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November 23rd, 2015

STUDENT-LECTURER ENGAGEMENT

Vision

Our vision is to educate a generation of excellent, ethical and values-based African leaders who are committed to the application of knowledge for the transformation of African society.

Mission

Our mission is to educate a new generation of African leaders with integrity for corporate, national and continental:

- *Creativity*
- *Excellence*
- *Innovation*
- *Service and*
- *Sustainability*

Our Core Values

- *Leadership*
- *Sustainability*
- *Excellent*

PROGRAMS

- *Banking*
- *Technology &*



My several years of experience in teaching at the university level and as an Associate Professor of Community Development in the Toulan School of



Urban Studies and Planning at the Portland State University gave me the insight into the connection that need to exist between teachers and students in the classroom in order to

ensure effective teaching and learning.

Under ideal circumstances teachers create an environment that is conducive to good learning.

And, in ideal circumstances all students are prepared to learn - having completed and reflected on the assigned reading.

But both teachers and students know that we don't live in ideal circumstances. Lots of things happen that prevent us from being the best instructor or student we want to be.

In early September, it was my privilege to work with both students and faculty of the Palm Institute. Teaching and learning styles are different from student to student and place to place. In Ghana, successful students complete elementary and secondary schools by listening closely to the teacher and repeating what the teacher presents in class on exams.

Accounting

- **Computerized Accounting**
- **Business Administration**

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- **Leadership & Governance**
- **Strategic Human Resource Management**
- **Organizational Leadership & Strategy**
- **Innovative & Creative Leadership**
- **Entrepreneurial Leadership**
- **Strategic Leadership**
- **Microfinance**
- **Risk Management**

This intentional listening skill serves them well, in many ways their ability to listen and retain information is more advanced than some of my own students at Portland State University.

But, though the typical Ghanaian student is a skilled listener and frequently a skilled notetaker, because of the nature of the education system in Ghana, students are not given the tools nor much opportunity to develop skills of critical thinking.

For four full days, in spite of the fickle Ghanaian electrical grid and reluctant generators, students and faculty of Palm Institute and I worked



through four workshops:

Critical Thinking and Practical Reasoning, Attributes of Successful Students, the Engaged Learner, and Death by PowerPoint.

The last workshop was in part an admission that many instructors (myself included) really know our subject well, but tend to use some simple technologies poorly. That all of us need some practical tools to make the classroom more interesting and informative.

Students were attentive, asked insightful questions, and appeared hungry to learn some new critical thinking skills. Faculty were equally interested in creating an engaged classroom. Faculty, staff, and students of Palm appear determined to stand out by building on the good learning and teaching skills they already have to create a collaborative learning environment where students are encouraged to test their learning and even challenge their professors with questions and new insights.

It is early stages yet. Students and instructors must both master a few skills before moving on to more difficult ones. Adopting a different way of thinking about instruction or learning is not

easy. It is always a few steps forward and a few steps back. But there are plenty of reasons to believe Palm Institute will be numbered among the few in Ghana who offer intimate, engaged class settings where both critical and creative thinking can bloom.

An added bonus of my time with Palm was the privilege of an additional four-day workshop with local Community Development professionals and the opportunity to prowl around Accra to observe and visit a half-dozen or so Community Development projects and professionals in the field. It was an exchange well worth the trip.

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