

Internationalisation

University of Innsbruck

Lecturing an 'International Human Resource Management' Semester Course

REPORT

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Departement of Human Resource Management

Internationalisation is a strategic priority for the University of Pretoria. Prof Du Plessis was an invited guest professor at the University of Innsbruck in 2007 when she lectured a course on Strategic Human Resource Management. As a result of the relationship that developed during her lecturing in January 2007 an international agreement was signed in 2008 between the University of Innsbruck and the University of Pretoria. Prof Yvonne du Plessis was again invited as guest professor to the University of Innsbruck for the wintersemester 2008/2009 to lecture an International Human Resource Management course.

Prof Du Plessis accepted the invitation and simultaneously is keeping the international relationship alive. The Winter semester commenced in October 2008 and ends in March 2009. Due to costs and UP commitments Prof Du Plessis could not attend the full semester and arranged to develop the course material and put it on the e-campus (alike the ClickUP system at UP) for the students to do preparatory work. The lectures and seminars started in January 2009, while Prof Du Plessis could be present in Innsbruck.

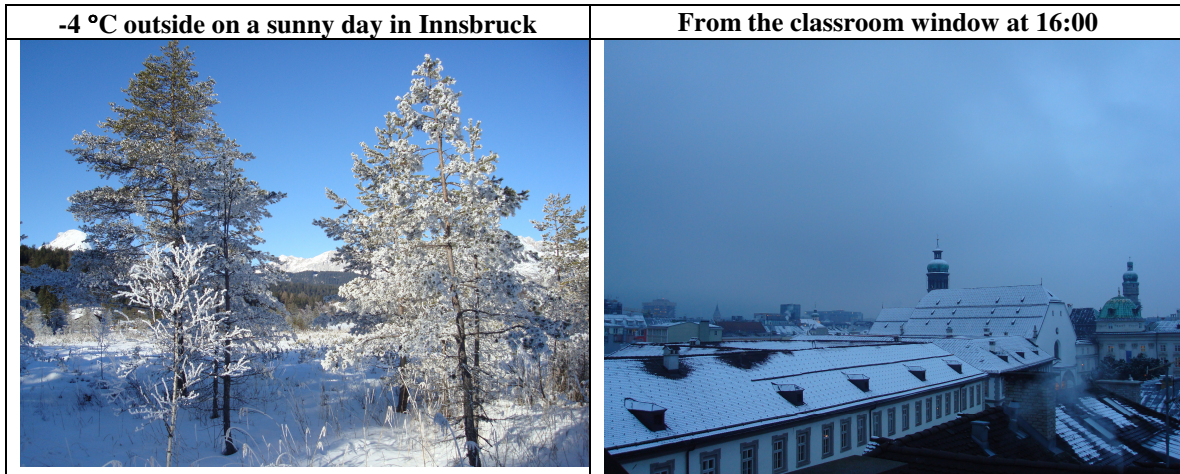
The course comprised of 60 hours lecturing and seminar discussions (schedule attached) as well as assessments in the form of a test and an individual and group assignment. Examinations commence in mid-February and students have three opportunities to write the examination until May 2009.

The 3 D International Learning Experience

At the University of Innsbruck students have core subjects, elective subjects and international exchange subjects for the foreign students. The course in "International Management" is an open course that can be selected by all three categories of students. Subsequently the course was full, maximum 35 students per class, when I arrived at the University of Innsbruck on 7 January 2009.

The nationalities of the 35 students on the list could not be assumed before the class commenced on 9 January 2009. On 9 January 2009, 28 students from 12 nationalities

(Taiwan, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, The Netherlands, Finland, Denmark and Sweden arrived in class and wanted to learn about International Human Resource Management from a South African Lecturer. The demographics of the students were even more complex, to name a few; mainly 4th year students, English not their first language, background of previous studies not in Human Resource Management.



As I stood there, at -4 °C outside with snow falling, in front of this group of aspirant students in IHRM I realized this is not just another course this is a lifetime experience for all of us and I have to make it work. This is a 3 D (three dimensional) international learning experience:

1. International Lecturer from South Africa (African Continent)
2. International students (Multi-nationalities within continents of Asia, North – America, Europe)
3. International Management course with the focus on IHRM, which represents us as humans who have to perform in an international setting.

The great learning started when they (students) realized they are going to be divided into a multinational group and apply the IHRM theory and practice to themselves as well as to a Multinational Business Case study of their choice.

