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Interview with Hewitt Walker: International Master Student Public Administration

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Interview with Hewitt Walker

International Master Student Public Administration

door Sebastiaan Verhey

Please tell us something about yourself

I was born in Jamaica and have lived in Jamaica, the Bahamas, the United States and the United Kingdom. I have a BA in Business Management and a MA in International Relations and Political Economy. Prior to starting my master Public Administration in the Netherlands, I worked on projects with the Inter American Development Bank in the area of youth development in the Latin America and the Caribbean. This project was focused on working with youths at risk such as street kids in Brazil and unemployed youths who did not complete secondary education in Jamaica. The project was to train these youths and help them to develop skills that would help them to become productive members of society.

Why did you choose to study Public Administration?

I went to Haiti after the earthquake and there I saw a disconnect between the international organizations policy and the actual practices. So I thought why not study Public Administration to better understand how these organizations work so that in situation of crisis/and conflict we would be better able to implement or coordinate responses in such situations.

So why choose did you Leiden University?

The master program offers different tracks, with different specialization courses. It is possible to follow courses that aren't part of your specialization. For instance, I follow the track International Administration, however, I am able to follow courses from Crisis & Security Management track as well, and this is good because I believe that International Administration covers issues or some aspects of crisis management. So the possibility to follow a mix of specialization courses influenced my decision to study in Leiden University. Furthermore, I also received a scholarship to study in Leiden.

Really? How did you receive the scholarship?

After I applied and was accepted to Leiden I saw the Leiden University Excellent Scholarship being offered to international students. So I applied for

it and was successfully thereby receiving a Silver-Award, which covers 75% of my tuition.

So your interest lies with international organizations and their development projects. Is that also a reason to choose Leiden?

Yeah, I was hoping that the Public Administration courses would provide me with a different lens to look at international development in terms of understanding and applying theories. The State of the Art courses that I have completed so far have really lived up to my expectations. However, while the content of the specialization courses are very interesting and relevant, I must say I was a bit disappointed in terms of the course delivery. I expected more interaction and students involvement, like giving your own thoughts and opinions instead of just coming to the lecture and to take notes. I find the courses at times to be too passive. Because at this stage, we being trained to be able to become leaders to tackle complex global issues in our respective fields so we must be allowed to give our own views and opinions because at the end of the day, that is what will be expected of us in our fields.

I don't think it is the fault of the students, but it's more a matter of how some of the professors organize his course, because I have seen some courses where there is an active discussion.

Are you satisfied with the literature?

Yeah I am satisfied for the most part with the literature used for on the course. However, there were concerns raised by students about one text used on a course because of the source that was used throughout the text.

Looking at your background, can you relate to the topics of the classes?

I certainly can, some of the courses have really opened my eyes. If I had the possibility to go back in time I would certainly have acted differently. For example, the course The Politics of Participation has given me a new perspective on my work. This course has helped me to understand how citizen participation can be beneficial in programme/projects from conception to implementation.

"Some of the courses have really opened my eyes"



What are your plans after graduating?

For my master thesis I want to look into the development of Africa, so after graduating I probably want to go work for an organization that contributes to the development of Africa. I hope to work for the United Nations or the World Bank.

"I find it interesting that in Leiden there are multiple faculties, which contradicts my study experience in the U.S. and the U.K. where everything is centered on one campus"

Do you enjoy the student life in Leiden?

Yes I do, but I find it interesting that in Leiden there are multiple faculties, which contradicts my study experience in the U.S. and the U.K. where everything is centered on one campus. I am a part of B.I.L. and I have been on a trip with them to the Council of Europe in Staatsburg. I am also a part of the International Student Network- ISN which is a network of international students that help with international student to integrate and also represent international student needs; they also organize events for international students. In general, Leiden is very nice city for studying. It a beautiful city, with very picturesque, it has a very rich history. It also has many bars, pubs and as long as those things are around, what else can you ask for?

What would you like to see differently in Leiden?

I have the feeling that there is sort of a dual University, one for the Dutch students and one for the international. The information on the Dutch

website is different than the English one, so as International student you are sometime lost and misinformed. One of the biggest disappointments was the welcome at FSW, which was given entirely in Dutch. So I would like to see more interaction with the Dutch and the international students. But in general, I am happy with the way thing go. I always look back at my first week in Leiden, when I was totally lost in the city and I didn't understand the language. I found the Dutch to be very helpful and friendly, showing me the way to go and so on. However, the Dutch language is very difficult to learn haha.

What is the biggest difference with the Dutch society and the societies where you have lived?

Well the biggest difference is that the Dutch are more organized and more agenda oriented. The Dutch system pays more attention to people who are not able to take care of themselves and that is a good thing. Your social programs are a lot better than the United States, your government really takes care of it's people and that's an accomplishment, something you guys should be very proud of.

To conclude, what is your happiest memory of Leiden?

Mmz, I would say the Scholarship Ceremony. For me it was a really good day, because I was among a group of some of best international students that are studying at Leiden University and were granted the Leiden University Excellent Scholarship and also at the Official Academic opening we were made to feel very much apart of the University. ■