Reflections of a Budding Global Business Leader

My long term, new year resolution is to keep a journal where I reflect on my week and certain memorable events. However, this will only be my second attempt at journaling this year. It is worthy of mention that writing my bio made me more confident and articulate when asked to talk about myself in informal and formal settings.

My GEE journey began when I clicked a link posted on a group chat 11th March, 2019. Luckily, it led to a website receiving applications to participate in a global business competition, I applied as soon as I could. I am glad to say GEE was worth every moment. GEE has distinguished itself by its scale and the depth of what I have learnt and done.

I woke up on May 1 to an introduction email from Deb Gilbertson and my team leader - Harry. I introduced myself and the rest of my team mates did as they became available. Without wasting time, we decided to use google docs to work and communicate through email and WhatsApp. Working with a team of such eager, young, smart, respectful people has been enjoyable and increased the hope I have for my generation. Every team member was available despite their other obligations and situations.

We made sure to communicate everyday, although we never fixed a specific time for meeting. A few of us suggested beautiful ideas and we used a poll to decide which we would work on, even if this took a while. The team used WhatsApp frequently for instant messaging. Only two members would be unavailable on the group I created because of exams and phone issues but I provided frequent updates for them via mail, which they were responsive to. My team leader was a good part of the experience as he is an even tempered and meticulous young man who fostered team unity. He also came up with the idea we finally chose, an idea that was totally new to me. He was doing just fine, so I didn't see it coming when he asked me to be a co-leader motivated by my knowledge of sub-Saharan Africa and enthusiasm. I think we made a good team.

In retrospect, we did not make full use of google docs, most of us worked on word documents with our partners instead but completed final report there, I feel this was a limiting factor to knowing areas where members where struggling. In addition, what section each member was working on was not made public, only your partner was made aware. However, I decided to use this opportunity to have conversations with each team mate to know them better, ask what they are working on, inform them of who was working on another section and to request they alert the team if they had trouble with anything. Communication was fair, when someone asked for clarification or made suggestions, most members would pitch in with their opinions. We brainstorm and decide on the best suggestion to follow through. Everybody's opinion was important and surprisingly I came up with the business name. Ha! Sabri, Jeroen, Harry, Heenal, Yomi, Thushara, Durjoy are thoughtful leaders and I can't wait to see them on the global stage.

A few 'challenges' came in form of periodic power outage so that my phone died a few times while working, managing mobile data used online and waking up at odd hours when I noted most team mates would be available. (While searching actively for a job). Furthermore, with no laptop, I typed all my work with the phone, my arm can testify. None of this was able to deter me though, I chose to see them as part of the process. My father once asked me what I was doing so seriously, suggesting that perhaps I was writing a book. LOL! Indeed!

When we picked the team idea, I thought I would be befuddled by the new technology, turned out to be finance instead. I will be spending more time learning that aspect of business. Most importantly to me during this project has been learning about my team's target country: Rwanda. I became interested in the East African country when HONY was there to learn about the effects of the genocide and journey to rebuilding the nation. I really did not know anything much about them until we started the project. However, I found a few Rwandan friends whom I had online conversations this period. Getting to know about the country, their current struggles, their vision, their investments and breakthrough in sectors like power, education and tourism was enlightening. It has made me want more for my country and resolve to give more of my self towards national development. Maybe a lot of interest in exploring Africa too...

For me, this will be unforgettable from the beginning to the very end. I had to push myself from my comfort zone and reach out to other people from time to time including my team mates and other Africans I connected with on and offline. I learnt about the importance of having a shared vision; how we have a part to play in making the things around us better; importance of asking for help and how much more there is to know about my continent. Central to this experience has been the opportunity to work with people from different interests, pace and beliefs to reach a common goal. This taught me that in our own little spaces, global collaborations are possible if you are willing to work with different kinds of people towards a common goal. Yes, we are not at the world bank or UN, but where we are now, we can connect and work together to effect change and transform lives.

Thank you to the GEE team for helping to shape me into a global leader. Thank you Professor Deb for the opportunity and good organization.

Daalu!