ERIK VAN 'T KLOOSTER

Travel to Learn

The Influence of Cultural Distance on Competence Development in Educational Travel

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The influence of cultural distance on competence development in educational travel

Reizen om te leren

De invloed van culturele afstand op competentieontwikkeling tijdens educatieve reizen

Thesis

To obtain the degree of Doctor from the
Erasmus University Rotterdam
by command of the
rector magnificus

Prof.dr. H.A.P. Pols

and in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board

The public defense shall be held on
Friday 6 June 2014 at 11:30 hours

by

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Born in **Laren (Noord Holland)**

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Erasmus Research Institute of Management – ERIM
The joint research institute of the Rotterdam School of Management (RSM)
and the Erasmus School of Economics (ESE) at the Erasmus University Rotterdam
Internet: http://www.erim.eur.nl

ERIM Electronic Series Portal: http://hdl.handle.net/1765/1

ERIM PhD Series in Research in Management, 312
ERIM reference number: EPS-2014-312 - MKT
ISBN 978-90-5892-363-9
© 2014, Erik van't Klooster

Design: B&T Ontwerp en advies www.b-en-t.nl

This publication (cover and interior) is printed by haveka.nl on recycled paper, Revive®.
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Certifications for the paper and the printing production process: Recycle, EU Flower, FSC, ISO14001.
More info: http://www.haveka.nl/greening

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

Although the process of globalization has been going on for several centuries, recent innovations in transport and communication technologies seem to have almost put the world in our backyard (Friedman 2005; Sheller & Urry 2006). We can now travel to exotic locations, almost in a snap of the finger. In the realm of business, a common language (English), ICT and travel systems, make it easier to exploit new market opportunities. International trade is becoming part and parcel of many companies' profiles. Global exports of goods and services doubled between 1995 and 2006 to reach over US$14 trillion. During this period a shift in growth patterns was also evident, with developing countries performing very well with a growth of 190% (UNCTAD 2008)[1]. Communication technologies and the media play a large role in how we perceive the world around us, overloading us with information about economic, political, cultural and social issues across the globe (van de Meent 2009). As a result, both travel and the media increasingly influence our worldviews, showing the potential opportunities and benefits which globalization offers, while at the same time the majority of people and the decisions they make in everyday life still play at the local scale.

Besides an increased awareness of opportunities, the global-local synthesis has also resulted in a heightened sense of uncertainty in the (globally) distributed workplace, nurtured by the awareness of ambiguous situations due to the disembeddedness of time and place, contradictions in cultural values and shifting political interests, for example, as Chinese organizations take ownership of western companies or US debt (AWT 2012; van Baalen 2012). Also, the occurrence of unexpected chain reactions due to global interdependence, for example caused by the financial crisis, make people experience a loss of control. Furthermore, immigration and labour mobility have a severe impact on people's sense of economic security, although it is not always clear whether this sentiment is realistic or manifest of the fear that is projected upon 'the Other'. Consumer lifestyles are constantly evolving by fusing local and global identities from all around the world, but

[1] Seven developing countries in particular have contributed to this trend: Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China, South Africa, Mexico, and South Korea.

these interactions can also be detrimental to identity formation processes (United Nations 2004). Trust in others is also becoming increasingly contested due to the global media revealing information that used to remain hidden, such as malpractices behind the walls of once highly-respected institutional identities. Hence, the uncertainties related to globalization are not only applicable to material matters and the world of work, but also affect negatively people's sense of ontological security, meaning a fundamental sense of predictability of who they are and what they can expect of others[2].

All in all, the intensification of worldwide social relations leads to a much more interdependent dynamic, competitive and unpredictable landscape, than we have seen before in history (Cent, 50 and Green 2009; Giddens 1991). While pragmatism and intuitive reactions are often practiced during decision making in complex situations (Mintzberg and Westley 2001; Postma 2009), this research project makes an effort to identify in a more methodological way the competencies that individuals need to make sense of globalization, and overcome both personal and societal myopia.

The starting premise of the present investigation is that educational institutes take an active role in preparing students for this global reality (Hanvey 1978). The internationalization of education can be defined as "a process that prepares the community for successful participation in an increasingly interdependent world" (British Columbia Council cited in: Knight & de Wit 1995). For much of the 1990s, business schools around the world were taking initiatives to internationalize their business curriculum, programmes and courses (Arpan & Kwok 2002). Nowadays, global business school ranking criteria such as those of the Financial Times emphasize the importance of internationalization[3].

[2] Ontological security refers to a "person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety" (Giddens 1991: 38–39). "Stated in simple terms, ontological security is a security of being, a sense of confidence and trust that the world is what it appears to be. Trust of other people is like an emotional inoculation against existential anxieties. Giddens concept relied on Erikson (1950), whose approach to identity signifies the closeness between identity and security. Identity, in Erikson's work, is seen as an anxiety-controlling mechanism reinforcing a sense of trust, predictability, and control in reaction to disruptive change by reestablishing a previous identity or formulating a new one" (Kinnvall 2004: 746).

[3] http://rankings.ft.com/businessschoolrankings/rankings

In recent years, educational travel activities have become more popular among students. Examples of educational travel activities include study tours, studying abroad and international internships (Kaufman et al. 2011). These educational travel programs often have several goals: (a) developing competitive professional expertise, (b) fostering international understanding and security, (c) personal growth and (d) general philosophical development[4] (Coelho 1962). In contrast to regular classroom lectures, educational travel activities provide students with an experiential learning opportunity to apply learned theories, master their skills and deal in real-time with the consequences of their management decisions (Paul & Mukhopadhyay 2004). Although educational travel can probably still be characterized as a privilege of the elite, the number of participating students is growing, although data on the sector is not comprehensive (Teichler 2004). For example, the OECD estimated that while in the year 2000 1.8 million students studied at a foreign university, by 2010 this figure had grown to 4.1 million. It is predicted that more than 6 million students will be involved in 2020 (O'Reilly 2010; OECD 2012). StudentMarketing CEO Samuel Vetrak presents an even more positive picture, claiming that in 2012 about 82 million trips with an educational component were taken by youth travellers (Custer 2013).

1.2 Focus

Although the educational travel sector has seen significant growth over the past decades it still somewhat remains unclear what the relevance is in terms of competence development. Recruiters and employers do not automatically value an experience abroad and may sometimes see it merely as "backpacking through Europe" (Fischer 2010). Hence, higher education institutes could benefit from reflecting upon what students actually learn from these experiences and what they should learn (Dolby & Rahman 2008; Dunkley 2009; Forsey et al. 2012; Heuts 2011; Stronkhorst 2005; Teichler 2010). College career-office staff members rarely know much about overseas study or its employment value, while study-abroad advisers are typically focused on getting students abroad, not on what happens once they return. This lack of understanding also makes it difficult for the

[4] General philosophical development involves the student using comparative experience in other societies as a preparation for intelligent participation in his or her own society (Abrams 1979).

students themselves to articulate to future employers the competencies that they acquired abroad (Fisher 2010; Tillman 2011). As one Head of Human Resources (HR) of a major global company explains: “The value of any study would depend on what was studied and where and for how long, but most importantly, the value that employers will put on it depends on how the graduates themselves articulate the added value that overseas study has given them” (Fielden et al. 2007: 15 cited in: King et al. 2010).

Martin Tillman, a higher-education consultant, points out "We're moving from the idea that study abroad is inherently a good thing […] to thinking more about the utilitarian benefits of going overseas" (cited in Fischer 2010). Moreover, several corporate recruiters emphasized during a roundtable discussion with educational institutes that they “really need people with international experience, not just study abroad" in order to gain a competitive advantage in the global economy (McMurtrie 2010). For example, Reuber and Fischer (1997) show that internationally experienced management teams of SME’s in the Canadian software industry have a greater propensity to develop foreign strategic partners and to delay less in obtaining foreign sales after start-up, and that these behaviours are associated with a higher degree of internationalization. Both the international internship and international research project[5] seem particularly worth examining here as they hold the potential to develop professionally relevant international competencies (Geringer & Pendergast 2010; Johnson 2005; Kaufman et al. 2011). This means that an investigation into competencies should not only look at the study abroad segment but also at how other types of educational travel affect the learning of competencies.

This research project has a specific focus on business students. This target population can readily be justified since business and management students are one of the largest groups engaged in educational travel (AIESEC 2011; Alfranseder et al. 2011). It is interesting to explore what practical business competencies these students develop during their educational travel experiences, but, from an ontological perspective, research should also look at more tacit competencies such as cross-cultural competencies and personal

[5] A program run by the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University similar to a global marketing practicum or global marketing programme. It is a part-time marketing consultancy project where students advise a real life business client on market opportunities in a foreign country (see chapter 2 and 6 for more details).

development. The latter types of competencies are needed to maintain a sense of ontological security while being confronted with different cultural values and customs (embodied in the concept of cultural distance[6]). In the end the insights from this research project will be used for the design of learning programs related to educational travel experiences, which should ultimately help students to gain a better understanding of themselves and the world around them.

The aforementioned issues give rise to the following central research question:

"What competencies are developed through educational travel experiences, how are these affected by cultural distance, and what are the implications for learning programs?"

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of this research project are fourfold.

1. To explain the evolution of educational travel and provide a definition.
2. To develop a competence framework for educational travel experiences, with an additional focus on the influence of cultural distance on competence development.
3. To test and explore empirically the competence framework and influence of cultural distance for two types of educational travel activities: the international internship and international research project. In addition, with the help of this new information, I assess how these experiences compare to other types of educational travel in terms of competence development.
4. To provide recommendations to educational institutes regarding the design of learning programs, specifically in relation to dealing with cultural distance.

The following section elaborates on these four research objectives.

Objective 1: To explain the evolution of educational travel and provide its definition.

Research into the field of educational travel is scarce, fragmented and as a consequence lacks common understanding (Ritchie et al. 2003; Williams 2010). It is hard to find a

[6] The extent to which two cultures differ (Babiker et al. 1980).

historical background on educational travel as well as a generally accepted definition of what educational travel is about. As a result, describing the evolution of educational travel and its definition are necessary steps to better understand the research area of educational travel.

Objective 2: To develop a competence framework for educational travel experiences, with an additional focus on the influence of cultural distance on competence development.

To date it seems that assessments of educational travel programs have been sporadic and modest (Gillespie 2002). In general it is unclear exactly what the learning outcomes of educational travel are and what they should be. It is possible to formulate a number of explanations for the absence of a generally accepted competence framework. First, there is only a small amount of research available on the international activities of educational institutes, much of which is anecdotal in nature (Miao & Harris 2012; Williams 2005). Second, the topic has been approached from different research perspectives, with the focus split between travel, education, language, business, culture and politics (Dolby & Rahman 2008). As a result researchers don't always build upon each other's work or measure the same things (Coelho 1962; Nash 1976; Sell 1983; van den Hoven & Walenkamp 2013). This makes it difficult to compare the results of existing studies. Third, the models of competency that have been developed mainly focus on study abroad. Other types of educational travel, such as international internships and study tours have received far less attention. Finally, while many studies investigate cross-cultural competencies, other competencies, such as management competencies and personal development, are not always included (Lambert 1993; Stronkhorst 2005).

Educational institutes involved in designing educational travel programs could benefit from having access to a framework of competencies which integrates the conceptual approaches of earlier research. The research process will also make note of the factors that influence competence learning whilst abroad, as there is also a lack of understanding regarding this matter (Dyer et al. 2009; Horn and Fry 2013; Kiely 2005; Portela-Myers 2006). However, this research project will pay specific attention to the implications of

cultural values and cultural distance on the development of competencies. The concept of cultural distance represents the main difference between experiential learning programs at home and abroad. Furthermore, in order to optimize the validity of the theoretical framework it will be reflected upon with the empirical qualitative data gathered for this research.

Objective 3: To test and explore the competence framework for two types of educational travel activities: the international internship and international research project.

As noted there is a need for not only better understanding the competencies that students learn during educational travel experiences, but there is also a shift towards the professional benefits of educational travel experiences. Both the international internship and international research project seem particularly worth examining here. However, there is little research available on international internships. Still, it is clear that student participation in international internships has increased significantly over the past years (Chlou & Gliozzo 2011; Dwyer 2004; Lacey 2006 cited in: Kaufman et al. 2011). For example, AIESEC reports a growth from 1000 overseas internships in 1998 to more than 5000 in 2012 (AIESEC 2012). In general recruiters put a high value on work experience and internships (GMAC 2012; NACE 2011).

Equally, there is little formal documentation about international research projects (IRP), but business students acknowledge its learning potential (Dizik 2009; Johnson 2005; Kaufman et al. 2011). In this project students perform market research abroad for real-life companies. The companies sponsor the IRP for much the same reason that they participate in trade missions. They are interested in finding new contacts, exploring a foreign market, becoming aware of market opportunities, increasing brand awareness or strengthening an already existing position (Regioplan 2010). It is interesting to explore the international research project, not only to assess its professional relevance and whether it fosters international entrepreneurship, but also because students increasingly select shorter educational travel programs (Dwyer 2004). In 2010, more than half of all American students who travelled for the purposes of international education were on programs of

eight weeks or less (Fisher 2011). Another advantage of these short-term programs is that they are timetabled outside of the traditional semesters (typically during summer and/or winter breaks), meaning that they don't interfere with the students' regular academic program.

Besides getting an idea of the learning effects of both the international internship and international research project, further insight in this research area will be provided by comparing my findings with existing research on other types of educational travel such as study abroad and the study tour. With this information both students and educators can improve their decision making with regard to both the selection and design of educational travel programs.

Objective 4: To provide recommendations to educational institutes regarding the design of learning programs.

With the accumulated information from both the literature review and the empirical analyses, I will provide recommendations to educational institutes on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their educational travel programs. These recommendations will mainly concern the pedagogical process of educational travel experiences, and the influence of cultural distance, as more general factors for optimizing educational travel experiences are already discussed elsewhere (e.g. see Feldman & Bolino 2000; Hansel 1988; Kaufman et al. 2011; van den Hove & Walenkamp 2013). In practice there is still room for improvement in the development of a pedagogical framework for educational travel and cultural training often happens on an ad-hoc basis (Ciofalo 1989; Forsey et al. 2012; Hofstede 2003: 271; Maiworm and Teichler 2002; Ward et al. 2001).

1.4 Research approach

De Boer and Smaling (2011) identify three traditional research approaches: critical, positivist, and interpretive[7]. Critical research mainly focuses on social critique, e.g. the feminist movement, with the aim of illustrating the restrictive and alienating conditions of

[7] In addition they discuss more recent research approaches which often combine aspects of the traditional approaches: neorealistic, complexity, constrictive, postmodern, participatory and intuitive approach.

current social norms. Since my primary research objective is not to critique the status quo, I only focus on positivist and interpretive views. Research is positivist if there is evidence of a very structured approach by means of formal propositions, quantifiable measures of variables, hypothesis testing, and using a representative sample to draw inferences about a phenomenon and apply these to a broader population. By contrast, interpretive researchers seek to develop close connections with the research subjects in order to understand their life world and meaning perspectives. They often assume that our knowledge of reality is only gained through social constructions in which language plays an important role. The interpretive approach is often applied when a theory hasn't yet been developed and the disorganized nature of reality is still not conceptually understood. Lee (1991) explains that both perspectives have their own advantages and disadvantages and that positivism and interpretivism should not be perceived as opposing and mutually exclusive approaches. He argues that these two philosophical perspectives can be combined through triangulation. Triangulation allows researchers to dialectically tack between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structures in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view (Geertz, 1983: 69 cited in: van Fenema 2002).

It could be argued that, although the research project includes both quantitative and qualitative research methods, as a whole it is best typified as interpretive. The research field of educational travel is highly fragmented, lacks robust theories and the objectives of this research project have emerged over time. Klein and Myers (1999) propose a set of principles for conducting and evaluating interpretive research. The basic rationale for the application of such principles is to optimize the plausibility of the narrative of the research. The most fundamental principle is that of the hermeneutic circle, upon which the other principles expand. This principle means that the interpretation of a research area moves from a precursory understanding of the parts to the whole and from a global understanding of the whole context back to an improved understanding of each part. The hermeneutic cycle can embrace meanings that originate from both positivist and interpretivist types of research (Klein and Myers 1999: 77). My research trajectory over the past 8 years encompassed the investigation of fragmented practices and research perspectives in the educational travel sector in order to make sense of the bigger research area and, in the

process, find a focus in the learning of competencies. Furthermore, the development of the competence framework itself was an iterative process using both theoretical and empirical investigations, which in the presentation of this report is masked by a traditional academic structure.

The second principle is the contextualization principle which requires that the subject of the research is set in its social and historical context so that the intended audience can see how the current situation under investigation emerged. In order to address this principle, both chapter 1 and 2 discuss the historical evolution of trends and activities in educational travel and chapter 2 provides a definition for educational travel.

The principle of interaction between the researchers and the subjects requires the researcher to place himself or herself and the subjects into a historical perspective and emphasize transitions in thinking during the process. During the period 2005-2013 I conducted, alone or in collaboration with other researchers, five studies in the field of educational travel. In 2005 two research projects were started on competence learning through international internships. The results of the first project were published in the Annals of Tourism research[8] in 2008 and are republished in this research in chapter 5, with the articles' introduction, theoretical background and competence framework forming the basis for chapter 1, 2 and 4. In the other research project I was the second co-author and the results were published as a book chapter in 2008[9], and are here summarized in the literature review. Over the next two years I shifted the focus of my research to service delivery in educational travel in order to better understand how intern satisfaction and competency learning might be improved. In this light I collaborated with AIESEC International to (1) investigate positive and negative critical service incidents as perceived by international interns (Gremler 2004) and (2) analyze the organization from an internal perspective with the aid of the service performance gap theory (Parasuraman et al. 1990) (both unpublished). In 2011 I presented a full paper on the learning effects of international

[8] van 't Klooster, E., J. Van Wijk, F.M. Go and J. van Rekom (2008). Educational Travel: The Overseas Internship. Annals of Tourism Research 35 (3): 690-711.
[9] van Wijk, J., F. Go and E. van 't Klooster (2008). International Student Mobility. Cross-cultural learning from international internships. *In* Mobility and Local-Global Connections, P. Burns and M. Novelli (Eds.). CABI Publishing.

research projects at the Educational Travel Foundation Conference 2011 in Tallinn, Estonia[10]. This paper formed the basis for chapter 6. The focus of the research trajectory on both competence learning and service delivery lead to indecision as to what precisely should be the main topic of his dissertation. This lack of focus was also present on a more general level as I have an eclectic taste and great interest in the wider world which backfired in a lack of direction, further complicated by nervous illness. While recovering from nervous illness with the help of ideas derived from cognitive and behavioral psychology (Weekes 1969), I developed a deeper interest in the topic of learning and adapting in the global modern world. Naturally, the research area narrowed down to competence development, with more of a cognitive psychological perspective to it. First this resulted in the inclusion of schema theory in the theoretical framework. Second, in this research project the focus is perhaps more on understanding the conceptual 'landscape' of educational travel rather than providing students with ready-made solutions. This emphasis is in line with dr. Claire Weekes who deems the understanding of underlying cognitive processes behind complex and stressful experiences essential to sense making. Hence, my approach with regard to competence development is more based on problem-focused and meaning-focused coping and less on emotion focused coping strategies (Folkman & Moskowitz 2004). The idea is that both understanding and desensitization have a balancing effect on emotions, allowing for better decision making with regard to cross-cultural adaptation and personal development.

