Intercultural Competence Needs of Exchange Students Coming to or Going Abroad from the University of Costa Rica

Master's Thesis
Glenda Guillén Mora
Department of Communication
University of Jyväskylä

September 2012

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty	Laitos – Department
Faculty of Humanities	Department of Communication

Tekijä – Author
GLENDA GUILLEN MORA

Työn nimi – Title
Intercultural Competence Needs of Exchange Students coming to or going abroad from the University of Costa Rica.

Oppiaine – Subject	Työn laji – Level
Intercultural Communication	Master's Thesis

Aika – Month and year	Sivumäärä – Number of pages
September 2012	107 pages + 2 appendices

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Internationalization of higher education is a process in constant development that has occurred over many years. It involves efforts of the entire academic community and the implementation of diverse strategies. Focusing on the academic exchange, the less developed regions face certain particularities that limit them.

The following study portraits this situation from the perspective of intercultural competence, in the context of one Latin American University, the University of Costa Rica (UCR). It explores the intercultural competence needs of exchange students, whose common ground is the UCR. The population considered in the study are regular students of the University of Costa Rica, who participate as exchange students and exchange students who come to the institution.

The study analyses the perceived role of intercultural competence in the exchange process by concentrating on university students' experiences and perceptions. In addition to understanding the phenomenon from the student point-of-view, the study looks at increasing and developing the kind of communication competence necessary for a successful exchange experience. The data consists of 142 answers to an online questionnaire. The results show that open-mindedness, and past experiences are important to adapt and re-adapt faster; results also show that support groups are very important in the adaptation and re-adaptation process. Finally, the results indicate that despite the amount of information people have in hand, more information regarding key issues such as adaptation, migratory procedures, and education is usually considered beneficial.

The study reveals, as a general conclusion, that internationalization processes need interculturally competent people, open-minded and culturally aware individuals. Therefore, it is important to promote the development and improvement of people's intercultural competences, in order to facilitate successful intercultural encounters.

Asiasanat – Keywords
Intercultural Competence, Internationalisation, Exchange Students, Intercultural Training

Säilytyspaikka – Depository
Department of Communication, University of Jyväskylä

Muita tietoja – Additional information

AKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe my deepest gratitude to all of you who helped me, guided me, and support me during the duration of my Master's degree, and in the preparation and completion of this study. This document would not have been possible without you.

First and foremost, I want to thank God for answering my prayers, and giving me the strength to keep on going despite the obstacles. Next, to the E2NHANCE Project of the Erasmus Mundus Program, for giving me the opportunity of obtaining this prestigious degree, and without whose support no part of this adventure would have been possible.

To the University of Costa Rica, and the staff of the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE) for their support and willingness to collaborate with this study. Without your help this study would have significant problems related to data.

I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Ph.D. Marko Siitonen, who has guided me throughout my thesis, and Master's Degree Program. With patience and encouragement, he motivated me to make the best out of difficult situations, and continue working towards the goal.

Last, but not the least, I owe gratitude to my family and friends for standing by my side along the process of my degree, and for always being there for me when I needed them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND GRAPHICS

Figures

Tables

Graphics

1 INTRODUCTION

Internationalization of higher education is a process in constant development that has occurred over many years. It involves efforts of the entire academic community and the implementation of diverse strategies.

The internationalization process is developing around the world. Europe is the region where it is more advanced. For example, there have been implemented some mechanisms such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS credits), and the EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students better known as ERASMUS program, both aiming at enhancing and promoting academic exchanges.

Besides, there are efforts arising in Asia, Africa, Oceania, North America and Latin America. Focusing on the academic exchange, the less developed regions face certain particularities that stop or limit their possibilities of improving and growing, despite the support provided by more privileged countries. The lack of influx of exchange students, even within the same region, is another problem these regions face. This situation becomes relevant, especially considering issues like brain drain.

Getting to know the topic from the perspective of the participants, allows a greater understanding of it. For this reason, the following study portraits the Internationalization of higher education through the perspective of intercultural competence in the context of one Latin American University.

It explores intercultural competence needs of exchange students, whose common ground is the University of Costa Rica (UCR).

The population in study are regular students of the University of Costa Rica, who participate as exchange students and exchange students who come to the institution.

It is analysed the perceived role of intercultural competence in the adaptation process of exchange students. At the same time, it intends to understand the importance of increasing and developing this kind of competence to achieve a successful exchange experience.

To guide the study, four research questions were formulated. The first one (RQ1) considers the primary needs related to communication and information higher-education students have when going abroad for student exchange. The second one (RQ2) studies intercultural communication situations that higher education students encounter during their exchange experience and Question three (RQ3) relates the basic intercultural competencies that higher education students should have (from their perspective) to accomplish a successful exchange experience. By establishing a clear panorama regarding needs, situations, and intercultural competence, it was possible to propose a series of guidelines to help students to improve their intercultural competencies (RQ4).

The study begins analysing the concepts and theories related to intercultural competence. The discussion continues toward the intercultural training topic. Then, the contextualization of the study includes the highlights of the internationalization process of higher education and the internationalization in Latin America, and particularly in the University of Costa Rica (UCR), the oldest higher education institution of this country

On the other hand, the selection of the bibliographical sources was based on the expertise of the authors and their approach to the topic. Some authors are cited many occasions, as is the case of Knight (2006), and Gacel-Ávila (2007, 2004, 2000), in the topics of

Internationalization of Higher Education and Latin American Education, respectively. Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) present a valuable review of the subject, which helps to enrich the analysis. .

Once all the background has been introduced, the methodological approach is presented. It discusses the use of mixed methods as the followed methodology, with particular emphasis on the qualitative answers and the mapping of the experiences and perceptions of the students. Renwick's approach (1999) is introduced as a model to design the framework for the training program, which will be presented as part of the results.

The framework is designed from the information given by the students. The systematization of the information provided by students is part of the study results. This includes data regarding their needs and experiences before, during and after their exchange period.

The study reveals, as a general conclusion, that internationalization processes need interculturally competent people, open-minded and culturally aware individuals. Therefore, it is important to promote the development and improvement of people's intercultural competences, in order to facilitate successful intercultural encounters.

2 UNDERSTANDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

2.1. What is competence?

The concept of competence is widely studied in different academic fields, such as business, education, psychology, and communication. (Hager and Gonczi, 1996; Grant, 1999; Le Deist and Winterton, 2005; Bielby, 2008) It is possible to find many different definitions of it, having a range that goes from the basic ones to more complex and explanatory. Broader definitions try to look at the concept describing most aspects it involves.

It is possible to find a definition of competence in a wide variety of disciplines. There are explanations from business to health sciences, not leaving aside social sciences and humanities. In business, according to Le Deist and Winterton (2005), the term competence had an important role in 1990's management literature, which accentuated the concept "*as a key organisational resource that could be exploited to gain competitive advantage*". (p. 27)

From this statement it is possible to take certain elements that might as well function in other fields. It is worth take into consideration the word "key", which enriches the whole meaning of the concept by presenting the idea of particular means of achieving something.

There are other contributions that also bring value into the concept. One standpoint to consider is the one given by the field of education. It is of special interest because of its linkage to the particular

topic presented on this study. From this perspective the Council of Europe (2009) argues that competence is related to "*'what people can do rather than what they know'*". (p. 2) They also highlight the "key" factor of competence sustaining that "*key competences refer particularly to specific competences that can be used to master a variety of situations and demands*". (Council of Europe, 2009: 3)

As explained by these two fields, it is important to recognize the relevance of certain competencies, acknowledging that some of them are indispensable to attain specific tasks. It becomes clear the necessity to keep this in mind at the moment of attempting to enhance people's competence. It reveals the importance to acknowledge the most prominent competencies that need to be improved when pursuing goals in the long term.

For Bielby (2008) competence is a measure of success. He sustains that "*common to each form of competence is a measure of successful generic or specific human function or capability*". (p. 10) Talking about measuring something gives the opportunity of assessing the importance or value of this something. It brings the idea that what is being measured can have a different amount. It could be considered a sign of the possibility for it to grow, decrease, be enhanced, and so forth.

The concept of competence related to perception has been acknowledged by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009). They argue there is a persisting problem with such an approach. Due to perception, one particular behaviour or skill can be seen as competent in one context, but not in other. It could also be perceived as competent by a particular person, but not by others. This refers to the fact that "*no particular skill or ability is likely to ever be universally "competent*". (Spitzberg and Changnon, 2009: 6)

The perception factor plays a prominent role when discussing competence. It all falls on the eyes of who is looking. Perception changes with people, places, cultures, situations and

subjects. It is of great relevance to be aware no one can be qualified as 100% competent by everyone all the time.

When evaluating competence through perception, it is likely the competence being evaluated would have a wide range of results. The reason for this stems from the fact that someone's perception on something is linked to the context. *Ergo*, different people may or may not have the same perception of the competence under scrutiny.

It is possible to find many different definitions of the concept, and many kinds of competence depending on the field: legal competence, linguistic competence, communication competence, pragmatic competence, cultural competence, intercultural competence, and so forth. All of them bring something particular into the concept, but, at the same time, have in common the idea of considering its main characteristic as "being able to do something".

Due to the topic of this particular study, the focus from now on is going to be mainly on communication, and intercultural competence. In spite of that, all the enriching contributions of other fields would not be left behind. All of them help to give a deeper meaning, and to have a better comprehension of the concept.

Taking into account the main line of the study, and due to the outcome that is sought, it is valuable to propose a construct of what would be understood henceforth. The suggested definition for this study sees competence as the sum of someone's key qualifications regarding knowledge, performance effectiveness, success, and capabilities. Having these qualifications the characteristic or possibility to be measured objectively and subjectively by the perception of others and the perception of the self.

2.2 Communication Competence

Communication is universal. Gestures, signs, movements, sounds, and even silence communicate something. Due to this peculiarity, communication is a subject discussed not just by experts in the field, but also by people from other disciplines.

Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) highlight an interesting question about whether human related concepts could ever be thought as universal or simply contextual. Deem this theme, and as portrayed in the above section, context is of great importance, especially when considering the perception component that accompanies human topics.

For Spitzberg (1983) communication competence is contextual. He explains people can be competent in certain situations but incompetent in different ones. He goes further by stating, "*competence is an impression resulting from the behaviours of the relational interactants, the context within which they are enacted, and the characteristics of the individuals involved*". (p. 326) With this definition, the author points out the element of perception. It is suggested competence is not individual; it also depends on the interactants' opinion about the development of the encounter.

An interactant's own perception on his/her performance is as important as others perception's. Motivation encourages people to give the best out of them in order for the other to understand the real meaning of what is intend to be communicated. At the same time, it helps to create in the other a good image of his/her performance.

Lustig and Koester (2010) maintain communication competence "*is a social judgment about how well a person interacts with others*". (p. 65) They continue pointing out that competent communication "*results in behaviours that are regarded as appropriate*". (Lustig and Koester, 2010: 66) This means individuals made suitable utilisation of certain symbols, which are expect to be used in a given context, being perceived as competent achieving the outcomes pursued with the communication. (Lustig and Koester, 2010) The

communication process could be qualified as appropriate and effective if going well. On the contrary it could be described as inappropriate and/or ineffective if the outcomes are not what were expected to be.

Lustig and Koester (2010) believe such "*judgment depends on the context, the relationship between the interactants; the goals or objectives that the interactants want to achieve, and the specific verbal and nonverbal messages that are used to accomplish those goals*". (p. 66) The statement includes not just the interactants but also the relationship they have.

Wiseman's (2003) maintains people who are competent have certain characteristics allowing them to behave appropriately. It is possible for these individuals to distinguish their goals and the resources needed to obtain those goals. Competent communicators are able to "*accurately predict the other communicator's responses, choose workable communication strategies, and finally, accurately assess the results of the interaction*". (Wiseman's, 2003: 193)

Wiseman's proposal highlights a fact of great importance: awareness. Awareness helps having better communication processes, and being perceived as competent communicators.

For Kim (2001) communication competence is composed by "*the cognitive, affective, and operational (or behavioural) capabilities by which individuals organise themselves in and with their sociocultural milieu*". (p. 48) The author's perspective involves a wider view on what communication really means, taking as base the perspective that everything people do or do not do communicates.

The author's viewpoint reinforces that everything communicates, and exposes the idea that during daily life activities and interactions people become more competent. Communication competence is enhanced by experiences, by getting in contact with others and learning from mistakes. It requires patience, awareness, perseverance, and overall willingness to become competent.

The author's unique angle on the concept helps in the process of comprehending, and adapting it beyond theory. With her

approach it is easy to imagine oneself in one's milieu attempting to be, and become more competent in different stages of one's life.

Regarding all those elements necessary to become competent, Ruben and Stewart (2006) maintain these elements are self-awareness, empathy, and respect for other's opinions, knowledge, perspective, listening, observing, and interpreting. It is quite a long list, but becoming competent is not an easy job. It requires commitment, motivation, and persistence.

An important fact to highlight is that "*there is not necessarily only one way to be competent*". (Lustig and Koester, 2010: 66) Therefore, it is important to learn all the suitable manners in which it is possible to behave competently. This will help not just to have a better opportunity of doing things appropriately, but also to be able to choose the one that fits better into our personality, and that at the same time is well perceived by others. Taking into account context, topic, goals, the interactants, and factors such as awareness and empathy. Willing to be perceived as effective and appropriate communicators. Aiming to be seen as competent communicators.

2.3 Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence could be seen related to the degree a person communicates effectively and appropriately with people from dissimilar cultural backgrounds. (Lustig and Koester, 2010; Chen and Starosta, 2005) Through this definition it is possible to perceive how intercultural competence is not a question of changing borders.

Being culturally different with someone else does not mean coming from different countries. It means having diverse cultural backgrounds, dissimilar cultural identities. Those define not just who people are, but also how they perceive the world.

Intercultural communication involves all the challenges presented during the communication process. In addition it also has elements such as worldviews and language barriers.

Knowledge, affect, skills, and experience play a significant role. (Penington and Wildermuth, 2005) Because of the human capability to learn, people are always in the process of becoming more interculturally competent. Practicing through encounters with people from other cultures could accelerate the process. (Campinha-Bacote, 2002)

Learning suitable manners to behave during intercultural encounters will help to be perceived as competent. With practice knowledge increases, helping in the process of discerning the most appropriate conducts during communicational endeavours.

Penington and Wildermuth (2005) based on Lambert (1993) claim that "*someone who is interculturally competent has knowledge of how their own culture and the host culture differ and finds value in both*". (p. 167) The authors continue with the idea that motivation is necessary to communicate appropriately, and communication skills are also a must. Their definition involves elements such as self and others awareness, motivation, empathy, and a learning factor. One of the key factors here is that interculturally competent people are able not just to see differences, but also to appreciate them. Turning those dissimilarities into assets enhancing their perception of the world; enabling communication with other cultures.

Byram (2000) presents the idea people are aware there is no absolute truth. He recognises someone interculturally competent "*has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures - someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined*". (Intercultural Competence section, paragraph. 3)

Competent people rationalise their intercultural encounters, having critical comprehension of what the interaction involves. They

acknowledged the fact that society shapes people's perception, and no one point of view might be consider as the absolute truth. Awareness, open-mindedness, and flexibility are key factors in becoming interculturally competent.

Hammer, Bennet and Wiseman (2003) discuss the idea that to be competent in another culture, it is necessary for the individual to have interest in other cultures. The authors also mention as important for individuals to be aware of differences, and be willing to perform certain changes in their behaviour as a sign of respect for the other culture. This statement reflects the importance of flexibility during intercultural interactions. (Meyer, 1991)

Another perspective sees intercultural competence as "*the ability to exercise intercultural sensitivity, as well as efficiently interpret and form discourse in a foreign language in academic/ professional contexts of intercultural communication*". (Ceseviciūtė and Minkutė-Henrickson, 2002: 51) This definition introduces the topic of second languages as a tool to achieve the desired outcomes promoting the interaction. It presents certain aspects exchange students require during their period abroad.

Wiseman (2003) points out there is a positive association between intercultural competence and "*awareness of the other culture, self-awareness, and […] language fluency*". (p. 202) The author assures that to be motivated to embark on intercultural interactions it is necessary for the person to have certain assets. These include "*intercultural sensitivity, positive affect towards the other culture, social relaxation, and empathy towards others*". (Wiseman, 2003: 202)

Motivation is a required aspect to engage in competent intercultural encounters. It facilitates one's development in the particular situation one might find oneself in. Motivation is the propeller encouraging individuals to start, engage, and achieve appropriately and effectively perceived intercultural interactions. "*Individuals who perceive themselves as competent communicators are also*

more willing to communicate". (Mansson and Myers, 2009: 11) Therefore, they have the motivation not just to pursue intercultural interactions, but as well to look forward to improve.

Individuals must have as part of their competence "*the ability to recognise how power is being exercised within a cultural context, and […] be able to exercise power in ways that are appropriate to other culture[s]*". (Bennett, 1998: 29) The prior statement gains relevance when considering that power relations take place in every interaction. Ones in more formal and explicit manners than others. Despite the preparation one might have on how other cultures handle power relationships, it is necessary to be open minded and to be prepare for the unexpected.

Concerning the components of intercultural competence, Martin and Nakayama (2010) assure the building blocks of the concept must consider as well the context in which the interaction takes place. The authors declare that contextualisation is a necessary labour. Even though "*intercultural communication competence may rely on individual competence*", (Martin and Nakayama, 2010: 465) context plays a central role on how that competence is going to be perceived. It shapes the guidelines interactants must follow to obtain the desired outcomes.

Besides context, according to Martin and Nakayama (2010) four primary components of intercultural competence are motivation, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills. Attitudes involve "*tolerance for ambiguity, empathy, and nonjudgmentalism*". (p. 469) Behaviours and skills include respect for others. (Martin and Nakayama, 2010)

When reflecting on the component of respect, it is necessary to consider as well the element of power. Both components are interdependent, having respect for the other is the initial point in a cordial relationship. When considering power relationships, respect is the path to follow as how to treat the other, behaving respectfully and accordingly to one's power position. Along with respect, awareness is fundamental in order for people to act as expected, not being

disrespectful by threatening the other's power position through behaviour, words or others.

In intercultural issues, a good balance among all the components of competence is essential to reach successful, effective, and appropriate encounters. The balance of the elements must be thought regarding the context in which the interaction is being held; the participants of the interaction, and the expected outcomes. Having in mind not only the desired outcomes, but also different case scenarios might help the individual to be prepare for most results, having a short reaction time that allows a fluid and natural development of the interaction.

"B*ecause cultural differences create dissimilar meanings and expectations*" (Lustig and Koester, 2010: 65) it is required a greater level of communication skills to be perceived as competent. Preparation, practice, and awareness are key to make the best out of every intercultural encounter individuals embarked in.

Taking into consideration the conceptualisations presented in the current section, and the ones made in the prior sections, it is now possible to produce a construct of intercultural competence. It does not pretend to be neither exhaustive nor irrefutable. It would help to unify the viewpoints exposed, taking those elements that are foremost crucial for this study, and bringing them together. Intercultural competence could be understood from now on as the sum of someone's motivation, and key qualifications regarding knowledge on one's own and other's culture; along with intercultural sensitivity to find value in both cultures, and self and others' awareness to be conscious that there is no one unique way of doing things.

Someone interculturally competent achieves performance effectiveness and success by the use of capabilities such as open-mindedness, non-judgmentalness, self-monitoring, problem solving, empathy, and flexibility to accommodate to the context in which the interaction is taking place. All of which is susceptible to be measured

objectively and subjectively by the perception of others, and the perception of the self.

