

# **Teaching and learning in International Settings: Experiences from the International Summer School, 2019 at the University of Lagos, Nigeria**

by

**Stefanie Kröner and Clara Kuhlen**

Julius Maximilians University, Würzburg, Germany

## *Abstract*

This paper analyzes the contributions of the International Summer School *Curricular Structures and Teaching Modes in Adult and Lifelong Education* conducted in the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The programme was an academic exchange and dialogue between students and the researchers from Nigerian and German Universities. It addressed the underlying questions of how the International Summer School contributed to the initiated learning processes of students and researchers from Nigerian and German Universities. The programme focused on the learning processes of the participants, as observed and reflected on from the authors' perspective as facilitators and planners. It was concluded that the programme was a rich learning experience and exchange of ideas for all participants.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, International Settings, Summer School.

## **Introduction**

The International Summer School (2019) is embedded in the one-year project *InterAAECT – International Dialogue on Academic Adult Education: Curricular Structures and Teaching Modes* and was a part of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) programme *Higher Education Dialogue with the Muslim World*. It addressed the German cooperation with Higher Education Institutions in member-states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The entire project was funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and coordinated by DAAD. As a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the programme was based on already existing cooperation between the Professorship for Adult and Continuing Education Department at the Julius-Maximilians University Würzburg (JMU), the Department of Adult Education, University of Lagos (UNILAG) and the Department of Adult Education and Community Services, Bayero University Kano (BUK). These institutions were the partners and representatives for the Nigerian perspectives in the project. In order to deepen the dialogue-orientation of the programme, the Nigerian partner universities covered two important regions in Nigeria. Perspectives from the southwest, Lagos, and from the north, Kano, were

included, and the Inter-Nigerian exchange was thus fostered in addition to the international exchange.

### **Programme targets and structure**

The project (International Dialogue on Academic Adult Education – InterAAECT) executed the programme’s interests within the field of adult education. Specific targets are the support of young researchers, women, along with the establishment of academic networks. The DAAD’s programme *Higher Education Dialogue with the Muslim World* was implemented to support a dialogue-oriented exchange on the basis of a common scientific interest. The target group of young researchers, including Doctoral students, as well as Masters’ students at an advanced level of their studies all participated in the International Summer School. The choice of this group of learners as participants was based on their similarity in structure as they were supposed to be teaching while pursuing doctoral studies in both countries, Nigeria and Germany. As young researchers for their own projects and staff members of the Higher Education institutions, they share a common ground of experience in the academic field of adult education (Egetenmeyer, 2018).

The focus of the International Summer School was on specific curricular structures, didactics and teaching methods used in the compared countries. Furthermore, a focus on the general understanding of the field of adult education for all partners was chosen and in accordance with that, commonalities were identified. International comparisons have not only been used to exchange ideas about the topics, but also as a shared background for dialogues on experiences and opinions. The report documented the structure of the Summer School as well as the contribution for the learning process of students and researchers. The International Summer School tagged *Curricular Structures and Teaching Modes in Adult/Lifelong Education* was held in the University of Lagos, Nigeria from the 5<sup>th</sup> until 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2019. Thirty graduate students at the Masters and Doctoral levels from the Universities of Lagos, JMU, Würzburg, Germany and Bayero University, Kano participated in the two-week programme, along with other participants. Their activities were spread over a period of two weeks, with the objective of building on joint inputs and learning experiences.

### **Inputs of participants and lecturers during the first week**

In the first week of the International Summer School, perspectives from Nigeria and Germany were presented by participants and lecturers of all partners involved, in order to provide an insight into the Nigerian understanding of adult education. An eminent guest Lecturer from

the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) gave the lecture on ‘Adult education and lifelong learning in Nigeria’. There were also other presentations by other participating universities with perspectives on policies, employability and historical aspects of adult education in Nigeria.

As an engagement of the participants, each University contributed with presentations about their country-specific perspectives from both, Nigeria and Germany on the themes:

1. Adult Education and Lifelong Learning
2. Curricular Structures of Academic Adult Education
3. Didactics and Methods in (Academic) Adult Education.

Based on these, three groups were built for further work on specific topics within those themes, as relevant to their discipline. The criteria for the topics were of interest to all the group members. It covered scientific research interest, respective research questions were also developed by all the group members comprising international comparisons between Nigeria and Germany. This also included a position derived from different perspectives reflected in the background of the experiences of group members as young researchers.