The principle of abstraction and generalization requires that theoretical abstractions and generalizations should carefully relate to the field study details as they were experienced and/or collected by the researcher. This is so readers can follow how the researcher arrived at his or her theoretical insights. Walsham (1995) argues that there are four types of generalizations from interpretive case studies: (a) the development of concepts, (b) the generation of theory, (c) the drawing of specific implications, and (d) the contribution of rich insight. While this research project contributes to all four types of generalization, it is

[10] van 't Klooster, E., F.M. Go and P.J. van Baalen (2011). Exploring new directions in a mature educational travel market: the international research project. The Educational Travel Foundation Conference 2011: Educational travel - Expanding Horizons. Tallinn, Estonia 19th - 21st August 2011.

the process of concept development that requires some clarification at this point in the report. This research trajectory started with two research projects on the learning effects of international internships. Since literature on international internships is scarce, the conceptualizations of management competencies and cross-cultural competencies were initially derived from widely accepted models in management and expatriate literature. Later on in the research trajectory, a literature review of educational travel research was performed which helped to validate our initial competence framework for the broader field of educational travel. My conceptualization of cross-cultural competencies was checked with theories regarding cross-cultural understanding, intercultural communication skills and international understanding, but this caused no reason for modification. In contrast, my conceptualization of personal development could benefit from a more precise definition. Various conceptualizations from previous literature contributed to a reformulation of this concept and it was in particular influenced by the research of Nash (1976). Finally, for the conceptualization of management competencies no significant benchmarks were available from the educational travel literature. During the end of the research trajectory, the content analysis of the international research project helped me to fine-tune the initial conceptualization of management competencies.

The Principle of Dialogical Reasoning requires the researcher to confront his or her preconceptions (prejudices) that guided the original research design (i.e., the original lenses) with the data that emerge through the research process. The original lens of the research trajectory was grounded in the experience of the researcher as opposed to a coherent theoretical lens, as this is lacking in the field of educational travel. Without a specific career path in mind I wanted to build upon my fascination with international work and learning experiences from around the world, triggered by my study abroad experience in New Zealand and travels in Asia. As the research trajectory evolved, I read a lot of literature on expatriate adjustment, social support and culture shock as these topics are closely related to the setting of the two original international internship studies. Later on, in order to delineate the research, it was decided to make competence development in educational travel the core of the research project.

The principle of multiple interpretations requires the researcher to examine the influences that the social context has upon the actions under study by seeking out and documenting multiple viewpoints along with the reasons for them. The analysis of reasons may include seeking to understand conflicts related to power, economics, or values. Moreover the researcher should confront the contradictions potentially inherent in the multiple viewpoints with each other, and revise his or her understanding accordingly. The target population of this research consists primarily of business and economics students. Compared to other student populations these groups of students could perhaps be said to represent the middle of the road in terms of value orientation between both the more socially oriented and technical oriented student populations. During the research trajectory I didn't notice any remarkable conflicts in value orientation among the population. However, in general it is believed that the motives of students from developed countries, compared to those of developing countries, are more related to personal development and the acquisition of cross-cultural competencies, than professional competencies.

Finally, the principle of Suspicion refers to the possibility of false consciousness or "false preconceptions" within the research. In general, the educational travel literature suggests that students might overestimate their learning and adaptation due to their young age and lack of interaction with locals. Such misjudgement might pose limitations on future personal development and professional performance, or postphone the need to deal with related internal and external conflicts .

1.5 Research outline

This research project on competence development is structured as follows. Both chapter 2 and 3 elaborate on the context of competence development, namely the educational travel sector. Chapter 2 presents the general background, by explaining the historical evolution of educational travel practices as well as its definitions. In order to bring some unity in a highly fragmented research area, chapter 3 provides an academic context by chronologically reviewing the most important literature related to competence development within educational travel. Based upon these findings, chapter 4 constructs a competence framework, with the help of additional theories on learning, management and

expatriation. In the following chapters this competence framework is further explored empirically in the context of two segments of educational travel, the international internship and the international research project. Chapter 5 discusses an online survey among AIESEC students and chapter 6 focuses on the international research project, using the content analysis method to analyze the evaluation reports of student participants. Both studies look at the learning of competencies and how it is influenced by cultural distance. In chapter 7, I discuss the findings from my empirical studies in order to reflect on the competence framework and assess the learning potential of different types of educational travel. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by summarizing the findings regarding each research objective, including of the limitations of the research and recommendations for educational institutes.

CHAPTER 2 THE HISTORY AND DEFINITION OF EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL

2.1 History of educational travel

Overseas learning experiences are not a new phenomenon, solely triggered by increased accessibility to other countries due to an expansion in the airline industry and the internet in the 20th Century. It started many centuries ago. Traveling abroad to receive education is a tradition that dates back to the ancients who traveled to distant lands seeking the wisdom and knowledge of other civilized people. Early biblical references speak of traveling scholars, and can be traced back to the reign of Asoka the Great of India, in the second century BC, and the establishment of the University of Taxila in what now is Pakistan (Ward et al. 2001). Important philosophers such as Pythagoras, Thales, and Aristotle are said to have studied in Egypt to gain knowledge of the ancient Egyptian mysteries, medicine and science. Others journeyed to Athens for philosophy and letters and to Rhodes for rhetoric (Bernal 1987 cited in: Golay 2006; Gough & McCormack 1967 cited in: Stitsworth 1989).

Within Europe, perhaps the best known traveling scholar was Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465-1536), who was later honoured by having his name given to the European exchange programme (de Wit & Knight 1999 cited in: Dolby & Rahman 2008). Between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries, many scholars and artists followed in the footsteps of Erasmus, travelling to meet influential peers and experience other cultures (Maczak 1995). Around the same time, the European upper-classes often sent their sons on a Grand Tour to major cities as part of their education (Brodsky-Porges 1981; Towner 1985).

From the 18th until the first half of the 20th Century colonialism was a significant historical factor in the internationalization of higher education, as the European university model was imposed on colonial subjects in Asia, South America, and Africa. Children of the local elites were often educated in the colonizing countries, in an attempt to inculcate them with Western values. During that same time period, wealthy Americans sent their sons to European universities to compensate for the perceived weaknesses of American

institutions (de Wit & Knight 1999 cited in: Dolby & Rahman 2008; Hoffa undated cited in: Golay 2006).

Before World War I, international education in the United States was loosely organized and mostly concentrated in churches and church-related organizations, with universities occasionally organizing study abroad tours. In the immediate aftermath of World War I, the Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded with the mission of promoting international peace and understanding. Beginning in the 1920's with the Junior Year Abroad, numerous study abroad models began to take shape, further stimulated by the World University Cruise, the Fulbright Program in 1946, and the establishment of the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES Abroad) in 1950 (Golay 2006). International education after the Second World War was firmly located within the politics of the Cold War as both the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to use international higher education as a means of consolidating and expanding their spheres of influence (de Wit 2002 cited in: Dolby & Rahman 2008). Study abroad became a customary component of the Bachelor's degree experience during the 1970s, along with internships and field experiences. Partly as a result of economic prosperity and advances in transportation, the number of students participating in international exchanges increased dramatically (Gough & McCormack 1967 cited in: Stitsworth 1989). In 1970 there were an estimated 10,000 students involved in around 300 study abroad programmes. It was estimated that 50,000 United States students would study abroad in the 1984-1985 school year (Burn 1985 cited in: Stitsworth 1989) In the early 1990s the number of students had grown to over 76,000 (Brooking 2010).

In Europe, during the post-war period, several European countries and the European Commission decided to advocate and to promote temporary student mobility to broaden the students' educational experience, to increase their international understanding, and to extend and raise the students' foreign language proficiency and to prepare them for the world of work where such abilities were expected to play an increasing role. Eventually these policies materialized in the establishment of The European Association for International Education (EAIA) in 1987, and was the start of Erasmus, a programme to

promote short-term intra-European student mobility. The number of students annually supported by an Erasmus grant increased from about 30,000 around 1990, when 12 countries participated, to about 150,000 in recent years, with 31 participating countries, in which more than 90 percent of the institutions of higher education are involved. Altogether, about 1.7 million students received support for mobility within the first two decades of Erasmus (Rivza & Teichler 2007; Teichler & Janson 2007).

Although much of the research has been conducted by western institutions, in the aftermath of the second world war, in general it is believed that educational travel is in particularly beneficial to students from developing countries, helping them acquire state of the art knowledge (Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin 2002). This doesn't just refer to technical knowledge but also to tacit knowledge. Developing and transition countries place great value on the development of soft-skills such as foreign language proficiency, independence, communication skills, flexibility and creativity. Often these competencies are underdeveloped among the populations of these countries due to an traditional rote-learning educational system which places a high emphasis on technical competencies (Baláz & Williams 2004; Waters 2006 cited in: Brooks & Waters 2009).

Statistics of foreign study abroad provide us with a general overview of student flows and popular destinations. In 2010, 77% of all foreign students were enrolled in OECD countries with Australia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States being the most popular destinations. Significant numbers of foreign students were also enrolled in Canada (5%), Japan (3%), the Russian Federation (4%) and Spain (2%). The fastest growing regions of destination are Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania and Asia (OESO 2012).

Asian students represent 52% of all foreign students enrolled worldwide. These proportions have remained stable during the past decade. In 2010 the largest numbers of foreign students were from China, India and Korea. Asian foreign students make up the largest group of foreign students in OECD countries and are particularly heavily represented in Australia (where they account for 80% of the total), Japan (93%) and Korea

(95%). In OECD countries, the next largest group is Europeans (24%). Students from Africa account for 9.6% of all international students in OECD countries and those from Latin America and the Caribbean represent 6%. Students from North America account for only 3.3% of the total (OECD 2012).

2.1 Definition of educational travel

The practical definition of educational travel varies between sector and country but generally includes trips with language components or development training (Custer 2013). In the academic literature it is difficult to find a definition but some related ones exist in the field of educational tourism. According to Rodger (1998: 28) education tourism refers to any 'program in which participants travel to a location as a group with the primary purpose of engaging in a learning experience directly related to the location'. A more elaborate definition is provided by Ritchie et al (2003) who describe educational tourism as 'a tourist activity undertaken by those who are undertaking an overnight vacation and those who are undertaking an excursion for whom education and learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip. This can include general educational tourism and adult study tours, international and domestic university and school students' travel, including language schools, school excursions and exchange programmes. Educational tourism can be independently or formally organized and can be undertaken in a variety of natural or human-made settings.'

My investigation focuses mainly on travels where education is the primary part of the trip such as study tours, study abroad, the international internship and the international research project. Language learning programs are not included in my research as I am interested in activities which are of particular professional relevance to business students and aim to teach a broader set of competencies. Hence, I define educational travel as "a programme in which participants travel to a foreign location, individually or as a group, with the primary purpose of engaging in a learning experience related to the development of cross-cultural competencies, management competencies or personal development."

In the next section I explain the types of educational travel relevant to my research.

2.1.1 Study abroad

Study abroad participants attend an university in a foreign country and often receive credit for the courses taken. Courses may be taken in English or the local language. Students may study abroad for a few weeks, a summer, a full semester or year (Kaufman et al. 2011). The main motivations for western students to get involved in study abroad are related to study, leisure, personal development and cultural learning goals, with a slight preference for the latter three motivations (Maiworm & Teichler 2002; Kitsantas 2004; van den Hove & Walenkamp 2013).

2.1.2 Study tour

The study tour can be defined as an academic course involving a mixture of traditional classroom learning and experiential learning opportunities in an international setting (Porth 1997 cited in: Kaufman et al. 2011). In the context of business schools, the goals of most study tours are to expand cultural sensitivity and generate interest in international business activities. The length of a study tour is approximately 1 or 2 weeks, and may include visits to one or more countries. Typically, students receive pre-trip preparation regarding places and organizations to be visited and are provided with opportunities to meet with business, governmental and academic experts at the host destinations (Litvin 2003; Schuster et al. 1998).

2.1.3 International internship

An internship is a closely monitored, (paid or unpaid) work experience at a corporation or non-profit organization. Such an experience offers students opportunities for socializing into the management profession and tackling a 'real world' challenge faced by the host organization. Internships also offer students an opportunity to observe the day-to-day responsibilities of their potential future careers. Such experiences can help students to crystallize their vocational interests and values (Taylor 1988 cited in: Feldman & Bolino 2000).

International internships have the additional advantage of enabling students to live and work side-by-side with people of the host country, and to get to know another set of

values, customs, and worldviews (van Wijk et al. 2008). From a business perspective the student gains insight into the practice of international business, institutional differences, economic performance and consumer behaviour (Toncar & Cudmore 2000). A disadvantage with international internships is that they less frequently lead to a job offer than national ones (Boerma cited in: van de Meent 2009). As a consequence, a better insight in the learning effects of international internships could improve the attractiveness for students in choosing an international internship over a national one.

2.1.4 International research project

The international research project can be categorized as a global practicum or global marketing programme (Johnson 2005; Kaufman et al. 2011). It is a part-time marketing consultancy project where students advise a real life business client on market opportunities in a foreign country. The primary advantages for participating students include (1) enhancing cross-cultural communication skills; (2) developing first-hand experience of the challenges of working in a foreign market; (3) applying business skills to a real-time problem; and (4) cultivating effectiveness as a team member in an international setting (Johnson 2005).

In the first couple of months students need to acquire enough client companies in their home country who are interested in doing market research abroad. The actual consultancy project takes about 3 months, of which 3 to 4 weeks are spent abroad interviewing companies, governmental organizations and customers. During the first part of the research students gather secondary data on the host country's environment, the company and its industry, and on the specific problem facing the company. Before traveling overseas, the student team must determine what additional information is required and how to obtain it abroad. Depending on the nature of the project, the team might have to identify which countries to visit and in what sequence. In addition, students need to identify and make contact with individuals in the target countries and schedule interviews in advance. These contacts could be middle to senior level managers, entrepreneurs, senior government officials, embassies or heads of trade association (Johnson 2005).

Following the argumentation presented above, the main differences between the types of educational travel are presented in table 2.1 (based on Kaufman et al. 2011).

	Study abroad	**Study tour**	**International internship**	**International research project**
Description	Coursework at institution	Field-based visits to companies	Work experience	Consulting experience
Primary goal	Learn foreign culture and sometimes another language	Gain understanding of foreign culture and business practices	To acquire work and cross-cultural experience	To acquire international business experience
Length	4-16 weeks	1-2 weeks	16 weeks	4 weeks
Group size	Individual	20-50	Individual	4 to 30
Home country faculty involvement	Often none	May or may not accompany student team	Often none	May or may not accompany student team

Table 2.1 Description of educational travel experiences (based on Kaufman et al. 2011)

2.3 Conclusion

The origins of international educational travel can be traced back many centuries, but its size and scope grew exponentially after World War II, due to major innovations in transport and communication technology and rising incomes. In the Western world both European and American institutions were established to promote educational travel in the form of study abroad, study tours and international internships. The main rationale behind such programs was to develop cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly interdependent (and, in the early days, war-ravaged) world. Both America and Russia used such programs as a tool for inculcating their values in 'client' developing countries as part of the cold war. By contrast, educational travel offered developing countries the opportunity to attain state of the art professional knowledge, mainly technical competencies but also intra and inter personal professional skills (Baláz & Williams 2004; Waters 2006 cited in: Brooks & Waters 2009; Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin 2002). During the 90's the study abroad phenomenon really took off, supported by such programmes as Erasmus in Europe and IES Abroad in the United States.

Almost eighty percent of all foreign students are enrolled in OECD countries with Australia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States being the most popular destinations. The fastest growing regions of destination are Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania and Asia. Asian students represent about half of the total number of foreign students enrolled worldwide.

I define educational travel as "a programme in which participants travel to a foreign location, individually or as a group, with the primary purpose of engaging in a learning experience related to the development of cross-cultural competencies, management competencies or personal development." The most important types of educational travel relevant to business students are: study abroad, international internship, study tour and the international research project. Lately, short-term educational travel programmes such as study abroad summer programmes and the international research project have gained popularity compared to programmes of longer duration such as study abroad and international internship. This is due to the more flexible nature of such programs which can run next to the traditional curriculum (Dwyer 2004; Fischer 2011).

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Within educational travel research, study abroad has received the most interest from researchers. Far less research is available on other types of educational travel such as study tours, home stays, semester at sea and international internships. As a result this literature review mainly captures articles from study abroad and reports only on few research from the other segments. This chapter summarizes the most significant articles since the 1950s and the picture that they paint about the learning effects of such experiences. While it was relatively easy to retrieve articles from the past 25 years, the older research was harder to track down as it was not always cited in the newer articles. Sells' literature review (1983) provided a useful overview of the most important articles and findings from earlier decades.

In general, research on study abroad has applied three types of methods, each with their own advantages and disadvantages: anecdotal research, retrospective survey, and quasi-experiment. To optimize the reliability and validity of this literature review, it focuses on articles that are based on quantitative and experimental approaches.

In general, a retrospective survey can draw conclusions from a large population, such as alumni (Teichler & Janson 2007). However, retrospective surveys are prone to being only being filled out by those alumni who had a positive experience, which enthused them to complete the survey (Farrell & Suvedi 2004). In addition, most such surveys do not include a control group (Salisbury 2011). Since students' attitudes and opinions change during their college years, regardless of where they study, comparison groups are necessary in order to attribute observed changes to the foreign study experience.

In contrast, quasi-experimental design makes use of a control group and subjects are tested prior to departure from their home campus and once again upon their return to their home campus. The noted changes are assumed to be related to the study abroad experience, and not due to the characteristics of the typical study abroad student who could be more

flexible and broad minded to begin with. The use of the control group allows us to see that it is the study abroad experience and not the other independent factors that contributes the most to that change (Williams 2005). Cook and Campbell (1979) discuss factors that could undermine the validity of quasi-experimental designs, but argue that that such designs often yield interpretable and defensible results. Still, unequivocal causal attribution of observed effects in study abroad students is probably not possible due to small sample sizes and the multitude of factors which may intervene prior to, during, and after college years (i.e., socio-economic levels, academic choices, maturation, lack of motivation to respond) (Carlson & Widaman 1988; Dwyer 2004; Nash 1976; Sell 1983).