The formulated construct is specifically created for this study, taking as basis all the literature exposed throughout the chapter. It is going to be understood as intercultural competence when mentioning the concept down the next chapters, unless specified otherwise. It is also important to clarify that throughout this study, and for practical reasons, intercultural competence and intercultural communication competence are going to be understood as having the same meaning.

3 TRAINING

3.1 Learning, Training, Coaching & Education

When talking about training, it is necessary to start by talking about learning. Bray (2006) defines learning as "*a process that enables someone to acquire new attitudes, skills or knowledge [. . .] so they can do something they couldn't do before, or do it more effectively*". (p.3) This concept is linked to training due to the fact that training is a process designed to enable people to learn. (Bray, 2006)

Recognizing the difference between training and education is important. Training refers to the act of teaching someone a particular skill or behaviour, while education refers to a more systematic, and holistic instruction. Education takes longer periods of time and involves wider topics. It allows the individual to have a full comprehension of the topic. Training is more based on information and the fulfilment of outcomes than on the process.

But the above-mentioned characteristics in reality are not as clear, and both blend more than it is visible when talking about the terms in their pure forms. (Clements and Jones, 2008) Nowadays training is seen as "*a necessary and significant part of a broader process of education*". (Fleming, 2009: 4) Education that will start in the classroom and will continue at work, and throughout people's life.

Another term that tends to blend with training is *coaching*. It is seen as a long-term adaptive and "*more personal process that has a deeper psychological impact on the coachee*". (Tomalin, 2009: 117) Despite of

that, training might involve coaching as well. Training is now bringing together certain qualities of other close practices, as education, and coaching.

The milestone of training is how the learning activities are designed. The key is achieving trainees to acquire knowledge and skill, instead of passively receive/listen. (Silverman, 2006) Considering the above, it is necessary to guide trainees to experience their learning process. This is achieved when trainees present "*information in their own words, give examples of it, see connections between it and other facts or ideas, and apply it to case situations with their peers*". (Silverman, 2006: 4)

A more holistic and integral learning would be allowed by choosing well the activities, doing a debriefing, a conclusion and implementing the knowledge. (Silverman, 2006) The last stage consists on letting trainees planning the application, and implementation of the new knowledge. (Tomalin, 2009) For people to gain knowledge, it is recommended they hear the information, "*see it, question it, discuss it with their peers, and do it*". (Silverman, 2006: 2)

It is important to consider people have different ways to learn. One approach considering all the possible learning styles is Kolb's Learning Preference Cycle (Figure 3.1). It addresses four learning styles: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract concentration, and active experimentation. Selecting training methods, and techniques, and keeping this model in mind can ensure each learning preference is addressed. (Fowler and Blohm, 2004)
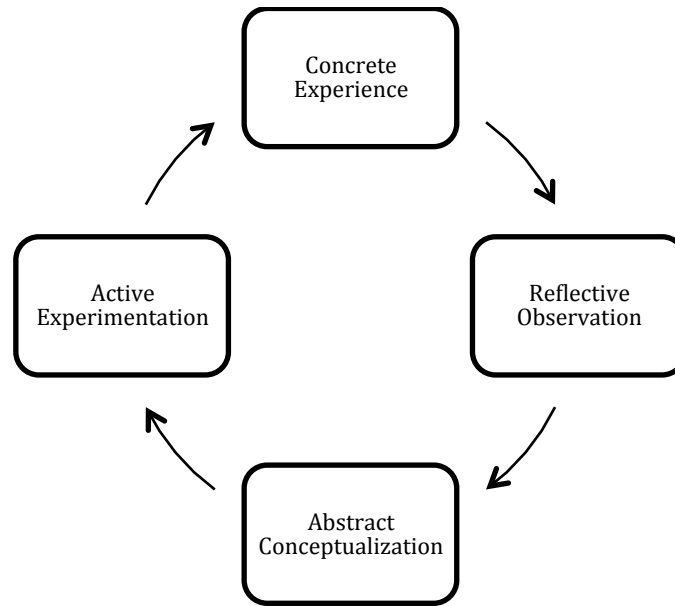
Figure 3.1 Kolb's Learning Preference Cycle (Fowler and Blohm, 2004: 43)

The facilitator has a great influence on how the process develops. Depending on the facilitator the choices on the design process will change the final form of the program. Aspects that might differ are: methods, time needed, complexity, and the expected outcomes, to name a few. (Clements and Jones, 2008)

As important is the selected method as the trainer that is going to put it into practice. (Fowler and Blohm, 2004) It is necessary not just to have the knowledge, but as well knowing how to apply it. Therefore, the trainer need to be not just well prepared on the subject, but also to be capable of building rapport with his or her target group.

In general it can be stated training is an activity looking forward to help people acquiring knowledge by the use of different techniques and methods. It requires the disposition of the trainer and the willingness of the trainees to participate. Training is not fix or static. It varies according to the desired outcomes, the trainer, trainees, and the basic format of the program.

3.2 Intercultural Training

There are many positions on the subject of intercultural training. The discussion mainly goes around if whether individuals can learn how to be more interculturally competent or not. On this particular study the position on the subject is that it is possible to learn how to be more competent, but it depends mainly on people's motivation and willingness to do it.

According to Pusch (2004) "*the development of cross-cultural training, which more accurately came to be called intercultural training, began when it was necessary to prepare people to live in unfamiliar cultures for specific purposes*". (p. 29) Pusch's approach presents one important fact: intercultural training is a necessity.

During its starting years "*the purpose of intercultural training was almost exclusively to train people to live and work overseas*". (Fowler and Mumford, 1995: xi) Despite of that, nowadays the curricula also include multicultural encounters in the home country, face to face and virtually. Such is the case due to the increasing "at home" experiences like multicultural teamwork, and tourism.

But, what exactly is intercultural training? Levy (1995) defines it as a "*series of events or activities designed to develop cultural self-awareness, culturally appropriate behavioural responses or skills, and a positive orientation toward other cultures*". (p. 1) According to the author the learning process on intercultural training has three stages: pre-training period, in-training period, and post-training period. (Levy, 1995) The last stage takes place throughout the intercultural experience, being this overseas or at home. Even after it has finished the learning process continues, when analysing the experience or engaging in new ones.

Penington and Wildermuth (2005) support such statement. They assure through contact with people from other cultures the individual challenges its perceptions on that particular culture, gaining competence. Intercultural training requires not just interaction with

members from another culture, but also a degree of analysis of the experience that can be later on extrapolated to upcoming encounters. (Penington and Wildermuth, 2005)

In order to consider intercultural training effective there are some key points to reflect on. Intercultural training is an interactive and coaching process, in which "*learners are given the opportunity to acquire culturally-relevant knowledge, increase self-awareness and other-awareness, manage emotional challenges, and/or practice competent intercultural communication skill-sets*". (Ting-Toomy, 2007: 255)

The author's position presents a rather significant issue: motivation is the key to learn. The trainer gives the opportunity, and the tools to the trainee, but it is up to him or her to embrace it, and learn or not. Therefore, it is essential the topics treated during the training are noteworthy in order for the participants to have the motivation to learn.

Despite of the particularities each individual program might have, there is a basic common ground: encouraging people's awareness during intercultural interactions. This particular kind of training looks forward to renovate people's mindsets; teaching them behaviours that will lead them to be more competent in intercultural interactions.

3.3 Methods Of Intercultural Training

There are many ideas and writings about the most suitable ways to train people on the topic of interculturality. Having previous techniques and methods as a base to work with is necessary, but it is always advisable to adapt them according to the public, and their necessities of training.

This section focuses on the most popular methods. Its hallmarks are introduced and some particularities that might be of interest for the study. Understanding method as "*a procedure or process for achieving and end*". (Fowler and Blohm, 2004: 38)

There are different approaches on how to classify training models. One way to see the different models of training is to divide them into interactional or experiential, and cognitive or didactic. This division allows in first place a general understanding about the main stream that will lead the methods.

Experiential or interactional methods generally refer to methods based on experiences, trying to fulfil its goals based on vivid events that enable the target to feel them closer. This facilitates the process of assimilation, and helps the trainee to make the most out of the activities, by applying all the knowledge into new intercultural encounters.

Didactic or cognitive methods have as main goal to instruct for example with a lecture. It is a kind of method more similar to the ones used in school, less participative and more traditional. But "*effective training incorporates a blend of both*". (Fowler and Blohm, 2004: 39) Adapting the methods to the preference of the target group, which at the same time are the most appropriate to fulfil the expected outcomes of the training.

To master "*a variety of methods is essential because no single method will work all of the time with every client for all desired outcomes*". (Fowler and Blohm, 2004: 37) Knowing the basic guidelines leading the different methods of training can be of great importance. Not just to make a proper use of them, but also to empower trainers to do their own adaptations. Mixing methods according to their experience, the participants, and the expected outcomes.

Many methods have needed to evolve and adapt to the digital era in order to survive. This is why it is possible to find them digital and computer-based. New trends are heading towards coaching, consulting, or advising. (Fowler and Blohm, 2004) Facilitating, guiding, and putting the learner in charge might be key to success, and nowadays many training methods offer opportunities to do it. (Fowler and Blohm, 2004)

Fowler and Blohm (2004) give a series of methods, and evaluation activities that might help for certain training outcomes. Those might serve as a guide for trainers when planning particular programs. When looking forward to develop certain skills it is recommended to use as methods role-playing, games, coaching, case studies, and simulations. (Fowler and Blohm, 2004) If the desired outcome is related to attitudes, Fowler and Blohm (2004) suggest the use of discussion, case studies, critical incidents, debates, self-analysis, and field trips to name a few.

There are certain factors affecting the selection of the training method. It is necessary to consider all factors to finally select the one that suits best the group and the desired outcomes, as indicated in Figure 3.2.
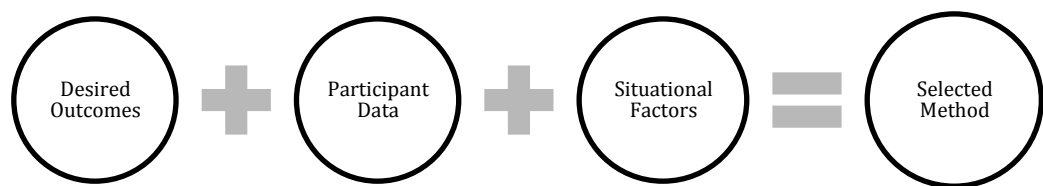
Figure 3.2 Factors affecting the method selection (Fowler and Blohm, 2004: 48)

Any training design has at least three major components: and objective, a method, and a format. The decisions made regarding "what is to be accomplished (objective), how it is to be accomplished (method), and in what setting it is to be accomplished (format) will determine the design". (Silberman, 2006: 155)

"*Certain techniques may be more effective than others for particular aspects of learning, at particular stages of learning, and with particular students*". (Fantini, 1993: 50) Therefore, it is necessary to have a reliable framework helping the trainer to make the best choice for each training program. (Fantini, 1993)

At this point different training methods will be introduced. They will be accompanied by a brief description of the basics of each one and its possible applications. This is intended to allow the reader to have a general idea of what each method is, and how it might be used. The main methods that will be introduced are: role-play, contrast-culture, simulation games, critical incidents, culture assimilator, case studies, self-awareness inventories, and small groups exercises. Along with these, other methods such as field studies and culture heroes will be presented.

The first main method is *Role-Play*. It is an activity in which two or more participants take on characteristics of people other than themselves. It can be used to build skills, create attitudinal change or even empathy. (McCaffery, 1995) Even though there are many steps involved in the role-play method, the more important ones to remember are: present the rational of the activity and how it and the main purpose of the training program are related. (McCaffery, 1995)

The *Contrast-Culture* method accepts cultural differences and uses them to train individuals to interact effectively with people from other cultures. The opening part of the method should be dedicated to introduce the topic, by making people aware that culture can have an unconscious influence on people's behaviours in practical issues on daily basis. (Stewart, 1995)

The method requires the use of three "eyes" or perspectives. The first "eye" focuses on the culture of the trainees or reference culture. Through this the trainee can gain an objective view of how his or her own culture contributes to, or inhibits performance in other cultures. (Stewart, 1995)

The second "eye" looks forward to help the trainees to become capable of recognizing their own, and other cultures without prejudice. (Stewart, 1995) The third "eye" refers to the debriefing and interviewing part. (Stewart, 1995) It is important to consider the use of different representations of the reference culture. This will help

avoiding polarisation of the cultures or reinforce of stereotypes. (Stewart, 1995)

Simulation Games is a method that looks forward to challenge assumptions, expand perspectives, and facilitate change by turning the present into the possible future. It refers to a combination of simulation, and games. This activity provides opportunities to practice new behaviours, and try out new attitudes and viewpoints. (Sisk, 1995)

Other important method is the *Critical Incident*. It is a method consisting in a brief description of any situation in which there was a misunderstanding, or issue due to cultural differences between the parts. Each incident gives enough information to set the stage, describes what took place, and if possible provides feelings, and reactions of the participants. (Wight, 1995) The purpose of this method is to challenge trainees with examples of how difficult, confusing, frustrating or conflictive, situations could be. Some of the main objectives are to increase participants' awareness, analyse diverse perceptions and interpretations, and clarify cultural differences. (Wight, 1995)

The *Culture Assimilator* method looks forward to sensitise people from one culture to believes, rules, viewpoints… and values of people from another culture. It exposes trainees to situations by simulating characteristics of circumstances that might appear while in contact with another culture. (Albert, 1995: 157-158) The goal is to train the person to see the situation from the perspective of people from the other culture. (Brislin, 1995)

Case Study is a method widely used. It contains several incidents related to each other, several characters and details about the context of the situation. (Lacy and Trowbridge, 1995) This method is designed for developing means of approaching demanding situations. (Lacy and Trowbridge, 1995)

Self-Awareness Inventories are a method that is used to encourage reflection on how past events lead people, and what actions might be the result of those experiences. (Brown and Knight, 1999)

There are no right or wrong answers. The participants' interpretation of the questions can vary at different times in their lives, if their self-concept or skills have changed. (Brown and Knight, 1999)

One more main method used for intercultural training is *Small Groups* exercises. It is a method in which the group engages in an interactive, and structure way to do certain activities. It enables the group to make decisions, analyse situations, clarify issues, build commitment… or prioritise their immediate concerns. (Fowler and Mumford, 1999) This method could be suitable for students when preparing for an exchange experience and need support groups to share their thoughts about what they are going through.

Other Methods that do not easily fit into the prior categories are: Field Studies, Visual Imaginary, Cross-cultural Dialogs, Cross-cultural Analysis, Deep Cultural Self-awareness, and Culture Heroes. The Field Studies method allows participants to learn from experience in a controlled situation: the participants can ask questions, categorise their experience and gain clarifications. (Gottlieb Berney, 1999) Visual Imagery is a method that helps to expand consciousness and identify the inner strengths of the individual. It allows people to imagine what they might encounter, and plan how they can meet the challenges of adapting to a new environment or even return to a familiar one. (Silberstein and Sisk, 1999)

The Cross-cultural Dialogs method looks forward to improve effectiveness in intercultural relations, without actually interacting with the target culture. (Storti, 1999) Cross-cultural Analysis is a method combining interaction with self-instruction, to explore culture, using informants from a target culture. (Wight, 1999) It could be applied when receiving people, letting them clarify their doubts while interacting with people from the host culture.

The Culture Heroes method explores values heroes in different cultures exemplify and their continuing impact on individuals and culture groups. It requires looking deeper into the culture to

discover what is generally believed to constitute heroic behaviour, how people within the culture identify with the values that are demonstrated, and how they use the hero as a reference for appropriate behaviour in their lives. (Stewart and Ohtake, 1999)

At the end, with a better panorama of the intercultural training field, it is possible to envision its applications. Intercultural training goes beyond training people to go abroad; despite it is still its major focus. It can be useful to train people to interact properly with people from different backgrounds, and cultures.

It has the tools, and flexibility to adapt to the needs of the participants, and to the strengths of the facilitator. When used with exchange students, it can be of great help, because it could be as dynamic as the group is. It may also include students' experiences, and expectations regarding the new culture. It might even include a section targeted to students in the host country, related to becoming culturally competent at home. All in all, intercultural training is a good way to approach the issue of enhancing intercultural competence.

4 INTERNATIONALISATION

4.1 Internationalisation: An Overview

The terms globalisation and internationalisation are tightly linked. One emerges as a proactive response to the other. They coexist and move forward together. They create and promote changes, and evolve along with those changes.

Higher Education Institutions (HEI) accommodate to provide the kind of graduates that would be required in the new globalised era. On this context, students are expected to develop their multiculturalism in cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical aspects of their life, becoming citizens and workers of the world. (Maringe, 2010)

Universities approach the issue of internationalisation in different ways, emphasising diverse aspects of the process. Some institutions pay more attention to student recruitment, and development of offshore teaching programs. Other universities focused their efforts on student and staff mobility, as well as in research. (Maringe, 2010)

The chosen strategies might be related to the experience of the universities, to the path they have followed, or even to government regulations. Older and state related institutions have certain regulatory frameworks more linked to the official position, despite the autonomy universities always seek. Many factors (internal and external) might influence the final decision.

Some responses universities have had include marketing strategies to attract international students, creating overseas campuses, and establishing student mobility partnerships. (Foskett, 2010) Such approaches respond at the end to major internationalisation strategies, driven by external forces and the own concept of what globalisation and internationalisation are.

The challenge is to respond to global circumstances and events starting on an institutional scale. Other challenging issue is to be able to involve the academic staff, which in most cases has still conservative thoughts. Such is the situation because despite the internationalisation factor universities have always had, its rise and more committed strategies are recent. (Foskett, 2010)

Therefore it is important to promote and motivate the academic community to make the change. Targeting the topic from a perspective of becoming an international and intercultural academic community.

4.2 Higher Education Institutions And Internationalisation

Internationalisation is a process. It tries to make some changes in the core of the university, to project the institution and its work in a global level. This is achieved by developing academic staff's capabilities to compete in a global market. It is also reach by trying to do research that can contribute to solve global problems; and by promoting international and intercultural values among their staff and student population. (Foskett, 2010)

Knowledge and research findings have had the ability to move between institutions and countries, especially due to academic mobility. (Taylor, 2010) The academic world of tertiary education is in many cases the driving engine into new ideas, and modernity.

Acknowledging universities are a moving force is accepting they are not just education centres, but formation institutions. Its labour is not just about the transference of knowledge, but also is about forging personalities, ideals, and preparing the students to lead the country into the glance of a better future. Universities respond to society's necessities promoting freethinking, and encouraging students to become the best professionals they can be.

The power that withholds the knowledge universities have, bind them to ethics and to be responsible with society. The new ideas and information must be generated with social conscience, promoting equality and the common weal. Having always in mind, the three primary goals universities have: teaching, research, and service. (Knight, 2006: 18)

Nowadays universities help not just to generate new knowledge, but also play a role in the economy of their countries. (Maringe and Foskett, 2010) With the rise of the global market, information technology, and globalisation as a whole; HEIs have taken a more proactive approach. International affairs offices (IAO) are playing now more than ever a relevant role in the promotion of the image of universities, strengthening relations with other universities, and building a more qualified and intercultural experienced staff.

This sets the basis for a more prepared staff, more culture aware students, and to become an international institution. To be prepared for the new circumstances it is necessary to act now, and try to envision the future. A universal institution that grants access to knowledge universally, transcending borders and cultures.

Nowadays internationalisation is seen more as a necessity than a pioneering deed. It involves a series of strategic actions in response to globalisation. (Maringe and Foskett, 2010) It requires the participation of the entire academic population of the institution. And it works as a propeller not just for the institution, but also for the image, ideas, and scientific research of the country.

