CREATING CONDITIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

**Social justice
perspectives from a
South African university**

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DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES THROUGH SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD

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INTRODUCTION

Internationalisation of higher education has grown rapidly in importance in South Africa and abroad over the past few decades (Altbach & Salmi 2011; Knight 2008). Leading universities now regard the size of their international student bodies as one of the key factors when measuring success and boosting their international profile (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber 2017). The number of students who study abroad has increased globally from 2.1 million in 2000 to 5 million in 2014, and a predicted 8 million students will be studying abroad by 2025 (University of Oxford 2015). In the past decade, the number of international students at universities worldwide has doubled (De Wit 2020) and “the presence of international students is now a core part of the student body for the world’s leading universities” (University of Oxford 2015:6). The importance of an international experience for students was emphasised by the 4th IAU Global Survey (Egron-Polak & Hudson 2014) of the internationalisation of higher education. This survey highlighted the increased international awareness, knowledge and appreciation of international issues of graduates as the most highly ranked benefit of an international student experience (Egron-Polak & Hudson 2014).

Internationalisation of higher education institutions (HEIs) is, however, more than the mere presence of international students on campus. Knight (2015:2) defines internationalisation as the intentional “process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education”. De Wit, Egron-Polak, Howard and Hunter (2015:29) expand on this definition by adding that the goal is “to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society”. A report from the University of Oxford (2015) also highlights the importance of internationalisation to achieve a variety of institutional goals.

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Internationalisation of an HEI can be interpreted as the internationalisation of the curriculum, its staff and/or its students. Klopper (2017) identifies five factors that drive internationalisation: globalising and liberalising economies, knowledge societies, information, technology, and the demand for massification. In addition, Klopper (2017) posits that the most important reasons for internationalisation of a higher education institution are to improve student preparedness for the working world, to internationalise the curriculum, to enhance the international profile of the institution, to strengthen research and knowledge production, and to diversify its staff.

From the above it is clear that there are various reasons why internationalisation matters for universities. Internationalisation increases the national and international visibility of institutions (Gao 2015). It also leverages institutional strengths through strategic partnerships and enlarges the academic community within which institutions can benchmark their activities. Universities use internationalisation to mobilise internal and external intellectual resources and to develop stronger research groups. Furthermore, internationalisation can add important contemporary learning outcomes to the student experience (Klopper 2017).

Gao (2015) proposes a framework for mapping internationalisation that focuses on six dimensions of internationalisation. These dimensions are research, curriculum, governance, engagement, students and staff. Gao's subcomponents of these dimensions provide a framework to consider areas that are lacking in terms of the institutional and national context of internationalisation (SU 2018a).

In South Africa, the Department of Higher Education and Training is currently finalising the first national policy on the internationalisation of higher education. This will guide universities and help them to align their institutional internationalisation policies and strategies with a national framework for internationalisation of higher education. Kotze (2019:1) states that "the policy is expected to require universities to adhere to the rationale and principles of the policy framework and to the national strategies and priorities of the policy itself. The policy is also expected to require universities to determine their own measurable indicators of internationalisation".

One of the measurable indicators of internationalisation of higher education in South Africa is student mobility. Driven primarily by internationalisation, student mobility has many facets. Some approaches to study abroad focus on long-term study opportunities (such as a semester, full academic year, or more), while others concentrate more on short-term study abroad opportunities (such as summer schools or short programmes led by academic staff). Sobania and Braskamp (2009) argue that, for various reasons that could range from personal to academic or financial limitations, many students do not have the option of utilising a long-term

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study abroad opportunity. Therefore, for many students, a short-term study abroad opportunity is the only way in which they can gain international experience while they are studying. During a study abroad experience students often develop skills that are not necessarily formally taught, but which they acquire through experience, that is, through experiential learning. Kolb (2015) explains the process of experiential learning as an opportunity for students to share experiences and then to reflect together on these experiences.

Traditionally, university education was aimed at equipping students through teaching and learning activities with the necessary knowledge and skills to obtain a qualification. However, this traditional concept of the university is rapidly changing. A university is no longer only a place for students to get a degree, but a place where students can grow and develop, not only in the classroom or through conventional teaching and learning activities, but also in the out-of-class or co-curriculum context. Oaks (2015) argues that an integrated approach to in-class and out-of-class learning experiences helps students achieve shared learning outcomes. In many universities, an international experience or 'study abroad'¹ is offered as part of the co-curriculum.

