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TRANSCRIPT OF LECTURE:

Winning PTDF Scholarship Scheme Under PTDF Strategic Partnership in France/Germany/China/Malaysia

LECTURER 1» SCHOLAR OGWUCHE DESTINY INNOSUCCESS

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Moderator: **Scholar Kenny**

LECTURE AGENDA

1. Introduction to the PTDF overseas scholarship.
2. How to apply
3. Basic requirements
4. Writing a seemingly motivational letter for the application.
5. Questions & Answers Session

INTRODUCTION TO THE PTDF OVERSEAS SCHOLARSHIP

The Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF), the Federal Government agency with the mandate of developing indigenous human capacity and petroleum technology to meet the needs of the oil and gas industry, invites applications from suitably qualified candidates for Overseas MSc and PhD Scholarships to institutions under its strategic partnership initiative. Successful candidates will be awarded scholarships to study in France/Germany/China/Malaysia commencing in the 2020/2021 academic session.

Under this scheme, applicants are invited to apply through PTDF to specific program at the partner institutions in any of the countries (full list of sponsored courses is available on the scholarship portal scholarship.ptdf.gov.ng)

the award includes the provision of health insurance, payment of tuition and benches (where applicable) as well as the provision of allowances to meet the costs of accommodation and living expenses. The program will also include language classes to aid scholars settle into their new environments (where applicable)

Most scholarship selection process is meant to identify people who possess the following:

1. **Purpose and focus:** in life that correlates with the priority areas of your sponsors (their vision statement) before you begin your application, you must determine what your focus or purpose for life is and whether that purpose is in tandem with the priority areas. Because being able to articulate your purpose is crucial to both writing your essays and presenting your ideas during your interviews, I will devote some time at a later stage to writing some helpful tips that will help you to properly articulate your goals and write your essays.
2. **Good leadership and influencing skills:** Sponsors are interested in developing a breed of leaders who have a vision and who have the ability to inspire and influence change. Accordingly, most scholars will be expected to return to their home countries and to assume high impact roles that will enable them to influence their communities. A prospective applicant, therefore, must be able to show that he or she possesses exceptional leadership qualities. It is not enough to say that you are a leader in your essays, as you must be able to provide supporting evidence that actually exhibits these leadership qualities. Your inability to show substantial proof of what you have done in the past or to reveal what you are doing I the present to confirm that you possess such leadership qualities, may result in your not being selected. This is then the time to think of projects, responsibilities etc. that you can say that you have handled as some point in your career. It is also the time for you to think about what you know about leadership and what your philosophies about leadership are.

3. **Exceptional vision and strategic planning skills:**

The assessors want to see that returning scholars will be able to initiate policies, projects etc. that will have a positive impact on their home nations; you must, therefore, do your best to articulate what you plan to do when you come back. You must be careful not to fall into the category of aspirants who are passionate about what they want to do when they return but who fail to show what they want to do when they return from studying abroad. It is important for you to outline your plan of action clearly in your essays, or you probably will not get selected.

To help you understand this criterion better, you may also want to study the profile of previous scholars to determine what they have been doing since they returned home.

4. **Good networking skills:**

Networking is a top leadership skill. In leadership skills, we need to provide the committee, the judges with evidence of why we are leaders and potential leaders for the future development of our country, or even the region (for PTDF focus on the gains to the gains to the oil and gas industry). We should also reflect our leadership experiences and try to find our leadership principles.

HOW TO APPLY

Applying for PTDF scholarship is fairly easy if you have your documentations and essays ready, <https://scholarship.ptdf.gov.ng/>

Selection Process: PTDF scholarships are highly competitive and only applicants who are outstanding across board are selected. A selection committee will be constituted to assess applications using the following criteria; academic merit as evidenced by quality of degrees, other professional qualifications acquired, and relevant publications to be referenced by applicants. Membership of professional bodies, the viability of the study/research plan (PhD applicants only). Applicants are required to make a case for their scholarship by submitting statement of purpose (maximum 500 words) stating the reason(s) they want to undertake the study, the relevance of the proposed study to the oil and gas industry and its expected impact on national development (MSc Applicants only).