Universities might have a different idea of what internationalisation means, and what is the best way of doing it. Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish two main strategies: internationalisation at home, and internationalisation abroad. These strategies involve home-based activities or abroad-based activities, respectively.

Regardless of the fact that both strategies have a different approach to the problem, they are not exclusive. They can, and should be complemented with each other, covering a broader spectrum of possibilities.

The main difference between these two broad approaches is the location of the key focus activities. The home-based activities refer to changes in the university's home country. The changes could involve internationalisation of the curricula, strengthened foreign-language instruction, employing international staff, adapting to different cultural necessities, sponsorship of foreign students to study on campus, and benchmarking nationally and internationally. (Foskett, 2010; Altbach and Knight, 2007)

On the other hand, internationalisation abroad involves overseas activities. It is generally centred on marketing actions targeted to recruit students willing to join the home university. The strategy might include as well student and staff mobility, overseas projects, joint teaching programs, overseas branch campuses, and research partnerships with overseas universities. (Foskett, 2010)

These two main strategies have several approaches. Those approaches can be categorised into five different sets of activities. These might centre on international student recruitment; student and staff mobility programs; collaborative teaching programs; collaborative research and enterprise programs; and curriculum reform programs. (Maringe and Foskett, 2010)

Internationalisation might mean for some states a *"brain drain"*. Some students or even academics that go abroad might not want to come back home, when facing more opportunities overseas than in

their home country. This fact concerns governments, and some have even started to consider strategies to prevent it. According to Foskett and Maringe (2010) these might include developing branch campuses or multi-institutional campuses from international providers.

When choosing the activities, universities might be choosing as well the image they will be projecting to the world. To be associated with certain activities can build up a reputation for the institution, certain kind of students, academics, or even investors from around the globe could be particularly interested on what the university projects.

When talking about internationalisation, international student recruitment is a key factor. This activity is one of the most competitive when talking about the topic. (Taylor, 2010) On this subject "word of mouth" gains relevance. People give high value to what others have to say about their experiences abroad. This is one of the first information sources people go to.

Despite the internationalisation process is an effort of all the members of the institution some actors are considered keystones. In first place the head of the HEI, followed by the International Affairs Office, and then other actors as faculty members and professors influence the institution more than the rest. (Marmolejo, 2010) It is important to have the participation of all members, but it needs a good leading from key actors.

It is necessary thus, to develop culture awareness in the university population along with genuine concern for the student and academics welfare. Exchange and visiting students, and professors greatly appreciate any support services the host institution might have. Those range from tutors and induction programs to language support and cultural counselling. (Taylor, 2010)

The way in which globalisation is understood most probably will affect the internalisation approach. The concept of globalisation is complex and involves a great variety of factors. Depending on the

relevance each factor is given, the concept will be understood, and the internationalisation process will be driven.

4.3 Internationalisation And International Students

One way to observe the growth of international education is the increasing number of international students. According to Scott (2011), this is a fact; despite there is no just one way to measure it. In some cases it refers to nationality, but in others it refers to the fee status in the institution. (Scott, 2011) Therefore, not all people that study in a country different than their own are considered international students.

There are diverse forms of mobility students could choose to go abroad. Full program encompasses students traveling to get a degree. It is a less complicated mobility because it just requires the relationship between the student and the university. Short-term mobility or credit mobility requires more involvement of the institutions. (Woodfield, 2010) There must be a partnership between the institutions, establishing diverse aspects such as the courses that will be recognised, the amount of credits, and the requisites students must fulfil.

The relationship between institutions might take an important role regarding the choice students make about the institution they want to attend. Despite of that, in many cases students make their choices based on the country to which they want to go, rather than the institution or programme itself. (Woodfield, 2010) At the end, many factors might interfere, as the education system of the country, the type of mobility available, language, tuition fees, and so forth.

Once overcome all those factors and despite the growing amount of mobility a university might have, it alone does not mean the institution has become more international or global. Internationalisation requires more than just one aspect; it requires a holistic change that

involves several strategies, and the support and change of the entire population of the institution.

Internationalisation is not an effort of one university, or one country; it is more a synergy between institutions, countries, and the harmonisation of higher education. Many efforts have been done, but so far the one that has taken the lead, and has been used as reference by others is the Bologna Process.

It is a European agreement that encompasses 47 countries, reaching nations beyond the European Union. It takes into consideration framework conditions, curricula issues, and the products and processes involving higher education. (Enders and Westerheijden, 2011)

Among the main reasons that lead the creation of the Agreement, it is possible to find issues introduced to European higher education by mobility programs. Those include comparability and recognition. The Agreement includes for example the creation of the ECTS, or European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. (Enders and Westerheijden, 2011) ECTS facilitate student mobility, assuring the transferability of credits from country to country, and programme to programme. Programs such as ERASMUS (EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) have benefited from the Bologna Process. (Altbach and Knight, 2007)

Students' needs go beyond agreements and negotiations. It is necessary for the HEIs to understand better the student, in order to satisfy their necessities, and provide them a good academic experience. Student satisfaction helps to retain, and attract new students. It helps to enhance positive word of mouth comments, which at the end help in the improvement of the institution's corporate image. (Arambewela, 2010)

4.4 Organisations Supporting Internationalisation

The concern about quality assurance, harmonisation, and the removal of barriers is not just a one country or one region thing. At regional level there are efforts like ASEAN's (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) removal of barriers or the Bologna Process in Europe. There are also actions held globally by organisations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (Woodfield, 2010)

The involvement of all these organisations helps to accelerate the internationalisation process. They act as motivators and propellers of the internationalisation process, not just by making statements about the subject, but also by proposing actions and strategies. (Maringe and Foskett, 2010)

One of these great actors is the United Nations. It is involved in education related issues through UNESCO. This specialised agency was the first major international figure to bring into the table education as an area of international interest. Even though its labour initiated focused on primary and basic education, soon it also started having initiatives on higher education. (Bassett, 2010)

This organisation established the Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications, which is a framework that looks for the promotion of cross-border recognition. Member States from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States, Europe, and Latin America have already ratified the document. (Bassett, 2010)

The Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) is a second great actor. Despite OECD is more focused on a commercial and economic side, it has as well been involved more and more in education related issues. Such is the case that they have created strategic objectives concerning the topic, and a Directorate for Education. The Directorate for Education presents

annually statistics and indicators helping to make international comparisons on education systems. (OECD, 2012-2013)

Bridging the two prior organisations is the World Bank. Its work focuses on providing "*low-cost loans to nations working to improve their economic conditions*". (Bassett, 2010: 285) Concerning higher education, it looks forward to create a balance by committing to it as it has committed to other education issues. According to Bassett (2010) it supports research on higher education, produces publications, conferences, and seeks to spread its research findings.

By doing such, the WB ensures access to information for all its members despite their economic situation. The supplied information gives countries the opportunity to act having a clear panorama of tendencies and current actions in other regions. Through this, countries that are not as advanced in the internationalisation process have the chance to project, and plan their actions targeted to reach those more advanced nations.

Another relevant actor in the race towards internationalisation is the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Given the current global situation, it has approach the topic of internationalisation of higher education from the trade point of view. Such is the case that education has been included in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Great part of international students is self-funded making it "*the largest source of funds for international education*". (Altbach and Knight, 2007: 294) This panorama is one of the reasons why education was included in the GATS in 2003. According to Maringe (2010), GATS pursued the liberalisation of trade in goods and services, in industries, and in education. The author continues by pointing out that HE was described in GATS as an international service industry.

On the Agreement the education sector is divided into five parts: primary, secondary, higher, adult, and other services. (Knight, 2006) GATS provide a regulatory framework that looks forward to

encourage international trade in education, besides other services. GATS focuses on facilitating mobility through cross-border supply, consumption abroad, commercial presence, and presence of natural persons. (Altbach and Knight, 2007)

Due to the fact that developing countries have special needs, GATS has provisory articles, and preferential treatments that might help to make up for those needs. (Knight, 2006) This might not be the perfect scenery, but it is a way of helping and encouraging developing countries to advance rapidly, and to get where developed countries are in the topic of internationalisation of higher education.

According to Altbach and Knight (2007), developed countries provide most international higher education services, while Asian and Latin American middle-income countries are the ones buying those services. This might be a reflection of those special needs GATS foreseen. It can be due to aspirational necessities of individuals, communities and states. And it could be related not just to economic reasons but also to social and cultural desires. (Foskett and Maringe, 2010)

The internationalisation process is not new. It has had many forms throughout the years. It has involved cooperation, academic exchanges, and now it also includes commercial initiatives. It is a process that needs the collaboration and willingness to work of institutions, organisations, countries, and the entire academic community.

Despite the strength internationalisation has, it is susceptible to changes in its pace. Due to its nature, global events can affect it greatly. Among those events are government policies, study costs, e-learning, English knowledge, quality assurance, trade agreements, and the global context in general. (Altbach and Knight, 2007) Therefore not everything is set concerning internationalisation. It is necessary for the actors to pay attention to global events, and try to be up to date not just

with new tendencies, but also foreseeing how the internationalisation context might develop.

5 INTERNATIONALISATION IN LATIN AMERICA

5.1 Latin American Education: A Chronological View

When the American continent was discovered, there were already universities in Europe. Due to this, Latin American countries have always seen Europe as the place to go when seeking good, avant-garde education.

Because of the difference in the education stages, and the fact that Europeans conquered it, Latin American education took European education as a model. By the late nineteenth century Latin American education maintained a close relation to the State. It recognised universities' privileges and rights, and financed it. Through this action it became to be known as the Teaching State. (Mollis, 2011)

By 1918, Latin American higher education took a turn, towards some of its main characteristics that nowadays accompany it. Argentina witnessed a liberal movement, which now is called the Córdoba Reform. University autonomy was gained as a result of this movement, along with student participation in decision-making, and an increased role of the university in the nation's social development. (Gacel-Ávila, 2007; Gacel-Ávila, Jaramillo, Knight and De Wit, 2005) These promptly spread, and became a part of universities all over the region.

According to Gacel-Ávila (2007) during the 1970s there were launched a series of scholarship programs for postgraduate studies abroad. As well, Latin American and Caribbean states signed a

Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education. This looked forward to, among others, increase cooperation in education, and to achieve integration within the region. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005)

By the beginning of the 1990's the largest universities have already opened the first international affairs offices. Those were in charge of issues related to academic exchange, and international academic cooperation. Later on, reaching the year 2000, universities included internationalisation to their strategies looking forward to improve education quality. (Gacel-Ávila, 2007)

According to Gacel-Ávila et al. (2005), experts concord there is no typical Latin American university. The authors express that this is the case because universities are a reflection of the great differences that characterised the countries of the region. Despite of the differences, there is as well a series of share characteristics the authors attribute to common ground. Universities of the region have in common the fact they belong to "*a dependent, underdeveloped continent that has not yet reached a sufficient level of scientific and technological development*". (Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005: 342) This is the main cause attributed to impede universities from becoming unconstrained cores of thought. (Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005)

What can be perceived, at least before the 21st Century is that the region is far behind with the newest tendencies related to education. Latin America advances, however a much slower pace than North America, Europe, and other regions. Despite all efforts, the region continues to lag behind, trying to adjust new trends and discoveries to its particular characteristics. Information technologies, accreditation, and internationalisation processes, along with the international and multicultural dimensions of teaching and learning, are slowly taking its place in Latin American academic life.

Nowadays, Latin countries are thinking more strategically about internationalisation, and making efforts to catch up with more

advance countries. The region looks as a model to follow the European Union, and more specifically the Bologna Process. This European achievement is seen not just as a successful internationalisation strategy, but also as an example of regional integration and cooperation in the academic field. (Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005)

5.2 Advances in Internationalisation

By the 21st Century Latin America initiated a stronger process towards internationalisation. It started to be seen as a fundamental strategy for quality improvement, and institutional development. Seeing the process as a mean for better intercultural understanding or even to improve the finances of the institution is not that common. It is still hardly focus on cooperation programs, but it is expanding as well to other possibilities. (Gacel-Ávila, 2007; 2004)

Despite the importance given to the topic in official speeches and declarations, there is still not a clear effort. It might be seen as an essential strategy, but there are no explicit policies, or clear initiatives. (Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005) It is necessary for Latin American HEIs to adapt, to make the process one of theirs by using their strengths, tools, and opportunities. Acting, innovating, and not just reacting to world changes.

Despite of the advances, there is still much work to be done. The structures characterising the university of the region, lack of basis to make use of what Gacel-Ávila, (2007; 2004) calls a comprehensive internationalisation. The concept refers to the idea of a global change, including the teaching-learning process, curricula, decision-making process, and organisational structure, to name a few. (Gacel-Ávila, 2007; 2004)

According to Holm-Nielsen et al., (2005) Latin America faces a high deficit in the trade of higher educational services, due to a

limited influx of students, which is less than 1 per cent of enrolees for Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, and Mexico. (Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005). By 2004 Latin America had "*the lowest rate of student mobility in the world*". (Gacel-Ávila, 2007: 402) As evidence, Gacel-Ávila et al. (2005) argue that more than 95 per cent of the academic population in the region will not have the chance to go abroad.

Most of the academic mobility and exchange programmes, and its increment are due to cooperation programs with the European Union (EU), and Anglo America. Those constitute the main destinations for a period abroad. Mobility occurs mostly outside the region. This might be the case because of the image of the quality of education in the countries of destination, a rigid curriculum used in Latin American countries, and also because of the lack of a system for the recognition of studies and credits within the region. (Gacel-Ávila, 2007; Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005; Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005; Lloyd, 2010)

However, most of the inter-institutional or cooperation programs tend to be with Spanish-speaking countries. The case is such, due to the lack of proficiency in foreign languages like English. (Gacel-Ávila, 2007; Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005) This goes in detriment of the international, and intercultural, competencies of graduates from the region.

Within the region there is a majority of Spanish-speakers, which means that when traveling within Latin America there is no need to know a second language. This fact might discourage people from learning a second language, especially when planning not to move outside the region. This might be also the reason for the lack of an academic offer in English, which might discourage exchange students from coming to the region. (Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005)

According to an interview made by Lloyd (2010) to Eva Egron-Polak (secretary general of the Paris-based International Association of Universities), there has been some progress in Latin America. Internationalisation has escalade on the priorities universities

have. Despite of that, the region requires developing regional and continental belonging. (Lloyd, 2010, Jaramillo and Knight, 2005) Holm-Nielsen et al. (2005), concord with the idea that is imperative for Latin American institutions to reinforce their linkages.

All the opportunities coming from internationalisation open new horizons for Latin America. Well-embraced internationalisation will help countries of the region gaining access to current knowledge, transfer technology, and exploit new business opportunities. (Holm-Nielsen, Thorn, Brunner, and Balán, 2005) This encourages academic exchanges, bringing a rising number of Latin American scholars teaching or researching abroad. The problem is the also increasing number of permanent migration, which denotes a brain drain in the region. (Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005)

5.3 Opportunities and Issues

Latin America needs to gain territory in the world education trade. At the moment, the region has been more an importer of services. This particular concerns the Latin American academic world because it might signify the loss of cultural identity. (Gacel-Ávila, 2004) Instead of been a threat, internationalisation should be seen as an opportunity to spread, and lead the world to know a little bit more about the region's culture.

In order to achieve that goal, it is necessary to make some changes and strengthen the academic sector. It is necessary to apply internationalisation strategies adapting HEIs into the new global schemas. Such is the case because at the moment "*there are few Latin American universities with the true capacity to export and sell educational services abroad*". (Gacel-Ávila, 2004: 7)

Latin American countries should start making great efforts to internationalise. They need to go beyond expected, and do quick and

successful changes. If the region wants to reach the same level developed countries are in, it is necessary to go faster than the advanced countries. (Gacel-Ávila, 2005; Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005) It is necessary to move faster, and with precise strategic actions.

Among the strategies, it is necessary to encourage students and academics to embark into intercultural experiences. (Gacel-Ávila, 2004) By doing such, the academic life in the HEIs will be enriched. New perspectives would be added to the classrooms and university life. The university will open up to internationalisation, and new cultures. It would open possibilities to attract new publics, and improve its relation with stakeholders.

Along with the prior statement, student mobility should be reconsidered. It should be an integral part of the education and formation objectives. (Gacel-Ávila, 2000) It is important to give opportunities not just to students but also to academics providing learning, research, and job opportunities. (Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005) This would help not just in the internationalisation process, but also to prevent brain drain. It is important trying to embrace multiculturalism at home, to create culture awareness at HEIs, and to promote a brain-gain.

All in all, the improvements Latin America may have during the internationalisation process, small or big, are going to be beneficial. The improvements may not just benefit the academic population, but the country as a whole. The improvement might help to gain more benefits on education trade, for example by making use of all the tools given by the GATS. (Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005)

5.4 Organisations, Internationalisation and Latin America

Having in mind the region considers cooperation a great part of the internationalisation process, it is necessary to take a look at the

organisations with which it sustains cooperative relations. It is also necessary to review agreements, and some of the stakeholders. According to Gacel-Ávila (2007) there are many agreements but a significant amount of them are inactive. The great majority are with European, and Anglo American institutions. (Gacel-Ávila, 2007)

There are different forms of cooperation. It is important to distinguish them in order to have a better understanding of the panorama. Depending on the participants, and level of involvement, the relation is classified into a specific category. For example, bilateral indicates foreign nongovernmental agencies and governmental agencies cooperating with individual countries. Interregional implicates regional cooperation, Latin America – other region. International makes reference to global actors, including intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, private foundations, and programs. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005)

International actors in the region include the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank, and the WTO, to name a few. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005) There are also bilateral participants. The list is constituted by national development agencies, embassies, and international cooperation agencies. The actors in this line of cooperation include the Swedish International Development Agency, the German Academic Exchange Service, and the Fulbright Academic Program. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005)

The interregional actors have among them government agencies, NGOs, networks, trade agreements, and programs. The list is quite extensive, but some of the participants that belong to it are the Andrés Bello Treaty, the European Commission, and the European Union Program of High-Level Scholarships for Latin America. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005) There are as well regional participants. They include intergovernmental figures, NGOs, networks and programs. The Organisation of American States (OAS), the Latin American Council of Social Sciences, and the Latin American Network of University Cooperation. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005)

Continuing with the cooperation forms and actors it is worth mentioning as well sub-regional participants. They include NGOs, agreements, and programs. Among them are: the Central American Council for the Accreditation of Higher Education (CCA), Common Southern Market (MERCOSUR), and the Common Academic Space Program. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005) At national level key actors include ministries of education and other related ministries and departments, agencies of international cooperation, science foundations, councils, national export agencies, scholarship agencies, quality assurance and accreditation agencies, NGOs, university associations, and networks. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005)

The growing number of participants in the region has helped to improve the connectivity of it. (Jaramillo and Knight, 2005) It has broadened the mix of action fields, but with a common denominator: internationalisation. The use of networks has allowed HEIs of the region to strengthen their collaboration relations or build new ones. (Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005) They help in the pursue of internationalisation of higher education, not just through programs but also helping to build a common front, and share views and concerns about the topic.

5.5 University of Costa Rica

As reflection of the region's complex panorama of stakeholders, Costa Rica has as well a great amount of actors. The list includes HEIs, NGOs, networks, and the government.

Concerning the higher education institutions, the country has a complex reality. As an example of it, it is worth mentioning that despite of being a small nation of approximately 5 million people, living in a territory of 51.100km² (INEC Costa Rica, 2012), it has more than 60 universities authorised to operate. Those are distributed into 50

private universities, 5 public universities, and 7 international universities. (SINAES, n.d.)