The study abroad opportunity, whether part of the curriculum or co-curriculum, is thus one of the ways in which students can develop a variety of skills and competencies. Assessment of students' learning is a standard practice in higher education, and this is also being done more concretely in co-curricular programmes such as study abroad (Porter & Smithson 2001). One way of measuring the impact or benefit of study abroad is to determine which competencies the student participants have acquired. Within a broad range of intrapersonal, cognitive and interpersonal competencies that can be developed through a study abroad experience, intercultural competencies are prominent.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES

As alluded to above, study abroad has many benefits for students who get such an internationalisation opportunity. The Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad that have been set by the Forum Council Standards Committee of the Forum on Education Abroad (2011) were first published in 2004 and revised in 2011. These standards stress that study abroad should "foster intercultural understanding, encourage language and/or intercultural communication skills, and encourage student development, including tolerance for ambiguity" (Terzuolo 2016:41).

¹ Study abroad in the context of this chapter refers to short-term mobility opportunities. The terms 'study abroad', 'summer schools' and 'summer abroad' are used interchangeably and all refer to study abroad opportunities.

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Terzuolo (2016) acknowledges that the setting of standards does not necessarily infer that these standards will be implemented. This remains the universal challenge for universities in offering study abroad experiences.

Short-term study abroad opportunities such as summer schools, which were the focus of the study on which this chapter draws, entail programmes which are between two and five weeks in length. A summer school is therefore a short, high-impact opportunity in which students can develop different elements of competencies. During a summer school, students from various backgrounds and nationalities come together to have an international experience and develop a variety of competencies.

Intrapersonal, cognitive and interpersonal competencies are all important for the holistic development of well-rounded graduates. Yet, in a globalised context characterised by increasing diversity across all societies, the need to be culturally sensitive seems to be gaining prominence. This suggests that students need to specifically develop intercultural skills.

UNESCO broadens the concept of intercultural skills to 'competencies' in their conceptual and operational framework for intercultural competencies (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013). This framework was adapted from Deardorff's (2006) pyramid model of intercultural competence. Whereas the UNESCO (2013) publication was a synthesis of regional papers on intercultural competencies, the elements of intercultural competencies that were identified in this chapter are included in Deardorff's (2006) framework. This is, however, not an exhaustive list. Within this conceptual and operational framework for intercultural competencies, Deardorff identified the following fundamental elements of intercultural competencies (UNESCO 2013:24):

- Respect ("valuing of others");
- Self-awareness/identity ("understanding the lens through which we each view the world");
- Seeing from other perspectives/world views ("both how these perspectives are similar and different");
- Listening ("engaging in authentic intercultural dialogue");
- Adaptation ("being able to shift temporarily into another perspective");
- Relationship building ("forging lasting cross-cultural personal bonds"); and
- Cultural humility ("combines respect with self-awareness").

This framework developed by Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013) provides a practical way to consider the different elements of intercultural competencies, which I have used in this study (De Wit 2021) to assess the development of intercultural

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competencies of students attending the summer school at Stellenbosch University (SU). In this study I decided to adopt the Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013) framework as this is currently, in my opinion, the leading framework of intercultural competencies. I argue that these elements of intercultural competencies are what students should develop during a study abroad. The question then arises to what extent study abroad programmes are actually effective in achieving this. My study explored this question in the context of SU, and specifically investigated which elements of intercultural competencies were developed by international students during a study abroad experience presented by SU.

INTERNATIONALISATION AT STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Having been founded as an independent university in 1918, SU celebrated its centenary in 2018. SU is a public university with an enrolment of more than 31 000 students, of which two-thirds are undergraduate and one-third postgraduate (SU 2018b). Approximately 3800 students are international students from more than 109 countries. In 1993, the Office of International Relations was established, which in 2010 became the Postgraduate and International Office. Currently, the division is known as Stellenbosch University International (SUI), having celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2018. SUI focuses on internationalisation at SU as one of the institutional aspirations guided by the institutional Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024.

Robert Kotze, Senior Director: SUI, argues that “defining internationalisation as comprehensive implies that it is an institutional imperative that should influence all aspects of campus life and that this commitment and these actions should be embraced by institutional leadership, faculties, students and all academic service and support units” (Kotze 2019). Kotze made it clear that internationalisation is a team effort and that the whole institution should be on board.