From the field trip to four adult education providers in Lagos state, the students and researchers equally gained insights in the practical field of adult education in south-west, Nigeria. This fostered a dialogue amongst the participants on how adult education in their countries has commonalities and differences. The informal dialogue contributed towards a better understanding of different cultural contexts.

The group work was conducted over the subsequent two days in three groups, comprising participants from each university, on three specific topics:

1. Distance Education
2. Curriculum in Adult Education
3. Didactics and Methods in Adult Education

In the group work, a first draft of a commonly designed concept and its digital adaptation was developed. The students and researchers visualized and/or wrote the concept and uploaded it onto the Moodle platform ‘OpenWueCampus’ from the University of Würzburg. The operationalization of concepts developed in that phase of the group work was derived from the different cultural backgrounds of the participants. The holiday weekend break (Islamic and national) was used to further work on the content to be discussed within the second week of the

International Summer School. Moreover, the visit to natural sights in Lagos gave the participants the chance to experience new surroundings and foster their personal and informal networking capabilities.

### **Workshop: “Success criteria and conceptualization of webinars”**

The second week of the International Summer School aimed for a broad visibility of the results of the group work by developing Webinar inputs about the specific topics chosen in the first week. A workshop on success criteria and the conceptualization of Webinars was also conducted, based on the conclusion of the presentations of the three topics above and derived from the group work. This paper focuses more on the reflection of perspectives of the second week of the International Summer School.

In the second week, the participants worked on the success criteria and the conceptualisation of Webinars. The first session “Success criteria of Webinars” included the reflection of the online Webinar “How adult education can save your life” from the *International Council of Adult Education* (ICAE, 2019). This aimed at fostering an understanding of the students about the various ways in which Webinars could be designed and created. The participants were given the task of writing down their observations of methods and tools used in the webinar. After that, they discussed the following three questions through the ‘world café’ method:

- (a) What makes a Webinar a good webinar?
- (b) What hinders the success of a Webinar? and
- (c) What has to be considered in planning a Webinar?

The participants were again asked to work on developing a Webinar as personal projects and to create new learning content in a team. For the second session on the “*Conceptualization of Webinars*”, a brain-storming session was further initiated to address the following questions:

- (a) What is the topic of the Webinar? What should be included? What should not be included?
- (b) Who is the target group of the Webinar? What is their benefit from joining the webinar? How can the target group be convinced to join the webinar?
- (c) What is the worst case scenario? How can you observe that no learning processes have been initiated? (d) What is the ‘best case’ scenario of the Webinar? How can you observe that learning processes have been initiated?

The next segment of the programme considered how the structure could contribute towards the initiation of learning processes and reflections.

**Reflections on learning processes during the International Summer School**

Based on observations during the International Summer School, the development of specific skills were analysed to be the major learning processes. Within the International Summer School, learning processes were initiated for students, staff, lecturers and organizers involved through presentations, lectures, field visits and group work all in informal settings. The learning processes could be differentiated into the following divisions: Teamwork, Communication Learning in International Learning Environments and Cultural Dialoguing. The selection of three soft skills was rooted in the criteria of benefits and obstacles that appeared during the sessions from outside perspectives.

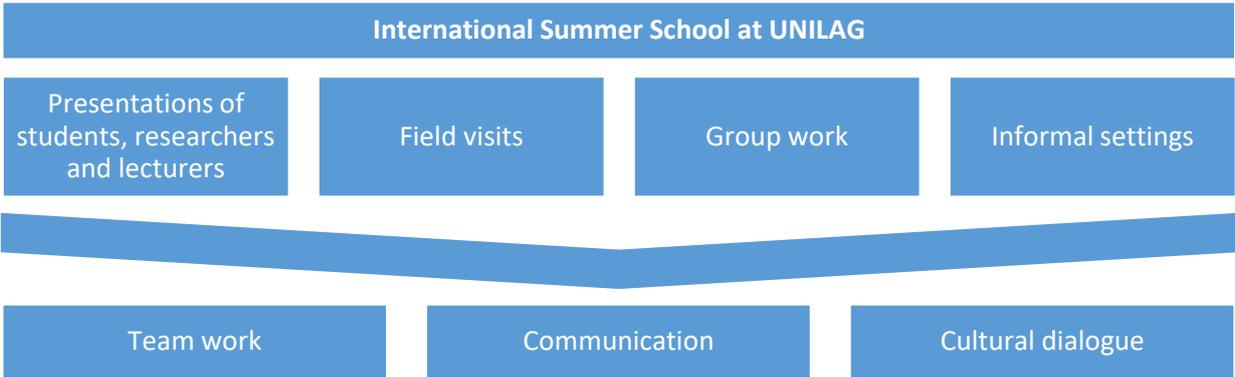


Figure 1: Learning processes initiated within the International Summer School at UNILAG (Kroner and Kuhlen – field work 2019).