On the internationalisation topic, according to Fedorov (2009) Costa Rica is one of the states that had started to implement initiatives regarding internationalisation of higher education. The country is looking forward to position itself within the global market; and it has placed more interest on internationalisation topics. Among the country's areas of interest it is possible to mention quality of university degree programs and their graduates, mobility, processes certifying and recognizing studies, and bilingualism.

The University of Costa Rica (UCR) is one the most influential institutions in the country. It could be consider an opinion leader, therefore its actions and policies are of great importance to set the course of action of many others. This is why the procedures and opinions coming out from it should be taken into consideration when discussing the higher education context of Costa Rica.

Lloyd (2010) assures that in order to prevent brain drain, one successful example is the strategy implemented by the UCR. The institution has started a process in which students are required to sign a return agreement. The author states the strategy has worked out well, "*with 90 per cent of students returning home*". (Lloyd, 2010)

Guido and Guzmán (2012) point out that UCR's position regarding internationalisation is that it requires academic growth. It is important the strengthening of international academic networks, the promotion of academic mobility, and learning a second or third language. (Guido and Guzmán, 2012) The strategy of the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation of the University of Costa Rica is to become more than the office in charge of giving scholarships, it pretends to have an influence in curricular management. (Guido and Guzmán, 2012) Promoting the internationalisation process on the institution.

Guido and Guzmán (2012) suggest that to venture in the internationalisation scope, at least in the University of Costa Rica is necessary the determination and engagement of the academic and administrative staff of the different faculties. It is especially the case when considering that at the moment it is not and institutional order.

At the moment UCR's internationalisation strategy is based first and foremost in academic mobility and staff education at postgraduate level in institutions abroad. This strategy aims to achieve in a few years the renewal of the staff, with a goal to reach at least a 20% of doctoral academics in each academic unit. (González García, 2011)

According to González García (2011), student mobility from UCR towards institutions abroad has increased between the years 2005 – 2010. The preferred region of destination is Europe, followed by Anglo America, Asia and Latin America. The increased, especially of students going to Europe is due to the University's participation on some European Union's mobility projects, which give great economic help to do the mobility. (González García, 2011)

On the same period, the main region from which international students came to UCR was Anglo America, followed by Europe, and Latin America. Contrary to the national students' tendency, the international students influx tended to decrease between the years 2005 – 2010. This situation might have to do with space limitations in the classes, language, and migratory procedures. (González García, 2011)

Despite of the help Costa Rican students might get to go abroad, there is mobility despair between students going to UCR and going from UCR abroad. There is a greater influx of international students going to Costa Rica. In 2010 the difference between the two groups was of 104 persons, which is more than the total amount of students going abroad from the University of Costa Rica. (González García, 2011)

6 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to analyse the perceived role of intercultural competence in the adaptation process of exchange students. At the same time it intends to understand the importance of increasing and developing this kind of competence to achieve a successful exchange experience.

In order to accomplish these general goals, four research questions are presented:

RQ1 What are the primary needs related to communication and information higher-education students have when going abroad for student exchange?

RQ2 What kind of intercultural communication situations do higher education students encounter during their exchange experience?

RQ3 What kind of intercultural competencies higher education students should have (in their opinion) to accomplish a successful exchange experience?

RQ4 What are the necessary aspects a training program in intercultural competence should include addressing exchange students' needs?

The first question (RQ1) presents a view on intercultural competence from the perspective of the students. It would try to reflect the

theoretical viewpoint on the importance of intercultural competence by presenting how necessary it is during intercultural encounters. It would reveal basic needs students have during an academic exchange.

The second question (RQ2) was more directed to the applicability of intercultural competence. It presented a series of situations in which competence is needed. The situations presented were based on students' personal experiences. Therefore, the situations are examples of what others may encounter when interacting with other cultures.

The third research question (RQ3) would be answered through the perception of students. They would give insights regarding the topic. The students, in their own words, could present examples like those given in the theoretical background (Section 2.3) about basic intercultural competencies to achieve a successful exchange experience.

It is important to consider this study as an exploratory approach. It is a starting point for further inquiry in this particular case. (Yin, 2003) Due to the exploratory nature of the study perception was selected to approach the topic. Perception can provide a general overview to initiate more in-depth investigation. There are many studies about the subject. But in Latin America, and particularly in Costa Rica there is a lack of such research.

The final question (RQ4) is mainly linked to the theoretical background regarding intercultural training. Answer it would required the use of the information provided by the students, and theory presented in chapter 3. It would be needed as well a general knowledge of the context (chapters 4 and 5). The answer to this question is a synergy between the main topics of the theoretical background and the information given by the students.

This question reflects the use of applied communication. Such is seen because the framework looks forward to "*assist real-world individuals […] to achieve communication goals*". (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002: 26) In other words, the framework is meant to help the section of

Student Mobility of the International Affairs Office of the University of Costa Rica to address student necessities related to intercultural communication.

6.1 Research design

Having in mind the main purpose of the study, and its exploratory nature it was chosen the use of a questionnaire. A good reason to use a questionnaire is "*to find out basic information that cannot be ascertained otherwise*". (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 1996: 98) Being this a good option to get to know students' perceptions about the topic.

The use of a questionnaire was selected due to its reach. This tool helps gather a wider range of opinions than other methods do. It is useful to explore the panorama and to give a base from where to pursue further and deeper research. The obtained results can be used as a starting point for new research questions, selecting a new population, or create guidelines as this study does.

The selection of the population was made looking forward to have a wide range of insights. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, it was important to gather information about diverse actors and issues related to the exchange experience. Students are in contact with different actors in the academic life, therefore they could give a broader set of insights relevant to the study.

The study population was constituted by students who did their exchange in Costa Rica, and by students from the University of Costa Rica who went abroad as part of an academic exchange. The purpose was to achieve a broader understanding of the diverse experiences by using both points of view. By doing such it is possible to reach a more holistic and synergetic analysis of the case in study.

It looked for interpreting the interaction of the different factors that were found in the data collection process. It aimed at applying its findings through a framework for two training plans.

Those looked forward to help improving the intercultural communication competence of exchange students.

The resulted research design was open to changes. It made use of a mixed methods approach, which is compatible with the vision of applied communication. The use of this approach offers opportunities for the integration of diverse perspectives (Fielding and Fielding, 2008), and "*methods to draw on the strengths of each*". (Creswell, Carroll Klassen, Plano Clark, and Clegg Smith, n.d.: 4)

The mixed methods approach was put into practice by the analysis of the questionnaire. It was done using both qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, but with special emphasis on the first. The questionnaire had open-ended questions that later on would be analyse qualitatively. The close-ended questions were analysed quantitatively.

The study could be seen as following a phenomenological philosophy. Such is the case because the gained knowledge was based on human perception and experiences. The study strategies were based on empirical research. It was pursued to explore the phenomenon on the basis of experiences, particularly those experiences and viewpoints of the target group. (Routio, 2007) The collected data functioned as the starting point for the practical part of the study. Along with the theoretical background, it was used to designed culture specific and culture general guidelines for future training plans.

An important part of the research was to analyse the target group experience. This was achieved by asking them to come out with a story about their experience abroad. Through their experiences and opinions, their necessities were recall. Those were very valuable to solve the problem of designing the guidelines.

This methodology was chosen because it has the potential of revealing certain information "*through richness of detail, [… that] might not be [found through] operationalised variables in a statistical study*". (Garson, n.d.1) In order to fulfil the primary goals of this study, a case study was used. This particular approach allowed making particular

emphasis in detailed contextual analysis of a specific and limited number of variables.

According to Shen Qi (2009) "*critics of the case study methodology point out that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings.*" (p. 22) Even though this is an important aspect to take into consideration, the proposed study did not intend to generalise its results. It looked forward into solving these particular issues, and to make a proposal based on the results of the study, following the vision of applied communication. (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002) As suggested by Shen Qi, (2009) "*the purpose of case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case.*" (p. 22)

Despite the similarities this study might have with action research, it is not quite exactly the same. The present study did not implement the proposed framework nor create a full training plan. It presented the framework (as a proposal) to an office that might put it into practice with the studied groups.

6.2 Data Collection

Existing materials drove the data collection for this study. It began by collecting information related to the process of internationalisation and academic student exchange of the University of Costa Rica. The data was collected mainly from the Rector's Annual Labour Informs 2005-2010, focusing on the section related to the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE), as well as its website. General information about academic exchange policies, and strategies was retrieved during this process.

Once the primary information for the theoretical background was collected, the questionnaire was created. With it, information on intercultural communication competence needs was recovered. The information was recovered using a self-administrated questionnaire.

The process of data collection was carried out through the Internet. An email with the link to access the web-based questionnaire was sent to the participants.

It was necessary to ask OAICE's legal adviser the best way to handle the contact with the participants. This was the case due to the delicacy of the contact information treatment. At the end, the agreement was to make contact through the personal of the International Affairs Office. They handled the dispatch of the questionnaire, and the answers were accessed directly through the Survey Monkey website.

This method allowed the respondents to have "*more privacy and self-disclousure as no interviewer is directly involved in the question-answer process*". (De Leeuw, 2008: 323) Through this, and the use of complete anonymity, it was sought obtaining open responses without the biases brought by fear of retaliation after giving an opinion.

The designed questionnaire had 23 questions in total. It included both close-ended and open-ended questions. (See Appendix 1) In certain occasions, respondents were instructed to "*answer by choosing from some number of alternatives*" (McIntyre, 2005: 158), while in others there were no suggested answers, so respondents answered in their own words. (McIntyre, 2005)

The instrument was divided into three sections. The first one was the agreement declaration, which respondents had to answer in order to continue with the next sections. The second section was named "experiences and opinions". It had 18 questions, both open-ended and close-ended. The questions looked forward to obtain the information that would respond the research questions of the study. The final section named "general information" had 5 questions (both open-ended and close-ended) about period of study abroad, home country and university, gender, and respondents relation with the University of Costa Rica.

The questionnaire had English and Spanish versions. For this, a translation was needed. A close translation was used. It tried "*to*

remain close to the semantic import, the vocabulary, and the structure of the source text but also to meet target language requirements regarding vocabulary, idiom, and sentence structure". (Harkness et al., 2010: 120) This strategy was used not just for the translation of the questionnaire, but also for the translation of the answers.

Due to resource limitations, a double translation was not utilized, nor were external translators used in evaluating the accuracy of translation. While this if often required of questionnaires with several language versions, in this particular case it was decided that the open nature of the study did not require full uniformity from answers to different versions.

The questions in each language were the same, as well as the order. In both cases, depending on the answers of the participants, some questions were skipped during the answer process. Therefore, the amount of questions to answer varied from participant to participant.

The questionnaire was created, and sent to be reviewed by two specialists in evaluation. They presented their recommendations, and changes were made in order to fulfil their requirements. The instruments were sent for a pre-test to eight different students, which are not part of the target group. The students were from Russia, Germany, Finland, Colombia, Spain, and Costa Rica.

After receiving the feedback from the students, and their answers, new changes were made. When all the corrections were done, the questionnaires were sent to a contact person in OAICE for a final review. Once it was approved, the instrument was sent to the student mobility area of OAICE for its distribution.

Students who participated in an academic exchange during the years 2007 – 2011 constituted the study population. The amount of students who constituted the population was 1323 from which 283 are Costa Ricans, and 1040 are from other countries. The sample was made by convenience, "*selecting sampling units on the basis of availability*" (McIntyre, 2005: 105) of their e-mails. The questionnaire was sent to 520

e-mail addresses, for a sample of 39% of the population. There is not a precise amount of how many of the e-mails were received. Despite of this, the response rate was of 27%.

The questionnaire was sent out two times, with three weeks of time in between. The second time constituted a follow-up notice asking "*respondents to complete […] their questionnaires*" (McIntyre, 2005: 170). The amount of time dedicated to collect data with the questionnaires was of 6 weeks. In total, 173 questionnaires were started in the online service. Out of these, 142 were fully answered (122 in Spanish, and 20 in English).

6.3 Data Analysis

Once all the data was collected, it was systematised into categories that came out from all the gathered information. The categories contain the information retrieved from the close-ended and open-ended questions. The study focused mostly on the open-ended answers which portrait students' experiences and opinions in their-own words. This allowed pursuing a thematic and qualitative analysis of the data, and the mapping of the experiences and perceptions of the students. It was complemented by a quantitative analysis of the data obtained with the close-ended questions. The analysis facilitated the creation of guidelines for a training proposal that would satisfy the necessities on intercultural communication competence students have. (Aronson, 1994)

Out of the information three categories were created: 1) needs for information and guidance, 2) opinions about the exchange and the adaptation process, and 3) intercultural experiences. Once this was set, the categories were further analysed in order to come up with the most relevant topics for the training plan.

Trying to fulfil the objective of proposing guidelines for a culture general and culture specific training plan, Renwick's (1999) approach was followed. The first step after the data collection and

analysis consisted in creating preliminary objectives for the training. Once these were prepared, it was time to start thinking about guidelines and how to reach the objectives. This part included: the duration, degree of dependence (on materials, trainer, participants), setting, required personal disclosure, pace, and percentage of experiential versus didactic methods, content, and training style (didactic, facilitator, coaching).

Each activity was designed having in mind that if it "*doesn't add absolute value to the session, [it is better] don't do it*" (DiSabatino and Oliver, 2002 in Fowler and Blohm, 2004: 38). Therefore the final design contains essential topics and exercises that might apply directly to the participants. (Fowler and Blohm, 2004)

The proposal is presented as a series of guidelines OAICE could use to prepare a training plan addressed to exchange students and regular students going abroad. The guidelines are focused on topics related to intercultural communication competence. They include topics such as time orientation, proxemics, directness versus indirectness, adaptation and re-adaptation process, and studies related information.

7 RESULTS

Students' perspectives presented in this study were taken from a questionnaire. Students answered a series of questions regarding their experiences abroad. The considered period was from 2007 until 2011. The answers were from 173 people, but just 142 completed the entire questionnaire. The answers were retrieved in a 6 weeks period, from May 3ed until June 6th, 2012.

The students' linkage is the University of Costa Rica (UCR). Some of them did their period abroad in the mentioned institution, while some others have UCR as their home university. The students who answered the questionnaire came from 16 different countries among which are Spain, Finland, Portugal, United States, Norway, Germany, Colombia, Argentina, México, Holland, and Costa Rica.

For its analysis, the retrieved information was divided into three categories. The first one gathered data related to information students considered important, and where did they obtain it. A second category considers students opinions, regarding the exchange experience as well as the process of re-entering the home country. The third category has to do with students' experiences abroad, particularities, and anecdotes.

It was assured to the students the information would be completely anonymous. Therefore, the references are presented through the use of a number given as identifier by the website in which the questionnaire was allocated. All answers are presented in English.

In the cases where the answer was given in Spanish, the original text can be found in Appendix 2.

7.1 Needs for Information and Guidance

Regarding information searched by the students, more than 85% assured had looked information about their trip before going abroad. People searched mostly information about their host university, followed by information regarding migratory procedures, and in third place living expenses. Students also looked for other information related to housing, culture, and general information regarding weather, temperature, language, touristic places, and leisure activities. (See Graphic 7.1)
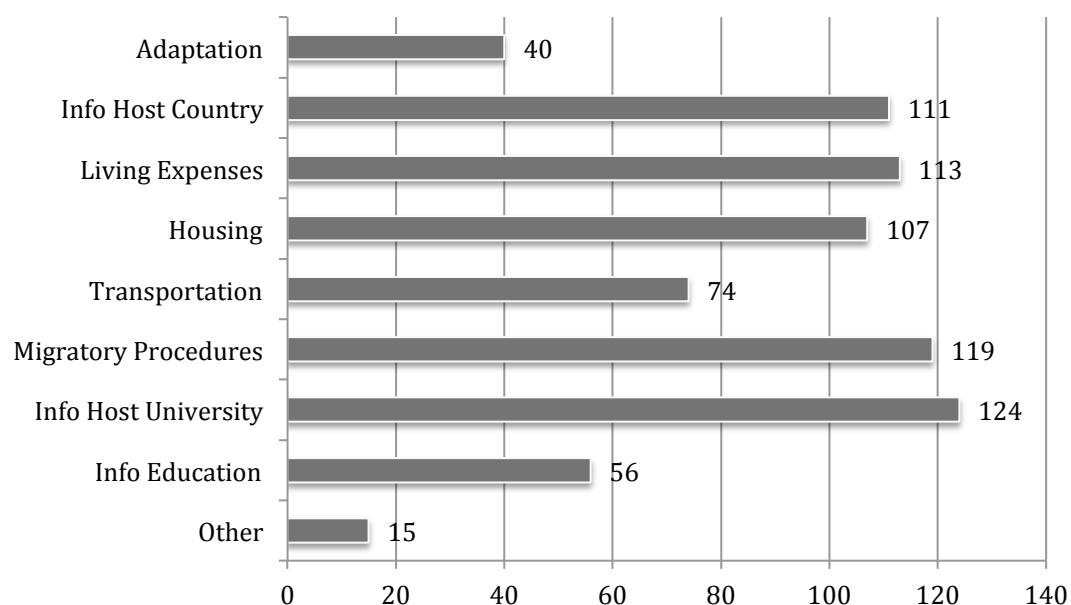

Graphic 7.1. Searched Information. N: 148

There was one revealing answer related to housing. It allows identifying certain particularities that might need to be considered when giving address related information. This is especially the case for students going to Costa Rica because of the particularities of the address system. In this country landmarks and cardinal points compose

the address system, instead of street names and numbers. This makes quite difficult for foreigners to locate places.

