

lbp experiences and learning cultural studies essay



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This report is about my experience and learning as a part of my IBP (International Business Practices) course which I did in Clarion Shipping, Dubai. This is my first international experience and I was very much excited about it. This will include my overall experience of working at an international location and their working culture, the difficulties I faced and how did I overcome those difficulties as well as my learning outcome from this. This report will also throw some light on the day to day life of Dubai and the culture and lifestyle of the Arab people. There are many interesting places to visit in Dubai and many things to do which will also be shared with you. But this report will not include any details regarding my project and my company per se but will only focus on experience and the learnings.

IBP Experience and Learning

International business practices (IBP) is one full course in IIM Udaipur in which the selected students have to go to some international location and work there in real corporate offices for 2 weeks. In this 2 weeks we have to complete a project assigned to us by the respective companies and give a presentation to the company about the work done and learning we got from that project and working in an international location. This is a wonderful opportunity for each student to gain international experience and learn a lot from it. Since this was my first international journey, the preparation for visa and other formalities had started long back. Since we were on tourist visa there was not much problem in getting a visa or other formalities. Our airline was air Arabia which was the cheapest flight to Dubai. At the airport, there were lots of formalities including security check, luggage check and immigration etc. You need to remove your shoes, belts, purse and other

metal objects to clear the security checks. We waited for some time at Ahmedabad airport and thought of grabbing some quick bites but all around it was way too expensive but still we managed to have some tasty bites. When we reached the Sharjah airport, we had to wait long to pass all the procedure and then we were greeted with a beautiful rose at the van and we left for Dubai. When we reached our apartment, it was very nice and comfortable with full air-conditioned and modern bathroom but later we realized there was a problem of drinking water. You get cold drinks and petrol cheaper than water here, welcome to desert land. We went for breakfast outside and ended up in a South Indian restaurant, better call it malayali restaurant. Here comes another truth of Dubai, you will find Indian here but 80% of them will be malayali i. e. people from Kerala. They earn a very good living by doing various businesses as well as they have some of the big companies in Dubai. When we reached office in the afternoon hat day, it was a nice interaction with the top executives of the IBP companies and I learnt a lot from their insights and got lots of information about Dubai and other Arab countries and various labor laws prevalent in that. One of the law says that every company has to hire a specific number of employees from all the countries present in UAE as UAE is cosmopolitan. We had nice lunch after the talk and some group photography as well as some gifts from one of the guests. That day in evening we went to a Sahara mall which was nearby our apartment and enjoyed the evening but could not buy anything as everything was too much expensive. Then we realized how costly it is to shop in Dubai. The story was same when we visited other malls like the Dubai mall and the Mall of Emirates. Now the everyday story begins which we had to follow for next 2 weeks i. e. waking up at 6 AM and running for the <https://assignbuster.com/ibp-experiences-and-learning-cultural-studies-essay/>

cab and reaching the office on time. We used to have breakfast nearby our office and continued to have breakfast from the same Malayali restaurant. Our office was in Khalid bin Al Waleed road.

BUSINESS CULTURE & ETIQUETTE

The working hours during the week in Dubai tend to vary between 40 and 48 hours, depending on the company's policy. Office hours are usually from 7. 30 am to 2. 30 pm in the government sector and from 8. 30 or 9. 00 am until 5. 30 or 6. 00 pm in the private sector. Friday is the Muslim holiday and, if your company has a five-day working week, the other day off will probably be either Thursday or Saturday. Saturday is the more popular choice for international companies, as taking Thursday off would mean a reduction in the number of operational days in common with much of the rest of the world. Business here is conducted mainly on the basis of mutual trust and personal relationships. It is vitally important to build on these. Although it is changing rapidly and large firms are structured as in the rest of the world, companies are often a family affair, with the ultimate decision-maker being the head of the family. Business is conducted frequently over lunch or dinner most probably in a hotel or restaurant. Business meetings may begin with a very informal preamble and polite conversation, commonly about each other's families. However, whenever the conversation turns to business it is usually resolved much quicker than in formal western business meetings. Though often considered as the most cosmopolitan and liberal of the Arab states, Dubai still adheres to an unsaid dress code that is both modest and conservative as compared to that experienced in the West. Although proper dress is very important for all business dealings, the local culture says that a

shirt and tie (for men) is sufficient for regular office hours; women commonly choose a suit or a skirt and blouse but nothing too revealing.