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

Applicants are advised to scan copies of the following documents and attach to their online application forms:

First Degree Certificate or Statement of Result

NYSC discharge certificate

WAEC/GCE/SSCE/NECO results

Recent Passport Photograph

Local Government Identification Letter

Master's Degree Certificate (PhD Applicants only)

Evidence of membership of professional associations.

NOTE: Applicants must have a National Identity Number (NIN) before applying for the scholarship. Applicants are also expected to upload a NIN verification report before completing the application. The report can be obtained from www.verifyme.ng (charges may apply).

Ongoing PhD applicants could only apply provided their Universities are among the partnership Universities. Applicants who have benefitted from any of the PTDF scholarships in the past cannot apply for the same type of degree; applicants interested in German Institution should choose Abuja as their preferred interview location. Applicants who are beneficiaries of any other scholarship need not apply. Applicants who successfully scale through the first round of screening will be requested to submit their transcript; all applicants are therefore advised to prepare their transcripts for submission in anticipation of such a request.

OTHER SALIENT POINTS

- ❑ The attributes that successful applicants have in common are excellent academic achievements, great leadership experiences and skills, and well-planned career goals.

In academic achievements, one should have a high cumulative grade point average (GPA) and have demonstrated outstanding performances in various academic events and projects to which they have contributed. Having a high GPA and demonstrating steady progress in learning, such as showing the ability to join honors program, will help one applicant to stand out from others. This will also assist in gaining admission to the top universities in the world since their requirements are high.

- ❑ Know your enemies, on a lighter note, know your competitors. Getting a scholarship is always challenging because you are competing with individuals who have similar profiles than you do, most scholarships demand a 2:1 and above but if you do not have this no tussle, there are scholarships that even third class can win with relevant work experience, research, hard work and other accomplishments.
- ❑ Your test score GRE/IELTS/TOEFL/Pearson test of English etc., you need to distinguish yourself. Not specific to PTDF but useful.

- ❑ Your referees and recommenders should be people who can speak positively about you. Personally, there were some references I received but never used them because those who wrote them did so out of obligation not the compassion to see you succeed more so they were generic, it was something they wrote for everyone else; some will just write 4 or 5 lines. Good referees should comment on your attitude, character, work discipline, accomplishments etc. Some chose to go for highly ranked Professor, if it rocks your boat fine but if it doesn't go for someone else.

How long has this person known you? What kind of relations are they? (professional, academic, management, voluntary, religious etc). When was the last time you communicated with each other? These are some questions you should answer.

- ❑ Get an admission: It seems so obvious right? But people don't know that, except for some scholarships like Chevening, PTDF etc. which allows you to start the application before getting an admission, the majority of scholarships require that you have an admission before applying. You need to know what you want to do and why you want to study that course.
- ❑ Apply before deadline: I would have rephrased this point a 'apply early' but my definition of early might not be your definition of early. Personally, I tend to give myself a deadline earlier than the stated date. For example, the deadline for PTDF is just few days away and that's when most prospective candidates are sending me their motivational essays, what they don't realize is I also have my schedules and I'm literally squeezing out time to attend to them.
- ❑ Accomplishments: Simply put, how far have you been able to distinguish yourself from your contemporaries, how many awards have you won relative to what you want to study, how many competitions have you emerged victorious in comparison to people of similar profiles like you, for example, study abroad programs, study exchange programs, national and international, business, entrepreneurship, startup, sports and technological competitions, what is your contribution towards making the planet safer and better, finalist at a hackathon, a leadership aspirant? It is called being a well-rounded applicant.

There are some scholarships that also require work experience and research publications.

WRITING A GOOD MOTIVATIONAL LETTER

Essays: In my opinion, this is the most important component of your application, it is your selling point, it is the first virtual opportunity where your reviewers get to meet you, you need not to copy, it is where you get to tell them who you are, why you deserve the scholarship, why is it just you and you alone that deserves the scholarship, personal statements play a big role in the application process.

