Teaching Experience

The seminar then started on the 17th of October with a total of 32 students from Germany and other countries such as Mexico, France, Italy, Taiwan, Brazil, Iran, and the USA. I had a certain approach in mind for the two-month Information Design Seminar, a more project and studio class oriented approach, but meeting with Professor Heidkamp after my first class made me realize how I should be taking a different approach that's more appropriate with the system of scientific seminars at KISD, backed up with more theories and references which he kindly suggested to add to the ones I already had on my list.

It was suggested by Professor Heidkamp to focus on the phenomenon of information in comparison to data, knowledge, wisdom, and action through the whole seminar which was a suggestion that I highly welcomed and

appreciated since it would be interesting to see what the students would end up with in terms of understanding and absorbing this phenomenon and relating it to design and their roles as designers, and see how they could contribute to this new field of design by trying to define it from their own point of view as a start, and later on backing it up with references.

During my first week at KISD, I organized a short term project under the title of 'Real-Life Context-Based Infographics'. The project lasted for one week only. The outcome was a collection of posters and one tangible and interactive infographic. They were all presented in an exhibition that the students organized themselves at the School.

Lesson Learned

The opportunity of conducting the seminar and the short-term project at KISD – both in Information Design – added significantly to the curriculum of the project based course that I had been teaching at GJU. Accordingly, I will be adding more theoretical references to the content, and the subject of 'Real-Life Context-Based Infographics' will definitely be added to the course.

A Successful Example to Acknowledge

My stay as a visiting lecturer at KISD was a tremendous experience and my impression of the school and their system was very inspiring: Everything from the facilities at the labs to the activities that varied from conferences, weekly talks, local design awards, weekly public presentations of students' work, to the exhibitions, and most importantly the sense of community and full involvement from everyone taking part in the school from the students to the staff and to the professors. Design is changing, and design pedagogy should change accordingly in order to provide designers able to work and adapt to the changes occurring in the design market and the design field. KISD is doing an impressive job in achieving that, making it a great example for us to follow as one of the best design schools in the country. KISD successfully achieved that by creating their own system basing their mode of teaching on projects, scientific seminars, lectures, technical seminars, workshops, and additional courses. They managed to separate themselves from the main system of the School, and created their own way where students don't get graded and registrations are based on a certain amount of modules that they need to accomplish each semester. And yet, the main registration system of the university is in accord with this separate system that KISD follows. It was great to see this system

work, since as a new design school trying to cope with the changes occurring in our field, we suffer from having to stick to one rigid system that in certain cases prevents us from progressing and from creating a more integrated and more interdisciplinary approach.

A large number of the students and staff I met at KISD, as well as a few designers I met in Cologne, were interested in visiting Jordan and getting more familiar with our school and our culture in general, which I think is a great opportunity for our school and our university to open the door for more exchange programs whether in collaborative projects between the two schools or short term projects and workshops that we could discuss more officially as a Department later on.

On a Personal Level

Teaching under the supervision of Professor Heidkamp was beneficial and valuable for me in terms of building a more reflective curriculum for the Information Design Course I teach with a more philosophical basis, which quite started shaping the path I'm interested to follow in pursuing my PhD.

Not only did I benefit professionally from the Train the Trainer program, but also, during my stay in

Cologne, I was able to make friends for life and meet wonderful people who actually managed

to break some stereotypes we have in our subconscious of German people and German culture.

Reflecting Upon

The Train the Trainer program is by far the most valuable experience I've ever had since I started teaching at GJU. I highly recommend seizing this opportunity to the entire academic and administrative staff to get more familiar with the German culture and understand how our partner universities function and learn from their experiences.

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