Analysis of the contribution towards an academic exchange and dialogue for students and researchers from Nigeria and Germany was done through the introduction of major learning processes that have been observed. The workshop “Success criteria and conceptualisation of webinars” was conducted by Stefanie Kröner and planned as the didactical part of the International Summer School by Clara Kuhlen. These observations were derived from the previously stated research questions and from the authors’ perspectives as facilitator and planner.

The group work was conducted in groups of ten people each, made up of all the partners involved so that it was designed as a setting for teamwork. The groups were formed in advance and had the task of creating a Webinar on their specific topics, as context-specific and aimed at teamwork. In the second week, a Workshop on the conceptualisation of Webinar support helped in building different smaller teams of approximately 2-3 people within the groups to

work on items like Copyrights and Data Protection, technical realisation, filming, etc. This division provided the basis for managing the Webinar development as their personal digital project in teamwork. The facilitator subsequently gave a task to participants and researchers to work on the project together in teams with members from the different cultural contexts to create their own Webinars. This enabled active learning processes that encouraged students and researchers to personally engage in the programme and learn how to manage a project in an international team.

### **Planner's Report**

From the perspective of a planner of the programme, the development of Webinars was planned to be a tool for developing skills in the field of digitalization. The intention of the development of Webinars was to enhance such skills amongst the participants. Organizing a Workshop by the facilitator to prepare all participants beforehand further ensured their understanding and participation in the Webinars. The appreciation of the benefits of the digital component of the International Summer School was equally ensured due to the joint project management that all group members had to engage in.

Some obstacles in programme implementation were however noted. Observations showed that the development of digital skills was more time-consuming than planned. The level of expertise of the participants, which was observed through their answers and engagement during the workshop in the second week was nevertheless found to be already elevated. In addition, it was found that the available resources for the use of hardware and software influenced the project management, especially since not all group members had access to laptops and other mobile devices.

As a result of said observations, team work appeared to be the key factor for successfully realizing the requested learning processes to design a Webinar. The group members had to incorporate their different levels of expertise, as well as the limited resources, in order to conceptualize, design and implement their digital input. All groups were to present a Webinar by the end of the International Summer School for their project management to be deemed successful. This was to showcase the skills of team work that was acquired during the programme. It could therefore be argued that the International Summer School contributed to the development of skills for team work as a major learning process for the participants.

In terms of communication, the verbal and written communication between all involved participants was germane to the project management during the programme. It was based on

English as a mutually spoken language among other native languages like Hausa and Yoruba, as well as German. General communication between all participants was encouraged during Lectures, Discussions, Group Work, breaks and other informal settings. Arranged activities like Lectures, Field visits and Workshops further encouraged contents to be discussed in more informal settings among the students and researchers. This was deemed pivotal to enabling a mutual understanding of adult education.

The participants used the opportunity for effective cultural exchange from the perspective of a Workshop facilitator. Students and researchers actively engaged in different didactical methods such as Brainstorming, Team work and World Café. The active participation of the students and researchers latently enabled a conducive learning atmosphere within the programme and also encouraged personal dialogue amongst the students. It was uplifting to observe how students supported and communicated with each other. In the group work, the participants were able to conduct a comparison between adult education in Nigeria and Germany. The programme setting in addition enabled a dialogue between different cultures which equally contributed towards a better understanding of each other. For adult educators, coping with different target groups from different cultural backgrounds than oneself was pivotal. Therefore, the programme contributed towards the academic professionalization of adult education graduate students.