As the reader will note, the articles themselves adopt many different conceptual approaches and often don't refer to each other, making it more difficult to analyze each article and relate the finding to the broader body of work. In order to make the literature review as readable as possible, the following structure is applied: it describes the main pieces of research and their main features, such as their goal, population, sample size, home country, host country, concepts employed and findings.

3.2 Chronological review of the literature

3.2.1 Study abroad

McGuigan (1958) was among the first to investigate the effects of study abroad on personal development. His sample consisted of 49 (all female) American college students who studied in France around 1956. The overseas study curriculum included courses related to the French language, French history, art, and literature. Each student lodged with a French family and traveled through Europe during the summer vacation. The quasi-experimental method he employed involved a control group of students who stayed at home.

Personal development was evaluated through a range of variables including values[11], personality[12], fascism, ethnocentrism, attitude toward self and others, social distance, feelings of insecurity, politico-economic conservatism[13], world mindedness[14], and adjustment[15]. Only two of these variables proved to be significantly altered by the study abroad period. The students who went abroad showed more concern about others and tended to conform more than those who remained home. This led McGuigan to conclude that intercultural experiences rarely result in personality changes.

McGuigan (1959) repeated the quasi-experiment among 31 overseas female sophomore year college students in 1957. The personality concept was modified and employed the following variables: social and personal distance[16], hostile feelings toward 'typical' Americans, xenophobia, a social opinions inventory and dependency. This time around more correlations proved to be significant. Overseas students significantly reduced their ethnic prejudice and their prejudice against people in general. When asked to compare Americans and Europeans, those students who went abroad tended to rate Americans less favorably. Finally, students became significantly less xenophobic and felt more dependent[17].

Nash (1976) conducted a quasi-experiment on personal development among approximately 30 American junior year university students who studied in France. The personality concept was measured using the following variables: autonomy, expansion and

[11] Allport (1951) distinguished six major value types which define the essence of a person: theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political and religious value types.
[12] Categorized as: neurotic tendencies, self-sufficiency, introversion, dominance, self confidence and sociability.
[13] The prototypic "conservative," is one who supports the status quo and resists changes in existing politico-economic power arrangements, who supports conservative values and traditions (concerned with practicality, ambition, and upward class mobility), who believes that labor is properly subordinate to employer or management, and who wishes to minimize the economic functions of government in order that individual businessmen can, in free and equal competition, provide goods of maximum quality at minimum cost to the consumer (Adorno et al 1950: 177).
[14] Sampson and Smith (1957) defined worldmindedness or global-mindedness as "a frame of reference, or value orientation, favoring a world-view of the problems of humanity, with mankind, rather than the nationals of a particular country, as the primary reference group" (p. 105).
[15] The categories used were home, health, social and emotional adjustment.
[16] The Social and Personal Distance Scale measured ethnic, occupational, religious, political and economic distance, and attitudes toward people (McGuigan 1959).
[17] Feeling less adjusted, having more dependency needs, being more misunderstood, indecisive and less confident (Navran 1954).

differentiation of the self, tolerance and flexibility, self assurance and confidence. Nash found a positive correlation between study abroad and increased autonomy, expansion and differentiation of the self, but not for the other attributes. He even found some grounds for suggesting a negative correlation between studying abroad and self-confidence.

Nash concluded that some of the general claims about the benefits of overseas study can be detected immediately after return from a foreign study abroad experience. However, three months after home-coming, none of the positive outcomes of studying abroad remained, while there was a continuance of reduced self-confidence. Nash thought this could possibly be attributed to his sample of which the majority of students experienced a separation from loved ones at home due to the study abroad experience.

Marion (1980) studied the connection between the nature of a study abroad trip and the attitudes of 90 Americans who studied abroad. Student participants were asked to complete a series of questions that focused around the themes of dogmatism, radicalism-conservatism, internationalism, self-assessment, and the students' perceptions of their host and home countries.

In general, the study didn't support the claim that study abroad results in more international, liberal, open-minded and self-confident attitudes. However, when taking into account the influence of antecedents, a more nuanced picture surfaces. Students who visited more countries became significantly less dogmatic, less conservative, and more favorable toward the host countries. Equally, those students who developed the most friends in their host countries became less conservative, had a more favorable attitude toward the host country, and a less favorable one toward the U.S. A seemingly contradicting finding is that those students who lived with a host family became more conservative and pro -U.S. and those, who lived with a greater percentage of host people became more nationalistic.

With regard to personal factors, students who were relatively conservative in the pre-test became more close-minded during their study abroad. Also, students who were more

socially-oriented before they went abroad or engaged more in socially-oriented activities became more positive toward the host country. Finally, students who rated their foreign language ability as fair or poor became more nationalistic and more favorable toward the U.S.

The location of the overseas program had a significant impact on attitude change. Students in France and Italy generally became more conservative than those visiting England. The students studying in Germany acquired a more favorable perception of the host country than their peers in Italy and France. Students who stayed in England and Germany became less favorable toward the U.S. than students who stayed in Italy and France.

Carlson and Widaman (1988) found that studying abroad heightens students' international understanding. International understanding involves factual knowledge of international issues and events as well as general attitudes that reflect heightened sensibility to international issues, people, and culture. Their retrospective quasi-experimental research involved more than 800 American college students, of whom 304 studied abroad at an European university during their junior year, with the other 519 remaining on the campus. One important aspect of this study is that the sample size was significantly higher than in previous experimental studies.

The group who studied abroad showed significantly higher levels of international political concern, cross-cultural interest, cultural cosmopolitanism[18], and more positive, yet critical, attitudes toward their own country. Humanities students exhibited significantly greater change in cross-cultural interest and cosmopolitanism than those studying biological, physical, social or behavioral science. Students with no prior experience of living abroad experienced greater changes in attaining a more positive attitude toward their own country and their international understanding rose to almost the same level as that of their traveling peers who had more travel experience. Women made a greater shift towards cosmopolitan attitudes than men.

[18] Cultural cosmopolitanism is defined as the interest in people, language, and traditions from other cultures.

Hansel (1988) compared cross-cultural competencies learning and personal development among 1100 AFS (American Field Service) home stay exchange students with students who remained at home. The study showed that the AFS exchange students learned more about the host country and other cultures and became more aware of international issues. They also gained more appreciation of foreign language ability.

In terms of personal development, the exchange students appeared to become more adaptable, more independent in their thinking, better able to communicate with others and less materialistic. Interestingly, the control group seemed to become more materialistic, although this correlation was not significant. Both AFS participants and those who remained in the United States reported personal growth in such areas as self-confidence, general maturity and in personal relationships. The AFS participants tended to believe that their personal development was an outcome of their exchange program experience, but the students who remained at home also had experiences that helped them develop their personalities.

Hansel's research (1988) also compared students on year-long and short- (10-12 weeks) programs. The year program students showed much more awareness and appreciation of the host country and culture and greater foreign language appreciation and ability. However, the short-program students showed greater increases in adaptability, international awareness, and understanding other cultures. While this latter finding is somewhat counterintuitive, it is plausible that the year-program students may have become more aware of their own inadequacies concerning their understanding of other cultures and consequently have given themselves lower ratings. Another explanation is that the short-program students needed to make less adjustments than the year-program students. Year-program students may more often become overwhelmed by the effort to adjust, while the short-program students need only make short term adaptations. Short-program participants may therefore have greater feelings of success about their adjustment and learning (Hansel 1988).

Studies amongst Erasmus program participants in the 1990s (Maiworm et al. 1991; cited in Teichler 2004) revealed that although students changed their opinions regarding many aspects of the host country, on average their ratings of the host country did not change positively or negatively. It seems that in-depth experience of a host country leads students to look beyond stereotypes and become more aware of problems, reinforcing both sympathy and antipathy. When describing the value of the study abroad, many students referred to the eye-opening and horizon-broadening effects of different academic paradigms, communication styles, daily life and cultural environments.

Erasmus students thought that academic knowledge gained in their exchanges was valuable, though less so than the learning of cross-cultural competencies. More than fifty percent of the students rated their academic progress abroad as higher than at home, particularly those who studied in Germany, the Netherlands and Nordic countries. Almost 30 percent of the student population thought they made about the same degree of academic progress abroad as they would have at home. Seventeen percent believed that they learned less abroad than at home. This group was concentrated among students who had travelled to Southern European countries: Italy, France, Spain, Greece and Portugal. While these results suggest higher academic levels in northern European countries, they are almost 15 years old and much may have changed in the meantime.

Stephenson (1999) looked at cross-cultural understanding among 52 American students who studied in Chile for a semester. Participants indicated differences between the adjustments they expected to make and those that actually occurred. Issues such as 'keeping an open mind about Chilean culture' 'maintaining a clear hold of your personal beliefs' and 'changing personal beliefs as a result of the experience' were all considered significantly more difficult than anticipated. For example, views concerning the social class system in Chile had a huge disturbing impact on the students. Other areas that the students found were more difficult than they had anticipated were related to the notion of time, food and the feeling of "standing out."

Dwyer and Peters (2004) conducted a survey among 3400 alumni from all IES (Institute for the International Education of Students) study abroad programs between 1950 and 1999. The results suggest that participation in overseas exchange has a profound impact. Asked about cross-cultural competencies, 98 percent of respondents said that their study abroad helped them to better understand their own cultural values and biases, and 4 out of 5 replied that their study abroad contributed to their developing a more sophisticated way of looking at the world. Foreign language usage was higher among respondents who lodged with local families than those who lived in an apartment or a residence hall with local students or other U.S. students. These findings were in particular marked for respondents who studied abroad for a full year (Dwyer 2004).

Full-year students were more likely to achieve personal development as opposed to short-program participants[19], although both groups made profound advances, regardless of their length of stay abroad. Students felt they developed the most in terms of increased self-confidence, tolerance of ambiguity and maturation. Full-year students were somewhat more likely to have changed, refined and or continue to be influenced in their political and social views. They were also more than twice as likely to have changed their career plans than their peers who studied abroad for a shorter period and were more likely to end up working for a multinational company or to get a job overseas (Dwyer 2004).

Surprisingly, summer program students were able to achieve roughly the same benefits as semester students. This seems counter-intuitive since one would expect that with a shorter duration of study abroad would have less impact on students. It appears that well-planned, intensive summer programs of at least 6 weeks duration can have a significant impact (Dwyer 2004).

Kitsantas (2004) assessed 232 American study-abroad college students prior to, and at completion of, their program in Europe. Cross-cultural skills were measured using the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI), which exists of variables related to emotional resilience, flexibility/openness, perceptual acuity and personal autonomy.

[19] A short program refers to a 16 week semester program or a 6 week summer term. A year program is 32 weeks.

Global understanding was measured through the Global Perspective Survey (Hanvey 1982)[20].

Analyses between students of the five different study abroad programs (in England, France, Greece, Italy, and Spain) revealed no significant differences in their reporting about changes in their cross-cultural skills and global understanding. Overall, the results showed that students believed that they improved their emotional resilience, flexibility/openness and personal autonomy. High levels of learning cross-cultural skills and global understanding were reported more often by students whose motivation for studying abroad was related to improving their cross-cultural competence and their interest in the subject matter, than by students more motivated by social goals.

Williams (2005) performed a quasi-experimental pre and post travel study among 44 American sophomore and junior year college students who studied abroad for one semester (4 months). He found that students who participated in a study abroad program increased their cross-cultural competencies more than students who stayed on campus, particularly in terms of their intercultural communication awareness and ethno-relativism. Changes in these variables also occurred more among students from communication majors than those from business majors. Perhaps surprisingly, the students general lifetime exposure to various cultures was a better predictor of the level of cross-cultural competencies that students possessed than the country where the students studied.

Teichler and Janson (2007) conducted several studies among former Erasmus students who went on an exchange between 1988 and 2001. Four years after their overseas experience, the alumni felt three times as proficient in a foreign language than students who stayed at home, at the time of graduation. They were also convinced that their study abroad helped them to get to know the culture of the host country and to get along better with people from different cultural backgrounds. They had a moderately higher opinion of their ability to work independently, their flexibility and general communication skills. Similar results

[20] Hanvey (1982) identifies five dimensions of a global perspective: (1) Perspective Consciousness, (2) "State of the Planet" Awareness, (3) Cross-Cultural Awareness, (4) Knowledge of Global Dynamics, and (5) Awareness of Human Choices.

were also found in a recent survey among employers and recent Erasmus students (Alfranseder et al. 2012).

Approximately 60% of the graduates stated that their foreign language proficiency and international study experience played a major role in their employer's decision to recruit them. Again, the employer survey confirms the student assessment. Although academic knowledge and the personality play more important roles in the employer's recruitment decision, many employers state foreign language proficiency (70%), work experience abroad (34%), and study period abroad (30%) of graduates as recruitment criteria (Teichler & Janson 2007).

The same authors also found that study abroad seems to have lost some of its original relevance, particularly for students from wealthy countries. Their longitudinal analysis shows that, over time, the value of study abroad in Europe for obtaining a first job is declining, although alumni still perceive it to be relevant. Equally, these surveys also show that in recent years, students have come to perceive the knowledge and cultural understanding of the host country to be of less value to their future career than before. Still, in recent student cohorts studying business, approximately 65 percent find general international competencies[21] to be important in their current work, in particular foreign language competencies (74%) and those competencies related to working with people from different cultural backgrounds (71%).

There are regional patterns trends within this overall trend. For example, within Europe, students from Central and Eastern European countries report that a temporary period of study abroad has a high professional value, probably because it is still a more exclusive experience in these countries (Teichler & Janson 2007).

[21] International competencies refer to (a) professional knowledge of other countries (e.g., economical, sociological, legal knowledge); (b) knowledge or understanding of international differences in culture and society, modes of behaviour, lifestyles, etc; (c) working with people from different cultural backgrounds; (d) communicating in foreign languages.

3.2.2 Study tour

Schuster et al. (1998) investigated the learning effects regarding international business (IB) among 90 US executive MBA students during an 16 day study tour to either Europe or Asia. The study distinguished three types of learning effects: change in attitude, cognitive knowledge and perceived behavioral skills. The cognitive dimension relates to the transfer of factual knowledge, affective relates to attitude change, and behavior relates to the perception of skills acquisition. The results of a pre-and post survey show that on the cognitive dimension the students factual knowledge about the foreign culture increased significantly. Concerning attitude, after the trip students perceived it was easier to enter a foreign market. The students also found out that negotiation styles were more similar to their home country than they thought prior to their visit. The perceived importance of local language skills also increased. Lastly, on the behavioral dimension, students became more confident in their ability to setup a business abroad. In comparison to the travel group, the non-travel control group showed less increase in cognitive knowledge, more neutral attitudes, and a greater aversion to participating in international business.

The research by Litvin (2003) on 45 Singapore based students participating in a business study tour shows significant learning effects regarding their attitude towards host countries visited. It was found that a two week business study tour to Egypt and Israel had a significant impact upon participant attitude towards both their host countries in terms of the image of the people, political beliefs, and economics. As students got to know the country better, their attitudes changed, sometimes more positive and sometimes more negative. Despite the seemingly significant changes, at the end of the research Litvin questioned whether true understanding was achieved as a change in attitude doesn't necessarily mean a change in behavior as well.

3.2.3 International internship

Feldman and Bolino (2000) investigated the skill utilization of international interns both quantitatively (survey N=125) and qualitatively (content analysis of comments). I will discuss here only the results of the quantitative study related to the independent concept skill utilization. Skill utilization was measured through a construct that encompassed the

skills most frequently mentioned as central to careers in international management: supervisory skills; administrative skills (managing projects); technical/functional skills; cross-cultural interaction skills; knowledge of foreign markets and competitors; communication skills; negotiation skills; and decision-making skills. All 125 interns studied international business in their home country. Eighty percent of the interns originated from the United States, the others from Asia, Europe, South America. Fifty percent interned in Western Europe, approximately twenty-five in South America, and the remainder of students working in Central America and Asia.

The research showed moderate satisfaction with international internships and moderate learning of management skills. Skill utilization and satisfaction showed a weak but significant correlation with cultural distance. The authors didn't elaborate on this finding since it wasn't the focus of their article. Cultural distance was measured by the procedures outlined by Kogut and Sing (1988).

Stronkhorst (2005) compared competence learning[22] of international internships (N=33) with study abroad and internships in the students' home country (The Netherlands). The study focused on measuring three concepts: foreign language competencies (listening, reading, writing, speaking) professional and academic competencies (international and intercultural competencies), and personality characteristics (five multicultural personality characteristics[23] and self-efficacy[24]). The results suggested that international internships have more positive effects on foreign language skills, cultural empathy, self-efficacy and intercultural competencies, although it must be noted that for this particular study the

[22] Competency is defined here as the ability to handle complex professional issues, tasks, and roles in varying contextual situations through application and further development of acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personality features (Stronkhorst 2005).

[23] The five multicultural personality dimensions are (a) cultural empathy (the ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of members of different cultural groups); (b) open-mindedness (an open and unprejudiced attitude toward nongroup members and toward different cultural norms and values); (c) social initiative (a tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiative); (d) emotional stability (a tendency to remain calm in stressful situations); and (e) flexibility (the ability to adjust and to learn from new experiences) (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven 2001).

[24] Self-efficacy refers to a concept that concerns a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven 2001).

difference in results could also be due to study abroad group having more travel experience beforehand.

Van Wijk et al. (2008) carried out a quasi-experimental survey among Dutch alumni (N=167) from the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University to examine the value of international internships, and compare them with national internships. They explored four dimensions: career impact, cross-cultural understanding, management skills and personal development. The host countries of international internships were divided into two groups (based on Hofstede 2003 and Inglehart & Baker 2000). Zone 1 could be labeled the 'home zone' and consisted of Protestant Europe and English speaking areas. Zone 2 consisted of the remaining regions, including the historically Catholic and communist parts of Europe together with Asia and Africa.

The findings show that both national and international interns find internships an indispensable element of the BA curriculum, and they were positive about the management skills they learnt. International internships (N=78) had a significantly more positive impact on the alumnis' social skills and career development than national internships. Looking only at alumni who studied abroad, the data show that they greatly appreciated the impact of the international internship on their language skills. They gained a much better understanding of manners in other cultures and moderately enhanced their awareness of personal prejudices towards other cultures. The international internships did not increase the alumnis' appreciation of their native Dutch culture. They also thought the experience was very useful in terms of 'learning about oneself' and 'personal development'.

The students who did their internship in zone 2 seemed to have gained a better understanding and greater appreciation of other cultures, than students interning in zone 1. They also learned more about international societal relations and international issues (such as malnutrition, contagious diseases, poverty, corruption and war).