Do not take those questions for granted, not only on for PTDF, but for every other scholarship as well. Again, you must

know that you are competing with many other potential candidates; so, tell the committee your best attributes in a humble way.

Give it to people, mentors, senior friends and folks who have gone ahead of you to review, they must not necessarily be graduates of English Language. Do not be shy about giving your essays out for reviews, I have reviewed essays for folks who graduated with a better grade than I did. Still on essays, I advise that you do not rush the writing process, a winning boxer does not emerge victorious in the ring rather he or she won in every moment of practice, you see a quote you like write it down somewhere, an idea jumps into your head note it, you made an observation about a process or an encounter jot it down, keep writing until your essay looks like a presentation before the United Nations.

You need to be straight to the point. This is usually a struggle for most applicants because social media have provided a platform to communicate limitlessly. So, having to convey your message in 500, sometime 100 words, is really hard. The way to go about this is to keep writing, editing, rewriting and editing over and over. Convey your thoughts without losing any part of it. I think that a dictionary or Google is helpful with rephrasing words.

Do not waste words as I have seen on lots of essays. Check your spelling and word phrasing, I cannot overemphasize that even if you have been speaking English since you were born, there is still a tendency to make mistakes. Everyone makes mistake but this is a time you don't want to make any mistakes. Re-read your answers over 10 times. Write your essays, then close your computer for days then re-read it again at a very slow pace to check for errors. It is better to take a long time to write your application than to make silly mistakes.

One way to spot errors in essays is to read it out to yourself rather than reading it by heart. Read books and read wide, subscribe to useful YouTube channels, read news sites like economist, Bloomberg, Harvard reviews etc. this will help you develop your vocabulary and writing prowess, in the race for excellence there is no finish line, keep editing and re-editing. Components of your essay should also include your after-study plan.

Somehow, others have a way of seeing beyond what you have written, we are not looking at the words but the writing style, the consistency of what you have written and how it synchronizes with other parts of your application, the syntax, the semantics, and the real intent. Later on, some of will understand better when you start reviewing essays for others and it comes with practice.

Sell yourself: You have to show that you are worth the award. Find a way of putting your major (if not all) of what you have achieved with your life. Show all that you have done in terms of experience, previous awards you have been given, any volunteer work, how good you were during your undergraduate studies (if you were top 10% in your class when graduating). It is not time to be timid, horn your trumpet but be diplomatic about it.

Answer the questions truthfully: This is a point that I personally believe in. I know some people are very good with words but I believe you need to answer the questions asked as truthfully as you can. You never know if your answer could be brought against you. I didn't complete scholarships because I didn't agree with their terms and conditions and I just couldn't continue with it. I didn't want to lie but if you want to, it's up to you.

Reach out to previous scholarship winners. Membership of professional association, I do not know why this is here but I presume it is a test of how well you will blend upon your return. In simpler terms, it boils down to networking. One very important factor is the power of specificity, we know we want to change Nigeria but we can only change a component at a time. Also, reach out to industry experts who are updated in your field of study. I can't overemphasize the power of LinkedIn and mentors there. In all, the last advice I would give would be to pray a lot after you have submitted your application. It is possible that sometimes you meet all the criteria and things still go "south". Pray and have faith, those things were what helped calm me down when I started to feel anxious. In the end after your hard work, the rest is an interplay of God's grace and favor.

LECTURER 2» Scholar Christabel Iworah Oweredaba

(PTDF alumnus in Health and Global Environment, University of Salford, United Kingdom)

You have to prove in your essay why you are the best candidate for the scholarship. This is because they are spending heavily to fund you and would love to know that money is not in vain. Hence, you must clearly state in your essay what your research area is. Also, reflect in your essay how that research area is of benefit to you, your career PTDF, Nigeria and the oil and gas industry.

HOW TO SELECT SCHOOLS UNDER THIS PROGRAM

Candidates are to select 3 different courses from the 4 countries. Please note, if you chose any course in Germany, you would be required to pick Abuja as your interview center. The complete list of courses, and universities which are in partnership with PTDF in the four countries can be found on scholarship.ptdf.gov.ng/guidelines.