In 2016, SU appointed its first Vice-Rector: Strategic Initiatives and Internationalisation. In addition, the SU Internationalisation Strategy (2019), aimed at addressing areas that were lacking in terms of the institutional and national policies of internationalisation, was recently approved. In the Strategy, internationalisation is defined as an intentional commitment to integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into all aspects of SU for all SU students and staff, in order to advance the quality of education (SU 2019). The goals and objectives of the Internationalisation Strategy (2019:9-11) align with this commitment:

Goal 1: SU mainstreams internationalisation across all activities, functions and policies.

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Goal 2: SU is a research-intensive University in and for Africa with a global reach.

Goal 3: SU shares and complements the SU knowledge offering through international collaborative learning and teaching programmes.

Goal 4: SU cultivates close relationships with its international stakeholders through functional engagement, active collaboration and mutually beneficial, complementary, reciprocal and transformational partnerships.

Goal 5: SU welcomes international students, enhances in- and outbound student mobility programmes and ensures a transformative student experience for international and domestic students in order to cultivate 21st-century citizens.

Goal 6: SU creates an environment for staff and postdoctoral fellows to develop and expand their international awareness and networks and to attract high-performing international staff and researchers for short- or long-term involvement in all programmes.

Goal 7: SU intentionally promotes the international reputation of SU through targeted international communication, marketing, and branding strategies.

Goal 8: SU actively encourages innovation, entrepreneurship and technology transfer activities internationally.

The concept note that was used in preparation of the Strategy states that SU needs to acknowledge “the social justice imperative as well as the need to identify and satisfy the competencies demanded within a globalised context” (SU 2018a:5). This is indicative of the value attached by the institution to the intercultural competencies that students need to develop.

One way in which the development of intercultural competencies can be achieved is through attending a summer school. Whereas studies have been conducted in Europe and the USA to determine the outcomes of these study abroad opportunities (AIFS Foundation and IIE 2018), not much research has been done to determine the outcomes achieved by students from abroad attending a summer school in the African context. Such a study, with a focus on intercultural competencies, could fill this gap in addition to serving important comparative purposes.

Since 2001 SU, through the former International Office, has been presenting an annual summer school during June and July. Students from abroad who attend the summer school at SU attain academic credits which are transferred back to their home institutions. In addition, they acquire, to a greater or lesser extent, intercultural competencies which should be recognised in some way. Even though students from the USA, constituting about 50% of the SU summer school participants annually, predominated, the summer school was attended by approximately 400 students

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from 18 different countries over the past five years. This is a broad mix of different cultures, and the development of many of the elements of intercultural competencies, as outlined by Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013), applies to the summer school programme.

THE STUDY

While attending the summer school, students experience how their perspectives differ from those of others and they get the opportunity to engage in intercultural dialogue. This makes them self-aware, and they forge lasting relationships, to name but a few of the elements. The research aim was to determine the unique elements of intercultural competencies that are developed when attending a summer school at SU. This was done by comparing students' perceptions of the competencies they had acquired during their study abroad experience in South Africa at SU, with the elements of intercultural competencies identified by Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013). Deardorff's model of intercultural competencies thus served as the theoretical or conceptual framework for this study. This comparison led to the identification of the specific elements of intercultural competencies of a summer school abroad at SU, and explication of how these competencies are unique to the South African context (if at all).

Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee (Humanities) and institutional permission was obtained from the Division for Institutional Research and Planning.

The research question in this study drove the research methods. The data collection in the study was done in two phases. Data collection for Phase 1 involved finding students who, over the past five years, had written blogs on their SU summer school experiences upon their return home, and contacting them for permission to use the content of their blogs in my analysis. I thus searched the web and invited former students to send me the links to the blogs that they had written. In Phase 1, the study participants were thus students who had already written blogs (n=10). Blogging can be described as the offspring of personal webpages and user-generated content (Haferkamp & Kramer 2008; Webb & Wang 2013), and is regarded as a powerful medium of communication and a new way of personal expression (Webb & Wang 2013).

Data collection for Phase 2 involved individual interviews which were conducted according to an interview protocol. Some of the students who wrote blogs were interviewed, but other students who had attended the summer school and who did not write blogs were also interviewed in order to compare their experiences with

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those expressed in the blogs. I started with students whose contact details I had, and then students who participated in interviews referred me to other students by providing updated contact information. I deemed these follow-up interviews necessary to further explore my initial findings. A total of 35 ($n = 35$) individual follow-up interviews were conducted.

