

NWSP 2009 Overseas Showcase in Germany

Group: Forget-me-not

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Our trip to Germany was filled with fun and excitement. We visited historical sites, entered places we would otherwise be unable to go explore, tasted German cuisine and immersed ourselves in the rich German culture. In a short span of a week, we gained a lot more than we expected.

Although we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves during this eye-opening trip, it was not all about fun and games. We were in the land of bratwurst and beer for a more important purpose – to gain a greater awareness of climate change through interactions with the local German students as well as visitations to corporate giants. Hence, this trip gave us the opportunity to discuss climate change with students who were, though from a different part of the world, similarly concerned over this subject.

[Perception of their awareness in climate change issue]

During our visits to two premier schools in Germany, we shared about our National Weather Study Project as well as initiatives that Singapore had undertaken to combat climate change. Through our interaction with the German students, we found that they possessed a high awareness of climate change and were actively spearheading Green projects in their school. They presented on the impact of climate change as well as the various methods taken up by their country to reduce its impact. These included charging money for plastic bags in supermarkets to encourage shoppers to use eco-friendly, non-disposable bags instead; and the country's reduced reliance on pollutive fossil fuels for renewable sources of energy (e.g. nuclear power). After which, they shared about how they themselves, as individuals, put in place measures to reduce their personal carbon footprints.

We found their involvement in green movements as well as their dogged spirit to make a difference truly inspirational. Taking a leaf out of their book, green awareness projects ought to start off with aiming for a wider audience in understanding personal involvement in climate change, such as personal carbon footprints. We feel that this is an effective method in showing the public that everyone makes a difference. In comparison to Singapore, where many people do not even know what a carbon footprint is, Germany has greatly succeeded in their awareness program. We have learnt much from them.

[Impression of the German students]

As compared to local Singaporean students, we found that the Germans were generally more vocal and outspoken in class. This made the overall atmosphere in class very lively. During our presentations, we were very encouraged by the level of enthusiasm shown by the students as they were genuinely interested and keen to learn. Communication was hardly a barrier as the German students, though

understandably less fluent in English, were not afraid to speak up to clarify their doubts.

In addition, we found the local students especially warm and welcoming to their foreign visitors. Cultural exchange was extremely beneficial as we witnessed first-hand the lifestyles of the Germans, and in return brought a little bit of Singapore's culture to share too. Their enthusiasm in our traditional games was very gratifying, and we are happy that this trip has allowed both parties to understand more about each other.

[Education system as compared to Singapore's]

We realised that their schooling system differed from our own, as students are streamed to different types of schools based on their aptitudes in Science or the Arts. They had only about three classes per level, with a relatively small class size of about twenty students. (The students were lamenting about how inter-class games could get so boring!) We felt that the small class size was very conducive for learning, in addition to being manageable for the teacher. The students also had to study about fourteen subjects, including four to five European languages. Indeed, we are very in awe of their comprehensive and culturally-rich curriculum.

We were also greatly impressed with the architecture of the school buildings. For example, one very memorable experience was our tour of Melanchthon Gymnasium, which has a school building that looked more like a historical monument, and a central library which contained books that are more than a century old. It was hard for us, students from such a young country, to grasp the idea of a school having over five hundred years of history. To see the progress and development of education (such as the translation of the Latin Bible into German) was truly an eye opener.

This trip was like a dream-come-true for us and sad to say, it ended before we knew it. People always say that good times pass quickly, and indeed, we are very grateful to Senoko Power and Siemens for this extremely memorable and inspiring learning experience.



Photo take at Melanchthon Gymnasium with German Students