> [i]Specific location of the university (especially in Costa Rica, because its addresses are very peculiar, because they are not very structured, and before being there I could not understand the address system. That is why it was difficult for me to get information about where to stay. (Student 1830755023)

Considering guidance, 56% of the respondents assured receiving guidance regarding their exchange period. From the students who received guidance 46 assured both institutions gave it to them; the home, and host university. Students, who claimed they got information through other sources, got it through friends and other students. (See Graphic 7.2)
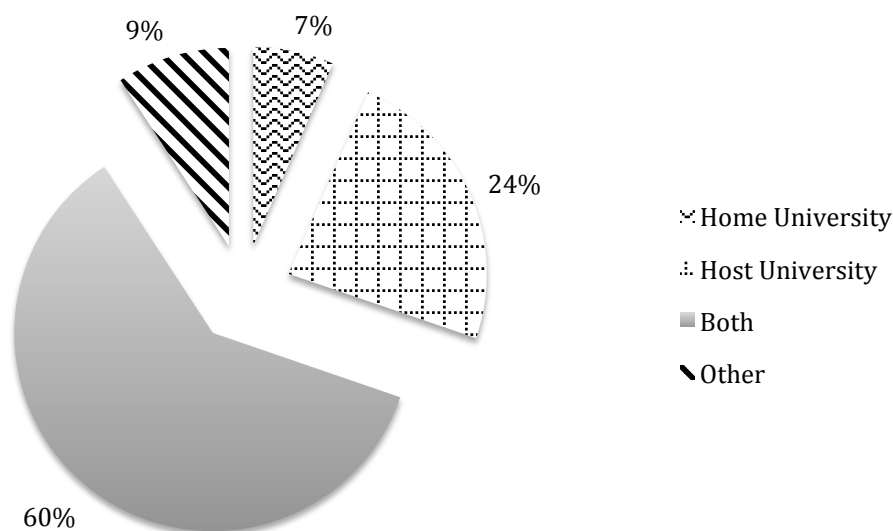
Graphic 7.2. Guidance Sources. N: 76

The received information was mostly related to the host university, migratory procedures, and general information about the host country. (See Graphic 7.4) Out of the responses, 16 people thought the information received was not enough, 73 people said the information was relevant or completely relevant, and 73 people said the information was necessary or completely necessary. Of the respondents, 10 people

said the information was not received on time. (See Graphic 7.3) In general the distribution of the assessment made by students gives quite similar significance to each category of information.
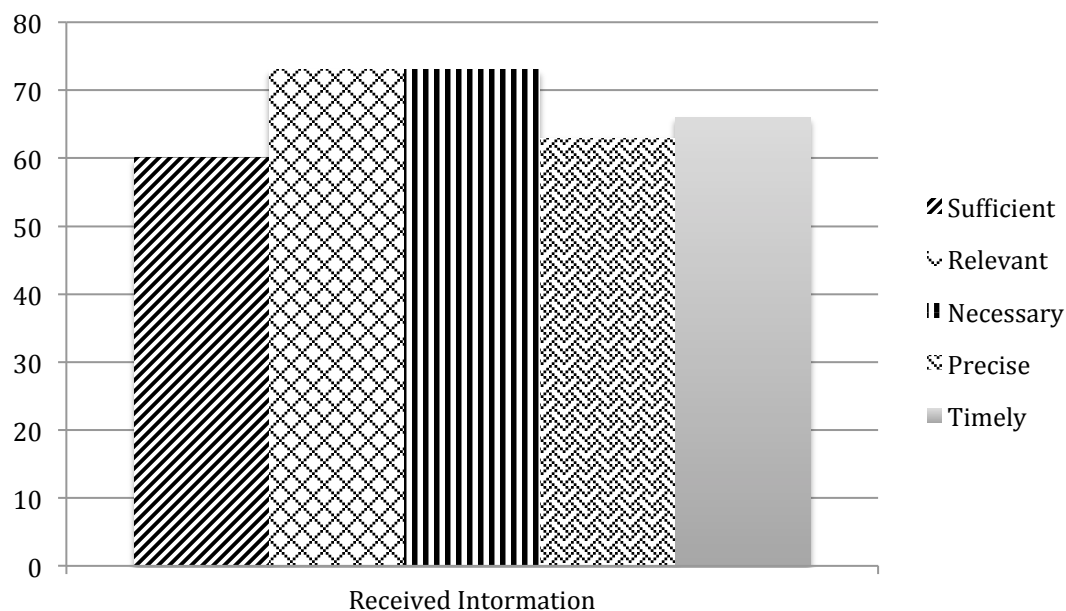
Graphic 7.3. Received Information. N: 76

Students argued the information received was relevant because it was very helpful, answered to all the questions they had, and gave the proper steps to get the visa. Despite of that, the same answers also contain opinions saying there should be more information, it could contain more details, and that it should be more up to date.

> I was given all the proper steps in obtaining my visa, applying to my host university, and other procedures. (Student 1826388307)

> iiThey should have given us more current information, because that is the kind of information of more importance (Student 1828139417)

> Everything that I asked was important to me at that time, so the information provided was relevant. (Student 1827899379)

> The information was relevant to what we were going through, but could have been more complete. (Student 1826665789)

ⁱⁱⁱThere are many cultural differences that are hard to overcome, and there is not much guidance about it. (Student 1854061003)

Regarding the information people should have when preparing for an exchange, 92% of the respondents considered information on migratory procedures of great importance. It was followed in relevance by information about living expenses, and housing; with a positive response of 83% each. Of the respondents 57% considered necessary to have information about adaptation into a new culture. (See Graphic 7.4)

People who received information is quite few compared to the amount of people who looked for information about the different topics. The amount of people who looked for information is about the same as the amount of people who would have wanted to have more information. Despite of that, the amount of information wanted in each topic is significantly more than the one searched and received. (See Graphic 7.4)
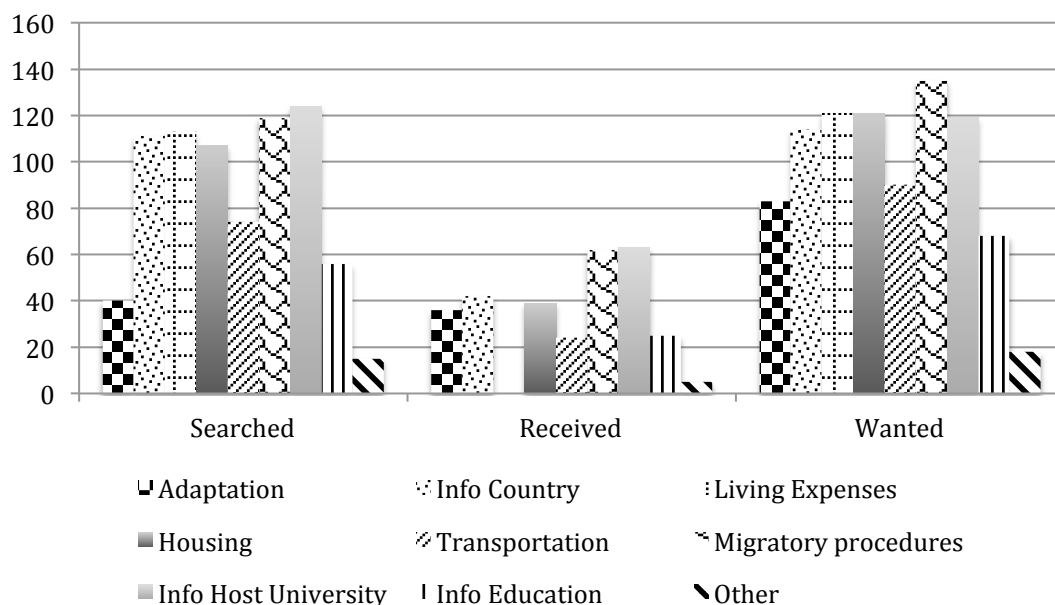
Graphic 7.4. Information About the Exchange.

Searched N: 148, Received N: 76, Wanted N: 146

In the received information the value of the "Living expenses" category is cero (See Graphic 7.4) because it was not included in the options

students had. Despite of that, students did not mention it when marked "Other". On the "Other" category students who received information mentioned weather, language, studies related information, and culture related information.

In general students also considered important to have information about the re-adaptation process. They mentioned as well the idea of having the possibility to be in contact with people who is going abroad during the same period, and/or have been abroad (at the same places) before.

[iv]... to be aware what involves to comeback home and leave behind all the created linkages. (Student 1854214541)

[v] Contact with other exchange students from prior semesters. (Student 1826319651)

[vi] Experiences of students that have already been through the exchange process. (Student 1826302682)

Regarding the process of re-adaptation, more than 91% of the respondents did not receive or have not receive any guidance at the moment of completing the questionnaire. From the compiled answers 20% of the respondents said that at the moment of the questionnaire they have not received guidance, and they were still abroad. (See Graphic 7.5)

Out of the 146 respondents, 13 people assured receiving some sort of guidance. (See Graphic 7.5) More than 50% of the people who received guidance, received it by the host university, and it was related to their studies. Just two people out of the 13 who received information assured being told something about the re-adaptation process to the home culture. (See Graphic 7.6)

9%

21%

Received Guidance

Did not receive guidance

No guidance, still abroad

70%
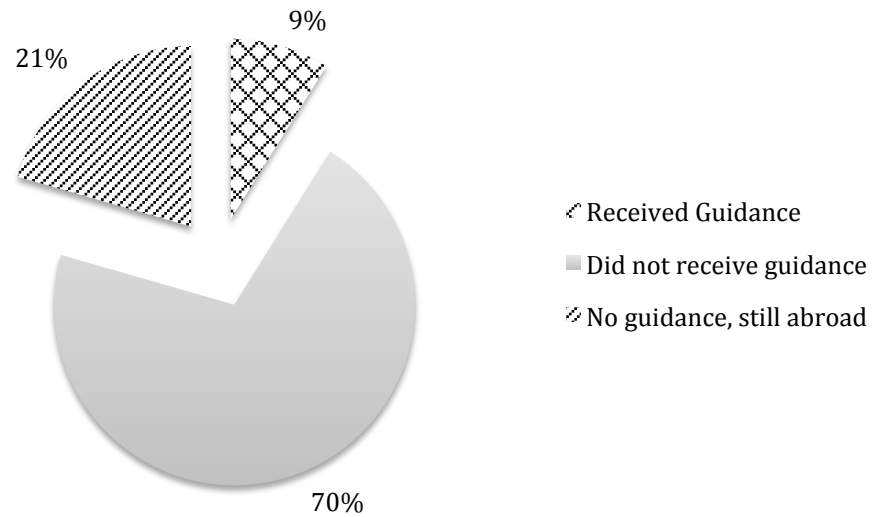
Graphic 7.5. Guidance about the return home: Percentage of students. N: 146

7%

27%

Logistics

Re-adapting

Studies

Other

53%

13%
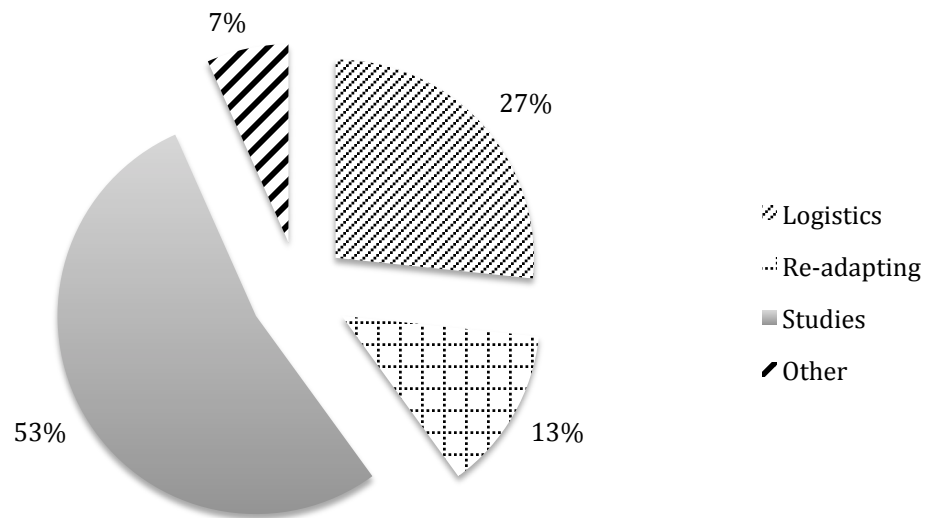
Graphic 7.6. Guidance about the return home: Received Information. N: 11

Students evaluated the received information regarding their return home. They considered this information relevant. Despite of that, there were some people who said the information was not received on time. Others assured it could have had more details.

[vii]As I stated before, there is never too much information. (Student 1828897661)

[viii]They knew exactly what us students needed to know. (Student 1854036383)

[ix]… the information could be delivered in a more appropriate time (for example before leaving). (Student 1853887704)

In general, students considered valuable all the information they could receive. According to their opinions, information must be given before departure (to the host country or to the home country), and it should be up to date. The information should cover diverse topics, not just academics but also cultural and leisure related issues.

7.2 Opinions About the Exchange and the Adaptation Process

Out of the respondents 7% considered difficult or very difficult to adapt into the new culture. For 38% of the students it was not difficult, and 34% said it was a little difficult. This means that most people felt comfortable in their new life, having little or no problem to adapt with a combined 72%. (See Graphic 7.7)
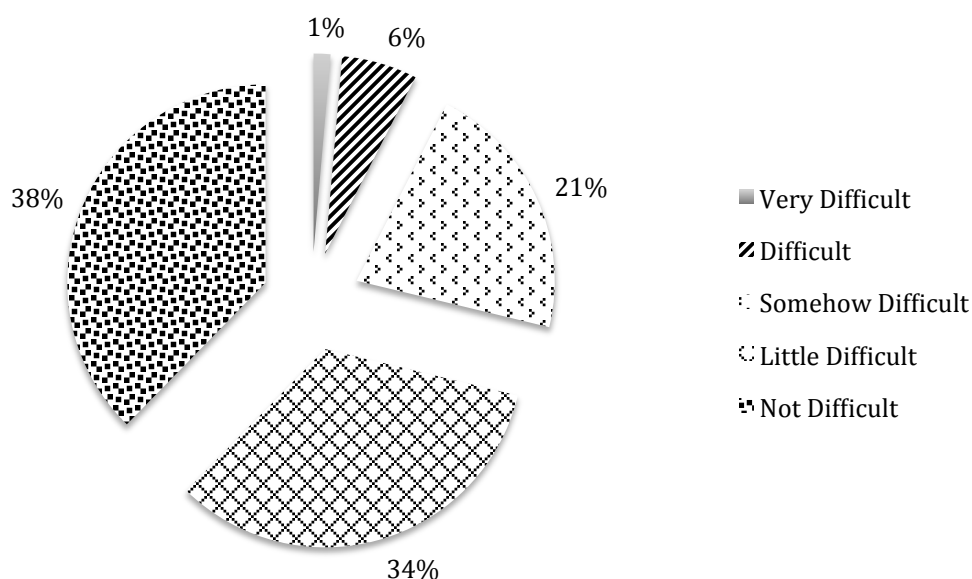
Graphic 7.7. Difficulty to Adapt into a New Culture. N: 146

Regarding the difficulty to adapt, people considered support groups as friends, and host families of great help. Other exchange students who are going through the same process are also considered of importance. The willingness to go abroad and to seek a change helped having a smooth transition. Loneliness is considered very hard, and makes the adaptation process difficult.

> [x]… if you want the other culture to be like your own, why traveling? I think it is needed a bit of curiosity, and the adaptation will be easy :-) (Student 1827873778)

> [xi]I think there are certain factors that make it [to adapt] harder for some people, but after you stop feeling alone and start living the experience, and meet new people, nobody wants it [the exchange period] to end. (Student 1856315580)

> [xii]It is somehow difficult because you are away from your family and all the things you care about, but… to be with other exchange students made it easier. (Student 1828360212)

Students considered open-mindedness, and past experiences important in order to adapt faster. Knowing the language and recognizing the similarities between the two cultures makes the process easier. Food and climate (light hours, rain, snow) are hard to adjust to.

> [xiii]The language issue is very important, because it can condition the social relations that might develop in an exchange context. (Student 1854735521)

> [xiv]I had some issues with the language (regionalisms), food, light hours, and also with the weather. (Student 1828818758)

> [xv]Applying for an exchange makes us be aware of the need to be open-minded to different cultures, customs and habits. My experience was very positive because respect was always present, and it was usual the willingness to enrol in multicultural exchanges. (Student 1854586644)

Students going to Costa Rica found difficult the fact that some people is very conservative, and religion is a centre point in their life. The address system was found really hard. This was the case not just when in Costa Rica, but also before going there while trying to find a place to stay. Insecurity and earthquakes are also hard to deal with.

> Some things like for example that the people here are very conservative is very hard and different. Also the way of life is sometimes very different and it is hard to adapt! (Student 1828457332)

> xvi …looking for something in a country without streets, and without knowing how to move around is very difficult. (Student 1828139417)

> xviiIn general, I would say the most difficult part was to adapt to the culture (for example the importance given by Costa Ricans to religion that nowadays does not have much influence in France, so the way of seeing things is "god only knows"), to the weather because I was not used to that much rain nor to earthquakes, and finally to the insecurity in San José city, because I had to be always aware at the moment of going out alone… (Student 1826532233)

Regarding education, students considered enrolling into the classes at UCR very hard. They said they did not have all the rights to enrol in the courses they wanted. It was also difficult to find detailed information about the classes (the program of the course).

> xviiiMy home university did not have any information about the host university, which is why I arrived to the country with no idea about the institution, culture or anything. Besides, it was hard to find out which classes I could take at UCR, because there were no lists with all the classes and its details. (Student 1826655089)

Even though most people considered low the difficulty to adjust back to the home country, 28 students considered it very hard. The fact that 28 out of 113 people considered there is a significant degree of difficulty in the re-adaptation process makes it worth to take into consideration as part of the information students going abroad require. (See Table 7.1)

Table 7.1. Scale of Difficulty: Re-Adaptation to the home country. N: 113
10 is the most difficult and 1 is the least difficult

Difficulty	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Percentage	9%	4%	12%	7%	8%	11%	7%	14%	12%	16%

Students assured the process of re-adjustment could be hard and slow due to the good memories created abroad and leaving behind their new life. They said it could be hard also when you did not take enough care of the contacts at home while being abroad. Other aspects mentioned as difficult were that at home there are more responsibilities, and expectations to fulfil.

Additional difficulties pointed out were the fact that at home people did not understand what the person went through, and that people did not care enough about the stories, and things students have to say about their experiences. Readjusting to the study system is hard and also seeing former classmates in more advanced classes or even graduated. Another important issue students mentioned is the possibility of feeling like a foreigner in your own country.

> Going back to your "old" live where not so much had changed for the people around you could be difficult because you wanted to talk more about your experience than they were willing to listen to. (Student 1826088281)

> [xix]You live freely without the social conventions and pressures of your country and family. The lifestyle is very different and you return home where society expects something particular from you, if you go back to live with your parents is also complicated after living alone or with people your age. (Student 1826399420)

> [xx]Of course you change a lot after one year abroad, it is very interesting to notice that despite you go back to your home country, so a familiar place, that place and those people are not familiar anymore, you have the feeling that in your own country you have to make efforts to get used to it again. You feel disoriented. (Student 1826532233)

Students mentioned support groups are very important. Being with family and friends again helps in the process of re-adjusting more easily. Having some bad experiences abroad was also mentioned as helpful in the re-adaptation process. One person mentioned that staying active, and doing leisure activities you could not do in the host country helps to re-adapt and fell in love again with your country.

> [xxi]I do not think it is easy because daily-life is completely different, the way of study is so different,… and you change when you are abroad for a while. I thought it would be harder but my friends helped me a lot so at the end I adapted quickly. (Student 1826425776)

> [xxii]It is actually your country, you need a short period to go back to your former life at home, but with the support of your family and friends you do it fast. (Student 1826602094)

> [xxiii]It was UNBELIEVABLY HARD. I was super sad, everything I had built in one year, all the independence, the entire experience, it ended overnight. It was like going out of the nest and all of a sudden going back. My friends were already working; I was very confused about what was my "North". My worldview was wider so I was very disoriented. I was like that for 6 months, until little by little I adapted: I found a job, re-established my goals; I started to feel fine in my home country… always when I was sad I tried to go to the beach and go out and do things that I will not do being in Holland, it is just that you do not adapt overnight. (Student 1858775056)

Overall, students considered the adaptation and re-adaptation process not that hard. Despite of that, they mentioned certain issues that could complicate it. Some things require just patience and time to adjust; others can be solved by information.

7.3 Intercultural Experiences

People have always stories to tell, or anecdotes about their experiences. Regarding experiences abroad, stories enclose certain particularities that for the locals might be normal, but for foreigners not. These anecdotes people remember might be useful for other students going

abroad. It is possible to find some "dos and don'ts" regarding behaviour, studies, food, weather, and so forth inside the stories.

There are positive stories about people's kindness. Several anecdotes recall how helpful people were when needed. Those stories might be related to daily life or to events out of the ordinary. What is important to rescue is that it is possible to find kind people willing to help everywhere.

> xxivArriving to San José, I was still on the plane; I met a couple of Costa Ricans. Curious, they asked me some questions about my trip and they ended up giving me their address and phone number in case I needed some help… This kindness really got to me, and it is very representative of the people in the country. (Student 1826125297)

> xxvMy father passed away during my exchange period. The host university was very understanding, and they even helped me economically to be able to come to Costa Rica, the teachers changed the date of some exams, and the university offered me psychological help. I was amazed of all the help I received, and I am very grateful to my host university, the staff and teachers who helped me. (Student 1856952634)

Other stories make reference on how during the exchange period people are in contact with different viewpoints, and worldviews. Those differences might be thought as good sometimes, and people could be willing to incorporate them into their lives. For this it is necessary to be open-minded and respectful of others. Recognizing there are several perspectives about how to live, and issues such as politics, education, and globalization.

