

Development of students' intercultural competencies through a study-abroad experience: an institutional case study

Higher education in South Africa and abroad always attempts to become more international in multiple ways, one of which is study abroad. Studying abroad exposes students to a different university and country, thereby expanding their world views.

This study aimed to identify the elements of intercultural competencies that students believed they had achieved by attending a summer school at Stellenbosch University (SU). The researcher did a content analysis of blogs and individual interviews to determine what the perceptions of the students were of the competencies they had developed during the SU International (SUI) summer school. These competencies were compared to those of students who attended summer schools in Europe and the USA.

Thereafter, the researcher formulated an idea of the elements of intercultural competencies that are unique to SU and the South African context, to determine the added value that students can be provided with by a study abroad experience in South Africa.

The study found that there were three unique elements of intercultural competencies developed by students during their short-term study abroad experience at SU. These are: being openminded, empathy, and *ubuntu*.

This study not only contributes to the future planning of the SUI summer school but also creates an opportunity for South African higher education institutions to engage and collaborate with their European and American counterparts on studies abroad – in promoting the benefits of study abroad in South Africa.

Werner de Wit

Supervisor: Prof Magda Fourie-Malherbe