I used an inductive approach to analyse the blogs through thematic content analysis (Kim & Kuljis 2010; Webb & Wang 2013) and conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005) to ensure that themes emerge from the data rather than imposing categories on the data.

The interview data was transcribed and coded in the same manner as the data from the blogs. The coding was done manually by reading the blogs and the interview transcripts a few times. Codes were assigned to any references to intercultural competencies, as discussed above. I then grouped the codes into the different elements of intercultural competencies to identify any correlations. These themes were thus compared to the elements of intercultural competencies identified by Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO, 2013). In this way, I was able to identify a set of unique elements of intercultural competencies developed by attending a summer school in the South African context.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

As indicated above, the aim of this study was to identify the elements of intercultural competencies that students believed they had acquired by attending a summer school abroad in the South African context. This was done by determining what the perceptions of the students who had attended the summer schools were of the competencies they had developed during the SUL summer school. First, I compared the students' experiences with the elements of intercultural competencies identified by Deardorff in the conceptual and operational framework for intercultural competencies (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013). The following elements of intercultural competencies were identified from my analysis of the blogs and interviews.

Seeing from other perspectives

My interpretation of the students' reflections related to this element uncovered three different nuances. Some students were profoundly affected by the South African perspective, while others referred to how the mix of international students from diverse backgrounds and cultures in the group opened their eyes to different viewpoints and perspectives. Thirdly, some students commented on how they looked at their own country with new eyes because of their summer school experience.

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When engaging with nationalities from across the world, students had the opportunity to compare how their own life experiences differed from those of others. Chris's^{2,3} input illustrated that he purposefully sought out a programme that would expose him to other world views:

The different nationalities are exactly what I wanted at my home university, which is not offered and so I wanted to find a study abroad programme that included other nationalities and not just Americans because I want to engage people from all around the world in my future profession and not just with Americans.

Judy reflected on her exposure to the South African perspective:

The academic experience has been like nothing I've ever experienced before. I chose classes on topics I'm interested in but then taking them within the context of South Africa, I just have a view point that I know that I couldn't get anywhere else.

Amy also alluded to the fact that South Africa has an interesting mix of cultures, and how that was a contributing factor to widening her perceptions: "I think that I've received many more perspectives within a contained environment that I would have anywhere else in the world at this point."

In his blog, Tom further referred specifically to the South African History class and his experience with South Africans in the class. He states:

We had South Africans of many different races, whose families experienced apartheid in many different ways to different extents, and when these students brought their personal stories, their versions of apartheid and the different realities, it made our discussions a lot more nuanced, a lot richer in the classroom.

These realities that South African students shared about their country and their past experiences opened the eyes of the international students to other perspectives. Derick wrote in his blog that he "did not expect the racial division to still be so obvious – though with hindsight it will take more than 23 years to heal a generation of segregation". Poverty and segregation were experienced first-hand when, in one course, students had the opportunity to visit a home in a local township. Evelyn shared her experience in her blog:

We had the privilege to go into a woman's home in the poorest part of the township. One very small room had a stove, bed, luggage to store her clothes, and a table that held her toothbrush, food, cleaning

2 All quotations are from interviews except when indicated that they are from a blog.

3 All names are pseudonyms.

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supplies, basically all the essentials. All in that one space. It opened all of our eyes to see it first-hand.

Such exposure to local communities could be risky, and some students did not enjoy it. However, hearing about it from a lecturer is completely different from walking through and experiencing those environments first-hand. The practical hands-on experience shifted many students' perspectives, which was evident in their reflections.

When attending a summer school, students of different nationalities share one class. This is of significance when evaluating the students' experience of a summer school abroad from different international perspectives, as Joy and Kolb (2009) argue that students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds learn differently. The students' experiences could therefore differ, based on their nationalities. Although students who came to SU for the summer school were from different nationalities, they all attended the same summer school. This was an important aspect that many students mentioned as one of the highlights of the summer school which greatly contributed to their experience. John mentioned that being able to interact with students from different nationalities was a factor that contributed greatly to his experience:

It was cool to be able to interact with students from South Africa as well as other countries around the world and so I feel I'm more culturally aware, globally aware and in addition to learning about the topics in the classes that I was taking.⁴

The cross-cultural personal bonds were strengthened by the fact that the students stayed together in a dormitory, and most of the time they shared a room with students from different cultures. James highlighted this aspect as one of his areas of growth:

My roommate was from Singapore and there are so many different people that are here from different nationalities that you can interact with people from all over the world and that is something unique to this programme. I could [...] see the world while only in one place.

