

WAFIRA Workshop 9- CAREER ADVANCEMENT THROUGH INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES: BALANCING PERSONAL AND WORKING LIVES

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Ice Breaker:

- The wall, the rabbit and the gun

Why International Exchanges in particular?

Local exchanges are a starting point in career advancement, but we ought to move across borders because

- The world has become a global village
- Information exchange is crucial
- No ivory towers exist anymore- even in the 2/3, developing world
- Individual & institutional visibility is vital for growth

How do we find these International Exchanges?

Often, we must begin by moving across Ghana! Start with 'Jerusalem, move to all Judea and then to the other nations- the ends of the world.'

- So, Departmental cooperation, to wider institution, then.....
- Professional associations- conference, meetings, workshops (networking)
- Internet searches

Factors Preventing us from Pursuing International Exchanges

- Lack of confidence. Fear of Failure! If you fail, so what???
- Fear of being in the limelight, of being the envy of colleagues
- Family situations- little children, busy partners, ailing parents
- We are too myopic. 'Ma mendwen meho!'
- Any others?

Best Practices for International Exchanges

- It should be a 2-way exchange. Be prepared to host the other person(s) and discuss possible funding avenues before the exchange begins
- Be specific about what each exchange would involve and have a written MOU, **supported by your institution**
- Discuss authorship of papers, reports etc. Each should lay all their cards on the table
- Find ways of sustaining the exchange even when initial funding is exhausted. (Ramapo College-KNUST eg)
- Remember that international exchanges can also be South-South exchanges

Role Plays: 3 groups

- General Scenario. You have just been able to secure a grant from DAAD to work with a professor in Germany for the next 3 or 6 months in his laboratory on some cutting edge research that will greatly enhance your career, vis a vis, exposure, possible papers etc.

For all the groups

- Decide which period you will chose, then put down in writing how this opportunity will help the 'significant persons' in your life; and also write a declaration of what you expect from those significant persons in your absence.
- Afterwards, the members of the group will role play the encounter between you and these persons before you leave for the international exchange

- **Group 1**
- You have no house help, you have a husband, and your mother or aunt has agreed to come and look after the children who are aged 2, 4 & 6 in your absence.
- **Group 2**
- You have 2 children, boy and girl aged 18 & 20, but no husband and your parents who live nearby have agreed that the children can come and stay with them till you come back.
- **Group 3**
- You have no children but you are about to get married in the next 5 months. What will be your decision about going? Whether you decide to go or not, carry out the assignment as for the other groups

Tips for successful transition after an exchange

- Don't complain about an untidy house. You have probably seen only neat places the past few months, so don't compare your house to any of these
- Don't complain if all your house plants have died. Be thankful that none of the people you left behind have!
- Have a written report ready to give to your HOD or immediate supervisor. Don't wait till you get back to write it.
- Bring back a few inexpensive gifts to your colleagues at work and thank them for holding the fort in your absence.
- If you found other opportunities during your exchange, please find a diplomatic way of discussing these with your host before they get too involving

Conclusion

- Do not rest on your oars
- Pursue other exchanges if the opportunity arises,
- Always remember the significant others in your life and take them along if possible

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!
IT'S BEEN MY PLEASURE!