The result of the learning experience was too intense for some and they left the class as they thought they just had to attend lectures as usual and did not find the time to truly involve themselves. The number of students who finished the class part and were assessed were 24 and all of them got grades to write the final examination.

Innsbruck 2009 IHRM class



Group work in class



Feedback from students:

Here are some extractions from student feedback received after the course:

E-mail received on 23/01/2009:

During this semester, your course was the mos (sic) interesting. It is different from finanz (sic) course, intercultural communication or strategic management because you have an (sic) human side that the other professors have not!

I don't know exactly what I can say, I hope I will have some professors like you in my school!

Best regards

Guillaume Jacquot (France)

Verbal Feedback in class on 23/01/2009:

It is very difficult for me to express my feelings, but I want to say the following to you as lecturer, and hope you see it in a positive light as I do not want to get favours from you:

This is my last course before I graduate, and for many years of studying in Europe this was the best I have ever had – the course and the lecturer. I never thought that learning can be so exciting and insightful. I never knew that Human Resource Management offered such a lot and that it is so interesting. I am thinking of changing my focus from Tourism to the human side of business. Thank you very much.

Bernhard Mayer (Austria)

E-mail received 24/01/09:

You are leaving tomorrow and i want to give you my best wishes.

Good flight on your way back home.

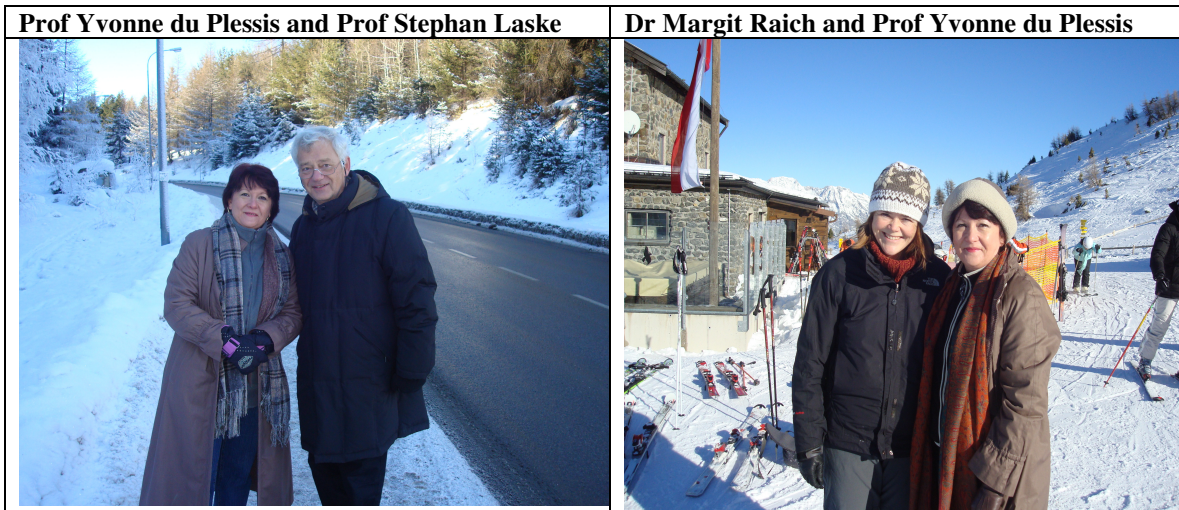
we will stay in touch and i will miss you, best lecturer!

All the best yours, Yufang (Taiwan)

In hind sight, the 3 D International learning experience is an opportunity not to be missed. After all it is a lot of work, but worth every minute and Euro of it.

International Research opportunities:

During my visit it was not just lecturing, I met with Prof Stephan Laske who was the Dean of Social and Business Sciences at the University of Innsbruck during 2008 and who came out in May 2008 to South Africa to sign the agreement with the University of Pretoria. We discussed further cooperation and research opportunities.



Dr Margit Raich and I discussed mutual research interests and we concluded on working together on two research projects, as a start, commencing after 16 February 2009.

In conclusion, internationalisation to me means building lasting international relationships from which we can all learn and prosper – Universities, Communities, students and lecturers. Despite the eagerness to rather go and ski than to sit in class (after all this is why they chose Innsbruck as the foreign city to do a course) was overcome by really enjoying the IHRM class and learning, because it made a positive difference. This agreement between Universities is positive and working because we make it work.

Prof Yvonne du Plessis