

Global Competency Reflective Essay

Global competency was something I thought about but never focused on before my study abroad experience. I thought that since I was a citizen of Canada I should focus on Canadian relations and culture. Before my learning on global competency, other cultures seemed more like characters to me. It was hard to contextualize them as being other people's lives and realities instead of a fun activity for the day. That changed however when I had my year abroad studying in France. While knowing about Canadian culture is still important, I see now that it is a component of a larger puzzle and there is so much more to learn.

To me global competency means empathy: empathy towards other people, towards other countries, and towards other cultures both outside of and inside of Canada. To be empathetic means to have the capacity to understand or feel what another is feeling, and to have the ability to place oneself in another's position. During my study abroad I spent a lot of time learning about other cultures, from visiting over ten countries, to participating in culture sharing activities. I saw how very different attitudes towards life can be across the world. I met people from many different countries. From the Yemen students I saw how even though their country is struggling, many of them had a deep pride for their country that made them want to better themselves so they could go back and help improve the situation for their populace. From my Korean friends I learned about the mandatory military service in their country and how this was just an accepted part of their duty to their society. During a cultural cooking night I attended, we were taught about the spiritual meaning behind Algerian family cooking. I made friends with a German who had a Turkish background and she shared with me how even though she was born in Germany people would often ask where she was from. This made her feel that they did not accept her as a "true German." To me this was eye-opening because I often asked people where they were from, as I saw it as a fun time to learn about their family's culture; she taught me how it can be intrusive and rude at times. I also had the privilege of sharing my Canadian lifestyle while abroad. This really made me look at our Canadian culture and I learned new facts and details about my own country through sharing it with others. Through all my acquaintances I learned that what I may see as completely backwards, to other people it is their norm. During my time abroad I saw how well all of us as international students got along because we just wanted to learn from each other and understand each other's points of view. Being open and empathetic towards each other fostered meaningful and enduring friendships.

When I returned to Canada I decided to put this new understanding into action by learning about others. I first focused on Canada and learned about our Indigenous peoples. I learned a lot about how they have been stifled and not allowed to participate in their own culture. I then expanded and began learning about how incoming cultures influence Canadian culture. I also learned about how other cultures act and deal with problems in their own countries. Through all my global learning I now better understand that all cultures have good and bad sides; they are complex and ever-changing. As Canadians we are proud to be a mosaic of cultures and I believe it is important that we keep fostering this by learning about other people's cultures and keeping our minds open to new and differing points of view.

Today the world is more interconnected than it has ever been as more people are studying, working, and living in other countries. As we continue down this path of global connection it is important that we strive to understand the diversity of cultures so that we may better communicate and create relationships with others. Learning from others gives us the ability to adapt to new and diverse situations. As a global community we should learn from each other and share in the knowledge we gain.

My goal is to be an educator, and I plan on continuing my global learning and have it influence my future as a teacher. I hope to foster ideas of empathy and understanding in a global world that can sometimes be a lot to take in. I hope to show students that different is not scary, and it can be exciting and eye-opening. Being a globally minded person is not a stagnant state of being. One always must be learning, rethinking, and growing. I know that I am just starting on my global learning journey, and I know it will be a lifelong progress, but I am looking forward to growing every day as a person in this regard.