PTDF INTERVIEW PROCESS

Hopefully, you were being selected for the interview. You would have to go along with all your credentials including your certificates, transcripts, SOP (for master candidates)/proposal (for PhD candidates), certificate of membership, proof of awards etc. The panel consists of 3-4 interviewers, two of which could be PTDF staff and 1 or 2 academics, preferably a professor in your field. Each of the interview would have a copy of your application details.

On the day of interview; walk into the room confidently and remember to be cheerful. Also, study and have extensive knowledge of your SOP/proposal as questions are most likely will come from there. There is no particular order for the questions asked and everyone might be asked different questions. In addition to the questions that might be asked from SOP or proposal, other possible question includes: why do you want to do a master degree? What's your research interest and how did you develop it? What do you plan to gain from current research goals/career goals?

On the assessment day during interview, different marks would be allotted to the following: your degree (the higher the class the higher the mark), journal publication, membership of a body, number of awards, component, application to oil and gas industry and knowledge of subject. In addition, PhD candidates would be scored in the various parts of their proposal such as: Introduction (Background of study, statement of problem, significance to oil and gas, aims and objectives), Literature review (extent of existing knowledge used and currency, relevance of literature to the research etc.), Methodology/materials (relevant materials, sampling methods, techniques for data collection, method of analysis), Expected outcomes and References.

Put in your best during the interview because your fate is determined there. Even if it seems they are probing too much just be relaxed and answer calmly but confidently. Remember, there are experts in the room. If you are confident and you know your subject area, you can initiate an inquiring conversation with them so you don't feel intimidate.

GENERIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Q. *How can one check if her course is related to the oil and gas? I studied forestry and environmental management and with the campaign against fossil fuels, my field can't see related course to apply for.*
- A. Well, I not a renewable energy expert but I know forest provides us with wood which is bioenergy and the whole world is going green energy.
- Q. *After one has registered with PTDF, is there timeline for registering on DAAD?*
- A. The best point of contact for questions relating to PTDF and/or DAAD is to mail them directly.
- Q. *I understand that PTDF asks PhD candidates to upload their MSc theses, does it mean that one's MSc research must also be oil and gas related?*
- A. well, uploading of your master thesis seems to be a new development. However, your research must not be exactly oil and gas but it would have a benefit to the oil and gas industry and Nigeria in general. It's up to you to make them see the relevance.
- Q. *Do people with no membership of professional associations have a chance of winning, if so, any tips?*
- A. You have a score for everything you bring and loose a point for those you don't have. For example, you might not be a member of a professional body but you might have 2 journal articles. So, if each had one mark, you would have two marks.
Let me give you a tip, if you don't have the proof of membership for professional associations, you could ask the leadership to write you a letter. I got my proofs after application because it was in pipeline.
- Q. *Can one choose a course related to one's field of study at 3 different countries or 3 different courses in a country?*
- A. It doesn't matter, if you want to choose 3 courses from one country or one similar course in the 3 countries.
- Q. *How can one relate Water Resources and Environmental Engineering to Oil and Gas sector?*
- A. I don't have engineering background but I know waste water treatment, oil spill and remediation etc. These are problems in that area that relate to Nigeria and that field has solutions.

Q. *How can one relate Civil Engineering to Oil and Gas industry?*

A. I want to believe you did some courses related to geology right? You can connect that to oil exploration. Also, its not compulsory to do an MSc in Civil Engineering even if you studied it at undergraduate level.

Furthermore, carry out a personal research using online tools and industry experts as well.

Q. *How many days would the interview last especially for those that will be going to Abuja?*

A. If you are successful, you would be sent an email containing your interview date, when you should be interviewed.

How can one answer those questions you highlighted in your lecture as regards the interview?

That is the homework you should do. There is no one answer to those questions. It depends on your research area, your experiences etc.

Q. *I am a corp member, am I qualified to apply?*

A. Apply and upload your call up letter for the meantime. Hopefully, before the interview time you would be rounding up.