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

Dubai has a very diverse and multi-cultural society. Even so, Dubai's culture is shaped mostly by the Islamic traditions of Arabia. Despite waves of modernity touching Dubai, the emirates are very much attached to their cultural heritage. Even today, Locals wear their traditional dress, which indeed is a symbol of national pride and identity. Dubai is a relaxed and tolerant society, with local population known for their traditional hospitality and their friendliness to foreigners. Dubai also has a liberal attitude towards women, Women are respected and are allowed to join modern schools, or work in offices with their men counterparts. There are numerous night clubs in the city with DJs, singers and dancers. Entertainment range varies from opera to international rock and pop bands - from traditional theatre groups to ballet. Dubai is one of the few cities in the world that has undergone such a rapid transformation - from a humble beginning as a pearl-diving Centre - to one of the fastest growing cities on earth. Dubai today is a tourism, trade and logistics hub. Home to about 1.9 million people from nearly 200 nationalities, Dubai is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Living in Dubai has a lot to offer. It is safe, politically stable, centrally located, has a good education system and healthcare facilities, modern infrastructure and much more. The sun shines almost every day, the shopping and leisure facilities are impressive, and the salaries are tax-free. Dubai is without a doubt a destination of the 21st century. Arab management style Local management style will be paternalistic and directive. Managers are expected

to give very clear and direct instructions to their. Lack of clear directional leadership will be seen as poor management. It can be thought in terms of a family where the father tells the children what to do and also looks after the. The ' children' do as instructed and also show respect to their father. One of the side-effects of this paternalistic management is lack of initiative.

Employees only do what the boss tells them to do and nothing more. Doing anything extra than what is said would be to disobey your boss. Nepotism is a still a way of life and key positions will often be filled with trusted family members. As with most family-owned organizations, the company will have a strong hierarchical organizational structure with the majority of power being held usually by older male family members. All major decisions will be made at the top and you will need influence at that level. Since all business is family and relationship-based, it is absolutely vital to devote as much time and effort as necessary to relationship-building. Every contact within an organization is very important, as a seemingly lower employee may prove to be a favored relative of a senior figure and therefore of greater importance than some other contact. It is also important to find out if the company you are dealing with is Sharia law compliant. If a company is Sharia law compliant, this will mean that the company is subject to the tenets of Islamic law and its actions will be overseen by a Sharia council consisting of appointed Muslim clerics. If you despise the heat, forget about moving to Dubai. It is hot 8 months of the year with humidity soaring up to more than 90% at the peak of summer. BUT - though many people criticize the heat here and think that we expats living here are living loony masochists happily suffering in the heat, I have to point out a word called " acclimatization". The first summer is worse but after that, you won't believe you'd be able to say <https://assignbuster.com/ibp-experiences-and-learning-cultural-studies-essay/>

that 30C is quite "cool". Also, since all of the buildings including residences have centralized air conditioning system, I can vouch that it is far easier spending the summer here in Dubai. It is said that there are 200 different nationalities living in Dubai. That means, people put various meanings and practice to what is called "safety driving". There is almost no courtesy on the roads, some drivers are rogue and never give way. It was blue earth (sea) all over when I looked down from the window, this was when we were about to land at a different nation altogether and eventually we landed at Sharjah Airport at 6:30 AM in the morning. Visa and immigration processing took almost 2 hours and we were greeted with a rose as a token of welcome. We reached Dubai at around 10 AM and after breakfast we took some rest and went to the lunch and meeting with the senior management of all the three companies' viz. UAExchange, Clarion Shipping and DM Healthcare. From Clarion Shipping, there were Thomas Gregory who is the head of business in GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) and Nitin Sunny who is the executive assistant to CMD (Chairman and Managing Director) Mr. Aniyankutty. The talk was started by HR representative from DM Healthcare. DM Healthcare was started by DR. Azad Moopen in 1987, headquartered in Dubai. It is present in 5 countries with 118 establishments and 5500 employees. About 70% to 80% of the employees are women. One of the reasons given by them is the non-requirement of visa and other formalities for women who came with their husband. But they all have to pass examinations held at some specific time in a year and it is very difficult to get the slots for the examinations. They have to follow the strict regulations passed by the Dubai Health Authority (DHA). DM Healthcare does not have a very high attrition rate. They also have to follow the rule for having a specific

