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RUglobal

Information and debate from Roskilde University

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Speed dating your future boss



Table of Contents

- 30 The mental bridge under the same sky
- 29 Speed dating your future boss
- 27 Students - we need your help again!!

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| Nr. | Articles | Notices | Publication date |
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| 07 | 18/1 | 22/1 | 1/2 |
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- at 12 noon on the assigned date

The mental bridge under the same sky

Thursday, 3 December 2009 was the day of the opening event of a linguistic and intercultural research and communication project at RU.

By Anne Frida Christiansen, RUGlobal

Klaus Schulte, one of the two project managers, opened the event by introducing the research and communication project, the idea of which has its source in the plans of constructing the Femern Belt bridge. Its purpose is to investigate and discuss what is required for the bridge to contribute to closing the cultural gap between the two countries rather than it becoming merely a road going through Denmark and Germany. The project that was launched on 1 October 2009 at the Department of Culture and Identity (CUID) is funded by RU and Growth Forum Zealand. In addition to participants from RU, researchers from Humboldt Universität Berlin and Ernst-Moritz-Arndt Universität in Greifswald also attended the event. The purpose of the opening event was to present ideas and discuss the intercultural and linguistic challenges that may result from the construction of a fixed link across the Femern Belt.

In continuation thereof, ideas behind a new educational learning package were introduced. One of the criteria of success of the learning packages is that they must constitute the basis of a network where the persons involved will continue to cooperate after the completion of a learning package. The learning packages will include the use of virtual working processes, including video conferences. Other options are chat, e-mail correspondence and plenary discussions. Podcast is also an option that can be produced by teachers as well as course participants. The aim of the learning packages is to provide the students with intercultural competences in Danish/German contexts, including German language skills.

The intercultural competences of the Danes

The subject, intercultural competences, was also included in associate professor at the

CBS Lisbeth V. Hansen's presentation. From an education policy perspective she gave a speech on the basis of her survey on Danish businesses' attitudes to foreign languages. Lisbeth V. Hansen's survey *Hvad skal vi med sprog? (Why do we need language?)* was published in 2008 in cooperation with DI (Confederation of Danish Industry). By way of introduction, she said that in many contexts intercultural understanding is the goal, and that the means to reach the goal could be knowledge of history, culture, society and language. Provokingly and rhetorically, she asked whether language skills are absolute prerequisites for intercultural understanding, and she highlighted one of the findings of her survey concluding that businesses do not necessarily see a relationship between these two elements. Some of the points from the survey caused great amusement amongst the audience. What was particularly striking was that in situations where businesses often experienced communication problems in relation to their trading partners, they tended to blame this on the other party and its language skills or lack of them. Thus, the blame for communication problems was consistently assigned to the trading partner, claiming that he/she did not master the language. Of particular interest to the survey and the event theme was that German trading partners ranked third on a list of how often businesses experience communication problems. Lisbeth V. Hansen concluded her speech by touching upon the so-called *National Competence Account* from 2005, which, among other things, shows the profile of the Danes' intercultural competence. In this account, only 5% of Danes have been classified as having a high intercultural competence. Here, she made the hypothesis that an explanation for this could be that the quality of foreign language teaching is declining and that the primary focus is on English.

A view from the other side

The last presentation *Blikket fra den modsatte retning (View from the opposite direction)* was given by Professor Bernd Henningsen from Humboldt Universität Berlin. Bernd Henningsen, who is also a project participant, gave a speech on the basis of his book *Dänemark published recently as part of the series *Tyskerne og deres naboer (The Germans and their**

neighbours). The books are published by the publishing company H.C. Beck by former Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and former Federal President Richard v. Weizsäcker, and the series has been produced in recognition of the fact that the Germans do not know a whole lot about their neighbours.

Having been raised in Flensburg in the mid-19th century, he outlined, on the basis of his own experiences, how the German/Danish relationship has changed during his lifetime and he told how as an adolescent in Flensburg, he remembered the Danes as absent in his mind, and that *one* Danish mayor was mentioned as *the* Danish mayor. It was a time when there was an inclination towards being anti-Danish, he said, whereas today everything in Flensburg is different with Danish money, schools and language. The purpose of the story was to lead on to the point that citizens of the northern part of Germany sometimes have a lot more in common with their Danish neighbours up North than their countrymen down South. In this context, he referred to an exhibition on country and city in Danish and German art focusing on the period between 1800 and 1850 and highlighted the Danish title of the exhibition, "Under the same sky". From this exhibition it became clear that there are great harmonies between these two countries, and consequently the importance of the initiated project was illustrated.

After a few questions for Bernd Henningsen and debate amongst the audience, it was time for the reception. The 40 guests took the opportunity to enjoy the refreshments served while lively conversation on the project and its ideas unfolded.

Sources used:

The Thorvaldsen Museum – Exhibition catalogues: <http://www.thorvaldsensmuseum.dk/butik/udstillingskataloger>

The National Competence Account – Main Report: <http://pub.uvm.dk/2005/NKRrapport/hel.html#kap09>



Speed dating your future boss

Career prospects. Identifying your range of possibilities is important, when looking for the job of your dreams – RUGlobal listened in on the career day of RUCareers.

By Camilla Buchardt, The Information Office

RU projects can become reality. This was affirmed by four RU students who arranged the career fair, RUCareers, at building 44 on Friday 4 December.

Design an event, and write a report on the concept and your considerations.

This was the formulation of the assign-

ment that all Business Economics students were given in the fifth semester.

RU needs career guidance provision. This was the thinking of four students. On this basis, they developed an idea for a career workshop where RU students can meet managers and project managers from different companies and thereby gain knowledge of companies' requirements and own qualifications and expectations for a job in "the real world".

