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## **Huddersfield TEAM says “*WE Have an IMPACT while WE are Learning*”**

This article introduces a mutual project initiative between a TEAM from the University of Huddersfield and PONTIS Foundation. The TEAM comprises 2015/16 first-year business studies students studying ethical and social impact issues on the Business and Environment module. The TEAM is headed by me as the module leader. The aim of this collaboration is to interact with an existing fair trade company (Ten Senses) in Kenya, one of Africa’s developing countries, in order to contribute towards improving teaching and learning experience in Kenya and the UK.

This initiative is introduced to Huddersfield students in the form of an assessment, and characterised by being exceptionally different from other forms of assessment, as it involves communicating with people in a different part of the world. The assessment allows students to explore different learning contexts within different cultures. The project emphasises ‘*Learning By Doing*’ through a pro-active approach. Seven students took part in this project; five British locals, one European and one international student. PONTIS Foundation serves as organisers of the project through connecting TEAM with Ten Senses Fair Trade and Kenyan schools.

Kenya presents with a population of over 46 million people. According to the Index of Economic Freedom (2016), the country capitalises on agricultural industry, but, yet, suffers from degradation of water quality and water pollution due to increased use of fertilizers and pesticides, as well as urban and industrial wastes. Moreover, the country experiences soil erosion, deforestation, desertification and poaching. Recently, Kenya also suffered a surge of terrorist attacks, but has gone through a moderate economic recovery since the 2007- 2008 violence. Still, poor infrastructure, systemic corruption, high unemployment and insecurity continue to undermine the country’s development.

### **Aim and results**

The aim of the initiative is divided into two parts. The first part is to enable Huddersfield students to contribute in the real-life situations, rather than focusing only on learning theories inside the classrooms. To achieve this aim, the students discussed concepts and issues around Business Ethical behaviour and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for Ten Senses fair trade organisation in Kenya, with the objective of supporting this fair trade in promoting its social responsibility.

The interaction between Huddersfield students and an existing company was a good opportunity for students to offer input into practical situations. It is believed that the indicators given to Ten Senses employees from Huddersfield TEAM can be

utilized in the best possible way to support future development of the business. Discussions with students showed that interaction with a fair trade company affects their perception towards the fair trade products, and how one single purchase, whether in the UK or elsewhere, can make a real difference into peoples' lives as well as the performance of businesses in different parts of the world. Ten Senses benefited from Huddersfield TEAM's thoughts in relation to training employees and supporting the local community. This interaction has also opened the minds of students to globalisation and international relations as well.

The second part of this initiative involves TEAM members interacting with Kenyan pupils to support their teaching and learning in schools, following from the old saying "*the best way to learn is to teach*". Huddersfield students started to teach Kenyan pupils basics in marketing, customer relations and business sustainability toward their country. Huddersfield TEAM used Slideshare and Skype to communicate directly with Kenyan pupils. Kenyan pupils believed that the quality of academic resources and materials about the general business topics are great, and encouraged using these resources again in different academic institutions, schools and colleges in Kenya. The contribution towards Kenyan pupils was not limited to academia, but also towards improving their intercultural communication skills and use of technology in learning. Moreover, the impact exceeded TEAM's expectations as Kenyan pupils were very excited about the idea of being in touch with UK students. The project met the inspirational KPIs for Huddersfield students; and offered these students a sense of pride and confidence about this achievement. This was reflected in the students' presentation of their project in front of all first year students and a few members of staff. They feel that they successfully made a difference though their contribution to one of the world's developing countries. Huddersfield students reflected "*we have an IMPACT while we are learning*".

## **Challenges**

One of the biggest challenges in this project is the internet connection in Kenya, particularly that the internet is the only method of communication with Kenyan pupils. This was sorted by using emails and video/audio recordings of the materials that TEAM wanted to send or discuss with pupils. The other challenge is the language barrier between TEAM and Kenyan pupils; this was worrying as it may result in not understanding some questions, thus, resulting in offering incorrect answers or advice. Yet, Huddersfield students were careful to talk slowly and clearly when explaining issues or answering questions in order to enhance the level of Kenyan pupils' understanding. Huddersfield students also asked short questions to these pupils in order to assess their level of understanding of issues discussed.

## **Conclusion**

Learning is not only about what learners absorb from the university and classroom, but it is also about the level of influence and involvement in reality. This learning initiative will last in their memories of TEAM, Ten Sense and Kenyan pupils for a long period of time, and will always serve as a reminder to Huddersfield students that *“WE Have an IMPACT while WE are Learning”*.

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