Judy shared how the exposure to different cultures was a highlight for her as she could experience what students from different nationalities thought on the educational topics during the summer school:

The different mix of cultures, there's people from all over the world. People from countries that I'll probably never get to go to. So, getting to hear their experience is just, it's amazing to have it all in a place so beautiful but also learn about so many other places.

4 I removed interjections such as 'like' throughout quotations to ease reading.

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Tom shared in his blog what he had learned from his peers through their sharing of knowledge:

In our Transitional Justice Course, we had students from all over the world who had knowledge and expertise on cases of transitional justice being applied in different parts of the world, which I was completely oblivious to. By sharing our different ideas and our different knowledge and our different insights we gained a lot by learning a lot from each other.

Brian learned more about his own country through the different perspectives to which he was exposed:

The value I gained from the programme itself is that there were altering perspectives as well as perspectives similar to mine, which formed a broader picture or a broader understanding of how I see the country I live in.

Students only realised what the impact of this cross-cultural exposure was once they returned home and reflected on their experience. A similar observation was made by Ingraham and Peterson (2004) when they conducted a study to determine the impact of study abroad upon their students' return. This exposure to different perspectives and world views in one space is one of the most valuable aspects of this summer school experience in Stellenbosch.

Self-awareness and identity

Another competence closely related to seeing from other perspectives is the self-awareness and identity that students developed due to their exposure to these different cultures. Often when one is exposed to something completely different to what one is used to, one's views are challenged, and one understands the lens through which the world is viewed much better. John reflected that "as far as lessons learned I would say the most important one is that to be open and I've opened my horizons". Suzy said that the more you are exposed to international environments, the more you learn about yourself:

I think the more that you engage in being in an international environment just kind of opens up yourself to a new perspective every single time. I think the fact that you've taken that step it kind of allows you to just continue learning and I think if you open up to learning, it just opens up yourself to kind of self-discovery. But also just open-mindedness at the same time.

Jennifer experienced greater self-awareness upon her return to the USA:

I think I've already changed some of my core opinions I used to have. I have changed – not the basis of [my opinions] but how I communicate

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them towards people because I've learned different ways of how to say things that mean more and make more sense if that makes sense. I've [developed] a bigger understanding of how to approach situations that include race and diversity and stuff like that.

Like Jennifer, many other students experienced a similar realisation of development upon return. This is one of the main reasons why blogging and reflecting on their experiences are so valuable to the students. Lily explained in her blog how this personal growth has made a significant impact on her life:

Spending time in South Africa provided me with another way to view the world. I think that I am much more open-minded now. My time abroad also taught me a lot about being independent. I travelled by myself for the first time and it was such an eye-opening experience. It gave me a lot of confidence in myself that I didn't necessarily have before.

This exposure to different world views led students to reflect critically on their own views and beliefs, and created a greater sense of self awareness.

Respect

This self-awareness often leads to heightened awareness of issues relating to social justice, as seen from Jennifer's reflection above. How students approach these situations of diversity and race is an important point of departure to start addressing social justice issues. This often ties in with the competence of respect. The value one places on others makes them feel respected. Amy said that to listen to what people have been through will give one insight into how they view things:

I think my biggest takeaway would just be to listen for what everybody else has been through until I integrate that into how I see them as a person because everybody's experiences define how they see different things.

Peter learned that it is important to treat each person as a unique individual:

It's very important that you treat every single person with respect because realistically, everyone's coming from different backgrounds and different beliefs, especially from all around the world, which is vital to understand.

Zianda also spoke about developing respect for other cultures:

I think I learned a lot about what it means to respect other cultures and also respect not in just the surface value but the depth of what it actually means to interact with somebody who's not from, you know, your background.

The following insights were expressed by Frank when he realised that everyone is different as a result of everyone's own culture and upbringing:

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Everybody has different beliefs; everybody has different values and it's all about respecting other people. And in a lot of my classes we did 'agree or disagree' arguments and that really made me realise that sometimes I have to be quiet about my beliefs and just respect other people's and that's something that really stood out to me in the six weeks.

Respect is a competence which is widely recognised and here one can see how respect can be related to other competencies. As students learned to respect other cultures, they learned to appreciate and value the individuals within those cultures.