3.2.4 Home stay

A study by Stitsworth (1988) tried to determine whether changes in personality occurred in American teenagers during one-month home stays in Japan, using the California Psychological Inventory[25]. The questionnaires were administered immediately prior to the trip (Time 1), at its conclusion (Time 2), and a third time four months later (Time 3). The research found that students who participated in a one-month home-stay program in Japan became significantly more autonomous, independent, flexible, and open towards unconventional ways of living, compared to the stay at home control group. The learning effects were in particular significant in the long-term (time 3) for those who had no previous travel abroad experience or whose family didn't have travel abroad experience. Also, students who had studied a language for three or four semesters changed significantly. In contrast, travelers who had previously studied a foreign language for one or two semesters experienced no significant changes. It is possible that this unexpected result occurs because enrollment in foreign language courses for 3-4 semesters makes students more enthusiastic about exchange experiences and thus they are more inclined toward personality change. The importance of motivation was also evident in the fact that the participants who paid most of their trip expenses changed the most as a result of the exchange (Stitsworth 1988).

3.2.5 Semester at Sea

The American Semester at Sea cruise travel program combines 50 days of full-time college course work in global studies, humanities and business with 50 days of travel observation in a dozen countries. Dukes et al. (1994) looked at the growth of meaning in life during a semester at sea program. Meaning in life is assumed to be derived from critical events in work and family life such as beginning a career, becoming a parent, or major travel experiences and increases as a result of a diversification of the sources of meaning. Frankl identifies four stages of meaning development: self-preoccupation with pleasure and

[25] The California Psychological Inventory encompasses three dimensions: (1) Flexibility refers to the adaptability of a person's thinking and social behavior. (2) Achievement via independence, identifies factors of interest and motivation that facilitate achievement related to autonomy and independence. (3) Communality relates to how conventional or unconventional the individual will be with regard to personality functioning.

comfort; realization of potential; service to others and dedication to the common good; and transcendence of individuality and discovery of ultimate purpose (Frankl 1969).

Meaning of life was measured in a pre- and post 20-item survey based on Frankl's conceptualization of meaning which generates high scores when the respondent has a direction in life, clear goals, and a positive self concept. The survey results prior to their voyage show that Semester at Sea participants had higher purpose in life than other college students and, perhaps surprisingly, were comparable to adults in moral development. Subsequently, the authors measured how purpose of life in 1991 was affected by the 1983 purpose in life (post trip) and life events related to family, travel and upward work mobility. The post-results are suggestive that the voyage of 1982 continues to affect personal growth after it is over. As control variables, travel correlated and family almost correlated significantly with purpose of life at a later stage. Surprisingly upward mobility (within real estate sector) suggests a negative, albeit not significant relationship with purpose in life. The authors of the article suggest that this is due to more conflict among work, family, and the self. There was no difference in results between men and women. However some hesitation should be practiced regarding these long term results of this study as some methodological limitations are in place due to a lack of experimental design.

Many Semester at Sea participants referred in the comments section to stage two of Frankl's meaning model: coming closer to ones potential. This means that the students became more confident and independent in their thinking and ways of doing. Students also acquired a cultural relativism perspective, gained more appreciation of their own wealthy home country and became inspired to travel more. Countries such as India, China, Egypt and Sri Lanka in particular contributed to the discovery of meaning. In retrospect, with increasing maturity, some adults expressed their feelings about change since the Semester at Sea as a transition from innocence and careless living to a working and family life full of responsibilities (Dukes et al. 1994).

3.3 Discussion

3.3.1 Competencies studied

From my literature review it can be concluded that past research on competence learning in educational travel focused mainly on the measurement of cross-cultural competencies and personal development, and to a lesser extent on professional or management competencies. Furthermore almost every article uses different concepts (see table 3.1), meaning that there is no agreement on a dominant model (van den Hoven and Walenkamp 2013).

Author	**Sample**	**Method**	**Independent variables**	**Dependent Concept**	**Dependent variables**
McGuigan 1958	49 American college female students in Europe	Quasi-experiment		- Personality facets	- Facism Scale - Security-Insecurity Inventory - Politico-Economic Conservatism - Ethnocentrism - Worldmindedness - Attitude Toward Self and Others - Adjustment Inventory - Personality Inventory - Study of Values - Social Distance Scale
McGuigan 1959	31 American college female students in Europe	Quasi-experiment		- Personality characteristics	- Social and Personal Distance - Hostile Feelings toward “Typical” Americans - Xenophile - Social Opinions Inventory - Dependency Scale.
Nash 1976	30 American students studying in France	Quasi-experiment		- Personal development	- Autonomy - Expansion and differentiation of self - Tolerance and flexibility - Self assurance and confidence - Objectivity

Marion 1980	90 American students studying abroad in Europe	Survey	- Countries visited - Interaction with locals - Personality	- Attitude	- Internationalism - Open or closed-mindedness - Radicalism-conservatism - Self-assessment - Perception of the host country - Perception of the U.S.
Carlson and Widaman 1988	304 American students in Europe	Retrospective quasi experiment	- Gender - Study background - Living experience abroad	- International understanding	- Cross-cultural interest - Attitudes toward home country. - Attitudes toward host country. - Cultural cosmopolitanism - International political concern
Hansel 1988	1100 American students studying abroad around the world	Quasi-experiment	- Duration	- International perspective	- Awareness and Appreciation of Host Country and Culture - Understanding other cultures - International Awareness - Awareness & appreciation of home country and culture. - Foreign language appreciation and ability - Adaptability - Awareness of opportunities - Critical thinking - Non-materialism - Independence & responsibility of self
Stephenson 1999	52 Americans studying in Chile	Survey		- Cross-cultural understanding	- City life - Host family situation - Social activities - Foreign language proficiency - University/classroom environment, cultural differences - Opinions/beliefs.

Teichler 2004	1998–99 Erasmus students	Survey		- Cultural experience - Foreign language learning - Personal experience - Professional value	- Learning a foreign language, - Academic learning experience - Understanding of the host country
Dwyer and Peters 2004	3400 American study abroad alumni	Survey	- Duration - Housing	- Academic attainment - Intercultural development - Career impact - Personal growth	- Better understanding of own cultural values and biases - Developing a more sophisticated way of looking at the world. - Foreign language usage. - Self-confidence - Tolerance of ambiguity - Maturation - Political and social views. - Change in career plan
Kitsantas 2004	232 American study abroad students	Survey	- Motivation	- Cultural skills and global understanding	- Emotional Resilience - Flexibility/Openness, - Perceptual Acuity - Personal Autonomy
Williams 2005	44 American college students	Quasi-experiment	- Lifetime exposure to various cultures	- Intercultural communication skills	- Emotional Resilience, Flexibility/Openness, - Perceptual Acuity - Personal Autonomy - Ethnocentrism - Ethnorelativism, - Intercultural communication awareness
Teichler and Janson 2007	Erasmus study abroad alumni	Survey with control group	- Home country	- Competencies	- Getting to know the culture and society of the host country - Understanding other cultures. - Getting along with persons from different cultural backgrounds. - Foreign language proficiency - General communication skills. - Working

					independently - Adaptability
Schuster et al 1998	16 day business study of 80 US students in either Europe or Asia	Quasi-experiment		- Attitude towards IB - Cognitive knowledge related to IB - Behaviour towards IB	- Knowledge of host country - Market entry - Negotiating - Local management practices - Appreciation of foreign language proficiency. - International market strategy - Business etiquette
Litvin 2003	Two week business study in middle-east by 45 students of Singapore.	Quasi-experiment		- Intercultural understanding	- Attitude towards people - Attitude towards political beliefs - Attitude towards economics
Feldman and Bolino 2000	125 International Interns	Survey		- Skill utilization	- supervisory skills - administrative skills - technical/functional skills - cross-cultural interaction skills - knowledge of foreign markets and competitors - communication skills - negotiation skills - decision-making skills
Stronkhorst 2005	33 Dutch students interning around the world	Quasi-experiment		- Foreign language competencies - Professional and academic competencies - Personality characteristics	- Foreign language ability - Cultural empathy - Open-mindedness - Social initiative - Emotional stability - Flexibility - Self-efficacy - International and intercultural competencies
van Wijk et al. 2008	78 Dutch international interns	Quasi-experiment / Survey	- Economic zone	- Cross-cultural learning	- Career impact - Cross-cultural understanding - Management skills - Personal development

Stitsworth 1988	154 One month home stay American students in Japan	Quasi-experiment	- Previous travel experience - Study foreign language - Personal monetary investment	- Personality change	- California psychological inventory: - Communality - Flexibility - Achievement via Independence.
Dukes et al 1994	77 semester at sea participants, departure from USA.	Quasi-experiment	- Purpose in life 1983 - Family - Travel - Work (Upward mobility)	- Purpose in Life 1991	- Direction in life - Clear goals - Positive self concept

Table 3.1 Overview of the literature review

Although the authors use different concepts and variables, there certainly are similarities. In table 2 I group similar concepts in categories. While these categories provide the reader with a more focused overview, they are still loosely defined as the theoretical basis of concepts in educational travel is meager. As a consequence, in the next chapter I aim to contribute to a more fundamental understanding by going more in-depth in the definitions of competence, learning, experiential learning and the learning process during cross-cultural experiences. Furthermore, I will search outside the field of educational travel to learn from widely accepted models for cross-cultural competencies, personal development and management competencies. Combined with this literature review, these two approaches should help me to develop a more robust framework for competence learning in educational travel.

Category #	Category	Concepts
1	Independence	Autonomy, independence & responsibility of self, working independently, self-efficacy, achievement via independence, self assurance and confidence, self confidence, emotional stability, social initiative, security, adjustment, dependency.
2	Tolerance and flexibility	Tolerance and flexibility, open-mindedness, tolerance of ambiguity, flexibility, communality, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, objectivity.
3	Self-awareness	Critical thinking, better understanding of own cultural values and biases, self-assessment, attitude towards self and others.
4	Expansion of self	Expansion and differentiation of self, purpose in life, change in career plan, political and social views, non-materialism, conservatism, radicalism.
5	International awareness	World mindedness, internationalism, cultural cosmopolitanism, international awareness, developing a more sophisticated way of looking at the world, international political concern, global perspective, facism.
6	Perception of host country	Perception of host country, awareness and appreciation of host country and culture, understanding other cultures, getting to know the culture and society of the host country, cultural empathy, cross-cultural interest, social distance, image of the people, political beliefs & economics, city life.
7	Perception of home country	Perception of home country, attitudes toward home country, awareness and appreciation of home country and culture, hostile feelings toward “typical” Americans.
8	Communication skills	Communication with locals, getting along with persons from different cultural backgrounds, general communication skills.
9	Foreign language proficiency	Foreign language usage, foreign language proficiency, foreign language appreciation and ability.
10	(International) business skills	Awareness of opportunities; attitude towards IB; cognitive knowledge related to IB; behavior towards IB; managing people; managing projects; technical/functional skills; knowledge of foreign markets and competitors; skills; negotiation skills; and decision-making skills.

Table 3.2 Categorization of concepts

3.3.2 Learning of competencies

Besides knowing what concepts have been used in past research to measure competence learning, it is also of interest to know to what extent competence learning has been reported. In the assessment of learning effects I focus on study abroad since this is the only segment within educational travel on which a significant amount of research is available, even though it suffers from fragmentation.

In general the literature on study abroad shows that surveys and large scale quasi-experiments provide a more positive picture than small scale sample quasi-experiments. Most of these small scale quasi-experiments date back to the early days of study abroad research and are particularly focused on competencies related to personal development. These studies use wide ranging conceptualizations of personal development but only find minor to moderate differences between students who went abroad and those who stayed at home (e.g. see McGuigan 1958 and 1959, Nash 1976). More recent, but more general, assessments of personal development provide more positive results.

Large scale surveys tend to report significant advances in perceptions of cross-cultural competencies and personal development. It is likely that these results are positively skewed by response bias, as the more enthusiastic alumni are most likely to fill out the questionnaires. This said, a few large scale quasi-experiments show significant differences between students who study abroad and those who stay at home.

Another potential problem with the research design of previous studies is related to the method of self-assessment. For example, in pre-travel surveys, students are likely to over-estimate the attainment of certain learning effects (Ingraham & Peterson 2004). For example, Hansel (1988) noted that students tended to give themselves very high pretest ratings on such personal development items as open-mindedness, independence and responsibility, communication with others, and non-materialism. While they may simply have tried to ’look good’ in their questionnaire responses, adolescents seem to significantly and consistently overestimate their open mindedness, independence, etc. In contrast, they gave themselves lower pretest ratings on cross-cultural competence items, such as

awareness and appreciation of host country and culture, awareness of opportunities and international awareness, since it may be easier for them to recognize their own shortcomings in these areas (Hansel 1988: 183).

It is also possible that students might fill out very high scores in post travel as they believe that the overseas experience should make them better citizens (Baláz & Williams 2004; Carlson & Widaman 1988). Research is hesitant in claiming that an overseas exchange is necessarily transformational (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus 2011). A qualitative study by Kiely (2004) among international service learning students[26] argues that participants only rarely experience long-term transformation in their perspective. While several studies (e.g. Eyler & Giles 1999; Rhoads 1997) confirm substantial short-term moral, political, and intellectual changes; none of the studies provide evidence of these changes being of a long-term nature. By focusing on the short-term, research tends to paint a romanticized picture of students becoming more socially aware and engaged. This analysis reflects the statements expressed by Semester at Sea alumni concerning the loss of innocence after graduation (Dukes et al. 1994). Still, even retrospective analysis among alumni may contain some elements of misremembering. On the other hand, as alumni often develop into senior professionals with long-term careers, they are well placed to judge the role that their overseas experience played in their own careers. Retrospective analysis in this case may thus be an advantage (van Wijk et al. 2008).

Overall, there is evidence that cultural competencies are learned. Most notably study abroad develops students relationship competencies in terms of communication skills and foreign language ability (Carlson & Widaman 1988; Dwyer & Peters 2004; Hansel 1988; Teichler & Janson 2007). On the attitudinal dimension students also learn in terms of cross-cultural understanding: awareness and attitudes toward home country culture, attitude towards host country, and understanding other cultures bias (Carlson & Widaman

[26] Service Learning is an educational methodology that combines academic study of a particular social issue (e.g. development, human rights, education, health, or the environment) with active involvement with local community organizations seeking to resolve such problems or issues. These credit-bearing courses are experiential in nature, and seek to enhance classroom learning through practical, hands-on participation and personal interaction. International Service Learning is the application of this methodology in foreign or overseas contexts. (http://studyabroad.rutgers.edu/)

1988; Dwyer & Peters 2004; Hansel 1988; Marion 1980; Teichler & Janson 2007). Studies show that students don't always gain a more favorable perception of the host country, in some it was negative (e.g. see Nash 1976) and results seem to depend on the country the student travels to (e.g. see Marion 1980). Others such as Teichler (2004) found that students gained a more nuanced, balanced and realistic understanding of the host country, of both the positive and negative sides of host and home countries. These findings should make educators aware that an overseas experience is not automatically educative by itself and depend on the destination.

Research findings of both quasi-experiments and surveys show the positive effects of study abroad on personal development which particularly increases independence (Hansel 1988; Kitsantas 2004; Nash 1976; Teichler & Janson 2007), flexibility (Hansel 1988; Kitsantas 2004; McGuigan 1958, 1959) and expansion of the self (Nash 1976).

More ambiguous results are found in the acquisition of self-assurance. While study abroad might be expected to help crystallize students' identity and life goals, some evidence suggests that prolonged exposure to a different culture and way of living might have the opposite effect, undermining the student's sense of personal identity and security (Cohen 2010; Nash 1976). For example, Carsello and Creaser (1976 cited in Chapman 2011) reported that although 40% of their study abroad sample experienced greater peace of mind, more than 20% reported a decrease. Similarly, studying abroad may have a diffusing, instead of focusing, effect on career development. Dwyer (2004) found that students who studied abroad were more likely to change their career plans following their travel than those who did not study abroad. This effect was proportional to the length of study: students enrolled in a year-long program were twice to three times as likely to experience changes in career plans compared to those participating in short-term programs. Carlson et al. (1990) claimed that the lack of substantial career development effects from these study abroad programs was because "study abroad students tend to be somewhat less committed to specific, clearly defined career goals than students who do not participate in study abroad" (p. 69 cited in Brooking 2010).

Awareness about the state of the world was also found to increase significantly during study abroad. However, this concept was often measured in a rather broad way; through variables such as 'cosmopolitism', 'sophisticated view of the world' or 'international awareness', which can be interpreted in different ways (Carlson & Widaman 1988; Dwyer & Peters 2004; Hansel 1988).

The literature review revealed very little quantitative research on the learning of professional or management competencies during study abroad. In general it is assumed that students traveling from developing to more developed countries are particularly likely to benefit from the academic knowledge offered at the university. For students from developed countries, studying at high ranking western universities[27] is likely to provide the highest value for money. This has an additional benefit since these high ranking universities are known by future employers and having studied at one, albeit for a short time, may provide a certain credibility (Brooks & Waters 2009). The globalization of curricula and standardization brought about by supra- governmental strategies, such as the Bologna Process mean that the offers made by European universities are likely to be coming more homogenous and less distinct (Teichler 2010).

Overall, universities from the East do not compare favorably with those in North America, Western Europe, or Australia, but they are catching up. For example, China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong all have excellent academic systems. The Indian Institutes of Technology are also top institutions. However the more traditional universities in India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and most of the poorer Asian countries have a long way to go in order to achieve the status of world-class universities. This requires the establishment of an academic culture based on meritocratic values, free inquiry, competition, combined with elements of collaboration and mobility. Improvements at many of Asia's universities is likely to be inhibited by a number of structural, academic, and cultural factors for the near future (Altbach 2010).

[27] See for example the Financial Times ranking of business schools.

Evidence about the attainment of intra and interpersonal management skills is limited but some patterns do emerge. There is some indication that self-efficacy and communication skills are improved by study abroad, but there is little reliable evidence for other competencies, such as problem solving and team work. Research by the Erasmus Student Network provides some interesting insights here. Alfranseder, Escrivá, Fellinger, Haley, Nigmonov and Taivere (2012) found that students with study abroad experience rate their ability to work in an intercultural environment much more highly than their counterparts with no study abroad experience. Their perceptions of other competencies, such as communication, negotiating, networking, analytical skills and creativity were only slightly higher than among the control group. It is unclear from their analysis if these differences are statistically significant.

3.3.3 Individual factors studied

The literature review identifies several factors that appear to influence the magnitude of the learning effects. The personal background of the student is influential, with the learning effects being more apparent for students with no previous experience of living abroad (Carlson & Widaman 1988; Stitsworth 1988). In gender terms the studies seem to find little to no significant differences between men and women.

Motivation for studying abroad also seems to play an important role in the learning of cross-cultural competencies. A study by Kitsantas (2004) indicated that students who reported they wanted to study abroad in order to improve their cross-cultural competence and because they were interested in developing competency in the subject matter taught, were more likely to report higher levels of cross-cultural skills and global understanding than those who did not. Similarly, students in humanities perceived significant greater change in cross-cultural interest and cosmopolitanism than those studying biological or physical science, social and behavioral science (Carlson & Widaman 1988). Williams (2005) found that changes in intercultural communication awareness and ethno-relativism, occurred more among students from communication majors than those from business majors.