People could have to deal with these situations interacting with the host culture or with people from other cultures that are also in the host country. During this kind of situations competencies such as awareness, respect, open-mindedness and empathy are necessary.

> xxviWe Europeans usually want to have everything under control. If something out of the ordinary happens we get nervous, this makes us different from the Costa Rican way of thinking. Then, if I get

lost or if I don't understand something I start to get nervous, but I know Costa Ricans don't understand that attitude. That is why I am learning to calm down. Calm down, calm down!!!! (Student 1826405960)

I became very good friends with a lot of my fellow exchange students, most notably one French girl… One day after our class… she told me her view on how she thought my government was, I was mind-blown. Sure, before, I had paid some attention to politics in my own country, but hearing what my friend had to say completely opened my mind… Normally, any other person would be angry and defensive that someone was criticizing their country, but I could not help but be open to her. Her critique made me question my own government and my place in politics; not just in the US, but in the world. (Student 1826388307)

[xxvii]It was very different to the Costa Rican culture to say things straightforward and to be confronted in a way that we Latins do not do. I had to realise this did not make them rude or impolite, but on the contrary it was their way of improve their relationship and to express truly what was bothering them. (Student 1853901442)

There are other anecdotes in which students recall how difficult was to deal with certain worldviews, procedures, or customs strange to them. Sometimes it could become a constant struggle during the exchange period. The issues could be related to life experiences, or even to cultural peculiarities that are not easy to overcome.

When immersed in a different culture it is possible to encounter great differences between the own culture and the host culture. These dissimilarities might be found estrange, tedious, or even impolite. Dealing with such differences might cause stress and anger. Such is the case especially when people get directly affected, they are disturbing someone else, or their values got contradicted.

[xxviii]On a Wednesday a Dutch friend and I said we were going to do a trip on Sunday. I told her that for sure we were going to meet on Sunday, but, naturally, I was waiting for her confirmation. Because none of us called the other on Friday or Saturday, I thought we were not going to go. Sunday afternoon, while I was napping, she called me telling me that she is already at the station, that where was I. In Holland, if you set a date and time, even though you do not speak again until that day, the date is set. In my

culture, we need to be sure, because in Costa Rica you always say: "yes, for sure, let's go! I'm in" (Student 1858775056)

*xxix*I am German; I studied two semesters in Costa Rica. When I say I'll be at "x" time at "x" place, I am there at that particular time and in that particular place. If something happens and I cannot be there, I apologise. In Costa Rica that is not the case. People never arrived at the time they said or don't go at all, without saying anything. You have to confirm every appointment two or three times, and people ask for a confirmation two or three times. Not even at the end of my exchange I could get used to that. (Student 1826054770)

Obtaining my student VISA!!! I had to go to multiple buildings and pay little fees and bring a lot of documents signed by very specific persons. It was actually quite a hassle in my opinion, because I felt my home university did not prepare me for the process sufficiently. (Student 1832461684)

xxxFor example to receive the scholarship (the money) we had to open a bank account, it was very hard because we were not locals and all banks asked for documents that only the nationals [citizens] had. Besides we received the deposit two months after our arrival so we almost did not have any money left, not even to pay the rent. (Student 1854763550)

There are also differences in the university environment. Sometimes the differences might be seen as valuable, and something worth trying to implement in the home country. Some other times, the experiences are not pleasant, and make it difficult for students to adapt into their new academic life.

Students spend a great amount of time in academic related issues. The differences in the academic system could be found not just in the classroom, but also in the assignments. The expectations of the students and the teacher not necessarily meet. When this occurs, a dissonance is generated, making necessary for the person to find mechanisms to overcome it. In such situations being assertive would be ideal, but due to different reasons that is not always the case.

I think the most challenging situation was to adapt to a different educational system. The way classes are taught, how exams are

applied, even the way you talk to your teachers is different from what I was used to. I remember the time when one of my classmates had a very bitter discussion with one the teachers. In my point of view she was rather disrespectful but it seems to me that it was the usual way over there. (Student 1827899379)

xxxiOnce in a social politics class, the teacher was trying to make the students participate, but they seem not very interested in participating. So I decided to participate and it lasted a few minutes… and the teacher tried to involve other students by asking questions, it did not happened, after a few minutes a student spoke and said: - professor, we could continue the class and if you and the exchange student classmate want to keep on talking you can have some coffee after class. It was really annoying for me to realise there was no interest on behalf of the class to do an exchange with me, because of this I tried to have these kind of spaces [for interact], outside the academic environment. (Student 1854295967)

xxxiiI really liked the more practical lessons of the European system, smaller groups, and a web system where forums might take place, and where the teachers uploaded documents and useful information. (Student 1854036383)

Stories told by the students are of great importance. Through them is possible to be part of their experiences and gather some insides into their opinions, and necessities regarding intercultural encounters and exchange experiences. They reveal more than it is said. The selection of the words, the punctuation, and other marks help telling the complete story.

From the stories told by the respondents, it was recovered a series of topics. These range from language issues, and bureaucracy, to time management, and direct communication versus indirect communication. Other topics as food, healthcare, race, living expenses, studies, insecurity, and migratory procedures were also mentioned.

All the concerns and experiences of the students are worth take into consideration. They can be used as reference for future exchange experiences. Based on past experiences it is possible to make efforts to improve. When looking at the past, and preparing for the

future it is possible to prevent past mistakes from happening again, and to continue doing, and improving what worked out well.

7.4 Drafting a training program

The guidelines presented in this section are based on the results. They involve ideas and information students consider important to have in hand when participating in an exchange experience. The proposed guidelines might help to fulfil students' intercultural needs through their implementation in a training plan carried by the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE) of the University of Costa Rica. Office that is the common ground of the population in study.

The objectives of both proposed frameworks are focused on trying to help exchange students to achieve effectiveness and gain knowledge. Due to this, there are included some methods suggested by Fowler and Blohm (2004) to fulfil such purposes. These include readings, lectures, and role-playing. (Fowler and Blohm, 2004)

Renwick's (1999) approach was followed when drafting the framework. He offered a clear path in which the frameworks are based. The proposed guidelines are guided by the idea that if one activity "*doesn't add absolute value to the session, [it is better] don't do it*" (DiSabatino and Oliver, 2002 in Fowler and Blohm 2004: 38). Such statement should be also taken into account when putting into action the proposal.

7.4.1 Culture General

Objective: To help students going abroad being more interculturally competent by empowering them with the necessary tools, and information to engage in successful intercultural encounters.

Duration: 1 hour session

+ Reading time

Degree of dependence: Giving a percentage to the parts involved, the proposed training could be divided as follows: Trainees 50%, Materials 30%, and Trainer 20%. The training would depend mostly on the participants. It requires their effort not just to assist to the "orientation meeting" but also to read the material, and be curious enough to participate in the session asking questions and making comments.

Setting: Once a semester a university classroom or auditorium depending on the amount of people, and any reading space students can find during their own time.

There is no required personal disclosure due to the proposed methods. It is mostly about a set of tools students can use during their trip to increase their intercultural competence.

Pace: Students would set the pace. They are mostly in charge, so everything would depend on how fast and conscious they read, and how many questions they might have for the trainer.

The proposed methods are mostly didactic. It is proposed the use of a lesson in which key topics can be explained to the students. It would be supported by printed material in which the content to fulfil the objective is clearly explained. Both are aimed to be complemented with students' participation and questions.

Content:

- Time orientation, mentioning general differences there are in time orientation. The emphasis should be made starting from the so-called "Costa Rican time" or "hora tica". Using critical incidents on this topic will be valuable.

- Proxemics. The management of space varies from culture to culture. Some differences between the Costa Rican use of space

and proxemics in other latitudes would help students to approach more carefully others in the host country, helping them to be aware of the issue and improving their competence on the matter. Preventing them to invade others' personal space. Critical incidents and the use of role-play would be proper methods.

- Greetings. There are different forms to greet someone, they could depend on the proxemics the culture has. Knowing there are cultures in which you greet with one, two or three kisses, others in which people hug, others that use handshakes, and even others that just say hi! from an appropriate distance is important. This knowledge will help students to be prepared for any situation. Using a role-play method would be a good approach to the topic.

- Directness versus indirectness is other relevant topic. This issue will made students to be aware there are different ways to communicate. The indirectness used in Costa Rica is not very much appreciated in more direct cultures. The use of critical incidents on how this topic can lead to misunderstandings will be valuable.

- Formality versus informality. The proper way of addressing professors varies from country to country. It is important for the student to be aware of the fact that teachers expect them to behave in a certain way when in class and when addressing them.

- Adaptation and re-adaptation process. The main aspects about the process of adaptation in a different culture, and the re-adaptation to the home culture will help students to understand

what they are/will go through. Giving examples of past experiences from other students, bringing someone to the session to tell his/her story, or present case studies would be useful.

- Studies related information. It is necessary to give students information regarding recognition of the studies, and the due process students have to go through when the time has come to go back home. A hand-out with the information is recommended.

The training style suggested is mostly didactic, with one face-to-face session, and one hand-out. Methods such as contrast culture could be useful, if looking for a more dynamic methodology.

7.4.2 Culture Specific

Objective: To empower exchange students with the necessary tools, and information to engage in successful intercultural encounters in Costa Rican soil.

Duration: 2 hours session
              + Reading time
              + e-mail exchanges

Degree of dependence: Giving a percentage to the parts involved, the proposed training could be divided as follows: Trainees 40%, Trainer 40%, and Materials 30%. The training would depend mostly on the interaction between the students and the trainer. It requires both of their effort not just in the "orientation session" but also for e-mail exchanges. Students would also have to read the material, and to participate in the session asking questions and making comments.

Setting: OAICE's website, e-mail accounts, students' reading space, and once a semester a university classroom or auditorium depending on the amount of people.

There is no required personal disclosure due to the proposed methods. It is mostly about a set of tools students can use during their exchange experience to increase their intercultural competence.

Pace: Students would set the pace. They are mostly in charge, so everything would depend on how fast and conscious they read, how many questions they might have for the trainer, and how involved they want to be in the face-to-face session.

The proposed methods are mostly didactic. It is proposed the use of a session in which key topics can be explained to the students, and in which they can be more involved with the topic and the trainer. It would be supported by material published on-line, which students can access before their arrival in Costa Rica. Both are aimed to be complemented with students' participation and questions via e-mail, and during the session. It could be combined with more experiential methods depending on the amount of participants.

Content:

- Time orientation, mentioning general differences there are in time orientation. It should be cleared out the Costa Rican approach, making emphasis on the so-called "Costa Rican time" or "hora tica". The use of critical incidents on this topic will be valuable for students to gain awareness on how time is treated in this culture.

- Proxemics. The management of space varies from culture to culture. Explaining the Costa Rican idea of personal space, and proxemics would help students to be aware of the issue. Role-play could be a useful method to clarify the topic.

- Directness versus indirectness is other relevant topic. This issue will make students to be aware of the use of indirectness in Costa Rica. Using critical incidents, cross-cultural analysis and role-play on this topic can help students to understand what they are facing, and to see the importance of appointment confirmation in this culture.

- Formality versus informality. The proper way of addressing professors varies from country to country, and from teacher to teacher. It is important for the student to be aware teachers expect them to behave in a certain way when in class and when addressing them. It is also important to mention that addressing older people requires more formality than addressing your peers, in the Costa Rican context.

- Nature related information. Students would like to have an idea of the average temperature, the amount of rain, and daylight hours. Other topics worth mentioning are the hurricane season, and where to find information about the proper behaviour during earthquakes.

- Address system and housing. Explaining the particularities of the address system, like the use of points of reference that no longer exist will empower students to face this part of their life in Costa Rica. A list of zones near the university in which is recommended to live will be useful for the students as well.

- Adaptation and re-adaptation process. The main aspects about the process of adaptation in a different culture, and the re-adaptation to the home culture will help students to understand what they are/will go through during their exchange experience.

- Migratory procedures. An explanation of the main procedures that need to be done, and the contact information of the General Direction of Migration will facilitate the process for the students going to Costa Rica.

- Living expenses. Giving an exact budget is difficult, but presenting some examples of prices would help the students to create their own budget: 1 coffee cup, 1 lunch at a university cafeteria, 1 average month of rent in an apartment would help to give an idea.

- General information about Costa Rica. How to deal with insecurity, a list of official holidays, and other important information like emergency numbers. Festivals, touristic places, volunteering, and leisure activities are some other generalities students could need.

- General information about UCR. The registration system, availability of classes, fees, rights and responsibilities, student dinners, and contact information of the student union. Other contact information of the university such as website, and telephone should be given to the students as well.

The training style suggested is mostly didactic, with one face-to-face session, one digital brochure, and direct communication via e-mail.

8 DISCUSSION

Before starting the discussion it is important to remind the reader that this document pursued an applied approach. One main motivating factor behind the study was that the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE) of the University of Costa Rica (UCR) could use the proposed guidelines in their work on student mobility. Therefore, once all the results of the questionnaire were considered, a practical proposal was made to the UCR. It is also important to remember that the UCR significantly affected the research design and data collection.

This study aimed to analyse the perceived role of intercultural competence in the adaptation process of exchange students. At the same time it intended to understand the importance of increasing and developing this kind of competence to achieve a successful exchange experience.

The study was guided by four research questions, which lead the order of this chapter. The first one (RQ1) asked what are the primary needs related to communication and information higher-education students have when going abroad for student exchange? The second question (RQ2) asked what kind of intercultural communication situations do higher education students encounter during their exchange experience? The third question (RQ3) considered what kind of intercultural competencies higher education students should have (in their opinion) to accomplish a successful exchange experience? The final question (RQ4) sought an answer to the question, What are the

necessary aspects a training program in intercultural competence should include addressing exchange students' needs?

8.1 Primary needs related to communication and information of higher-education exchange students

Analysing the students' responses, it can be argued that their intercultural needs initially seem to be largely related to miscellaneous procedures. In the beginning they need general information about the new country, the information on how to go there and enrol in the university, information about housing and living expenses, and so forth. Once they fulfil these needs, necessities start to become more related to socialisation, and intercultural experiences.

The centre point of going abroad as an exchange student is to study. In order to develop a good role in the host university, it is necessary to know at least some basic information about it. Students can be seen as being competent actors in their home countries, but given the fact that competence is contextual (Spitzberg, 1983), it is necessary to empower students with new tools and key information that allows them to become competent in the new milieu. Among the necessary information students should have is the registration system, fees, and availability of classes for exchange students, healthcare availability, rights and responsibilities, student dinners, and contact information of the student union, among others.

Living expenses is another central concerning of students who are going abroad. Being that students are supported by a scholarship, or that they have to pay for all their expenses, it is important to have a notion of which is a suitable amount of money. The calculations vary not just from country to country, but also from retailer to retailer. Even though it is impossible to have a complete chart of prices, having an average or range of at least three products might help students to create a budget.

Migratory procedures are a major concern. This is especially the case when considering the idea of obtaining a student visa. As the results showed sometimes it requires a lot of paperwork, which if not clear, might be exhausting for the student. Besides all the paperwork, students should have information regarding matters such as if they have to register in a governmental office when arriving, go to the police to present certain documents when arriving, or even if they have to do the visa papers once in the host country, and not before.

It is also necessary to provide them with information about the housing system in the country, and the university. They should know if there are special places for students or if the housing system is apart from the university. Regarding housing, it is also important to inform the safest and nearest areas to the university, and the address system. This could help them when looking for a place to live or when trying to locate the institution.

Weather conditions affect everyone. The respondents' views indicate that light hours, temperature, and seasons are part of the basic information needed when going abroad. Weather is unpredictable, but being prepared for the new possible conditions facilitates the transition. When you are used to have around 12 daily hours of light, and go to a place where the light hours depend on the season, or when you are used to have around 3 months of rain a year and go to a place where there is rain practically every day, it can be a shock and take you off-guard.

As the results showed there are some cultural characteristics that might be useful to inform exchange students before going abroad. On this regard, the main issue is to remain them that despite the similarities, there are always differences that might affect their life in the new country. Even though you know the language, or it is your mother tongue as well, each country or region has small differences like slang, which can affect people's competence while interacting in the new culture. Therefore it is important to remember "*no particular skill or*

ability is likely to ever be universally "competent". (Spitzberg and Changnon, 2009: 6)

Festivals, touristic places, volunteering, and leisure activities are other non-academic related issues some of the respondents highlighted as important. The respondents' views indicate that knowledge about the other culture, awareness and empathy are part of students needs once they have satisfy their need for miscellaneous information. Going abroad as an exchange student involves immersing into the culture, interact, and develop your intercultural competence. Participating in non-academic activities helps the student in the development of such competence at the time that makes smoother the adaptation process. Getting involved in the community, interacting, and practicing your intercultural competence is a way to improve. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this is still part of the training/learning process.

Knowledge about the re-adaptation process is also a need students have. Despite students did not receive much information about the topic, they did considered it relevant. The information received was mostly studies related, but it could be complemented with other topics. An important issue to consider is that it should be given on time; it should be up to date, and detailed. The re-adaptation process is also lived through the intercultural competence of the individual.

As the results showed more guidance or information is given to the students when going abroad than regarding their return home. In some cases students considered the re-adaptation process smoothly, in which case the lack of information is not a problem. In others, students considered the process not that easy and any information about it vital.

There are many changes students deal with when going back home. It might seem hard or not, but giving the students a panorama of what might happen would empower them to face the new changes. Therefore it would be important to give the students guidance related to the different stages that involve an exchange experience. Guidance

does not necessarily mean to engage in meetings or face-to-face training programs. It could consist on a guidebook, or even a small presentation.

Some of the respondents highlighted support groups as another primary need students have. These might include family, friends and other exchange students who are going through the same process or have been exchange students in the past. Students mentioned the idea of having the possibility to be in contact with people who is going abroad or have been abroad.

Giving students the sense of being supported, and having the possibility to contact the international affairs office, and other students is a form of assuring them the university has their back. It is also a manner of guaranteeing students all the doubts and questions that might appear along the way are going to be answered by experts, people that already went through the same process, or are experiencing an exchange process as well.

In general, the results showed students value all the information they can receive. It represents a way of being prepared, and to be more interculturally competent. They can gather it through many sources, but if it comes from the experts it will be a plus.

8.2 Intercultural communication situations experienced by higher-education exchange students

Throughout the exchange period students experience many cultural differences between their culture, the host culture, and the culture of other exchange students. Through their engagement in their new context, and their relations with others, students experience a series of situations which help them gain awareness, open-mindedness, and to see other worldviews and viewpoints. This process of adaptation allows one's worldview to expand, including *behaviour and values appropriate to the host culture*". (Bennett, 1998: 25)

The process on engaging in intercultural encounters is part of a personal, and cultural growth experience. As the results showed the experiences students went through helped them to see things differently, to appreciate what they have, and what other cultures have. Good and bad experiences, things they did and then learned they should not have done, or things they did as expected; all are part of the learning process that is going and living abroad.

Regarding the second research question, there are a few intercultural communication situations students commented. Among these is the language issue, uncovering the fact that despite you share a common language misunderstandings can occur. Due to regionalisms and slang some words or phrases might be misinterpreted or not understandable at all. Another issue commented by both exchange students coming into Costa Rica, and Costa Ricans traveling abroad, is time orientation. Many respondents reported noticing a difference between cultures' time orientation. Some cultures consider time very valuable while others think time is infinite so it is not that bad to be late all the time, or take your time to do things: not everything has to be done in a second.

