

Studying Internationally - Diversity as the Key to Success

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Part-time MBA programs and the Executive MBA programs in particular include study abroad periods. Olga Pantchenko, 33, and Dr. Hans-Joachim Schulz, 55, completed the Global Executive MBA Program of HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management and EADA Business School with some modules in five different countries. Both the doctor of physics from Germany and the Russian linguist specializing in intercultural communication hold executive positions and therefore consider studying abroad a vital part of the program.

***Why exactly did you choose the Global Executive MBA Program instead of one taking place solely in Germany?

Hans-Joachim Schulz: As a matter of principle, an MBA program is to develop leadership skills in its participants and cultural knowledge plays an important role in this regard. Before closing transactions abroad, you should familiarize yourself with the culture and traditions of the respective country. Therefore, I chose the GEMBA Program as it allowed me to complete modules in Leipzig and Barcelona as well as to spend a week each in China, Brazil and India.

Olga Pantchenko: I fully agree with my former classmate. Intercultural competence is becoming increasingly important and people assuming responsibility in leadership positions should be familiar with the cultures they are dealing with. This will come in very handy when preparing for business appointments abroad. For instance, the procedures regarding contracts in China differ greatly from those here in Europe.

***How did you benefit from your study visits abroad on a personal and professional level?

Olga Pantchenko: The study abroad periods were generally a very valuable experience for me. Changing locations increased my productivity throughout the program enormously. It also helped to view many aspects from different perspectives and to understand the various different national mentalities from an academic and economic point of view. I greatly benefited from the experience of our lecturers in China, Brazil and India as it makes a huge difference whether you only read about cultural diversity in the business world or listen to unfiltered opinions in a country. On a technical level, I learned a lot from visiting all the different companies. I also consider traveling itself to be a valuable experience. If you can connect it to your studies, then you will grow not only professionally but also as a person and will learn a lot about yourself.

Hans-Joachim Schulz: While completing the modules in the different countries, I learned many things I had not known before despite my numerous trips abroad. The whole program was like a fountain of youth to me. We talked to so many different people in the other countries and it was just fantastic to hear about the various approaches in the field of economics. I learned a lot in Brazil when we studied marketing and compliance. On a personal level, I benefited greatly from the cultural realities in the respective countries.

***Looking back at the individual modules you completed abroad, what were your personal highlights?

Hans-Joachim Schulz: I could name so many things! We spent a week each in India, Brazil and China and it was always a very intense experience. We had the opportunity to completely immerse ourselves in the new environment, get to know the country and its people and although it was just a short amount of time, every week was absolutely sufficient to absorb new knowledge. One of my personal highlights was in China. We had a dinner on the last night. During the event, I engaged in great conversations with Chinese business people, introduced my company and recognized the enormous potential of the Chinese market. I was not expecting that.

Olga Pantchenko: One of my favorite things was learning about the diversity of the people in the respective countries. I travel very often but before starting the GEMBA Program I had no idea about the different styles of teaching in Europe and India, for instance. This insight gave me an opportunity to better understand this diversity. I realized that diversity often leads to success.

***Theory meets practice: Which contents from your study periods abroad were you able to apply best to your job?

Olga Pantchenko: Value Chain Management was a very important topic to me. It helped me to organize the processes within my own company much better. I founded my own business and to see how this is done in other countries had a lasting impact on me, particularly in connection with relations between companies and international suppliers, for instance.

Hans-Joachim Schulz: I have found the content taught in Brazil and China to be very helpful in my line of work. In Brazil, we focused on marketing and I learned several strategies there that I apply to my job here in Germany. The legal and political developments in China, the changes of the economic framework conditions in the Chinese market over the last 20 years and the opportunities for foreign investors arising from them were particularly relevant to me.

***In conclusion, what do you consider to be the greatest benefits of an intercultural academic program?

Hans-Joachim Schulz: The intercultural competencies, which are taught as part of the GEMBA Program and which are vital for any leadership position, are a major advantage. The various approaches and methods in the different areas of economics not only prepared us for the conventions in the individual countries but also provided us with a lot of input for applying some of the content to our own companies.

Olga Pantchenko: Another great benefit was the multicultural nature of our study group and the fact that the lecturers came from different cultural backgrounds as well. In times of globalization, it is vital to be flexible and to value various points of view. I believe that the GEMBA Program not only strengthened our academic skills but also allowed each and every one of us to grow - a process unlocked by diversity.

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The Global Executive MBA Program of HHL and EADA

The Global Executive MBA Program of German HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management and Spanish Escuela de Alta Dirección y Administración (EADA) focuses on the development of leadership skills and teaches about intercultural competence and the economic peculiarities of management in Southern and Northern Europe as well as Brazil, China and India. The program, which uses English as the classroom language, is designed especially for executives who have obtained several years of professional experience but have not studied business administration.

The structure of the 21-month Global Executive MBA Program has been adapted to the professional and personal needs of international managers. For

the Executive MBA double degree from HHL and EADA, participants must successfully complete eight six-day residential weeks on various management disciplines over the course of 21 months and write a Master thesis.

The program consists of six compulsory modules of which three must be completed in Germany and three in Spain. Another two of three electives have to be completed at renowned business schools in Brazil, China or India.

In addition to teaching core competencies in economics, an executive coaching session as well as the development of key qualifications such as communication, negotiation, conflict and diversity management as well as intercultural management abilities, which are all essential for international leadership positions, is a vital part of the program.

Admission requirements for the program are a first-level academic degree, a minimum of five years professional experience of which at least three years is in a leadership position, and an excellent command of English. The tuition fees, including course material as well as room and board during the residential weeks, amount to EUR 45,000. <http://www.hhl.de/gemba>

HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management

HHL is a university-level institution and ranks amongst the leading international business schools. The goal of the oldest business school in German-speaking Europe is to educate effective, responsible and entrepreneurially-minded leaders. HHL stands out for its excellent teaching, its clear research focus, its effective knowledge transfer into practice as well as its outstanding student services. The courses of study include full and part-time Master in Management as well as MBA programs, a Doctoral program and Executive Education. In the 2014 Financial Times Masters in Management Ranking, HHL's full-time M.Sc. program was ranked among the top 10 in Europe. In 2013 and 2014, HHL reached one of three first places for the best entrepreneurial universities in Germany in the Start-Up Radar ranking published by Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft (Founders' Association of German Science) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BWMi). According to the Financial Times, HHL ranks first in Germany and fifth globally for its entrepreneurship focus within the M.Sc. and EMBA programs. HHL is accredited by AACSB International. <http://www.hhl.de>

Pressekontakt

HHL gGmbH

Herr Volker Stößel
Jahnallee 59
04109 Leipzig

hhl.de
volker.stoessel@hhl.de

Firmenkontakt

HHL gGmbH

Herr Volker Stößel
Jahnallee 59
04109 Leipzig

hhl.de
volker.stoessel@hhl.de

HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management

Die HHL ist eine universitäre Einrichtung und zählt zu den führenden internationalen Business Schools. Ziel der ältesten betriebswirtschaftlichen Hochschule im deutschsprachigen Raum ist die Ausbildung leistungsfähiger, verantwortungsbewusster und unternehmerisch denkender Führungspersönlichkeiten. Neben der internationalen Ausrichtung spielt die Verknüpfung von Theorie und Praxis eine herausragende Rolle. Die HHL zeichnet sich aus durch exzellente Lehre, klare Forschungsorientierung und praxisnahen Transfer sowie hervorragenden Service für ihre Studierenden. www.hhl.de

Anlage: Bild