In educational travel literature some authors raise the question whether the personality of the typical study abroad student isn't different from the one that doesn't participate in such an experience, and is a priori a more tolerant group (Dwyer 2004). Both Williams (2005) and Carlson and Widaman (1988) found higher, albeit not significant, pre-test scores on cross cultural competencies for the study abroad group compared to those who stayed in the home country. Also, Williams (2005) found that exposure to other cultures in general (in the home country) was the most significant predictor of intercultural communication skills.

Research into other segments of educational travel provides further understanding of the influence of personality on the learning of cross-cultural competencies. Content analysis of 183 interviews by Smith (1955) suggests that it is likely that an overseas study experience does not significantly affect the attitudes of those who were already world-minded or ethnocentric beforehand. There is some evidence, although not highly reliable, that those with extreme ethnocentric and/or nationalistic views found, or perhaps even actively sought, reinforcement for their prejudices whilst abroad. In contrast, overseas experience particularly affects the attitudes of students who, prior to the international experience, were relatively authoritarian, politically and/or economically conservative, anti-democratic, ethnocentric and/or nationalistic. It seems that the relatively bigoted attitudes of these 'conformist' conservatives were supported or reinforced by their social networks but were susceptible to reorganization. The distinction between the ethnocentric and world-minded student closely parallels the controversial typologies of the extremely authoritarian and extremely non-authoritarian personality (Smith 1955, 1957; Smith & Rosen 1958)[28]. Similarly Marion (1980) found that students who are more conservative and nationalistic before the experience tend to increase in that direction and those who have a more international and radical-orientation increase in that direction. This may be due to the fact that study abroad is an intense experience and may cause a defensive reaction in those students who find the culture shock too severe.

[28] The Authoritarion Personality traits include conventionalism, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, anti-intraception, superstition and stereotypy, power and "toughness", destructiveness and cynicism, projectivity, and exaggerated concerns with sexual "going's-on" (Adorno et al.1950: 228).

3.3.4 Contextual factors studied

The learning effects of a study abroad programme seem to be most significant when students stay overseas for a longer duration. This is particularly the case for developing an awareness and understanding of the home and host cultures, and greater foreign language appreciation (Dwyer & Peters 2004; Hansel 1988). Interestingly, Hansel's study (1988) shows that students who studied abroad for one semester showed greater increases in adaptability, international awareness, and understanding other cultures than participants in the one year program. While this latter finding is somewhat counterintuitive, it seems plausible, on second thought, that year-program students may be more aware of their inadequacies and may therefore rate themselves lower. This finding resonates with the widely held belief that cross cultural adjustment often starts out with a 'honeymoon phase', after which reality kicks in (Hofstede 2003). McGuigan (1959) found that the last eight months were in particular effective in reducing ethnic prejudice among one year study abroad students, suggesting that a more nuanced attitude emerges over time.

Still, short controlled experiences, such as highly intensive and structured summer programs, seem to be very effective, almost as effective as semester programs (Dwyer 2004; Nairn cited in: Marchal 2010; De Bruyckere cited in: van de Meent 2009). Perhaps another reason for the effectiveness of these shorter programs could be that it attracts highly motivated students who choose freely to participate outside the regular and compulsive school year semesters.

It is widely believed that the amount of interaction with locals affects the learning of cross-cultural competencies. Students might learn only little by primarily residing in their cultural 'bubble' in the form of escorted bus tours or interacting with only familiar social networks. This means retreating into an 'expat enclave' and only interacting with fellow study abroad peers. Such behaviour would mean that a study abroad program would be little more than studying business in an exotic location rather than experiencing what it is like to do business in a particular country (Deakin 2012; Forsey et al. 2012; Salisbury 2011; Waters and Brooks 2010). Hence, optimal learning requires students to have the opportunity for contact with nationals of the host country. Some empirical studies seem to

back up this proposition. For example, Stronkhorst (2005) found that international internships have more positive effects on foreign language skills, cultural empathy, self-efficacy and intercultural competencies, than study abroad. In addition, Dwyer (2004) found that foreign language usage was higher among respondents who lodged with local families than those who lived in an apartment or a residence hall with local students or other U.S. students. Students who lodge with families are also likely to become more involved in the local culture through interactions with their host family including, meals, religious observances, or other cultural activities (Brooking 2010; Dwyer 2004; Golay 2006: 53; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002). Hofman and Zak (1969 cited in Sell 1983) grouped US and Canadian students according to their degree of interaction with their Israeli hosts and found that those classified as 'high contact' fared better on all the attitude parameters they investigated. Ideally, interactions with the local culture should include various aspects of the life, for example living with a host family and working with locals. Allport (1954:264) noted only contact that involves people doing things together is likely to result in changed attitudes. Pizam, Milman and Jafari (1991) emphasize the need for equal status between host and guest for meaningful interaction. Other studies have found that a variety of different status inequalities during contact produces the same attitude change as equal status (Triandis & Vassiliou 1967 cited in: Ward et al 2001). However, although the above studies suggest a positive relationship, the research by Marion (1980) is more hesitant in this respect, due to positive influence of local friends, but a negative influence of stay with the host family.

The location of the study abroad experience, the number of locations and the country of origin of the student also seem to have an influence on the learning of competencies (Marion 1980; Teichler & Janson 2007; van Wijk et al. 2008). However, the results regarding the complex concept of cultural distance are inconclusive and could provide an interesting avenue for further research. First, it would be interesting to investigate a wider student population as empirical quantitative research has mostly focused on western students, from Europe or the United States, with students from other regions receiving much less attention. Second, it is unclear how students experience this "cultural distance"

and what cultural dimensions in particular promote or impede their learning. These would appear to be omissions in the literature which would be worth addressing.

3.4 Conclusion

In summary, the literature review on educational travel confirms the observation by previous researchers that the conceptual approach towards the topic of competency learning is highly fragmented. Although three types of main concepts can be identified (i.e. cross-cultural competencies, personal development and management competencies), and authors use similar variables, there is no common agreement on what to measure. In order to come up with a more robust competence framework, in the next chapter I will triangulate the findings from the literature review with a more in-depth understanding of learning and competencies, as well as with insights gained from more widely accepted models in the field of management and expatriation.

During the literature review several methodological caveats were revealed which should be taken into account when interpreting the results of educational travel research. In general the literature shows that surveys and large scale quasi-experiments provide a more positive picture than small scale sample quasi-experiments. Large scale surveys tend to report significant advances in perceptions of cross-cultural competencies and personal development. It is likely that these results are positively skewed by response bias, as the more enthusiastic alumni are most likely to fill out the questionnaires. This said, several large scale quasi-experiments show significant differences between students who study abroad and those who stay at home.

We used our literature review to assess the learning effects of study abroad, the main segment that has been studied in educational travel literature. Our literature review provides fairly positive results for the learning effects of study abroad and shows significant differences between students who study abroad and those who do not. However, taking into account the warnings of Hansel (1988), we should keep in mind the methodological flaws of self-reporting and the tendency for it to produce socially desirable and optimistic ratings. For example, Hansel (1988) herself found that students who resided

for abroad for one year rated certain cross-cultural competencies lower than those who were abroad for a semester, possibly suggesting a period of confidence followed by one of self doubt. Similarly, a study among Semester at Sea alumni found that although former students acquired a culturally relativistic perspective during their travels, in retrospect and with increasing maturity, some of them felt the Semester at Sea as a transition period from innocence and careless living to a working and family life full of responsibilities (Dukes et al. 1994).

Overall, for the study abroad segment, there is evidence that cultural competencies are learned in terms of attitude changes, relationship skills and foreign language ability. Research findings show the positive effects on personal development which particularly increases independence, flexibility and expansion of the self. The most contradictory results are found in the acquisition of self-assurance. Awareness about the state of the world was also found to increase significantly during study abroad. However, this concept was often measured in a rather broad way.

The literature review revealed very little quantitative research on the learning of professional or management competencies during study abroad. In general it is assumed that students traveling from developing to more developed countries are particularly likely to improve their technical knowledge. For students from developed countries, studying at high ranking western universities is likely to provide the highest value for money. Evidence about the attainment of intra and interpersonal management competencies is quite mixed but some patterns do emerge. There is some indication that communication skills are improved by study abroad, but there is little reliable evidence for other competencies, such as problem solving, creativity and negotiating.

The personal background of the student is influential, with the learning effects being more apparent for students with no previous experience of living abroad. Motivation for studying abroad also seems to play an important role in the learning of cross-cultural competencies. Students with an interest in humanities, communication or cross-cultural learning tended to learn more cross-cultural competencies.

The learning effects of a study abroad programme seem to be most significant when students stay overseas for a longer duration. This is particularly the case for developing an awareness and understanding of the home and host cultures, and greater foreign language appreciation. Still, short experiences, such as highly intensive and structured summer programs, seem to be very effective as well.

Optimal learning requires students to have the opportunity for contact with nationals of the host country. The choice of place of residence while abroad seems to play a key role here. The home-stay experience, where students lodge with a host family seems to provide a number of local interactions that are not available in international programs where students are lodged in dormitories, sometimes known as ’island programs’.

The location of the study abroad experience and the country of origin of the student also seem to have an influence on the learning of competencies. The results regarding cultural distance are inconclusive and could provide an interesting avenue for further research, in particular in light of the debate of the relevance of educational travel in a globalizing world. This concept of cultural distance will be elaborated on in this research project.

CHAPTER 4 COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

The literature review revealed that concepts in educational travel have been defined in many different ways leading to little agreement on which competencies should be measured. Several steps can be taken to come up with more valid and reliable conceptualizations for either cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development. A first step was taken in the previous chapter were similar concepts were grouped together. I can organize these categories according to competence, as portrayed in table 4.1.

Cross-cultural competence	**Management competencies**	**Personal development**
Communication skills	(International) business skills	Independence
Perception of home country		Tolerance and flexibility
Perception of host country		Self-awareness
Foreign language proficiency		Expansion of the self
		International awareness

Table 4.1 categories organized according to competence

The second step to improve the conceptualization of the competencies is to define better what is meant by competencies and to understand the nature of learning. In my explanation of learning I build upon theories which have been used in the context of cross-cultural encounters: experiential learning and schema theory. These theories can act as guidelines for selecting valid variables related to cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development. As a third step I identify widely accepted competence frameworks in related research fields such as management and expatriate literature. The remainder of this chapter explains more in-depth the concept of cultural distance[29] which will be the main independent concept that I investigate in this research project.

[29] Paragraph 4.4 discusses the concept of cultural distance and a part of this text was published in van 't Klooster, E., J. Van Wijk, F.M. Go and J. van Rekom (2008). Educational Travel: The Overseas Internship. Annals of Tourism Research 35 (3): 690-711.

4.1 Competencies

4.1.1 Definition

There seems to be little agreement in the literature on the definition of competence. The concept is often not well defined, or not defined at all (Hoffmann 1999). The lack of clarity in meaning is further diluted by a number of different approaches from different stakeholder perspectives such as psychologists, management, human resource managers and politicians. Hoffmann (1999) defines competencies as the underlying attributes of an individual. From a human resource management perspective, a common categorization of these underlying attributes goes by the acronym of KSAO which refers to Knowledge, Skills, Ability, and Other, where Other includes both interests, motivations and personality construct (Peters et al. 1997 cited in: Leiba-O'Sullivan 1999). In line with this definition Stronkhorst (2005) defines this concept in his study on educational travel outcomes as "the ability to handle complex professional issues, tasks, and roles in varying contextual situations through application and further development of acquired knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personality features" (p. 311). Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud (2006) investigated many definitions of cross-cultural competencies and finally defined it as follows: "the individual's effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad".

One question related to competence development is the extent to which different people can learn particular competencies. In this regard, Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999) makes a distinction between stable and dynamic competencies. Knowledge and skills are representative of dynamic competencies, because they may be acquired through training and learning. In contrast, ability and personality (e.g. interests and the Big Five personality traits[30]) represent stable competencies as they are considered to be much more fixed and may influence a person's potential to develop a skill.

[30] The Big Five personality traits are: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openeness (Costa and McCrea 1992). Agreeableness: refers to being friendly, helpful, trustful and willing to compromise ones interests with others. Conscientiousness is the tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement against measures or outside expectations. Extraversion tends to be manifested in assertive, talkative,

Based on the above explanation I define competencies as "the underlying attributes of an individual in the form of knowledge, skills, abilities and personality features (attitudes, interests, motivation and personality traits)". Furthermore, I recognize that the acquisition of knowledge and skills is easier than the learning of new abilities or the altering of existing personality features.

4.2 The learning process of competencies

4.2.1 Definition

Following our discussion on competencies, learning in particular is applicable to the development of dynamic competencies. Hence, learning can best be defined as acquiring new knowledge and skills, whether consciously or unconsciously. This may occur as a result of habituation, conditioning or more complex activities such as play (Oxford dictionary; Vygotsky 1978). Looked at from a neurological perspective, learning occurs through a process of memorization. Memories are constructed by repeated patterns that occur in the nervous system, which transform short-term memories into long-term memories. Short-term memory involves processing new information received by the body. Long-term memory is the stabilized associations of information within the brain. For a memory to be 'promoted' from a short to a long term one it has to be meaningfully associated with information already present in the brain. At this first stage in memory formation, the newly acquired information is still easily lost or corrupted. To become more stable, the memory must be consolidated and stored. During this process, which seems to happen largely when we're asleep, neurons undergo potentially permanent change (Gibb 2007).

4.2.2 Experiential learning

Perhaps the most popular theory of learning among educators is the one of experiential learning, which is sometimes referred to in research on educational travel, although it is

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excitement seeking behavior. Neuroticism is the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or depression. Openness involves active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, and intellectual curiosity.

not always explained what is exactly meant by this theory. This paragraph provides an overview of experiential learning theory.

The philosophy of experiential education builds upon Jean Piaget's model of cognitive development, which locates learning in the mutual interaction of (1) the process of assimilation of experiences from the world into existing concepts and schemas, and (2) the process of accommodation of schemas to practical experience (Citron & Kline 2001 cited in: Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich 2002). One of the fundamental beliefs of experiential education is that experiences are not educational by themselves. "Activity that is not checked by observation of what follows from it may be temporarily enjoyed. But intellectually it leads nowhere. It does not provide knowledge about the situations in which action occurs nor does it lead to clarification and expansion of ideas. Some experiences may also be mis-educative, when it has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experience in the future are restricted" (Dewey 1938: 25 cited in: Giles & Eyler 1994). Hence, the interaction between experience and schema development can only be optimized through carefully chosen experiences which are supported by reflection. According to the philosophy of John Dewey, the goal of experiential education should be human empowerment and liberation, which he believed could be developed as the learner "framed" his own purpose, in contrast with the slave "who executes the purposes of others" (Itin 1999 cited in: Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich 2002).

In specifying how experiences were educative, Dewey proposed two principles: the principle of Continuity and the principle of Interaction. The principle of Continuity states that all experience occur along a continuum called the experiential continuum. This is the idea that experiences build on previous ones and they need to be directed to the expansion of an existing experience. However, new experiences should be sufficiently unfamiliar to the learners to cause a conflict between what is currently known and what needs to be learned (Roberts 2003).

The second principle of Interaction posits that learning results from the transaction between the learner and the social environment. One implication is that for knowledge to be usable through recall and application it has to be acquired in a situation; otherwise it is segregated from experience and is more easily forgotten. Experiential learning is seen as most meaningful when learning goes beyond cognitive learning, including all three dimensions of learning: affective, cognitive and behavioral. Sensory experience increases the chances that the new knowledge and skills will be memorized (Paul & Mukhopadhyay 2004; Vande Berg et al. 2009).

The Experiential Learning Model is a generally accepted model of experiential learning theory. It has four cyclical stages: (1) taking part in a concrete experience; (2) reflecting on that experience; (3) forming new schemas in the mind, and; (4) testing the new schemas in a concrete experience (Kolb 1984). Kolb's learning cycle starts with concrete experience. When students have immersed themselves in the experience they endeavor to articulate that experience through reflective observation. The next phase is abstract conceptualization, where the students try to integrate and understand their experiences, in the light of existing knowledge schemas. This may lead to the students constructing and adjusting theories and strategies, which may then be tested via active experimentation (Eyler & Giles 1999). Sometimes experiential learning seems to suggest something totally different from class room learning, but this notion should be abandoned. Both class-room and field learning entail aspects of experiential cycle, albeit perhaps in a different ratio. A classroom course may be 60 percent abstract knowledge and 40 percent concrete, and vice versa for an experiential learning situation (Ciofalo 1989).

Experiential learning emphasizes the notion of reflective learning, where students reflect on the experience, often with the help of theory. This seems to contradict with the common education philosophy which puts theory before practice. However it has been argued that the reverse order (practice then theory) is an equally plausible and effective method, allowing students to move from lower-order to higher-order knowledge structures (Ciofalo 1989; Feldman 2005; ISO 2008). Reflection during or after a foreign experience can be

particular effective, as it can make students aware of initially vague cultural factors, and help them to form guiding theories for future foreign situations (Hofstede 2003: 287).

Reflective learning during the foreign experience can be both an individual and a social learning process. It can occur through various reflective and discursive processes such as keeping a journal, reflection groups, mentor-protégé relationship, research and observation (Kiely 2005). The impact of reflective learning has been investigated in the context of service learning. Service learning courses which included reflection showed higher rates of learning than those without reflection (Eyler & Giles 1999). The use of reflection has been shown to allow for broader and deeper learning and creates opportunities to debunk stereotypes and question social conditions. Another outcome of reflection is an increase in the retention of the lessons learned (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane 2000; Eyler & Giles 1999). Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige (2009) found that students with a cultural mentor learnt significantly more than those students without.

Concluding my argument above, learning concerns a memorization process, which according to neuroscience entails the formation of associations in the brain in the form of conceptual knowledge and skills. The learning of new knowledge and skills could indirectly change more stable associations related to personality features, although this is likely to be a long and difficult process. Learning seems to be most effective when the newly acquired knowledge and skills connect to previous associations, through the process of observation, reflection, conceptualizing and experimentation. The experience should preferably be interactive, including three dimensions of learning: affective, cognitive and behavioral. Still, these insights don't explain how people deal with the tension between old and new knowledge. For example, in a new foreign environment it could be that the perceived 'distance' between new and old associations is too great to overcome. Schema theory has been applied in the context of cross-cultural encounters to explain the learning process during an overseas experience.