Cultural humility

In the reflections above, respect has been combined with self-awareness, which indicates the development of another competence, namely 'cultural humility'. As I discerned these different competencies from the students' inputs, it became clear that most of them do not stand alone. They are integrated with each other, as can be seen from Figure 15.1 at the end of the chapter. These competencies are rarely developed in isolation. The students develop in many different ways, and holistically. Only after reflecting on their study abroad experience, some students realised which competencies they had developed. Consequently, they changed their outlook on life and the way they approached other people and situations. Mia reflected on this aspect upon her return:

I feel I started respecting people more ... I started saying thank you and stuff like that more, so I gained respect, more for people and took in more of other people's cultures instead of being super-American.

Amy learned more about herself and her own value in the world through other people's views:

Certainly, an appreciation for other people's points of view of the world and also [getting] insight to how people are often blind to their own prejudices even when they should be ... in a position where they should be aware of them. And even when they're aware of some of them, there are still other elements which will still come through quite clearly and it is much harder to spot that in yourself than it is to other people.

This open dialogue without judgement is important as it empowered the students to get a view of how other people see things, and through this insight they also learned more about themselves.

Listening

Cultural humility as mentioned above cannot be reached without active listening. 'Listening' refers to engaging in authentic intercultural dialogue. When students

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engage in these authentic dialogues, they cultivate a deep understanding for other people and their cultures. Amy learned to not only judge things on face value, using the example of someone telling her that he/she is not a feminist. If she took that on face value, she would just believe it, but there could be more behind that statement. She commented that she had learned that she needs to take a step back and not judge what somebody says at face value:

You don't know what they could have gone through and I think that was a big thing that I realised within South Africa because of how recent all the history is. So that made me really introspect on that point. So, listening was very important.

Madie learned that to listen authentically, one needs to be actively and critically engaged:

...to not participate in soft engagement when I'm interacting with people and when I'm interacting with people specifically from different cultures to really be actively and critically engaged when I can, hopefully at all times but specifically, when I'm interacting with people from different cultures.

Listening authentically to others while considering their context helped students to be more open-minded.

Adaptation

If one actively and critically engages in listening, it will help one to adapt. 'Adaptation' refers to being able to shift temporarily into another perspective (Bennett 1998). The ability to do this enhances growth. By shifting into another perspective, it becomes possible to truly engage with that perspective and grow as a person. Adaptation, according to Bennett (1998:7), is an intentional "shift into a different cultural frame of reference". How the students experienced this shift to other perspectives is illustrated in the quotations below.

John commented:

[T]he learning environment was really interesting; it was a little different than what I'm used to in the US. But it provided me (with) an opportunity to grow.

Brian specifically indicated the value of other people adapting in the same space as oneself, and how one also learns from them:

Having someone that's never experienced what I've experienced, within the same space, I think gives you so much more – it broadens the dynamics so much more and it gives you a better understanding

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of, or it gives you an alternative understanding of what you already understand, which I think enriches and that's what I think is very powerful and substantial of this programme.

Peter also mentioned that his way to adapt to challenges was enriched by being in the presence of many different cultures in one place:

I think the biggest element that I developed was the adaptation to different challenges and different things going on. A lot of times I'll go to one country and I'll be surrounded by people from that country but now there is such a mixing of different people that I think it expanded me more because it's not only that I am working with South Africans; I am working with people from the UK. I'm working with people from Singapore and so it's a completely different environment than what I'm used to.

Engagement amongst students from different cultures who were adapting to this new environment greatly contributed to their growth. The temporary shift into a different cultural frame of reference allowed the students to engage meaningfully with the local culture, to listen and consequently to build strong relationships.

Relationship building

The exposure of the students to so many different nationalities and cultures in one space led them to forge lasting cross-cultural personal bonds. This relates to the last element of intercultural competence from Deardorff's (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013) framework: 'relationship building'. This is the element that students, at first glance, found easiest to relate to. Tom learned that building relationships and learning about people's backgrounds will bring one closer to others and enrich one's own experience, regardless of your background, language, age or race:

During my time at Stellenbosch I learned a lot, though I'd say above anything else, I learned the importance of connecting with people from different backgrounds, different cultures with different experiences. By connecting with the local students as well as the international students, you're really broadening your horizons in a sense of you get to see life from different perspectives and different approaches.

Many of the students indicated that the South African approach, and what they had learned from the South African students, had deeply impacted their own development and outlook. Zianda commented as follows:

I specifically worked in a programme that was working with children in South Africa in a local township, so having that experience and really being able to take that I understand I see that this is another culture

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but actually interacting with it and going deeper and it's seeing the humanness that we all have and share, it was I think that was the biggest thing perhaps.

