

# The experience of KANYANA Gorret, after students exchange program in Germany

## **Introduction**

PIASS and DHBW, have a collaboration of students exchanging program. DHBW sends its students from the faculty of social worker to come and do internship in Rwanda and have in the same way PIASS sends its students mainly from the faculty of development studies to Germany at DHBW. Some of the criteria to be chosen, students must have good grade, pass interviews within the faculty, and with the international office team at DHBW which is normally done online. The students exchange program started some few years back where students get a chance of getting different experiences and exposed to different culture and learning context. In 2018 September I was one of the students that qualified to apply for the program and I did series of interviews which I passed.

I left Rwanda 1<sup>st</sup> September and arrived on 3<sup>rd</sup> in Villingen Schweningen where I was welcomed by someone from international office and took me to my apartment. The following day I went to the university and met with other students who come from over ten countries. We were briefed by the international office team about what we are expected during our stay in Germany and introduced us to some of the staff members to contact in case of any enquiry.

## **Description exchange program activities.**

During my stay in Germany I was a full-time student, I participated in several courses designed for international students in exchange program and some few with Germany students. Besides that, I also participated in other events organized by international office and others organized by

students themselves, among these events were study tours, workshops, and trainings, meetings, international dinner, I also made a presentation about my country and the university mainly about peace building interventions in Rwanda.

### **Course I participated in;**

After the orientation week, I again did another English tests both oral and written which determined which courses I would be able to participate in, then I had to choose the courses to take throughout the semester. These were; management which had three units (game theory, change management and financial mathematics), event management, English academic writing, basic German, English for social worker and international topic for social worker and intercultural communication. All these courses broadened my knowledge in different ways for example I gained knowledge in business, how to manage changes mainly in administration settings, how to organize small and big events, about the history of social worker programs, but more especially I was helped by intercultural communication and culture awareness because it helped to understand general differences between cultures and break the stereotype I had towards other people's culture. I found this related to peace building as it is important to respect and tolerate other people who seem to do things differently from what one is used of.

### **Meetings and seminars;**

During my stay in Germany I attended different meetings with Barden Wurttemberg Stiftung, the scholarship company that supports German students who want to have a semester abroad and the students from Europe and other continents who wish to study in Germany. It organized meetings for its beneficiaries both in coming and outgoing. It offered trainings on strong personality, culture awareness and, personal understanding, and the meetings which aimed at strengthening the relationship among its beneficiaries but mostly it aimed to make the beneficiary meet which gave me a chance to meet with many different people with different nationalities and made friends. In one of these meetings I and my Rwandan colleague were invited on the panel to discourse our experience in both countries (Rwanda and Germany), the audience asked us questions and we responded to them, this was one of my great experiences during my stay in Germany, standing before the audience of 80 people in a foreign country.

**Study Tours;**

The international office of DHBW, organized two study tours: to Mercedes Banze and to the European parliament, and I participated in both of them, when we visited Mercedes Banze it was a great experience for me to see how cars are assembled from the starting point to the last when the car is ready for sell. Most of the work was done by the machines which acted like they could communicate to each other because everything is done smart, smooth and faster. The visit to the European parliament in France was also amazing, it is also called “The Citizen’s Voice in the E U”. The tour guide gave us a short history of the parliament story behind its design and an explanation how it operates. As we walked around we watched video on E U, the tablets where you could write a message to any member of the parliament and I manage to know the achievements of E U like abolition of border control, peace, stability and prosperity, single market, single currency and many others I found this very interesting and helpful and I wish the same for A U or EAU.

**Traveling;**

Students organized group traveling to different parts of Germany like Constance, Stuttgart, Europe park, crossed the border to Swaziland, castles in the region. We enjoyed a lot because we explored the country and we got to know a lot in the history of the country through visiting historical places like churches, and old cities.

**Lessons learned;**

I learned a lot during my stay in Germany: relating with people with different culture from the intercultural communications and through living with the people we do share the culture, flexibility is another skill I acquired, use of some program like google doc where we used to do our group assignments, from the visit at European parliament I learned that if countries have strong economic cooperation can benefit all the members of the country in one way or the other. Generally, my stay was educative in many ways.

## **Conclusion;**

The exchange program for students is very significant for the students who participate in it because it exposes them to different context and getting out of comfort zone make us learn a lot from others and even appreciate our selves and where we come from. Therefore, I'm very grateful to the administration of PIASS for empowerment its students in different angles. I am also grateful for the university DHBW for accepting to collaborate with PIASS and all learning environment provided to us.

BELOW ARE SOME OF THE PHOTOS FROM THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.

At international dinner



Being interviewed about the importance of commemoration at the memorial cite of Nazi victims



After the meeting with Baden Württemberg Stifftug in Stuttgart



Meeting of outgoing and incoming students and the founders of PIASS-DHBW exchange program



At European Parliament



Introduction to event management in front of international office