4.2.3 Schema theory

Schema theory explains how people form and adjust knowledge structures in their brain and is useful for explaining the learning process that students go through when they travel abroad and need to adjust to an unfamiliar foreign environment (Coelho 1962; Nishida 1999). Schemas can be defined as generalized collections of knowledge of past experiences. This knowledge includes associations between social roles, identity, facts, etiquette, procedures, problem solving strategies and emotional states. Psychologists hypothesize that a change in one schema causes changes in all the others, and in the total system (Bartlett 1932; Nishida 1999). There is a distinction between meaning schemas and meaning perspectives. Meaning schemes are sets of related and habitual expectations governing 'if-then', 'cause-effect' and category relationships, as well as event sequences. Meaning perspectives are made up of higher-order schemas, theories, propositions, beliefs, goal orientations, and what linguists call "networks of arguments". Meaning perspectives are defined as "broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations" (Mezirow 1991).

Schemas are gradually formed by conscious and unconscious lessons learnt from daily events and experiences. When a person encounters a familiar situation, the already built cognitive structures are retrieved, helping the person to categorize information, interpret stimuli and then select appropriate reactions. As similar experiences accumulate, the schemas become more organized, stable and elaborate. Hence, the more experience individuals gain in any cultural context, the less energy and effort they need to spend to comprehend and react to situations (Nishida 1999; Piaget 1929). Stereotypes are a product of knowledge schemes. They represent mental 'files' or images that people use to help them process new information by comparing it with past experience. Although stereotypes may be useful for rapid decision making, they can be counter-productive when rigidly applied in unfamiliar situations (Schneider & Barsoux 2003). Developmental psychologists suggest that a child's fundamental value schemes are anchored by around the age of ten, due to 'mental programming' which starts in the family and develops further through schools, associations, work, public life and community (Hofstede 2003: 20).

Schema development occurs when there is a cognitive conflict between existing schemas and new information. An overseas experience is likely to provide a strong stimulus for this occurring as cross-cultural adaptation involves the transformation of one's own schemas toward those of the host culture and acquiring new schemas within the host culture environment (Chang 2009; Nishida 1999). A cross-cultural encounter leads individuals to assimilate and accommodate new stimuli, thus adjusting their schemas. Assimilation describes the process of making the experienced world fit into the existing schemas. Accommodation, on the other hand, occurs when the new experience does not fit into the existing schemas, leading people to modify them. Assimilation and accommodation are strategies which are often applied simultaneously as found by Ying (2002) in her longitudinal study on the personality change of Taiwanese students in the United States. In addition to these two strategies, there is also a third option, people withdraw from the situation and stop learning. In other words, instead of changing the schemas that have proven inadequate in a new context, they choose to change their situation and environment (Chang 2009).

In intercultural interactions, anxiety (the fear of not being able to accurately predict or control a 'foreign' situation) has an important impact on the schema adaption strategy (Gudykunst & Hammer 1988 cited in: Beamer 1995). This anxiety could translate into a denial of the differences between oneself and 'the Other' or a dominant pose, both reflecting an assimilation strategy. Another coping response is to reject the new situation and withdraw from it. The individuals choice of a particular schema adaptation strategy might depend on (1) the personality and coping strategy of the individual (2) the intensity of the experience, e.g. the distance between the two cultures, and/or (3) the interpretation and guidance provided by influential others (Adler 1975). Osland's research into learning amongst expatriates (2000) found that major transformations in thinking can be characterized by a letting go of unquestioned acceptance of basic (cultural) assumptions and a taking on of new, broader, schema.

Chang (2009) identified four important learning components that help to move the schemas during intercultural encounters: schema awareness, mental tension, mental

dialogue, and culturally relevant others. Hence, educational programme design should increase the students' awareness of host country schemas and how those differ from those of the home country. Teachers should also help students to make sense of the mental tension that arises because of this awareness. Next, this awareness and tension often persuade students to develop a new perspective. This can be facilitated with the help of an internal dialogue and seeking out information on cultural relevant others. These learning components share many similarities with the theory of experiential learning but put more emphasis on coping with the mental tension that arises due to the gap between the familiar and unfamiliar context.

4.2.4 Conclusion

To investigate the issue of competence learning in educational travel experiences, a more fundamental explanation of the learning process is required, than has been provided by past research. Taking into account previous definitions, I define competence as 'the underlying attributes of an individual in the form of knowledge, skills, abilities and personality features (attitudes, interests, motivations and personality traits)'. It is important to note that people differ to the extent to which they can learn particular competencies. Competence attributes related to knowledge and skills may be acquired through training, but, in contrast, ability and personality are considered to be relatively fixed and may influence a person's potential to develop a skill. For example, my literature review revealed several articles that showed a relationship between motivation, interests and the learning of cross-cultural competencies.

The concept of experiential learning appeals to many educators, although it hasn't always been fully explained in educational travel literature. Experiential learning theory proposes that experiences which engage multiple senses and are relevant to the persons' life world, are considered to accelerate learning more than cognitive classroom learning. Recent insights from cognitive psychology and brain research appear to provide more accurate explanations. They show that experiential learning involves memorization processes within the brain and the nervous system. A person's functioning is based on the development of networks of knowledge associations in the brain. These processes confirm the importance

of learning as a multi-sensory experience and the preference for learning to occur when it can connect with previous experiences.

Research into cross-cultural adaptation often uses schema theory to explain how people deal with the 'gap' between familiar and unfamiliar experiences. In general, the adaptation of schemas can occur in three ways: individuals can assimilate and accommodate new stimuli, or withdraw from the situation. The choice for a particular adaptation strategy is based on the competencies a person possesses, the characteristics of the environment (e.g. cultural values), and the support provided by others. Several of these factors are already discussed in the literature review and will be elaborated on in the final chapters of this research project where the implications for educational institutions are proposed.

The implications for my competence framework are the following. I will define the dynamic competencies (knowledge and skills) for both cross-cultural competencies and management competencies. For the concept of personal development I look at both dynamic and stable competencies. I argue that general knowledge and skills with regard to the self and world are relatively easy to acquire, such as feelings of independence, flexibility and international awareness. However it is likely to be more difficult to change the underlying meaning perspectives related to personality constructs.

4.3 Educational travel competencies

The next section defines the different competencies. It distinguishes between three groups of competence: cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development. As the educational travel literature lacks a robust competence framework, the conceptualization of cross-cultural competencies and management competencies is based on existing models from related disciplines, i.e. expatriate and management literature. The conceptualization of personal development uses the concepts put forward by Nash (1976) as a starting point. Prior to defining these concepts it is important to further underpin the reasons for choosing them. First this is done by explaining general ideas regarding culture, management and personal development. Second, I make the connection with learning, schema and competence theory. Finally I reflect on the selection of competencies with the help of my findings from the literature review.

4.3.1 Cross-cultural competencies

Background

Cultural differences can be found in three types of operational spheres: (a) employee collaboration, (b) external stakeholder management and (c) interactions with consumers. Many employees working for multinational companies have to cope with a range of cross-cultural issues that arise from the staff's multicultural backgrounds Although corporate culture, functional disciplines (e.g. finance, logistics) and regulations provide employees with a sense of common understanding, projects can be severely negatively affected by a lack of skills for dealing with cultural misunderstandings. A lack of insight into the diversity of values and demeanors can bring about interpersonal distrust and slow down the coordination of tasks, in particular in an international context (Hambrick et al. 1998; Schneider & Barsoux 2003; van Fenema 2002). Secondly, from a stakeholder perspective, international corporate scandals related to work conditions and the environment, and the increased political capacity of local residents have encouraged international managers to improve their skills in cross-cultural conflict resolution and enter into strategic dialogues with a broader range of stakeholders (Richardson 1976 cited in Hicks 2003; van Tulder & van der Zwart 2006). Finally, from a marketing perspective, various elements of culture (e.g. religious beliefs, materialism, language, education, the family structure, gender role, manners, customs, and time orientation) can have a significant impact on the acceptability and adoption pattern of innovative products and services among consumers (Javalgi & White 2002).

In order to understand the nature of cross-cultural competencies we first need to understand what culture is and what challenges it can pose. Historically societies have developed different cultures, consisting of shared behavior, beliefs, values and symbols, to deal with the problems of external adaptation (managing relationships with the environment) and internal integration (managing relationships among people). Solutions to the problems of external adaptation include assumptions regarding control and uncertainty, the nature of human activity, and the nature of truth and reality. Solutions to the problems of internal integration include assumptions regarding the importance of relationships over

task achievement, relationships with superiors and subordinates, and relationships with peers (Schneider & Barsoux 2003: 35). Malewski (2005: 65) provides a very simple definition of culture: “the sum of characteristic choices made by a group of people”. Culture can be seen as a control mechanism for governing behavior and generating trust (Geertz 1973) and is often the result of human choices under particular conditions that are shaped by forces such as geography, political influence, religion and language (Malewski 2005). Many aspects of a culture are learned during the formative years of childhood and are therefore difficult to unlearn. This is not to say a culture is monolithic or fixed. People can decide (at least to a certain extent) which aspects of their culture they want to shun or embrace, for example by choosing a particular consumer lifestyle or working for a certain company. However, it usually takes travelling to another environment to help people realize the extent to which they have unconsciously adopted the choices and solutions they grew up with, and that other options exist (Malewski 2005). Often the realization of the power of culture only comes in retrospect. As culture only has tacit impact on business processes and results it tends to be downplayed or neglected (Czinkota and Rokainen 2005; Schneider & Barsoux 2003). Yet, in a study of international businesspeople, managers rated inter-cultural sensitivity as the most important criterion for success in foreign assignments. The same study also found that when actually deploying people for foreign assignments, this was one of the least considered criteria, coming well below professional experience and reputation as criteria for selection and placement decisions (Frankenstein & Hosseini 1988 cited in: Bhawuk & Brislin 1992).

Values are a crucial element of culture. If one simply looks at all the cultural phenomena visible on the surface, one may get the impression of an infinite number of differences that can’t possibly be listed or grouped (Malewski 2005: 72). Values act as the underlying principles that guide behavior. Metaphorically, culture is often represented as an iceberg. One sees items on the surface that represent the tangible aspect of culture (e.g. habits, rituals, laws and symbols) whereas the (much-larger) part under water represents the intangible aspects, i.e. the values. Building upon the work of renowned scholars (such as Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars and Edward T. Hall), Malewski (2005) identifies seven value dimensions that shape the way people think and act.

1. Personal identity (individual versus group).
2. Power differential (low versus high).
3. Attitude to change (embrace versus avoid).
4. Notions of time (rigid versus fluid).
5. Communication style (direct versus indirect).
6. Etiquette (informal versus formal).
7. Emotional expression (reserved versus affective).

Personal identity. Individualistic societies can be defined as those where relationships between individuals are loose. Such societies value individual initiative and competitiveness (Hofstede 2003). In terms of ego psychology, the individual identifies with himself rather than with some larger collective. The individual can be seen as structuring his life space by drawing tight rather than permeable ego boundaries between himself and relevant others (Schooler 1972). In contrast, collectivism appreciates group effort and decision making through discussion. Identity is more strongly related to the group than the individual. The United States is generally seen as the most individualistic society, followed by other English speaking counties and Europe. Latin America and Asia are more group-oriented cultures (Malewski 2005: 84).

Power differential. Power distance is defined as "the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally" (Hostede 2003: 39). In societies with a low power distance, social and corporate hierarchies are fairly flat and flexible. This means that people can raise themselves to positions of power through their ability to fulfill a certain mandate. By contrast, in societies with a high power distance, only people with a certain family background, education, gender, or level of seniority can attain positions of power, creating a more stratified and rigid society. Low power distance regions include protestant Europe, Israel, United States and Commonwealth. High power distance regions are considered to be Asia, Latin America, the Arab World and Catholic Europe (Malewski 2005: 86).

Attitude to change. Another cultural variable is the degree to which people are willing to embrace uncertainty or change. In some societies, such as the United States and those influenced by Protestantism, people believe that they can shape their future through their own actions. They tend to be more comfortable with novel, risky, or ambiguous situations and feel that they can successfully manage such situations. Interestingly, the philosophy of fatalism (more visible in the Asian world) can sometimes also promote openness to risk. Other cultures (e.g. Catholic Europe, Latin America and Japan) feel that the individual is only a small part of a larger society or tradition and that has little influence on the way things are done, so it is best to go with the flow (Malewski 2005: 88).

Notions of time. In some societies time is rigid: objectives must be reached within a specified time and tasks are scheduled accordingly. The logic is that getting more done in a given time frame leads to increased earnings ('time is money'), so people tend to be in a rush to meet deadlines and value punctuality. This attitude extends to the social sphere, where people plan gatherings in advance and hosts expect guests to show up on time. In other cultures, people consider the quality of the time spent as more important than the quantity of things that get done. Thus work can be interrupted to help a colleague or a friend. Deadlines and schedules tend to be fluid. At social events, guests may arrive much later than the scheduled time and family and friends usually welcome impromptu visits. Notions of time are more rigid in Germanic countries, such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and in the United States, while time is more fluid in the Catholic European countries, such as France, Belgium, or Italy, as well as Latin America and Japan (Malewski 2005: 90).

Communication style. In some countries importance is placed on delivering a message as explicitly and directly as possible even if it involves a refusal, bad news, or negative feedback. People do not consider such communication offensive; rather, the recipient appreciates this because it allows him or her to take corrective measures. In other cultures, conveyance of bad news or feedback tends to be more indirect or implicit, and may be achieved by omission, hints, or even intermediaries, to allow the recipient to save face. In these cultures it is common to avoid direct refusals out of concern for damaging the

harmonious functioning of a group or relationship. The United States, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, and New Zealand are cultures where direct communication is preferred, while people in Asia and Latin America convey their messages less explicitly (Malewski 2005:92).

Etiquette. In informal societies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Israel, job performance and moral uprightness matter most, while titles, family background, and outward appearance take second place. People tend to be on a first-name basis with each other and there are fewer explicit rules dictating social conduct, such as 'you must stand in the presence of elders' or 'men shouldn't wear hats indoors'. It is, however, very important to be respectful to all people, regardless of their social background. In formal societies, including Asia and Europe, observing proper etiquette is at least as important as job performance and moral uprightness. There are often complex rules concerning the use of titles, precedence, proper attire, table manners, appropriate small talk, and so on (Malewski 2005: 93).

Emotional expression. Some societies consider it best to refrain from outwardly revealing thoughts and emotions, be this through facial expressions, bodily gestures, or an emotional tone of voice. In other cultures, outward expressions of emotions are perfectly acceptable, and it is okay to hug and kiss colleagues and friends as a sign of welcome, or to show excitement, approval, or disagreement through facial expression and voice modulation. Some of the more reserved countries or regions include Japan, China and Northern Europe, while Latin America and the Arab world tend to be more affective (Malewski 2005: 95).

The experience of crossing cultures is often referred to as a culture shock. "Culture shock is a stress reaction where salient physiological and physical rewards are generally uncertain, difficult to control or predict. Thus, a sojourner remains anxious, confused, and sometimes apathetic or angry until he or she has had time to develop a new set of behavioral assumptions that help him or her to understand and predict the social behavior of the local natives." (Weissman & Furnham 1987: 314). The culture shock initially stems from an awareness that many parts of one's knowledge about cultural values, roles,

etiquette and symbols are not useful in the new environment. It can also include dealing with the stress involved in building a new life (e.g. work-entry, making friends, finding the supermarket, financial management) and dealing with ecological and social differences (e.g. weather conditions or extreme poverty) (Hottola 2004). Although a single stressful event may not place great demands on the coping abilities of most people, the accumulation and persistence of multiple problems can strain an individual's emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies (Cohen & Wills 1985; Lazarus & Launier 1978 cited in: House et al. 1988; Lazarus 1966). Culture shock can be a very subjective experience. For example Ruben and Kealey (1979) concluded that people who were most aware of the personal and subjective nature of their perceptions experienced culture shock most intensely.

Although the term 'culture shock' is often used to describe the stressful experience of settling in another country, it is perhaps more accurate in this day and age to use the less extreme-sounding phrase 'culture confusion' (Hotolla 2004). This phrase implies that cultural adaptation is a learning process in which external stresses repeatedly disorient and confuse the traveler who uses these stimuli in order to discover the appropriate cognitive and behavioral schemas. The confusion is brought about by an accumulation of (small) stresses over time and is not necessarily a sudden shock. It seems plausible to assume that, in our more globalized society, culture shocks occur less than in the past - due to people having more experience with travel, available 'bridging' tools such as foreign language proficiency, ICT support (mobile phone and internet) and 'recuperative' tourist safe havens (resorts, western hotel chains, Starbucks, McDonalds etc) (Sorensen 2003; White & White 2007).

This background on culture points out several aspects which are important for our definition of cross-cultural competencies. First is the concept of cultural values which underlies more superficial behavior and which can be difficult to identify at first sight due to its tacit nature. Second, overcoming cultural confusion shares many characteristics with stress management, where especially the interaction between multiple stressors can complicate decision making.

Definition of cross-cultural competencies

Cross-cultural competencies can be defined as "the individual's effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad" (Johnson et al. 2006: 6). Only few studies have empirically tested a rigorous theoretical model with regard to the competencies that people need to successfully adapt to a foreign environment. An example is a study by Tucker, Bonial and Lahti (2004) who tested several times the predictors for cross-cultural adjustment among peace corps expatriates. In their studies it turned out that intercultural adaptation (cognitive, behavioral and affective), was dependent on the following predictors:

1. Internal locus of control
2. A behavioral approach which includes flexibility, patience, sense of humor, initiative and risk taking.
3. A social interpersonal style which incorporates trust in people; interpersonal interest; and social adaptability.
4. A world view characterized by open-mindedness, respect for other beliefs and tolerance for different conditions.

Although the study of Tucker et al (2004) seems to be an extensive one, it isn't cited widely. Still its findings resemble the commonly used cross-cultural competencies dimensions of Black and Mendenhall (1990). Black and Mendenhall (1990) offer a taxonomy of cross-cultural competencies that has three dimensions: self-maintenance, relationship and perceptual. The *self-maintenance dimension* refers to the capability of coping with stress. Second, the *relationship dimension* involves the capability to foster and maintain interpersonal relationships with people with a different cultural background and to effectively deal with diverse communication styles, social customs and the feelings of another person. Finally, the *perceptual dimension* concerns the mental capacity to interpret and understand the behavior of culturally different people (Black & Mendenhall 1990). The strength of this model is that it takes into account that the impact of foreign experiences on participants is complex and multifaceted, involving not only attitudinal but also behavioral concepts (Litvin 2003; Sell 1983).

As explained earlier, Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999) makes a distinction between stable and dynamic competencies, which stems from a common categorization of competencies, consisting of knowledge, skills, ability, and other factors, which include interests and personality constructs. Knowledge and skills are seen as dynamic competencies, because they can be acquired through training. Ability and personality are more stable competencies because they are relatively fixed and may influence someone's potential to develop a skill (Peters et al. 1997 cited in: Leiba-O'Sullivan 1999). Following on from this, this investigation into learning focuses on dynamic cross-cultural competencies, which are defined below.

