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Ervaringsstage



I've had the immense pleasure of working as an intern at Leipzig International School (LIS) over the past weeks. Being able to experience another educational context has significantly deepened my understanding of the type of school I would like to work in. In this sense, it is safe to say that the experience has broadened my horizons in a way which will stay with me for the remainder of my career in education.

There were a number of reasons I wanted to go to LIS, the main one being that it is supposed to be a great international school which prioritizes learning. I found this to be true. LIS is a relatively small school, making the atmosphere personable. I felt immediately welcomed by students, teachers and management alike. We sat down together on the first morning to create a schedule which would allow me to observe a range of teachers in practice. Observing excellent teachers is a fantastic way to learn more about the craft. I sat in on a range of different lessons, in all kinds of subjects.

From Art with Grade 6 (ages 11-12) to Geography with Grade 11 (ages 16-17), the lessons were engaging. I was particularly impressed with some of the work students in a Grade 9 (ages 14-15) English class were doing. The level of thinking on display was immense, and it was fascinating to see how this teacher facilitated an environment in which students were able to attain this level of thinking.

Besides observing, I also taught a range of lessons myself. Teachers were trusting in giving up their classes for me to take, and I enjoyed doing something I've done so much of in The Netherlands, but in a different environment. For example, at my placement school in Zoetermeer, class-sizes are much bigger, and classes are much shorter than they were at LIS (40 minutes, compared to 1.5 hours). This meant designing and executing activities which were more demanding in order to cater for the demands of these classes. The goal of the World Teachers Programme is exactly this: for teachers in training to understand how cultural differences (in the broadest sense of the word) shape education, and to foster students that are able to adapt to the needs of various environments. In that sense, I would say this has been an immensely positive experience.

There are other differences too. For example, in The Netherlands the norm is for students to have a wide range of different classes. My students in Zoetermeer are taught Geography, History, Religious Studies and Global Perspectives all in different subjects. At LIS, the learning is much more interdisciplinary. They have just one class ("Social Studies") and are expected to engage with material from a range of different (disciplinary) perspectives. To this end, I taught the first 3 lessons of a unit about Africa to a 6th grade class. We covered geographical matters (where are different countries? What is a continent?), sociological issues (what are stereotypes, what can we do to avoid stereotyped thinking?), historical elements (the colonization of Africa and the Berlin Conference) and learnt new skills (making a bar-graph). This broad approach to a single topic is not something I have come across in my lessons in The Netherlands but actually fits in really well with my vision on what education should be about. It also lines up to my own hugely interdisciplinary academic background.

Besides this, I taught a number of classes in an IB Geography class. This is not a subject I had previously taught but I was pleased to find that it is predominantly human, rather than physical geography. In this sense, the internship was also a useful one in exposing me to the fact that there are more IBDP courses that I could teach than I previously believed there to be. Students said my classes were engaging and we had some great discussions. I received consistently positive feedback from colleagues observing my lessons and felt appreciated by both students and staff. Besides observing lessons and teaching myself, I participated in a staff meeting from the Individuals and Societies department about curriculum development. This, too, was insightful as this type of holistic approach to education – where time is built into the schedules of teachers to reflect on their practice and develop it – is not something I have come across elsewhere.

Halfway through my time at LIS, the principal approached me and indicated that there was a position they would like to invite me to apply for. This was flattering, but initially I didn't think moving to Leipzig was the right choice for me. Nonetheless, as time went on, I realized that being at LIS longer would bring me so much. I found the school culture to be immensely close to what I believe a school should be about and felt

inspired by the wonderful educators around me. So, at the beginning of my second week, I voiced interest in the position and was interviewed in two different rounds in my last days at school. These conversations really stuck with me. I found the leaders of the school to have a vision I would love to work with, and was pleased when they offered me the position on my last day.

In that sense, this internship has been massively determining for my future moves. I have accepted the position and will be returning to Leipzig for the start of the new school year. The trip has thus caused a massive shift in my thinking about the moves I want to make when I finish my degree, and am so grateful to LUF for facilitating that.

Due to the nature of the job being one that involves children, taking pictures of me “in action” is not something that was appropriate. Nonetheless, you can find a number of pictures from in and around the school in the attachments. Please let me know should you require any additional information about my internship and thank you so much for the funding I received.