Related to this is the difference about the confirmation of appointments. Having a lot in common with the idea of time orientation is the issue of directness versus indirectness, exemplified by the difference in treating appointments. Some of the respondents highlighted that while for some people it is necessary to confirm the date more than once, for others once you agreed to meet, it is binding.

Every teacher, and every course is different. When going abroad to another educational culture the difference can be even clearer. As showed by the results students experienced this difference in the academic life. Sometimes it was seen in a positive way, described as an easier way to communicate with the teacher and classmates. Some other times the teaching approach, the way in which the classmates addressed the teacher or their motivation in the classroom discouraged

students from participating. Students could enjoy a new and exiting academic life, or on the contrary might have to settle with an academic approach that limits them. They should be prepared for this challenges intercultural encounters can have.

As the results showed other intercultural communication situations students experienced had to do with people's directness or lack of it. For someone of an indirect culture people from more direct cultures might appear rude or impolite. On the other hand, people from more direct cultures might not understand what their counterpart from an indirect culture tries to communicate. Students should be aware of these differences and try to approach them in an assertive, open-minded, competent way.

8.3 Basic intercultural competencies to accomplish a successful exchange experience according to higher-education exchange students

Students answered the question related to intercultural competence sometimes directly, sometimes between the lines. According to them it is important to be motivated, to be open-minded, to be respectful, and to be culturally aware. Many respondents highlighted these aspects of intercultural competence, indicating that they are imperative when waiting to succeed during an exchange experience.

The process of going abroad initiates with the motivation to do so, students seek for a change and experiencing something new. This is the first basic intercultural competence students should have to accomplish a successful exchange experience. As Martin and Nakayama (2010) put it, intercultural competence requires motivation.

The respondents' views indicate that when going abroad students are aware of the change they are about to make, they know they will be estrangers in a new culture, they want to build new memories, and live new experiences. On the contrary, as the results

showed students are not always aware how hard can be going back home.

Some of the respondents highlighted that after the exchange they are conscious of the social pressures awaiting them. On this regard, Martin and Nacayama (2010) indicate "*international students who return home also talk about how their friends and families expect them to be a little different […] but basically the same as before*". (p. 333) They can become aware of the various pressures when returning home, and along with their re-gained responsibilities, and the friendships and experiences left behind, this can make the process harder than expected.

The results of this study indicate that it cab be particularly important to guide students in the return home stage of the exchange process, advising them about the possible shock they might have upon returning home. It is important to try to make them aware of their home country's culture, and what might be awaiting them. According to Martin and Nakayama (2010) "*sometimes this adaptation is even more difficult because it is so unexpected*". (p. 331) They attribute this, in part, to the idea that "*the person who returns home is not the same person who left home*". (Martin and Nakayama, 2010: 332)

8.4 Basic aspects of an intercultural competence framework for a training plan for higher-education exchange students

Considering a future training program, it is necessary to pay attention to the selection of the trainer. This is due to the fact that as Clements and Jones (2008) stated, depending on the facilitator different aspects of the training program might change. Having a facilitator who can create rapport with the students will help in the dynamic of the training, and also to have a good work environment free of pressures and judgmentalism, ideal for an intercultural training.

A dynamic and participative training can help the trainees to be more involved, one that includes strategies promoting hearing,

seeing, questioning, doing, and teaching. (Silverman, 2006) At the same time it helps in the learning process, because by making people having an experiential learning the process of gaining and applying new knowledge is enhanced. Despite of this, it is necessary to have appropriate resources and to take into account the amount of time students have available for this kind of activities. Having in mind compulsory activities are not as well received as voluntary ones.

As the results showed, miscellaneous information should be included in the training, teaching students some habits and/or behaviours will lead them to behave more competently. (Ting-Toomy, 2007) This should be done not just in order to help students by providing them with information they mentioned as important, but also to help in the process of internationalisation of the university. Providing students with such information will contribute by improving and presenting a good image of the institution to the world.

The proposed framework is suitable to be considered when designing a training plan. It is shaped considering only students' needs gather as result of the study. A complete training plan should also take into consideration the International Affairs Office point of view, regulations, and resources.

9 CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study encompasses the information presented throughout the study aiming to pursue further and more in-depth research. From this perspective a general conclusion will be given. It was obtained after analyzing all the information and the study in general.

The chapter is divided in two. The first section consists of a general evaluation of the study. The second one will discuss the conclusion reached after the study was completed.

9.1 Evaluation of the Study

The process of the study was not without problems. It started up looking forward to analyse more in depth the relationship of the students with the personal of the International Affairs Office. Looking into the perception students have about the intercultural competence of the staff, and complementing it with the self-perception of the personnel of the office. Due to unforeseen reasons this was not possible. Because the study was already well advanced, it was decided to change the perspective and focused it on the students.

Even though the information was retrieved successfully, if attempting a work like this it would be advisable complementing the questionnaire with interviews. This would allow having a deeper knowledge of the target group experiences and viewpoints. In hindsight, it would have been good to include among the questions a

space for contact information. It would have permitted a second contact with at least some of the students, in order to deepen the inquiry into topics considered important, or clarifying answers or concepts.

Another valuable approach would be to take into consideration the perspective of the personnel of the International Affairs Office. Their experience would enrich greatly the final goal of the study. At the same time, the Office could benefit of the study not just by the results of it, but also because of the reflection about past events needed to complement the data.

Overall, the study would benefit of a more in depth analysis. But, as a first approach under the particularities of the case, it presents a good panorama that could be taken as base for future studies. As an exploratory approach, the proposition here made will serve to pursue further inquiry, (Yin, 2003) a more in depth analysis would allow drawing more than just guidelines. With the information of both sides, knowing not just the needs of the students, but also the possibilities of the International Affairs Office would be possible to create a tailored design that meets both parts.

If attempting to design a training plan fulfiling student needs in intercultural competence (under the particular context of this case study) it is necessary to gather more information. To achieve a full design, it is necessary not just to consider students' needs; it is necessary to take into account other perspectives, such as that of the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE), as well as receiving universities staff and students in the case of Costa Ricans going abroad.

It would be fundamental to consider the Office resources, needs, and regulations under which it operates, as well as its objectives and duties. Following the contextuality that is part of the case. Acknowledging, "*cases are shaped by their many contexts [... and that] relationships between contexts and cases (and among cases) are interdependent and reciprocal*". (Mabry, 2008: 217) All in all, it would have been good to

be able to guide this study more into the direction of action research. Unfortunately this was not possible during this process.

9.2 General Conclusion

The internationalisation process needs interculturally competent individuals. It requires open-minded, culturally aware people. Therefore, it is important to try to develop and improve people's competence for them to engage in successful intercultural encounters.

Despite the study focuses on exchange students it is necessary to go beyond. Strategies should target as well students on campus and academic and administrative staff of the universities. Sensitization should be made about interculturality among the academic community, especially in the least developed countries.

Focusing on intercultural training the willingness to be competent is shown in the eager of students to gather information. It is seen in phrases such as "*there is never too much information*". Seeking information could be perceived like an action students have to empower themselves, gain knowledge in the other culture, and become aware of cultural differences.

After the exchange, students become experts that can help others. Students' stories, and experiences might be helpful to new exchange students. Despite of that, it is always important to have in mind that people, and cultures evolve, and situations differ from person to person, and from culture to culture. What was true in a point on time might not be in another. Therefore students' experiences can be taken as a reference, trying to make the best out of them to be interculturally competent. But there is no better way to become interculturally competent than just going and experiencing the culture, and experiencing by yourself what others have told you.

It is perceived how when students look in retrospective their exchange they become more aware, and give value to cultural

differences. Being more competent helps to engage in more successful intercultural interactions. It helps to discern the most appropriate responses, behaviours, and in general it gives the person a sense of security leading their action course.

The study helps to understand the target group. At the same time, this understanding might help to improve intercultural encounters in which the target might get engaged. This is of particular importance when thinking of the current relevance of internationalisation of higher education.

There is still much to be done regarding the internationalisation process. Latin America and other regions should follow the lead of Europe on this topic. It is necessary not just to forge intercultural competent people, but also to give more facilities to students coming as part of an academic exchange.

More academic offer in a second language, credit recognition, harmonization of degrees are a must. Such facilities would help to improve the internationalisation process on campus. At the same time they would attract more people to come to the region, enhancing the image of the university and the country worldwide.

REFERENCES

Albert, R.D. (1995). The intercultural sensitiser/culture assimilator as a cross-cultural training method. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods (Vol. 1)* (pp. 157-167). USA: Intercultural Press.

Altbach, P.G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalisation of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education,* Vol. 11, N°3/4, pp. 290-305. DOI: 10.1177/1028315307303542

Arambewela, R. (2010). Student experience in the globalised higher education market: Challenges and research imperatives. In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives.* (pp. 155 - 173) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Aronson, J. (1994). A Pragmatic View of Thematic Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 2, N°1. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/BackIssues/QR2-1/aronson.html

Bassett, R.M. (2010). International organisations and the tertiary education sector: Understanding UNESCO, the OECD, and the World Bank linking-pin organisations. In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives.* (pp. 278 - 290) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Bennett, J.M., Bennett, M.J., & Landis, D. (2004) Introduction and Overview. In Landis, D., Bennett, J.M., & Bennett, M.J. (Eds.). *Handbook of Intercultural Training (3ed ed.).* California, USA: Sage Publications.

Bennett, M.J. (1998). Intercultural Communication: A current perspective. In Bennett, M.J. (Ed). Basic *Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected readings*. Boston: Intercultural Press.

Bielby, P. (2008). International library of ethics, law, and the new medicine. (Vol. 40): Competence and Vulnerability in Biomedical Research. Dordrecht, Holanda: Springer.

Bray, T. (2006). Training Design Manual: The Complete Practical Guide to Creating Effective and Successful Training Programmes. London, GBR: Kogan Page Ltd.

Brislin, R.W. (1995). The culture-general assimilator. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 1) (pp. 169-177). USA: Intercultural Press.

Brown, C., & Knight, K. (1999). Introduction to self-awareness inventories. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 19-30). USA: Intercultural Press.

Byram, M. (2000) Assessing intercultural competence in language teaching. Sprogforum, No. 18, Vol. 6. Retrieved from http://inet.dpb.dpu.dk/infodok/sprogforum/Espr18/byram.html

Byram, M. (2009). Afterword: Education, training and becoming critical. In Feng, A., Byram, M., & Fleming, M. (Eds.). *Becoming interculturally competent through education and training* (pp. 211 - 213). Bristol, GBR: Cromwell Press Group.

Campina-Bacote, J. (2002). The process of cultural competence in the delivery of healthcare services: A model of care. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 13,*181-184.

Cesevičiūtė, I., & Minkutė-Henrickson, R. (2002). Developing student's intercultural communicative competence: towards effective university learning environments. Socialiniai mokslai No. 4 Vol 36.

Chen, G.M., & Starosta, W.J. (2005). Foundations of Intercultural Communication. Maryland, U.S.A.: University Press of America.

Clements, P. E., & Jones, J. (2008). Diversity Training Handbook (3rd Edition). London, GBR: Kogan Page Ltd.

Competence. (n.d.). In Oxford Dictionaries online. Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/competence

Council of Europe. (2009). Key competences for diversity. Diversity and inclusion: challenges for teacher education. *Final conference of the Council of Europe Project "Policies and Practices for Teaching Sociocultural Diversity".* 26 – 28 October 2009, Oslo: Norway.

Creswell, J.W., Carroll Klassen, A., Plano Clark, V.L., & Clegg Smith, K. (n.d.). Best Practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences. *Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. National*

Institute of Health. Retrieved from http://obssr.od.nih.gov/scientific_areas/methodology/mixed _methods_research/pdf/Best_Practices_for_Mixed_Methods_R esearch.pdf

De Leeuw, E. (2008). Self-administrated questionnaires and standardized interviews. In Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L., & Brannen, J. (Eds.). The SAGE handbook of social research methods. (pp. 313 - 327). GB: SAGE Publications.

De Moura Castro, C., & Levy, D.C. (1997). Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: A strategy paper. Washington: Inter-American Development Bank.

Directorate for Education. (2012-2013). OECD work on education: brochure. Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation. Retrieved from http://oecdmybrochure.org/edu/handle.php

Education. (n.d.). In Oxford Dictionaries online. Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/education?q=educat ion

Enders, J., & Westerheijden, D.F. (2011). The Bologna Process: from the national to the regional to the global, and back. In King, R., Marginson, S., & Naidoo, R. (Eds.). *Handbook on globalisation and higher education*. (pp. 469 - 484).UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Fantini, A.E. (1993). Focus on process: An examination of the learning and teaching of intercultural communicative competence. In Gochenour, T. (Ed.). *Beyond experience: The experiential approach to cross-cultural education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 45-54) Maine, U.S.A.: Intercultural Press.

Fëdorov, A. N. (2009). Internationalisation in view of Central American higher education. Bulletin IESALC reports on higher education, N° 211. Retrieved from http://www.iesalc.unesco.org.ve/index.php?option=com_cont ent&view=article&id=2424:internacionalizacion-en-la-mira-de-la-educacion-superior-centroamericana&catid=126:noticias-paginanueva&Itemid=712&lang=en

Fielding, J. & Fielding, N. (2008). Synergy and synthesis: Integrating qualitative and quantitative data. In Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L. & Brannen, J. (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of social research methods*. (pp. 555 - 571). GB: SAGE Publications.

Fleming, M. (2009). Introduction. In Feng, A., Byram, M., & Fleming, M. (Eds.). *Becoming interculturally competent through education and training* (pp. 1 - 12). Bristol, GBR: Cromwell Press Group.

Foskett, N. (2010). Global markets, national challenges, local strategies: the strategic challenge of internationalisation. In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (pp. 35 - 50) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (2010). The internationalisation of higher education: A prospective view. In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (pp. 305 - 317) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Fowler, S.M., & Blohm, J.M. (2004). An analisys of methods for intercultural training. In Landis, D., Bennett, J.M., & Bennett, M.J. (Eds.). *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3ed ed.) (pp. 37 - 84). California, USA: Sage Publications.

Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (1995). Introduction. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 1) (pp. xi-xviii). USA: Intercultural Press.

Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M.G. (1999). Small group exercises as intercultural training tools. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 113-121). USA: Intercultural Press.

Gacel-Ávila, J. (2000). La internacionalización de las universidades mexicanas: Políticas y estrategias institucionales. México: ANUIES.

Gacel-Ávila, J. (2004). La internacionalización de la Educación superior en América Latina: el caso de México. *Cuaderno de Investigación en la Educación*. No. 19. Retrieved from http://cie.uprrp.edu/cuaderno/ediciones/19/index.htm

Gacel-Ávila, J. (2007). The process of internationalisation of Latin American higher education. *Journal of studies in international education*. Vol. 11, N°3/4, pp. 400 – 409. DOI: 10.1177/1028315307303921

Gacel-Ávila, J., Jaramillo, I.C., Knight, J., & De Wit, H. (2005). The Latin American way: Trends, issues, and directions. In De Wit, H., Jaramillo, I.C., Gacel-Ávila, J., & Knight, J. (Eds.). *Higher education in Latin America: The international dimension*. (pp. 341 - 368). U.S.A.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

Garson, G. D. (n.d.1). Case Studies. Quantitative Research in Public Administration. North Carolina State University. Retrieved from http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/cases.htm

Garson, G.D (n.d.2). Participant Observation and Action Research. Quantitative Research in Public Administration. North Carolina State University. Retrieved from http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/particip.htm

González García, Y. (2011). VII Informe Annual de Labores 2010-2011. Universidad de Costa Rica. Retrieved from http://www.rectoria.ucr.ac.cr/informe/index.php?option=com_phocadownload&view=category&id=5:informes-rectoria&Itemid=32

Gottlieb Berney, M. (1999). Field studies: Individual and group trips, expeditions, and hunts. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 175-183). USA: Intercultural Press.

Grant, J. (1999). The incapacitating effects of competence: A critique. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*. Vol. 4, pp. 271–277. DOI 10.1023/A:1009845202352

Guido Guido, E., & Guzmán Aguilar, A. (2012). Criteria for the internationalisation of university curricula. *Revista Actualidades Investigativas en Educación*. Vol. 12, N° 1, pp. 1-25. Retrieved from http://revista.inie.ucr.ac.cr/uploads/tx_magazine/criterios-para-internacionalizar-curriculum-universitario-guido-guzman.pdf

Hager, P., & Gonczi, A. (1996). Professions and competencies. In R. Edwards, R., Hanson, A., & Raggatt, P. (Eds.). *Boundaries of Adult Learning* (Volume 1 in the Adult Learners, Education and Training series). London: Routledge.

Hammer, M.R., Bennet, M.J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: The intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. Vol 27, pp. 421 -443. DOI: 10.1016/S0147-1767(3)00032-4

Harkness, J.A., Villar, A., & Edwards, B. (2010) Translation, Adaptation, and Design. In Harkness, J.A., Braun, M., Edwards, B. Johnson, T.P., Lyberg, L. Mohler, P.P., … Smith, T.W. (Eds.). Survey methods in multinational, multiregional, and multicultural contexts. (pp. 117 - 140). USA: Wiley.

Holm-Nielsen, L., Thorn, K., Brunner, J.J., & Balán, J. (2005). In De Wit, H., Jaramillo, I.C., Gacel-Ávila, J., & Knight, J. (Eds.). *Higher education in Latin America: The international dimension*. (pp. 39 - 69). U.S.A.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

IBSTPI® (n.d.). Competencies. Retrieved from http://www.ibstpi.org/competencies.htm

INEC Costa Rica. (2012) Datos del País. Retrieved from http://www.inec.go.cr/Web/Home/pagPrincipal.aspx

Jack, G. (2009). A critical perspective on teaching intercultural competence in a management department. In Feng, A., Byram, M., & Fleming, M. (Eds.). *Becoming interculturally competent through education and training* (pp. 95 - 114). Bristol, GBR: Cromwell Press Group.

Jaramillo, I.C., & Knight, J. (2005). Key actors and programs: Increasing connectivity in the region. In De Wit, H., Jaramillo, I.C., Gacel-Ávila, J., & Knight, J. (Eds.). *Higher education in Latin America: The international dimension*. (pp. 301 - 339). U.S.A.: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

Kim, Y.Y. (2001). Becoming intercultural. California, U.S.A.: Sage Publications.

Knight, J. (2006). Higher education crossing borders: A guide to the implications of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) for cross-border education. France: COL/UNESCO

Kraemer, A.J. (1999). A method for developing deep cultural self-awareness through intensive practice: a retrospective. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 225-239). USA: Intercultural Press.

Lacy, L., & Trowbridge, J. (1995). Using the case study as a training tool. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 1) (pp. 187-195). USA: Intercultural Press.

Le Deist, F.D., & Winterton, J. (2005). What Is Competence?. *Human Resource Development International*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 27 – 4. DOI: 10.1080/136788604200033822

Levy, J. (1999). Intercultural training design. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 1-15). USA: Intercultural Press.

Lindlof, T.R., & Taylor, B.C. (2002). Qualitative Communication Research Methods (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage

Lloyd, Marion. (2010). Lack of Financing is cited as the top obstacle to internationalisation. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Lack-of-Financing-Is-Cited-as/125079/

Lussier, D. (2007). Theoretical bases of a conceptual framework with reference to intercultural communicative competence. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. vol 4,3. DOI : 10.1558/japl.v4i3.309

Lustig, M.W., & Koester, J. (2010): Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures. International Edition. 6th Ed. Pearson Education, USA.

Mabry, L. (2008). Case study in social research. In Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L., & Brannen, J. (Eds.). The SAGE handbook of social research methods. (pp. 214 - 227). GB: SAGE Publications.