Dynamic self-maintenance competencies consist of factual cultural knowledge, self-efficacy (confidence based on previous experience) and stress management skills. Stress-management skills include the student's capability to monitor his or her cognitions and emotions, the ability to recognize the range of social support strategies helpful for self-maintenance in particular situations, and the willingness to apply these (Walton 1990).

Dynamic relationship competencies consist of conceptual cultural knowledge (e.g. recognition of different values and their influence on interactions), relationship self-efficacy and conflict-resolution knowledge and skills. Conflict-resolution knowledge and skills can be defined as a familiarity with different conflict-resolution styles (e.g. communication style), an ability to utilize these and to take the influence of culture into account (Baláz & Williams 2004; Kozan 1989; Thomas 1975).

Dynamic perceptual competencies consist of attributional cultural knowledge and perceptual questioning skills. Perceptual questioning skills include self-monitoring and an understanding of how bias, emotions, motives and prejudice influence decision making. Attributional cultural knowledge encompasses an awareness of contextually appropriate behavior in unfamiliar situations. Inevitably, when one becomes involved in a foreign culture, paradoxes in cultural values become apparent which don't fit with general stereotypical values (Osland & Bird 2000). The cause of these paradoxes lies in the interaction between different cultural layers, such as role, family, organization, sector,

region, country and history. A culture of a company may be influenced by many different factors: regional (e.g. north versus south, capital city versus provinces), industrial (e.g. cosmetics versus banking), corporate (e.g. marketing versus R&D driven), and functional (e.g. manufacturing versus finance) (Hofstede 2003; Malewski 2005; Rudmin 2003; Schneider and Barsoux 2003). Understanding these interactions help sojourners to gain better insights into these paradoxes and interpret more accurately the attitudes and behavior of the people they are interacting with. The benefit of an overseas experience is not to develop a more or less favorable perception of the host country but to gain a more complex and differentiated worldview (Kelman 1974).

The above conceptualization is in line with and elaborates on concepts found in the literature review.

Dimension	**Black and Mendenhall (1990)**	**Concepts from the literature review**
Self-maintenance	- Factual cultural knowledge - Self-efficacy - Stress management skills.	- Independence - Emotional resilience
Relationship	- Conceptual cultural knowledge, - Relationship self-efficacy - Conflict-resolution knowledge and skills	- Communication skills - Foreign language proficiency
Perceptual	- Perceptual questioning skills - Attributional cultural knowledge	- Recognition of bias - Understanding other cultures, perception of host and home country

Table 4.2 cross-cultural competencies

Our conceptualization of cross-cultural competencies closely follows schema theory. It distinguishes between perceptual and relationship competencies, a categorization that mirrors the definitions of meaning perspectives and meaning schemas. The self-maintenance dimension refers to becoming more aware of one's cognition and emotions and being able to successfully deal with the mental tension that arises because of the interplay between schema accommodation and assimilation strategies.

4.3.2 Management competencies

Background

As with the previous conceptualization on cross cultural competencies, this section also focuses on dynamic competencies, meaning knowledge and skills. Through practice it is possible to develop and improve skills. At the same time, practice without the necessary conceptual knowledge will lack flexibility and adaptability to different contexts. There is a distinction between technical, intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies (Whetten et al. 2000).

Researchers argue that, in recent years, intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies have gained in importance, compared to technical skills (Bracht et al. 2006; NACE 2011; Whetten et al. 2000). In response to fierce and global competition and innovations in new technologies, organizations tend to be in a constant state of change often leading to frequent restructuring, and sometimes downsizing and outsourcing (Allred et al. 1996). As a result employees increasingly need to deal with uncertainty and communicate with 'outsiders' from other business units or organizations. Second, some experts argue that tacit interactions are becoming more valuable as a source of competitiveness because ICT is increasingly streamlining and standardizing transactions. Furthermore, nowadays explicit knowledge can be found everywhere, develops very quickly and is no longer the exclusive domain of a particular institution or expert (Scott 2010). As a result some researchers claim that tacit interactions play an increasingly important role in providing a professional with a competitive edge. Tacit interactions or knowledge refer to collaborative learning, cross-cultural management, multidisciplinary thinking, the management of change and innovation, reflection and analytical skills[31] (Beardsley et al. 2006; GMAC 2012). Projects can often fail due to a lack of mastery of soft skills, such as failing to recognize different ways of thinking in good time. Such failures can be critical in a highly dynamic and international market (Bancino & Zevalkink 2007; Hofstede 2003: 14). A survey among CEOs of Fortune 500 companies seems to affirm these assumptions in the context of international business. They place a high importance on soft skills related to

[31] e.g. learning how to synthesize different sources of information and assess their credibility.

communication, change and cross-cultural management, international strategy and competitiveness (e.g. finding local partners) (Geringer & Pendergast 2010).

The division of tacit and explicit forms of knowledge fits with schema theory. Explicit knowledge refers to technical knowledge as set out in written words or maps, or mathematical formulae (Dampney et al. 2002), consisting of clear schema structures and clusters. By contrast, tacit knowledge is more needed for the execution of dynamic intra and interpersonal competencies, and consists of looser, ambiguous and higher order sets of schema (e.g. related to underlying values, perceptions, attitudes and communication styles)[32].

Definition of management competencies

Whetten, Cameron and Woods (2000) make a distinction between three types of management competencies: technical, intrapersonal and interpersonal. Technical knowledge and skills include core business knowledge and quantitative skills (GMAC 2009; Schuster et al. 1998). The following core business knowledge areas are the most important for doing business internationally: international marketing strategy and market entry strategy, finding skilled management personnel, and international legal and political issues (Geringer & Pendergast 2010).

Whetten, Cameron and Woods (2000) discuss the nature of intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. Intrapersonal skills include self-awareness, problem solving skills and stress management[33]. Self-awareness means that students understand their personal motivations, feelings, strengths and weaknesses. Problem solving includes being able to effectively identify and define a problem and generating the most appropriate solution from among a

[32] Tacit knowledge is typically individualistic, heavily organisationally based, it is directly related to skill and it is context specific. Furthermore it tends to be practically rather than theoretically oriented in nature (e.g. learning by doing), and given the nature of human competition, it is acquired in conditions of low environmental support, which leads to it's being used for competitive advantage. One other very important issue, often not realised with tacit knowledge is the need for understanding on the part of the receiver. This may help explain why tacit knowledge is so culturally loaded (beliefs, values, importance of language), and why others may not understand immediately what is taking place, even if they do happen to understand the syntax and semantics of English. Over time the tacit knowledge component, in addition to the already acquired syntax and semantics, aids in improved communication amongst people (Dampney, Busch and Richards 2002).

[33] For a definition of stress management see the discussion of cross-cultural competencies.

set of alternatives. One Dutch student from the Rotterdam School of Management provides an example of how he improved his problem solving and time management skills during an internship in Germany:

> "When you are capable of looking analytically at a certain problem and successfully defining its major and minor aspects, then you understand it. Having an overview of the problem makes it easier to solve it. First off, you need to apply your analytical skills to clearly differentiate between the major and minor aspects and identify the main objectives etc. The second skill is related to the first point and concerns problem solving skills. Am I capable not only of formulating a problem but also solving it and within a certain time period? Working with a fixed time schedule introduces the third point, time management skills. For me personally this is a skill, which I need to improve.
>
> During my internship my boss forced me to put my task into a project task time table. This table is a visualization of the different elements of the task, consisting of synchro points, which function as deadline points. At each point feedback should be given or a certain task needs to be completed. The main advantage of the project task time table is that it gives you a good overview on the diversity of tasks involved and forces you to make you own time schedule and improve your time management skills. This tool helped me improve my time management skills a lot. I currently work at Rolls Royce and use the same table."

Interpersonal skills involve communication, collaboration and conflict management. Communication refers to aspects such as empathy, listening, diplomacy and choosing the right medium for the message (e.g. face to face or media) (GMAC 2009; Whetten et al. 2000). Typical collaboration skills include motivation skills, empowerment and delegation (*ibid*). Furthermore, as decision making becomes more decentralized and organizations grow in size, it will become essential for future managers to clearly articulate values that will provide a shared sense of purpose (Beardsley et al. 2006).

The above conceptualization fits and extends upon the concepts found in my literature review. Note that some of the concepts share similarities with those of our definition of cross-cultural competencies.

Dimensions	**Whetten et al. (2000); Geringer and Pendergast (2010)**	**Concepts from literature review**
Technical competencies	- International legal and political issues - International market strategy and market entry strategy - Finding skilled personnel - Quantitative skills	- International business knowledge; - Knowledge of foreign markets and competitors - Technical and functional skills
Intrapersonal competencies	- Self-awareness - Problem solving skills - Stress management	- Managing projects / administrative skills - Decision making skills - Creativity - Independence, flexibility
Interpersonal competencies	- Communication - Collaboration - Conflict management	- Communication - Work in multicultural teams - Negotiating - Supervisory skills

Table 4.3 management competencies

4.3.3 Personal development

Background

Culture shock is often assumed to be a negative phenomenon (Oberg 1960). However, exposure to a new culture also has the potential to be a transformational experience as the new cultural stimuli and shocks can serve as triggers that lead sojourners to re-examine their own assumptions, accommodate their schemas and adopt a “new frame of reference” (Brown 2009; Hall 1960 cited in: Chang 2009). In such cases, the sojourn evolves from a confrontation with a new culture into an encounter with the self and, consequently, a movement from a low to a high state of self awareness (Abrams 1965; Adler 1975; Wallace 1962).

In educational travel literature there is a lack of agreement about what aspects of the personality ought to be measured. This is also recognized by Nash (1976), who, in order to build a more underpinned concept of personal development, looked not only at existing ideas of researchers and practitioners in the field, but also build upon large scale empirical research which investigated the personality features of the modern man / woman. Although personal development is now a much used concept, it has not always been so important in the past. It is believed that modernity has brought about individuals who are increasingly internally oriented, intellectually adept and autonomous (Schooler 1972). The general reasoning behind these observations is that increases in social complexity (urbanization, education, mass communication, industrialization, politicization) are associated with a weakening of social norms. This gives greater freedom to the individual and is accompanied by a concern with the autonomous self (Inkeles & Smith 1970).

The nature of the overseas educational experience is, perhaps the quintessence of the modern experience in a complex, changing world (Nash 1976). Thus, when I build upon research by Nash and other authors in the field of educational travel, I assume that a student who successfully completes an educational experience abroad ought to become more independent, flexible, self aware, and gain an expanded world view. Our conceptualization follows the ideas of Nash, but also includes a few changes based on more recent research, as well as general understanding of learning processes.

Definition of personal development

Independence. By learning to adapt to a strange environment students come to appreciate their ability to deal with uncertainties and stresses. Independence is closely related to self-efficacy which refers to a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task (Black & Duhon 2006; Nash 1976; Stitsworth 1988; Stronkhorst 2005).

Flexibility. This concept describes the malleability of a person's thinking and social behavior which is needed to adapt to an uncertain situation (Hansel 1988; McGuigan 1958, 1959; Stitsworth 1988; Stronkhorst 2005,). The terms flexibility, tolerance, patience and objectivity seem to be closely related to one another and are sometimes used

interchangeably. Nash (1976) makes a distinction between flexibility and tolerance but these concepts can benefit from a better definition. Following the research by Tucker, Bonial and Lahti (2004) flexibility can be identified as a behavioral approach to situations and can be grouped together with other concepts such as patience, sense of humor, initiative and risk taking. On the other hand, tolerance says more about the world view that someone holds and can be grouped with such concepts as open-mindedness and respect for other beliefs. From the perspective of schema theory, flexibility is more related to meaning schemes and tolerance more to meaning perspectives. Using Hofstede's model of an onion (2003: 19), tolerance is more at the level of values and flexibility is related to more superficial behavioral practices such as business etiquettes, traditions and symbols.

Self-awareness. The Oxford dictionary defines self-awareness as "the knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires". I would suggest that within the context of educational travel this concept consists of two aspects: self-assurance and an expanded view of the self. *Self assurance* refers to the idea held by many educators that overseas study leads to a crystallization of the self (e.g. strengths and weaknesses) and life goals (Coelho 1962; Dukes et al. 1994; Dwyer & Peters 2004). Second, the overseas experience gives an *expanded view of the self* in that it has a liberating effect which can lead the student to feel free to act in a more autonomous way. If self-conceptions reflect the nature of one's environment, the overseas student, who must function in two cultures, may well develop a more expanded or differentiated sense of self. As such, the intercultural experiences and the new environment provides the student with an opportunity to examine his or own personality and characteristics from a different perspective and their effects upon others (Coelho 1962; Dunkley 2009; Nash 1976).

Expanded worldview. This concept also contains two smaller components: awareness of the state of the world and tolerance. *Awareness of the state of the world,* refers to a better understanding of prevailing world trends, issues, social and political views, global interdependencies, sustainability and how this understanding can be distorted by selective information gathering and provision. Furthermore, awareness of the state of the world involves identifying and intelligently comparing experiences from other societies, and

possibly adopting best practices for the benefit of the society, related to quality of life (e.g. public life, cultural values, and the environment) (Abrams 1979; AIESEC 2011; Geringer & Pendergast 2010; Hanvey 1978; Spaulding & Flack 1976 cited in: Snow 2008). The second concept, increased *tolerance* should be the result of a more objective viewpoint to deal with the contradictions and complexities of the modern world. People become more aware of their cultural biases and can more easily see both sides of an issue and adjust their perceptions to changing conditions. Hence, tolerance describes accepting and non-judgmental social beliefs and attitudes (McGuigan 1958; Nash 1976; Stitsworth 1988).

The conceptualization of personal development is also in line with the theory of schema development. Independence means that the sojourner becomes more confident in relying on his or her set of schema. Flexibility refers to a looser application of schemas in order to adjust to different contexts. Self-awareness describes both a more integrated set of schema (self assurance) and/or an elaborated set of schema (expansion of the self). An expanded world-view describes a more elaborated set of schema through tolerance and an awareness of the state of the world.

The above conceptualization fits and extends upon the concepts found in our literature review.

Concept	**Variables**	**Concepts from literature review**
Independence		Independence, autonomy, self-efficacy.
Flexibility		Tolerance and flexibility
Self awareness	- Expanded view of the self - Self-assurance	Expansion and differentiation of the self Self-assurance and confidence
Expanded world view	- Tolerance - Awareness of the state of the world	International awareness

Table 4.4 personal development

4.4 Cultural distance

4.4.1 Definition

Previous research suggest that the location of educational travel experiences has an influence on the learning of competencies (Hansel 1988; Marion 1980; Teichler 2004; Teichler & Janson 2007; van Wijk et al. 2008). It has been theoretically assumed that cultural distance has a negative effect on the capacity of individuals to develop cross-cultural competencies (Johnson et al. 2006; Ward et al. 2001). Large differences in cultural values, language, economic, political and legal systems may constitute a barrier for interns to effectively communicate with people from the host country and learn significant management competencies. Currently very little research exists on how the concept of cultural distance influences students competency learning, which is in contrast to expatriate literature where more information is available on this topic. As a consequence our conceptualization of cultural distance will be based on expatriate research and cross-cultural research in general.

The concept of culture is usually discussed from three main perspectives: postmodernist, particularist and dimensionalist. The latter is often used by social scientists some of whom have constructed frameworks to try measure cultural differences The leading figures of the dimensionalist perspective are Hofstede, Triandis, Schwartz and Inglehart (Vinken et al. 2004). They explain cultural variation across the world along a set of value dimensions. These dimensions can be used to measure differences in cultural values and became the basis of the concept of cultural distance (Babiker et al. 1980), defined as the extent to which two cultures differ. I will now focus on the dimensions put forward by Hofstede and Inglehart. The Hofstede dimensions are probably the most frequently used in cross-cultural research and originate from the seventies. The Inglehart value dimension are established more recently with the help of the ‘world values survey’ and have been re-examined every 5 years since 1981.

4.4.2 Hofstede dimensions

One widely used index for measuring cultural distance was developed by Kogut and Singh (1988) who drew on Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Shenkar 2001). Hofstede used a factor analysis to classify data from a work value survey done by IBM among 40 countries between 1967 and 1973. This contained four dimensions: power distance, individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. Power distance was defined as 'the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally'. Individualism was defined in terms of the looseness of relationships between individuals in a society and contrasted with collectivism, societies where individuals are highly integrated into groups. Masculinity was defined as "the extent to which the dominant values in society are 'masculine' – that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and not caring for others, the quality of life, or people". Uncertainty avoidance was defined as "the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behaviors, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise" (Hofstede 2003).

Recently, the Kogut and Singh formula has come in for some criticism (see e.g. Chirkov et al. 2005; Magala 2006; Shenkar 2001). One of the criticisms is that the metaphor of distance creates an illusion of symmetry. For example, a study by Selmer, Chiu and Shenkar (2006) found that German expatriates adjusted better in the USA than American expatriates in Germany. International interns may well experience such asymmetry. For example, a Danish student doing an internship in Vietnam might experience more cultural distance than a Vietnamese counterpart doing an internship in Denmark, partly at least due different power distances (higher in the first case and lower in the second)

Another weakness of the cultural distance concept is that it suggests that countries are culturally homogenous. This underestimates the potential differences between ethnic, regional or social groups within countries (Chirkov et al 2005; Kirkman et al. 2006). Hofstede (2003) himself warned against applying country level cultural values to individuals. Despite this, many studies have used the dimensional model at the individual

level, often producing contradictory results. This has led Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson (2006) to argue that researchers should use models that recognize the characteristics of specific populations in a country. It is more likely that differences between countries stem from individuals' perceptions of a foreign country's general values and attitudes, often referred to as psychic distance. Psychic distance is defined as "the distance between the home market and a foreign market resulting from the perception and understanding of cultural and business differences" (Evans et al. 2000: 377).

4.4.3 Inglehart dimensions

This research uses Inglehart & Baker's dimensional value model (2000) to measure psychic distance. This model is more dynamic and more comprehensive than the relatively static work-sphere that Hofstede used to develop his dimensions (Vinken et al. 2004). Inglehart and Baker (2000) argue that cultural values shift from 'traditional' to 'secular' when an agrarian economy develops into an industrial one. Traditional values that are commonly found in pre-industrial societies include relatively low levels of tolerance for abortion, divorce and homosexuality, tend to emphasize male dominance in economic and political life, a deference to parental authority, and the importance of family life. They are relatively authoritarian and religion plays an important role. As an economy develops further, becoming more post-industrial, cultural values shift further from survival to self-expression and embrace general trust, tolerance, subjective well-being, and political activism. Although economic development triggers these shifts in norms and values, the nature of the actual cultural changes is dependent on a country's broad cultural heritage (e.g. Protestantism, Catholicism and Communism).