From the planner's perspective, possibilities for communication and engagement were taken into account throughout the whole planning period of the programme. As part of the dialogue-orientation, communication was considered the basis for starting a dialogue, taking the different levels of English language skills of the participants into account. As a reflection, the understanding of a variety of dialects and accents within the spoken English appeared to be an obstacle for the full duration of the programme between participants; particularly difficulties of understanding each other's pronunciations was prevalent, this manifested through inquiries as well as questions to the lecturers and organizers. In spite of the obstacles, the vigour and extent of the communication and the continued efforts throughout the International Summer School did not diminish. This further led to the conclusion that communication was an important aspect of the learning process. In particular, communication could be considered from various perspectives and dialoguing appeared to be, not only a focus of the programme, but also crucial to the success of the International Summer School 2019. Given the international context, cultural dialoguing was also analysed in detail.

### ***Cultural dialoguing***

The dialogue between Nigerian and German universities contributed towards the communication learning processes of participants and researchers involved. It supported the reflections on communication within the context of diverse cultural environments. Culture was defined within a very broad sense for the purpose of reflection, taking into account nation-states, tribes, languages, religions, social norms, forms of socialization, local and global regions and personal assumptions about commonalities and differences. The concept of cultural dialoguing was explained within context of the Summer School 2019 and derived from the perspectives of the two authors, being positioned as researchers and staff members of a German University.

From observations, the participants and researchers received a deeper mutual understanding, especially of regions, tribes and religions as major aspects within the context of Nigeria. They were able to get an in-depth insight on learning and working within a culturally diverse context. The group work supporting their teamwork experiences in international teams also led to a better understanding and practical experience of adult education in culturally diverse contexts.

The entire process was accompanied by the development of a differentiated understanding of diversity of learners and adult educators. This development of a professional identity, according to Robak (2018), was crucial to the field of adult education from an academic perspective, and the experience likely to become a part of the professional identity of the participants and researchers as adult educators themselves. Hence, cultural dialoguing among the participants contributed towards their professionalization, especially with regards to on-going internationalization, since sensitivity for diversity is pivotal within adult education (Egetenmeyer, Schmidt-Lauff, & Boffo, 2017).

### ***Conclusion***

For individuals, the International Summer School, 2019 provided in-depth learning experiences for the 30 participants within an international context with regards to teamwork, communication learning processes and cultural dialoguing. From the broader societal perspective, the learning processes further positioned the participants and researchers to cope and reflect on societal changes such as internationalization and digitalization. With regard to the field of adult education, the programme contributed to a subject-specific dialogue between Nigeria and Germany within Nigeria according to the participants and other people involved. In addi-

tion, the International Summer School fostered the programme targets of the German Federal Foreign Office, communicated through DAAD. The contribution of the International Summer School through the development of skills is thus documented in this paper. However, the institutionalization within all the academic institutions involved and is still an ongoing process to ensure a sustainable effect of supported learned processes. The authors therefore thank the cooperating universities (University of Lagos and Bayero University, Kano) as well as other participants and look forward to further cooperation and exchange to implement further precious learning processes..

### *References*

- Egetenmeyer, R. (2018). *InterAAECT – International Dialogue on Academic Adult Education: Curricular Structures and Teaching Modes*. Unpublished project application for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Würzburg.
- Egetenmeyer, R., & Schüssler, I. (2015). Academic Professionalisation in Master's Programmes in Adult and Continuing Education: Towards an Internationally Comparative Research Design. In S. Lattke, & W. Jütte (Eds.), *Professionalisation of Adult Educators* (Studien zur Pädagogik, Andragogik und Gerontagogik / Studies in Pedagogy, Andragogy, and Gerontology; 65 ed., pp. 91-103). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Egetenmeyer, R., Schmidt-Lauff, S., & Boffo, V. (2017). . In R. Egetenmeyer, S. Schmidt-Lauff, & V. Boffo, *Adult Learning and Education in International Contexts: Future Challenges for its Professionalization. Comparative Perspectives from the 2016 Würzburg Winter School* (S. 9-24). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- German Academic Exchange Service. (n.d.). *Hochschuldialog mit der islamischen Welt*. Retrieved 08 21, 2019, from German Academic Exchange Service: <https://www.daad.de/hochschulen/ausschreibungen/projekte/de/11342-foerderprogramme-finden/?s=1&projektid=57509025>
- ICAE. (2019). How adult education can save your life. Retrieved August 16, 2019, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xazsNrkog4>
- Robak, S. (2018). Inter-/Transnationale Personalentwicklung als Gestaltungsraum für Weiterbildung. In R. Tippelt, & A. von Hippel, *Handbuch Erwachsenenbildung/Weiterbildung* (S. 715-733). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.