According to Chantal, a unique element of interacting with local students was that they are willing to take a conversation deeper than just the surface, which is something that she had not experienced in Europe or the USA:

So, I've acknowledged that when you've had a conversation with a South African that it can start out with just a basic conversation as 'How are you?' And it always turns into something deeper and it's got more significant meanings. So, I learned a lot more about just culture and race and just the world in general just because that's where the conversation usually led to. I guess, I feel that's unique and I wouldn't get that in Europe, especially America because we are very politically correct and censored.

Chantal expressed appreciation for the openness with which South Africans expressed their opinions: "South Africans do not beat about the bush." This observation was only possible based on the relationships she built and the cross-cultural bonds she could foster, and she could realise through this that they were not being offensive towards her.

As seen from the above extracts from the interviews, all the elements of intercultural competencies as listed by Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013) were achieved by the students during their summer school at SU. The question then arose whether these were the only elements or if there were other unique elements that were developed. I argue that there were some unique elements that were developed, especially if we consider these elements from a social justice perspective. The perspectives of the students were challenged by the history of South Africa and the lived experiences of the people. The exposure to poverty, social injustices and issues still prevalent in the country drove the students to not only be aware of these issues, but to shift their world view. One of these unique elements, which is relevant in the context of this book, is 'transformative mindsets'.

Transformative mindsets

The fact that students were exposed to real-life scenarios, and not just theory, had a deep, transformative effect on them. This exposure to real-life situations was described by James as follows:

Coming to a clinic like this one over here and seeing the real conditions and the real situations, you said you want to go to different countries and treat different people, does this give you some sort of idea what is going

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on overseas? Here, it's more hands on, it's more ... you can see it if you know what's happening in these countries, while in the US we can just look at videos and pictures. This is a real-life example.

Amy referred to the fact that the exposure to these real-life scenarios developed empathy in her:

I think I learned large amounts of empathy just going through the HIV course and having spoken to people who grew up in apartheid that had HIV whether they were part of the LGBTQI community or they were not and the different experiences they had with that.

Gu (2015) discusses the journey of identity change and transformation of Chinese students during a study abroad experience. Similarly, personal growth and a broadened world view was evident in the participants in my study. Being exposed to the relics of apartheid, or reminders of injustices of the past, helped the students grasp the history of our country. It also helped them to look afresh at their own country and inspired them to go back to their country to make a change (Miller-Perrin & Thompson 2014). Tina said:

My perspective on South Africa changed. I, in all honesty, I didn't know a lot about the history. I think that unlike a lot of my peers, I had heard of apartheid but I didn't know the details and so it was an opportunity to learn [...] and to see the disparity that we don't see in developed countries.

Their summer school experiences sometimes affected the students more deeply than they realised at first. The students witnessed and recognised injustices, but they also questioned their presence in these spaces. Their responses resonate with other studies on students visiting spaces where people live, and acknowledging that this could be intrusive (Prideaux 2015).

It was clear that the students' engagement with children made a particularly lasting impression. This is illustrated by Catherine's reflections in her blog after she had returned home:

Though apartheid has ended, the oppressive laws continue to have a trickle-down effect keeping many blacks in poverty. At first, I was concerned about how we would be received. Do the residents want us there? Do they know what we were doing? We always arrived at the school as the last kids were filing in and we received such a warm welcome from the parents and students. There was no better feeling than getting off the bus and having one of my students yelling, 'Teacher, teacher!' and running over to grab my hand and escort me proudly into their school.

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Experiencing inequality first-hand helped students understand social justice at a deeper level. Students need to have “active participation in a dialogue about all aspects of their educational experience” (Leibowitz & Bozalek 2017:67) so that they can understand what these experiences mean to them. The elements of intercultural competencies that students developed, in this case, could be regarded as transformative mindsets. Rose, Fuller, Gilbert and Palmer (2011) define transformative mindsets as the changes in thinking that appear to have taken place, evaluated against a theoretical framework drawn from transformative theory. They further refer to altered perceptions.