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percentage of different nationalities present in Dubai as their employees. This is really a challenge for their HR team to manage employees from different nationalities and all at the same workplace. HRD (Health Regulation Department and not Human Resource Department as in India) is the responsible entity to regulate and provide licensure to healthcare professionals in Dubai. UAExchange (as it says " Adding Convenience to your life is our business") is a remittance company. They have 7000 employees from 40 different nationalities. The company has almost 135 competitors. Customer relationship management is a big challenge as this business is totally dependent on customers. Customer from different nationalities wants to interact with employees from same nationality which is a challenge. Trust is an important pre-requisite for this business as it involves handling of other people's money. Service delivery should be made from the heart and not for the sake of doing and for that one needs a high level of motivation and humility. Then it was the time for Clarion Logistics to share their thoughts. They are in the business of freight forwarding where they act as a broker. They book container and sell container spaces to companies. Ford's spare-parts are its major customer. They deal with third party and four party logistics. A 3PL is an outsourced provider that manages all or a significant part of an organization's logistics requirements and performs transportation, locating and sometimes product consolidation activities. An arrangement in which a firm contract out (outsources) its logistical operations to two or more specialist's firm (the third party logistics) and hire other specialist firm (the fourth party) to coordinate the activities of the third parties. But this industry is not well regulated industry in the GCC Countries. Supply logistics is one of the latest businesses, the company has started. The major challenges are HR

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and money management and that too especially in Africa (Sudan). The business is very much dependent on other players in the network and thus to reduce the dependency, it has multiple networks. Clarion provides innovative solutions to companies on how to transport various products like non-chemicals in Flexi bags, isotanks etc. There are specific requirements for transporting specific materials like Chicken should only be transported at -18 degree centigrade, neither above nor below that. Dr. Melodena from University of Wollongong and Mr. Balakrishnan from Yum Foods were also present and shared their valuable experiences with us. One of the issues which were discussed was that whether globalization is important for companies or localization. The churn rate at Yum Foods is very high almost 100-200% in a year which is the major challenge for them. They want the employees to work for their other brands (Pizza Hut or KFC) rather than leaving the company because the training cost is very high and is regarded as very intense and valuable in the industry. Today we went to the company office at Khalid Bin Al Waleed Road and met Nitin. We came to know a lot more about the company. Clarion is a one-stop integrated logistics solutions provider. The mission is to be the global leader in Shipping, Forwarding and Logistics and to provide a comprehensive range of services to the customers across the world through quality logistics solutions. The logistics sector in the GCC is on a growth trajectory and is witnessing all the right mega trends and would enhance the region's prominence as a logistics hub. While development of exclusive cargo ports and Free Trade Zones is enhancing the region's potential for international trade related logistics, development of rail transport mode for cargo and promotion of domestic manufacturing activities would result in the growth of the integrated supply chain services business.

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The highly appreciated GCC Customs Union introduction in 2003, which is considered a key step in a broad process of regional economic integration in the Gulf, facilitates the free movement of goods across GCC nations.

Information Technology is the most powerful enabler that the FLP has at its disposal. The value adds for the forwarders are Bundling of customer (shippers) demands, procuring transport capacities with volume rebates, coordinating many/all transport related prayers (depending on the agreed INCO terms between Shipper and Consignee) and enhancing transport management with value added services. The profitability can be reduced by increasing net revenue, improving cost of sales or by reduction of DOE (Direct Operating Expenses). Increasing revenue can be attributed to increasing service/product portfolio and expanding in emerging markets whereas DOE reduction can be done through continuous monitoring of overhead costs. Today is Sunday and we are in the office. In Dubai, Sunday is a working day and this fact is really surprising for everyone. We worked on India Data for its different offices. Shamil Habib appreciated the work done on the dashboard and asked a one page explanation about various operational and financial ratios that we had calculated. The various ratios include ROA, ROE, Debt/Equity, ROCE, Payable Days, Receivable days etc. The audited financial statements are prepared on the historical cost basis in Arab Emirates Dirhams (AED). It is in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards. Property and Equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation. We also interacted with Mr. Mario, the General Manager for Projects Sub Division. He has been in the shipping industry since last 3 decades and shared many valuable experiences with us. He shared that Clarion needs more structure with respect to operational as well as <https://assignbuster.com/ibp-experiences-and-learning-cultural-studies-essay/>

organizational level. The centralization of power is more and more risky for the business. Then we discussed how Margins can be maintained even in turbulent times. The suggestions came was built on volumes, reducing costs and by improving productivity of the resources available. Too much diversification is bad for the company. It should concentrate on its core business (freight forwarding) in the new area (offices). He has also described how it is very much different to stay in the UAE than in India or any other countries. The overall learning of the IBP includes a lot about cultural aspects of Dubai and people here. Even if our office timing was very hectic and we were quite busy at work, we took out some time to visit the scenic places of Dubai. Dubai is a cosmopolitan metropolis that has grown to become a global city. The city has become symbolic of its skyscrapers and high-rise buildings. We have noticed that most of the people here possess luxury cars and luxury villas which show the prosperity of the city. It is a very beautiful city and if given the option, I would definitely want to visit this place again. It was a great international learning experience.