



Incredible India
A report of an exchange semester at the College of Engineering, Pune
By Christopher Lisson

To whomsoever it may concern,

“Like a seed needs time to grow into a plant, an experience needs time until one can draw the right conclusions out of it.”

Nearly one year after I arrived in India and nearly after half an year after my last exam, I think it is the right time to look backward and give a statement about my semester at the College of Engineering in Pune in India.

Reflecting on all the questions I’ve been asked about my semester abroad in India, there are two main topics, which interest the most people: How was the education system and what did I take away at a personal level from the experience?

I want to describe the level of education at the COEP with some of its strengths and potential to improve. Since I had only attended courses of the Production Department and an impressive course in Entrepreneurship Development, all my observations are drawn from those two perspectives.

1. General impression of COEP

My impression of COEP is that it is undoubtedly one of the top universities in India from the education point of view. What is further endearing is that it also trains its students well in moral aspects- the words truth, strength and endurance really seemed to be lived there.

2. Curriculum and Subject Detail:

The curriculum includes subjects closely relating mechanical engineering with manufacturing and production operations. Machine Tool Design and Manufacturing Automation are prime examples. I was also greatly drawn to Operations Research and Supply Chain Management, subjects I believe should be fundamental courses for anyone who studies the specialization of Production Technology.

3. Examination and Evaluation pattern

The strategy of continuous learning leads to a better overall understanding of a subject and decreases furthermore the effect of variability in an exam.

Extra curricular activities like ED, MindSpark (the annual technology fest), sport and many other school clubs, enables the students to participate and improve their skills in different fields.

4. Potential for Improvement:

- Making the old exams of each subject available online, so that the preparation to an exam can occur in more efficient and focussed way.
- Introducing a 10 min. break after each lecture. Out of my own experiences a small break improves the student's concentration and helps them to make a clear cut between to subjects. It increases the efficiency of the thought.
- An online timetable would help all participants to organize in a better way, so that they can adapt to changes more proper than being surprised by them.

5. Future of the exchange program

- From my point if view a longer duration of exchange (perhaps 2 semesters) should be taken into consideration. Due to the settling time required, the duration of really being integrated and living the other system is quite short.
- A longer duration can go hand in hand with a dual bachelor degree of both institutions. This would raise the "market value" of all who participate in such a program.
- Another scenario is a cooperated internship, where students of our both countries can not only study but also work together. I think this is an interesting approach in experiencing each other's work culture and way of thinking.

To summarise from the academic standpoint, I would say that the program must be continued for benefit of students of both institutions.

My personal experience from the stay in India has been deeply moving. When a human is able to change his outlook, he is able to change the world- something I've learned in India. When I arrived in India, I was overwhelmed by the variety of the country- the variety of people, colours, tastes, aromas, cultures and landscapes. To be absolutely honest, I was still stunned by those things even when I left the country. It feels like you arrive every day afresh in this country. Nothing is as constant there as change itself.

Looking at the fact that India has over a billion inhabitants and Pune has 5 million, its obvious that you get in touch with a lot different people and their ways of life. You meet businessmen and beggars, students and professors, landlords and homeless, shy and extroverted people, infidels and priests- but no matter who you meet you meet lovely people (with the exception of some Riksha driver). All of them have one thing in common, they love their cricket team! If you open your eyes and heart, all of them will teach you something about life and about yourself. This will widen your horizon and change your definitions of your established words like happiness, luck, luxury, health and a happy fulfilled life. This experience will help to improve personal character and become a better human being- and that is what a exchange semester should do and what it did from my point of view.

Work ethic and motivation:

I often found the principle of zestful drive to excel- either in the motivation of the students or in the traffic on the streets. I think its unique for India that everybody tries to improve himself so much, that its causes a benefit for the whole society- and it seems to work. The best way to explain this fact is a quote of an fellow student:” I do so much for my career, so I can give it someday back to the people- for example as an employer.” This philosophy is something by which I am really amazed.

Coming to my fellow students at the COEP I admire the way they work to reach their goals and the degree of being focussed, no manner how impossible one task seemed for me. They taught me not only to comprehend the situation, but manage it towards a successful outcome. But no matter where in the world you are, the student’s problems are nearly the same, so we had a good foundation to start. It was very easy for me to get in touch with my fellows and I met a lot of friends there.

In summary the personal experience surpassed my expectations and helped me to grow personally as much as professionally.

To conclude, I would strongly recommend to everyone, who has the possibility to participate in such a exchange program, to go ahead with it. It helps to build bridges between cultures, so that foreigners become friends and use this bridge to lead us together into a better future.

I take this opportunity also to express my heartfelt thanks to:
all the people, who gave me the chance to take part in this exchange program.
all the responsible in the DAAD, COEP and Ostfalia.
all the people who helped and supported me during my stay in India.
all the people who will keep this program alive.

And especially all the people I met as strangers but left with a heavy heart as friends!
It is **your** merit that these pages are not empty! You are the story!

Yours faithfully

Christopher Lisson