I define transformative mindsets in this context as ‘transforming one’s frame of mind or how one views things’. This differs from the element of adaptation as discussed above. With adaptation, one only shifts temporarily to a different perspective in order to engage with that perspective. I argue that a transformative mindset transforms one’s outlook from that point on. Once one is exposed to real-life scenarios as described above, one cannot un-see them. Students could experience the theory and content included in the modules and consequently developed a deeper understanding of what they had learned. In the South African context, history and injustices are still evident, even though they may be ‘concealed’. Students were faced with the realities of injustice and inequality, and this caused them to question their own worldviews and transform their mindsets and the way they had viewed things before. A transformative mindset does not mean that a person’s core values, or what they believe in, are changed. Rather, it refers to their frame of mind and the way they approach situations.

Jennifer and Miles reflected on their experiences and explained how the first-hand experience of inequality contributed to their understanding of social justice:

A lot of the time I didn’t see the poverty because it’s not right outside but you can see it bleeding in from different things. You can see the poverty that’s going around in some of the areas that we were at and some of the things that were going on and you can say, okay, this is something that’s still going in this world. Okay, this is still here. This is still going on. And we can still see the racial divide of colonisation and apartheid.
(Jennifer)

Although, as Jennifer mentioned, poverty and inequality are still rife in South Africa, Miles made the point that the relationships he had built with locals restored hope for him:

I think ... the thing that stands out for me the most would be especially in taking the South African history class before all this, we really learned a lot about the bad parts of history and a lot of the inequality and everything

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here. And so that can kind of you know, give you a bleak perspective of the world but then I think everywhere I travel and especially, I've noticed here, the relationships you form and the individual people are so kind and caring. So, it gives you faith in the world. So, despite learning about all the hard parts of history, the individual people can better that and give hope.

One of the goals of social justice, according to Fraser (2010), is participatory parity, which she explains as the way peers socially interact with each other in an equitable way. Regarding the equality of opportunity, she refers to social exclusion as an injustice. Leibowitz and Bozalek (2017) argue that recognition of how people are seen in society based on their social markers is important, as it affects the way people engage with each other. When students are directly exposed to these aspects, as seen with Jennifer and Miles above, they are taught this first-hand, as described by Fraser (2010) and Leibowitz and Bozalek (2017). This kind of experience transforms students so that when they return to their home country, they can reflect and see what the injustices are within their own society, and they can then be agents of social change and transformative justice. In her blog, Mandy summarised this perfectly by reflecting that transformation must come from within:

For the transformation to happen, it has to come from within whereas the group of people actually want to cause a change in the community that they're working in. So, as we learned so far, transformation begins with yourself, which is the simple act of wanting to prove something. So, once you have that feeling you can start engaging with the community, engaging with the process and from there transformation can begin. Transformation, it's a feeling. It's an action. It's something you want to do. So, by interacting with your community that's already causing change within yourself which can lead to development and sustainability of other programmes and initiatives.

Having a transformative mindset thus begins with the individual. Students who were exposed to injustices and inequality first-hand had the opportunity to use what they had learned and could make a change in their community upon their return to their home countries. This exposure transformed the way they see things and engage with other people, and this can eventually transform communities.

Figure 15.1 is a visual representation of the intercultural competencies as discussed above. The seven competencies as identified by Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013) are all represented and the figure makes provision for the inclusion of the newly identified competence of transformative mindsets. It is evident from the figure, as well as the discussions above, that the competencies do not exist in isolation; they are all linked to each other. As students develop one element of the

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intercultural competencies, they develop other elements too. These elements cannot stand alone and the development of these competencies are linked.

FIGURE 15.1 South African intercultural competencies
(Source: Adapted from Deardorff 2006 and UNESCO 2013)

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I considered the different dimensions of internationalisation and specifically in the context of SU. While unpacking the elements of intercultural competencies, it was seen that the SUI summer school was effective in achieving all of the competencies as set out by Deardorff (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013), but that they cannot stand alone.

It was found that when the students developed the competencies, this did not take place in isolation, and many of the competencies overlapped with one another. Through developing one element, students often develop a further element. Deardorff's list of elements (Deardorff 2006; UNESCO 2013) is not an exhaustive one. It was clear that in the South African context other elements were developed that are unique to this country. One of these elements is having a transformative

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mindset. The rich history of the country, and the experiences of local people with whom international students come into contact, influence the way these students experience the summer school and their study abroad experience. The findings of the study showed that the (South) African context adds significant value to the summer school experience, particularly by confronting students with issues of social justice such as historical backlogs, poverty, discrimination and inequality. Elements of the South African culture can thus be experienced, and as seen here, this expands the spectrum of intercultural competencies that are developed. This study offered important and appropriate evidence on the unique intercultural competencies that are developed in the South African, and specifically the SU, context.

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