Mansson, D.H., & Myers, S.A. (2009). A Reexamination of Swedish and American College Students' Communicative Attributes. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*. Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 9–22. DOI: 10.1080/17475750903381622

Maringe, F. (2010). The Meanings of Globalisation and Internationalisation in HE: Findings from a World Survey. In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (pp. 17 - 34) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Maringe, F., & Foskett, N. (2010). Introduction: Globalisation and universities. In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (pp. 1 - 13) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Marmolejo, F. (2010, October 22). Internationalisation of higher education: the good, the bad, and the unexpected. *The chronicle of higher education*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/blogs/worldwise/internationalisation-of-higher-education-the-good-the-bad-and-the-unexpected/27512

Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T.K. (2010). Intercultural Communication in contexts (5th ed.). USA: McGraw Hill.

McCaffery, J.A. (1995). The Role-Play: A powerful but difficult training tool. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 1) (pp. 17-25). USA: Intercultural Press.

McIntyre, L.J. (2005). Need to know: Social science research methods. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

McNiff, J., Lomax, P., & Whitehead, J. (1996). You and your action research project. UK: Routledge Falmer.

Method. (n.d.). In Oxford Dictionaries online. Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/method?q=method

Meyer, M. (1991) Developing transcultural competence: Case studies of advanced foreign language learners. In D. Buttjes and M. Byram (eds) *Mediating Languages and Cultures* (pp. 136_158). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Mollis, M. (2011). The invisible topics on the public agenda for higher education in Argentina. In King, R., Marginson, S., & Naidoo, R. (Eds.). *Handbook on globalisation and higher education*. (pp. 306 - 323).UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Pellegrino, A. (2001). Trends in Latin American skilled migration: "Brain drain" or "Brain exchange"?. *International migration*, vol. 39 (5), pp. 111-132. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2435.00174/pdf

Penington, B., & Wildermuth, S. (2005). Three Weeks There and Back Again: A Qualitative Investigation of the Impact of Short-term Travel/Study on the Development of Intercultural Communication Competency. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*. Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 166-183.

Pusch, M.D. (2004). Intercultural Training in Historical Perspective. In Landis, D., Bennett, J.M., & Bennett, M.J. (Eds*.). Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3ed ed.) (pp. 13 - 36). California, USA: Sage Publications.

Rathje, S. (2007). Intercultural Competence: The Status and Future of a Controversial Concept. *Language and Intercultural Communication* Vol. 7, No. 4. DOI: 10.2167/laic285.0

Renwick, G.W. (1999). Culture-Specific Training: China. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (285 - 321). USA: Intercultural Press.

Routio, P. (2007). Planning an empirical Study. Arteology, the science of products and professions. The Aalto University School of Art and Design. Retrieved from http://www2.uiah.fi/projects/metodi/144.htm

Ruben, B.D., & Stewart, L.P. (2006).Communication and human behaviour (5th ed.). Boston, U.S.A.: Pearson Education.

Salo-Lee, L. (2007). Towards cultural literacy. In Kaivola, T., & Melén-Paaso, M. (Eds.). *Education for global responsibility: Finnish perspectives*. Vol 31, pp 74-82. Finland: Publications of the Ministry of Education.

Scott, P. (2011). The university as a global institution. In King, R., Marginson, S., & Naidoo, R. (Eds.). *Handbook on globalisation and*

higher education. (pp. 59 - 75).UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Shen Qi. (2009) Case Study in Contemporary Educational Research: Conceptualisation and Critique. *Cross-cultural Communication*. Vol.5 (4), pp 21-31. Retrieved from http://cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/770

Silberman, M. (2006). Active training: a handbook of techniques, designs, case examples, and tips (3ed ed.). San Francisco, U.S.A.: Pfeiffer.

Silberstein, F.J., & Sisk, D.A. (1999). Visual imagery as a training tool. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 185-194). USA: Intercultural Press.

SINAES. (n.d.). Authorised Universities. Retrieved from http://www.sinaes.ac.cr/riacesen/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=136&Itemid=52

Sisk, D.A. (1995). Simulation games as training tools. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 1) (pp. 81-91). USA: Intercultural Press.

Spitzberg, B.H. (1983). Communication competence as knowledge, skill, and impression. Communication Education. Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 323-329. DOI: 10.1080/03634528309378550

Spitzberg, B.H., & Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence. In Deardorff, D.K. (Ed). *The Sage handbook of intercultural competence*, pp. 2-52. SAGE Publications: California, USA.

Stewart, E.C. (1995). Contrast-culture training. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 1) (pp. 47-57). USA: Intercultural Press.

Stewart, E.C., & Ohtake, J. (1999). Culture heroes in intercultural training. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 241-260). USA: Intercultural Press.

Storti, C. (1999). Cross-cultural dialogs. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 203-209). USA: Intercultural Press.

Taylor, J. (2010). The management of internationalisation in higher education. In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (pp. 97 - 107) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Ting-Toomy, S. (2007). Intercultural Conflict Training: Theory-Practice Approaches and Research Challenges. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*. Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 255–271. DOI: 10.1080/17475750701737199

Tomalin, B. (2009). Applying the principles: Instruments for intercultural business training. In Feng, A., Byram, M., & Fleming, M. (Eds.). *Becoming interculturally competent through education and training* (pp. 115 - 131). Bristol, GBR: Cromwell Press Group.

Training. (n.d.). In Oxford Dictionaries online. Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/training?q=training

Vulpe, T., Kealy, D. Protheroe, D., & MacDonald, D. (2000). A profile of the interculturaly effective person. Canada: Centre for Intercultural Learning: Canadian Foreign Institute.

Wheeler, D. (2012, February 2). The case against internationalisation. *The chronicle of higher education*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/blogs/planet/2012/02/02/the-case-against-internationalisation/

Wight, A.R. (1995). The critical incident as a training tool. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.). *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 1) (pp. 127-139). USA: Intercultural Press.

Wight, A.R. (1999). Cross-cultural analysis as a training tool. In Fowler, S.M., & Mumford, M. G. (Eds.), *Intercultural source book: Cross-Cultural training methods* (Vol. 2) (pp. 211-224). USA: Intercultural Press.

Wiseman, R.L. (2003). Intercultural Communication Competence. In Gudykunst, W.B. (Ed). *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication*. California, USA: Sage Publications.

Woodfield, S. (2010). Key trends and emerging issues in international student mobility (ISM). In Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (Eds.), *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education: Theoretical, Strategic and Management Perspectives*. (pp. 109 - 123) London, GBR: Continuum International Publishing.

Yin, R.K. (2003). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. USA: Sage Publications.

APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire: Regular students and exchange students

Dear Mr. /Mrs.:

The following questionnaire is part of a graduation project for the Master's Degree Program in Intercultural Communication from University of Jyväskylä – Finland. It aims to learn about your experiences and views regarding your period of academic exchange.

It is requested your voluntary participation by completing the following information. Completing the questionnaire will take a few minutes, and your responses will be completely anonymous.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Agreement Declaration

(   ) I hereby declare that my participation in this questionnaire is voluntary and the information provided is true.

Experiences and opinions

Complete in detail the requested information or mark the correct option.

1. Did you seek some kind of information regarding your exchange period?

( ) Yes

( ) No

2. What kind of information did you look for? You can mark more than one option.

( ) Adaptation into a new culture

( ) General information about the country

( ) Living expenses

( ) Housing

( ) Transportation

( ) Migratory procedures

( ) Information about the host university

( ) Information about education in the host country

( ) Other (please specify) _____

3. Did you receive some sort of guidance or training when preparing your exchange period?

( ) Yes

( ) No

4. The guidance received was provided by:

( ) Your home university

( ) The host University

( ) Both

( ) Other (please specify) _____

5. The guidance was in relation to:

You can mark more than one option.

( ) Adaptation into a new culture

( ) General information about the country

( ) Housing

( ) Transportation

( ) Migratory procedures

( ) Information about the host university

( ) Information about education in the host country

( ) Other (please specify) _____

6. According to your experience, the information received was:

	Completely Agree 4	Agree 3	Disagree 2	Completely Disagree 1
Sufficient				
Relevant				
Necessary				
Precise				
Timely				

7. Please explain your previous answers:

Sufficient

Relevant

Necessary

Precise

Timely

8. What kind of information do you think is more important to have at your disposal when preparing for a journey of academic exchange? You can mark more than one option.

( ) Adaptation into a new culture

( ) General information about the country

( ) Living expenses

( ) Housing

( ) Transportation

( ) Migratory procedures

( ) Information about the host university

( ) Information about education in the host country

( ) Other (please specify) _____

9. How difficult was for you to adapt during your exchange experience to your new life in a culture different than yours?

( ) Very difficult

( ) Difficult

( ) Somehow difficult

( ) Little difficult

( ) Not difficult

10. Please explain your answer

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Could you refer to a particular incident occurred during your experience abroad that you find particularly interesting or challenging? Explain in detail.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Did you receive some sort of guidance on the return to your home country?

( ) Yes

( ) No

( ) No, I am still abroad

13. The guidance you received was provided by:

( ) Your home university

( ) The host University

( ) Both

( ) Other (please specify) _____

14. The guidance was in relation to:

( ) Information about the logistics of your return

( ) Re-adapting to your culture

( ) Information about your studies

( ) Other (please specify) _____

15. According to your experience, the information received was:

	Completely Agree 4	Agree 3	Disagree 2	Completely Disagree 1
Sufficient				
Relevant				
Necessary				
Precise				
Timely				

16. Please explain your previous answers:

Sufficient

Relevant

Necessary

Precise

Timely

17. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is the most difficult and 1 is the least difficult. How difficult was for you to adjust back to life and studies at home?

	1	2	3	4	5	7	8	9	10
Difficult	()	()	()	()	()	()	()	()	()

18. Please explain your answer

General information

19. Gender:

( ) F

( ) M

20. Home country: _____

21. Relationship with the University of Costa Rica:

( ) Regular student of the University of Costa Rica

( ) Exchange student in Costa Rica

( ) Other (please specify): _____

22. Home university: _____

23. Period of study abroad (mm/yy – mm/yy): _____

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding the fore you may contact me by e-mail glenda.guillen-mora@jyu.fi

APPENDIX 2

ⁱ Ubicacion especifica en donde se encontraba la universidad (especialmente en Costa Rica, debido a que sus direcciones son muy particulares, ya que no son estructuradas y antes de ir al pais yo no lograba entenderlo. Por esta razon se me dificulto obtener informacion previa sobre posibles viviendas. (Student 1830755023)

ⁱⁱ les hizo falta darnos un poco mas de informacion actual que es a que es de mas interes (Student 1828139417)

ⁱⁱⁱ Hay muchas diferencias culturales a las que cuesta acostumbrarse, y hay poca orientación al respecto. (Student 1854061003)

^{iv} Tomar consciencia de que se descubrirán aristas de la propia persona de uno, que antes no se conocían, en un contexto diferente, con un estilo de vida diferente y personas nuevas, de diversos orígenes y creencias. 2- Lo que implica el regresar y desprenderse de lo real en los vínculos que se habían formado. (Student 1854214541)

^v Contacto con otros estudiantes de intercambio de los semestres anteriores (Student 1826319651)

^{vi} Experiencias de estudiantes que ya hayan terminado el proceso de intercambio. (Student 1826302682)

^{vii} Como dije arriba nunca sobra la información. (Student 1828897661)

^{viii} Sabían exactamente lo que los estudiantes necesitabamos saber. (Student 1854036383)

^{ix} A pesar de que mi decisión de regresar al país de origen fue inesperada, la información pudo ser entregada en un momento más adecuado (por ejemplo antes de partir). (Student 1853887704)

^x Naturalmente, las culturas eran casi totalmente diferente, pero también había similaridades. Y sí se quiere que la otra cultura era como

su misma, porque viajar? Creo que se nececita solamente un poco de curiosidad y la adaptación va a ser bastante fácil :-) (Student 1827873778)

xi Siento que hay varios factores que hacen que para algunas personas sea mas dificil que para otras pero despues de que uno deja de sentirse solo y comienza a vivir la experiencia y conocer gente, nadie quiere que llegue el final. (Student 1856315580)

xii Es algo difícil porque uno está lejos de su familia y afectos... el estar acompañada de otros estudiantes extranjeros lo hizo un poco más fácil. (Student 1828360212)

xiii El tema del lenguaje es importante ya que puede condicionar las relaciones sociales que se puedan crear en un contexto de intercambio. (Student 1854735521)

xiv Tuve problemas con los aspectos de lenguaje (regionalismos), alimentación, horas de luz de día, y también con la cuestión del cima. (Student 1828818758)

xv El solo hecho de aplicar para un intercambio nos obliga a ser conscientes de la necesaria apertura que debe tenerse a culturas, costumbres y habitos diferentes y diversos a los propios. Mi experiencia fue muy positiva ya que siempre existió mucho respeto, y lo más común fue el interés por el intercambio multicultural. (Student 1854586644)

xvi …el hecho de buscr algo en un pais sin calles y sin saber andar en el es muy dificil. (Student 1828139417)

xvii En conjunto, yo diría que lo que fue mas difícil fue adaptarme a la cultura (por ejemplo la importancia de la religión en la vida cotidiana de los costarricenses que hoy en día en Francia no tiene mucha influencia y entonces la manera de ver las cosas: "solo dios sabe"), al clima porque yo no estaba acostumbrada para nada a tanta lluvia y a terremotos y por fin a la inseguridad de la ciudad de San José porque siempre tenia que estar pendiente al momento de salir sola… (Student, 1826532233)

xviii Mi unversidad en casa no tenía nada de información sobre la universidad anfitrona, por eso llegué al país sin tener una idea de la organización, la cultura y nada. Además fue difícil saber antes cuál cursos puedo eligir en la UCR, porque no había una lista con todos los cursos con sus detalles. (Student 1826655089)

xix vives muy libremente sin las presiones sociales convencionales de tu país y tu familia. el ritmo de vida es muy distinto y regresas a tomar normas de una sociedad donde se espera algo determinado de ti, si regresas a vivir con tus padres de nuevo es complicada esa parte también, después de vivir sólo o con gente de tu edad (Student 1826399420)

xx Es que claro uno cambia mucho después de un año al extranjero es muy interesante notar que de toda manera a pesar de que uno vuelva a su país y entonces a un lugar familiar, le parece que ese lugar y esa gente ya no es familiar, tiene la sensación de que dentro de su propio país también tiene que volver a hacer esfuerzos para volver a acostumbrarse. Uno se siente como desubicado. (Student 1826532233)

xxi No me parece fácil porque la vida cotidiana es totalmente diferente, la manera de estudiar no tiene nada que ver con aquella,... y uno se cambia cuando está fuera del país por un tiempo. Yo pensé que será más difícil pero mis amigos me ayudaron mucho así que al final me ajusté muy rápido. (Student 1826425776)

xxii En realidad es tu país, necesitas un corto tiempo para volver a tu vida anterior en tu casa, pero con un poco de apoyo familia y de amigos tardas poco en conseguirlo. (Student 1826602094)

xxiii Fue INCREÍBLEMENTE DIFÍCIL. Estaba super triste, tyodo lo que había construido en un año, toda la independencia, toda la experiencia, se acabó de un día para otro. Fue como haber salido del nido para luego de un día para otro volver. Mis amigos ya estaban trabajando, estaba muy confundida sobre cuál era mi "norte". Toda mis perspectiva se había ampliado entonces estaba muy desorientada. Estuve así como 6 meses, hasta que poco a poco me adapté: encontré un trabajo, volví a establecer metas, me empecé a sentir a gusto en mi país… siempre que estaba triste procuraba ir a la playa y salir y hacer cosas que no haría si estuviera en Holanda, nada más que uno no se adapta de un día para otro. (Student 1858775056)

xxiv Llegando a San José, todavía en el avión, conocí a una pareja de ticos. Curiosos, me hicieron preguntas sobre los motivos de mi viaje y terminaron dándome su dirección y número de teléfono en caso de que necesitaba ayuda... Esta amabilidad me impactó mucho y es muy representativa de la gente del país. (Student 1826125297)

xxv Mi padre falleció durante mi intercambio. La Universidad fue muy comprensiva e inclusi me ayudaro en términos financieros para poder venir a CR, los profesores cambiaron exámenes de fecha y se me ofreció asesoría psicológica. Me sorprendió cuánta ayuda recibí y estoy

muy agradecida con la universidad y sus funcionarios. (Student 1856952634)

xxvi Como europea es típico que queremos tener todo bajo nuestro control. Si pasa algo raro nos ponemos nervioso, algo que nos diferencia de la mentalidad tica. Entonces si me pierdo o si no entiendo algo tengo ganas de ponerme nerviosa, pero sé que los ticos no entienden esa actitud. Por eso estoy aprendiendo de calmarme. Suave, suave!!!! (Student 1826405960)

xxvii Me pareció bastante diferente a la cultura tica el decirse las cosas de frente y ser confrontados de una forma en que los latinos no lo hacemos. Tuve que darme cuenta que esto no hacía que fueran maleducados o groseros, sino que por el contrario era su forma de mejorar la relación y expresar de verdad lo que les molestaba. (Student 1853901442)

xxviii Una amiga holandesa y yo quedamos el miercoles de hacer una pseo el domingo. Yo le dije que de fijo nos veíamos el domingo, pero, naturalmente, esperaba su confirmación. Como ella no me llamó ni yo a ella el viernes o sábado, asumí que no íbamos a ir. El domingo en la tarde, mientras yo estaba tomando una siesta, me llama diciendo que ya está en la estación, que dónde estaba yo. En Holanda, si uno establece una fecha y una hora, aunque uno no se vuelva a hablar hasta ese día, la fecha es fija. En mi cultura, necesitamos asegurarnos, porque uno en Costa Rica siempre dice: "sí, de fijo, jale!, yo me apunto" (Student 1858775056)

xxix Soy alemana, estudié dos semestres en Costa Rica. Cuando yo digo que llego a una hora a un lugar, llego a esa hora a ese lugar. Si pasa algo y no puedo llegar, me excuso. En Costa Rica funciona diferente. La gente nunca llega a la hora acordada o simplemene no llega sin excusarse. Hay que confirmar todas las citas dos o tres veces y la gente pregunta por una confirmacion dos o tres veces. Hasta el final de mi estadia no me acosumbré completamente a eso. (Student 1826054770)

xxx Por ejemplo para recibir la ayuda de la beca (el dinero) tuvimos que abrir una cuenta bancaria, lo cual era difícil porque no éramos nacionales y todos los bancos requerían documentos que solo los nacionales tenían. Además nos depositaron dos meses después de haber llagado por lo que ya casi no teníamos dinero ni para pagar la renta del apartamento (Student 1854763550)

xxxi Una vez en clase de polícia social, el profesor estaba tratando de que los y las estudiantes participaran, sin embargo parecían poco interesados/as en participar. De manera que me animé y comence una intervención que se extendió por algunos minutos… aunuqe el profesor

trató con preguntar de involucrar a otros/as estudiantes, no pasó, al cabo de algunos minutos un estudiante tomó la palabra y dijo:-profesor, podríamos seguir la clase y si usted y la compañera de intercambio desean seguir charlando pueden tomar un café después de clase.   Fue muy molesto para mi comprobar que no existía interés de parte de estos estudiantes por hacer un intercambio conmigo, por lo cual procuré estos espacios, fuera del espacio académico. (Student 1854295967)

xxxii Me gustó mucho el sistema europeo de clases más prácticas, grupos más pequeños y un sistema en la web en donde podían darse foros y donde los profesores subían los documentos e informaciòn necesaria. (Student 1854036383)