Amidst tutor meetings, plenary discussions and report writing, the four students decided to put the idea into practice.

Thus, the gap between RU and the business sector was bridged on 4 December when all students were given the opportunity to speed date, for example, a project manager from

Novo Nordisk, a head of department from IBM, an HR manager from the Municipality of Hillerød and an HR manager from BK Medical. The past as well as the future were discussed at the conference tables that were set up in building 44, and the managers present listened patiently while the students asked questions.

The children at the fence

The day also held a number of speeches by people telling the audience about their road to the job of their dreams. One of them was Johanne Djurhuus who has been working as an expatriate for the UN, Unicef and the Danish Refugee Council in Gaza, on the West Bank and in Iraq.

International Development Studies is one of the most popular programmes at RU. Many of the students on this programme dream of a career in a large international charity organisation. Some of them are amongst the audience who have come to hear Johanne Djurhuus describe what it is like working in the field. They listen in silence and make a few notes on their pads now and then, while Johanne Djurhuus gives her speech standing in front of a large slideshow showing photos of war-stricken areas:

"I would like to tell you about an incident on the West Bank where each morning school children were waiting at a fence for the soldiers to let them into the area where their





school was located. Some days, the soldiers came an hour late, other days they came three hours late, and then there were days when they never turned up. The children stood all alone waiting in the hot, burning sun or in the pouring rain”, says Johanne Djurhuus pointing at a photo of little children carrying their big rucksacks, their faces turned towards a high fence.

“In such situations, creative thinking is crucial”, Johanne Djurhuus points out.

After several unsuccessful discussions with the soldiers, Johanne Djurhuus took the initiative to set up large blue tarpaulins on either side of the fence. Underneath the tarpaulins the children would at least be sheltered from the rain and the wind while waiting. The blue tarpaulins caused a stir and resulted in vast attention from the Israeli press. Eventually, the soldiers decided that school buses should be put into service for the children to pass the major checkpoints always guarded by soldiers. “That is the sort of experience that puts meaning into this job”, says Djurhuus.

All-round competence

What qualifications are, however, required to be stationed abroad for a large charity organisation, a question asked by one of the male members of the audience:

“You need to know a little about administration, have a natural talent for politics and understand how to carry out project work. When working in war zones, it is also important not to act too swiftly, but to wait until you understand how things stand”, she explained and provided the following example:

“At a certain time in a war zone, we needed food for a lot of locals. For that reason, we decided to grow a lot of tomatoes. People were starving, so we didn’t consider whether fussiness would be a problem.”

“But they had never eaten a tomato before. One needs to do one’s homework properly. My advice is therefore: Wait. Go out there and get an idea of what is going on. Gain some knowledge of the everyday life of the population.”

Round of questions



Liv Dammers, 26 years old, a Cultural Encounters student:

“I am here to identify what possibilities I’ve got and to get a better idea of what I want to do. I have just been talking to a career coach, and that was very positive. For instance, I have been wondering whether there are companies making money from helping major Danish companies have their foreign labour integrated in Danish society. That is something I would like to work with.”



Monica N. Andreasen, 42 years old, trained nurse, a Health Promotion student

“Studying at RU is about combining your own programme, and sometimes without your focus always being on the goal. You have to achieve a result, of course. I do hope, however, that I will become wiser by participating in this event.”

“I would like to work with occupational health and safety. What is it precisely that companies elected the “work place of the year” do right? I find that topic very interesting.”



Viktor Greir, 21 years old, a Business Economics student, one of the initiators of RUCareers:

“When I first enrolled at RU, I had no idea what career I wanted. I thought I was to become an engineer, but my marks were not good enough.”

“In the future, I would like to work with communication and project management – to combine business economics with something of a more human nature. At Novo Nordisk, for example, they are highly skilled, and I take a great interest in the case they are pursuing.

On RUCareers:

The RUCareers initiative was taken by Asbjørn Djurhuus, Edda Hendrup, Sune Folden Lindholdt and Viktor Greir who all study Business Economics (Business Administration) at RU.

The day held a number of different speeches, among others by Johanne Djurhuus, UN employee, and a “speed networking event” where students singly or in pairs could talk to a business manager from a Danish business for ten minutes at a time.

Fact box

Business representatives at the arrangement

- Aisec
- Nordea
- The National Audit Office
- DJØF (the Danish Association of Lawyers and Economists)
- Execute.dk
- The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Agency for Spatial and Environmental Planning
- The Municipality of Hillerød
- IBM
- BK Medical
- PricewaterhouseCoopers

Students

- we need your help again!!

Foundation Course* for international students at Roskilde University: Introduction to RU: Campus, study form and language. From January 16 – January 29, 2010.

January 2010, 40 new international students begin their study with a 2 week Foundation Course. In order to support and integrate them at RU, we seek students, both Danish and international, who would like to help and share their experiences with the new students. During the course the students will be introduced to problem-oriented project work and it is in particular for that we need help: 4-5 students for 4-8 hours.

The project introduction will last 4 days from January 25 – 28 and will be completed on the 28th with a lunch served by the Danish teachers and the students.

*Foundation Course is held by LICs: RU's Centre for Language and Intercultural Communication Services.

We cannot offer you any payment for your effort, but we will cover the costs for transportation - and of course you will get the traditional Danish lunch. If you need a reference, this is also possible.

Interested students can contact: Susanne Hvidtfeldt, suhv@ruc.dk

Best regards

The Danish teachers:

Karen-Margrete Frederiksen, Mads Kirkebæk and Susanne Hvidtfeldt

Never reveal your password to others!

Someone is trying to trick you into revealing your RU username and password and misuse your account.
Read more here:

www.ruc.dk/phishingattempt