Minkov (2007 cited in: Minkov and Hofstede 2011) investigated the database of the 'world values survey' and his findings related to the more recent 5th dimension 'long-term orientation'[34] led Hofstede to redefine the concept. Minkov also found strong evidence for

[34] In societies with a long-term orientation, people believe that truth depends very much on situation, context and time. They show an ability to adapt traditions to changed conditions, a strong propensity to save and invest, thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results.

an additional dimension named 'indulgence versus restraint'[35] which Hofstede later added in his model as a sixth dimension.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter proposes a competence framework for competence learning in educational travel. The model includes cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development (see figure 4.1). These competencies will be explored more in-depth in the following chapters which analyze the learning effects of two types of educational travel which could benefit from more research: the international internship and the international research project. In these empirical studies I will also look at the influence of the cultural distance, as at the moment theory insufficiently explains how it affects the learning of competencies.

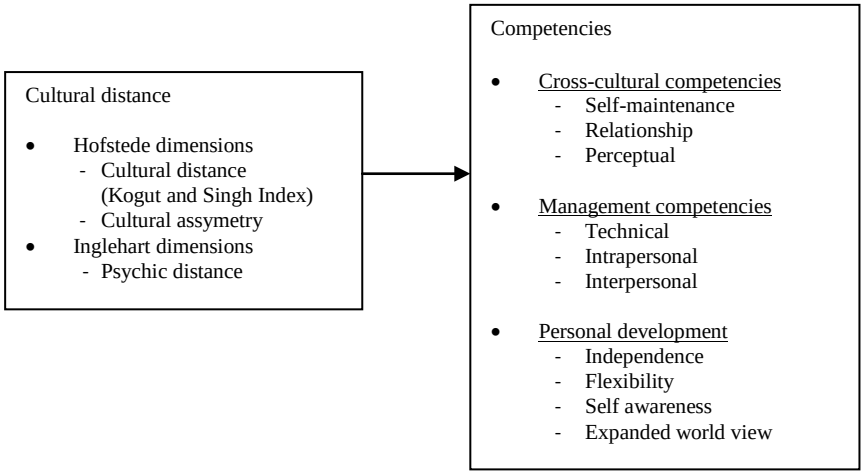

Figure 4.1: Competence framework for defining competencies and personal development

[35] Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

CHAPTER 5 THE INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP

5.1 Objective

This chapter[36] seeks to investigate the learning effects of international internships, a segment of educational travel which has hardly been researched, yet is one of the types of educational travel that is presumed to have relative high professional relevance. This chapter also explores the importance of the influence of cultural distance on the learning of competencies, testing hypotheses about the influence of cultural distance on the learning of management and cross-cultural competencies. Both the measurements of management and cross-cultural competencies are based on an earlier version of the competence framework, meaning that the survey items differ slightly from the ones proposed in the previous chapter. The concept of personal development wasn't operationalized for this study, but some findings are useful in this respect as the management competence construct measured the increased self-awareness of the student.

In order to gather data a survey was conducted among AIESEC students. Prior to discussing the results of the survey I present the hypotheses and explain the research method. Based on my competence framework and the explanation of the cultural distance concept, twelve hypotheses can be formulated and these are visualized in the following conceptual model:

[36] As explained in detail in paragraph 1.4 (Research approach), parts of this chapter were previously published in: van 't Klooster, E., J. van Wijk, F.M. Go and J. van Rekom (2008). Educational Travel: The Overseas Internship. Annals of Tourism Research 35 (3): 690-711.

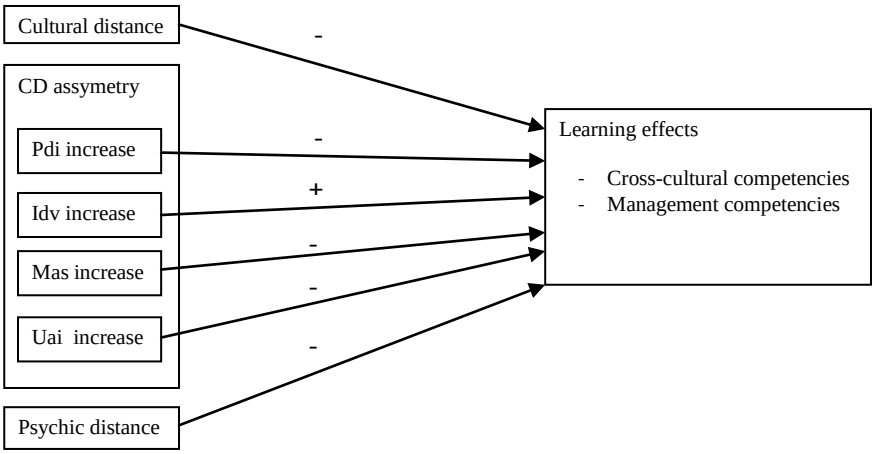

Figure 5.1 Conceptual model tested for the international internship[37]

Hypothesis 1: Cultural distance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.

Hypothesis 2: Cultural distance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.

Research by Feldman, Folks and Turnley (1998) on international internships showed that job autonomy and access to senior colleagues are positively related to work performance and group socialization. Taking into account these conditions, this leads to hypotheses about asymmetry: that interns will learn fewer management competencies when they work in host societies with a higher power distance, more uncertainty avoidance and/or are more masculine. Equally, students operating in more individualistic societies will be given more decision making power and thus have more opportunities for learning, thus increasing their chances of absorbing management competencies.

It might be expected that interactions between interns and locals will be more difficult when the interns are working in societies where power distance, uncertainty avoidance and

[37] Where Pdi = power distance : Idv = individualism; Mas = masculinity, Uai = uncertainity avoidance

masculinity are higher than they are used to. A higher level of individualism should foster more open interactions between people from different backgrounds, which enables interns to learn more cross-cultural competencies.

Hypothesis 3. An increase in power distance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.

Hypothesis 4. An increase in individualism is positively related to the learning of management competencies.

Hypothesis 5. An increase in masculinity is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.

Hypothesis 6. An increase in uncertainty avoidance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.

Hypothesis 7. An increase in power distance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.

Hypothesis 8. An increase in individualism is positively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.

Hypothesis 9. An increase in masculinity is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.

Hypothesis 10. An increase in uncertainty avoidance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.

The following hypotheses were developed for the concept of psychic distance.
Hypothesis 11. Psychic distance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.

Hypothesis 12. Psychic distance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.

5.2 Research method

5.2.1 Online survey

Empirical data was gathered through an online survey placed on the AIESEC website and accessible to alumni from all around the world between June and August 2005. Each year AIESEC (Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales) facilitates more than 5000 international internships. AIESEC was founded in Europe in 1948 and is the world's largest student-run organization. Its focus is on providing a platform for developing youth leadership by offering young people the opportunity to participate in international internships, experience leadership and a global learning environment (AIESEC 2012).

Globally, AIESEC has more than 700 local offices in cities and on university campuses in over 110 countries. Consisting primarily of volunteers, the membership base of AIESEC exceeds 55,000, of whom 57% are female and 43% male, mostly between the ages of 19-24. The academic backgrounds of members are spread mostly across business, management, engineering and science (AIESEC 2011). Table 5.2 shows the geographical division of interns for the year 2011/12.

Global Internship Program 2011/12	**Students received**	**Students sent abroad**
Africa	108	233
Asia Pacific	1978	799
Central and Eastern Europe	1050	1561
Ibero-America	592	1033
Middle East and North Africa	183	283
Western Europe and North America	1120	1358

Table 5.2 Geographical overview of students according to region

Online surveys have several advantages. It is relatively easy to get in touch with the designated target population and it is a method that gives the respondent the opportunity to

fill out the survey whenever he / she wants, taking their own time (in contrast to, for example, a telephone survey). It is also relatively easy (time and money wise) to send the survey to the respondents, to transform the online survey data into an analyzable dataset (with help of for example SPSS), an approach which minimizes coding errors (Medin et al. 1999).

Online surveys also have some downsides. The first is they generally have a lower response rate than offline surveys. While many people (particular in western countries) have access to the internet these days, some people don't use the internet or have limited access. This can be an issue as there are significant differences in internet use between different ethnic and social groups, which can lead to sampling errors (Solomon 2001). While this survey could have suffered from such problems this is unlikely as the population is students, most of whom have experience with ICT (Solomon 2001).

Concerns about privacy are another potential problem with online surveys. Some potential respondents might be afraid that their data will be misused (e.g. use of email address or neglecting anonymity) (Jeavons 1998). Nowadays the issue of privacy / security is not that big any more as more and more people are familiar with the internet, its potential dangers and ways to prevent those from happening. To allay any concerns the introduction to the survey explicitly stated that the responses would be dealt with confidentially.

Finally, another disadvantage is that the respondent is alone when answering the questions. A respondent who doesn't understand a question may fill out the wrong answer as there is no immediate assistance available. As a consequence it is important to run a pilot test to ensure that the questions are easy to understand and don't take a long time to fill out. To avoid this, the survey was pre-tested among a group of interns (12) to identify any mistakes or problems (Malhotra & Birks 2003).

5.2.2 Measurements

We developed our own survey questions to measure the perceived learning effects, drawing on the work of Hottola (2004), Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999), and Whetten, Cameron

and Woods (2001), using a seven-point likert scale (van Herk et al. 2004). Cultural distance asymmetry was measured by subtracting the home country's Hofstede values from the host-country's Hofstede values, for each dimension. Both cultural distance and psychic distance were calculated according to the Kogut and Singh index, represented by the following formula:

$$CD = \sum_{i=1}^{4} \left\{ \left(I_{ihost} - I_{i\,\mathrm{hom}\,e} \right)^2 / V_i \right\} / 4$$

where: CD = cultural distance; I_{ihost} = index of the ith cultural dimension and the host country; I_{ihome} = index of the ith cultural dimension and the home country; V_i = variance of the index of the ith dimension

The questions about psychic distance were selected from the 1999-2002 World Values Survey and used ten items that explore the traditional versus secular-rational dimension and the survival versus self-expression dimension (Inglehart & Baker 2000: 24). The items in the first of these dimensions measure perceptions of the importance of god, child upbringing, abortion, national pride, and respect for authority. The items in the second dimension measure the value perceptions of job factors, happiness, willingness to sign a petition, homosexuality and trusting people. The last question in the survey was open ended, asking alumni to "write down additional comments and recommendations with regard to your internship experience."

Two of Inglehart and Baker's cultural dimension items were measured with multiple questions, namely "qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home" (child upbringing)[38] and "aspects of a job that people say are important" (job factors)[39]. The cronbach's alphas for "qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home" were

[38] Child upbringing qualities refer to Independence; Hard work; Feeling of responsibility; Imagination; Tolerance and respect for other people; Thrift, saving money and things; Determination, perseverance; Religious faith; Unselfishness; Obedience.

[39] Job factors are: Good pay; Not too much pressure; Good job security; A job respected by people in general; Good hours; An opportunity to use initiative; Generous holidays; A job in which you feel you can achieve something; A responsible job; A job that is interesting; A job that meets one's abilities.

0.81 (home) and 0.68 (host). The alphas for "aspects of a job that people say are important" were 0.78 (home) and 0.83 (host).

To make the analysis of psychic distance findings more concrete we examined the specific travel patterns that produced high psychic distance. Following Inglehart and Baker's thesis that cultural values are linked to economic development we used World Bank data to cluster our data in four economic zones: low-income economies (LIC), $825 GNI per capita or less; lower-middle-income economies (LMC), $826–3,255; upper-middle-income economies (UMC), $3,256–10,065; and high-income economies, $10,066 or more (World Bank 2005: 291). Table 5.3 shows the countries for each category that are relevant for our sample.

5.2.3 Sample

A total of 1280 responses were returned, of which 967 were sufficiently complete to be used to answer questions relating to the cultural distance hypotheses. The sample consisted of 501 females and 466 males, a ratio similar to the general AIESEC student population. Most students did their internships between 1996 and 2005. Private companies accounted for 70.5 per cent of these internships, the rest being made up of NGOs (15.2%), educational institutes (11.2%) and government institutions (3.1%). Forty per cent of the sample came from one of the following home countries: Germany (115), Poland (73), United States (57), Netherlands (56), Colombia (32), Canada (31), Romania (30), Mexico (29), Czech Republic (28), Turkey (27), India (27), Brazil (26), Finland (21), and Australia (20). Similarly, forty per cent of our population did their internships in one of the following countries: India (174), Germany (85), Poland (62), Turkey (55), United States (35), Czech Republic (25), Netherlands (24), Italy (21) and Canada (19), Brazil (18), Hungary (18), Japan (16), Colombia (16), and Ukraine (16).

Low-income economies	Lower-middle-income economies	Upper-middle-income economies	High income economies
Afghanistan	Albania	Argentina	Australia
Bangladesh	Armenia	Botswana	Austria
Cameroon	Belarus	Chile	Belgium
Ivory Coast	Brazil	Costa Rica	Canada
Ghana	Bulgaria	Croatia	Denmark
India	China	Czech Republic	Finland
Kenya	Colombia	Estonia	France
Nigeria	Dominican Republic	Hungary	Germany
Tanzania	Ecuador	Latvia	Greece
Togo	Egypt	Lithuania	Hong Kong
Uganda	El Salvador	Malaysia	Iceland
	Guatemala	Mexico	Ireland
	Indonesia	Poland	Italy
	Kazakhstan	Russia	Japan
	Macedonia	Slovakia	South Korea
	Morocco	South Africa	Malta
	Peru	Turkey	Netherlands
	Philippines	Venezuela	New Zealand
	Romania		Norway
	Serbia		Portugal
	Ukraine		Singapore
			Slovenia
			Spain
			Sweden
			Switzerland
			Taiwan
			United Kingdom
			United States
			United Arab Emirates

Table 5.3 Overview of countries according to economic zone and relevant for our sample

5.3 Results

Although this study lacks a control group, the students' responses about their perceptions of learning effects seem to confirm previous theoretical arguments and empirical evidence concerning study abroad. In the self-maintenance dimension of cross-cultural competencies, students were strongly of the opinion that they had adjusted to the stressors caused by local street life and ecological conditions (Table 5.4). They also said that they learned a lot about the socio-economic and political institutions in the host country. In the relationship dimension, students felt that their communications with colleagues at work and local people were satisfactory but were less convinced that they had overcome language differences or learnt conflict-resolution skills. With regard to the perceptual dimension, respondents claimed to have developed an understanding of the dominant views of people in the host country about international political controversies. They talked affectionately about their host country and expressed a longing to revisit it.

On the whole the interns thought they developed their cross-cultural competencies more than their management competencies (Table 5.4). They were moderately positive about the management competencies learned during their internship abroad, but felt it taught them relatively little about their study discipline. In terms of intrapersonal management skills, they experienced increased self-awareness and an improved ability to solve problems, but made less progress in improving their time management skills. Interns saw improvements in their verbal communication skills with co-workers. They were rather neutral about whether they learnt to motivate, or delegate tasks to, co-workers suggesting that they did relatively independent jobs which required few leadership qualities.

No relationship was found between Kogut and Singh's cultural distance index and the perceived acquisition of management competencies or cross-cultural competencies (Tables 5.5 and 5.6). Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 are rejected. In light of the discussion earlier in this chapter, cultural distance asymmetry should be more significant. Tables 5.5 and 5.6 show how an increase or decrease in Hofstede's dimensions affected the learning of management competencies or cross-cultural competencies. Increases in power distance and individualism produced significant effects. For management competencies, an increase in power distance negatively affected study discipline knowledge, time management skills, problem-solving, verbal communication, self-motivation and motivating others. An increase in individualism positively affected study discipline knowledge, time management, problem-solving, verbal communication, self motivation, motivating others and task delegation. An increase in uncertainty avoidance negatively affected verbal communication and task delegation. Thus hypotheses 3, 4 and 6 are accepted and hypothesis 5 rejected.

Table 5.4. Learning of management competencies and cross cultural competencies

Management competencies (N = 967)	Dimension	Mean[40]	STD
The internship increased my self-awareness.	Intrapersonal	5.92	1.28
The internship increased my verbal communication skills with co-workers.	Interpersonal	5.59	1.55
The internship increased my problem solving skills.	Intrapersonal	5.24	1.57
The internship taught me how to motivate myself.	Intrapersonal	5.15	1.68
The internship increased my time management skills.	Intrapersonal	4.33	1.88
The internship taught me how to motivate other co-workers.	Interpersonal	4.15	1.86
The internship taught me about the study discipline that I specialize in.	Discipline	3.96	2.00
The internship taught me to delegate tasks to co-workers.	Interpersonal	3.46	1.92
Cross cultural competencies (N = 949)			
During my internship I began to love my host country.	Perceptual	6.39	1.26
Towards the end of the internship I had adjusted quite well to the street life of my host country.	Self-maintenance	6.19	1.13
Towards the end of the internship I had become sufficiently adjusted to the ecological conditions (temperature, humidity, pollution) of the host country.	Self-maintenance	6.14	1.18
Towards the end of my internship I felt I had adjusted to the different communication style of my colleagues	Relationship	5.87	1.17
During my internship I learned a lot about the formal socio-economic and political institutions of the host country.	Self-maintenance	5.60	1.48
Towards the end of my internship I managed to communicate with local people in a satisfactory way.	Relationship	5.59	1.56
Towards the end of the internship, I understood the main view in the host country on international political controversies.	Perceptual	5.36	1.36
Toward the end of my internship I was able to apply local conflict-resolution strategies.	Relationship	5.03	1.49
I want to visit my host country again.	Perceptual	5.01	1.80
Towards the end of my internship the difference in language still seriously hindered my performance in my internship organization.	Relationship	3.03	2.01

[40] 1= Totally disagree; 7 = Totally agree

Table 5.5. Pearson correlation coefficients for cultural distance and acquisition of management competencies (N = 967)[41]

	Study discipl.	Self-awareness	Time management	Problem solving	Verbal communicat.	Motivate self	Motivate others	Delegate tasks
Psychic distance	-.231**	-.148**	-.290**	-.149**	-.186**	-.161**	-.117**	-.143**
CD Hofstede	0.15	.053	.026	.061	.021	.022	.031	-.010
Pdi increase	-.223**	-.060	-.333**	-.172**	-.181**	-.157**	-.097**	-.150
Idv increase	.210**	.045	.302**	.145**	.187**	.191**	.141**	.183**
Mas increase	-.001	-.013	-.056	-.027	-.057	-.039	.003	.031
Uai increase	-.074*	-.071	-.050	-.070*	-.097**	-.044	-.045	-.120**

For cross-cultural competencies, the influence of cultural distance asymmetry was less evident. An increase in power distance had a positive influence on learning about the formal socio-economic and political institutions of the host country and a negative influence on communicating with locals. An increase in individualism made it easier to adapt to the communication style of colleagues, apply conflict resolution skills and communicate with locals. An increase in uncertainty avoidance had a negative influence on adapting to the communication style of colleagues, communications with locals and a positive relationship with language hindrance. Since most of the cross-cultural competencies items didn't relate to Hofstede's dimension increases, we reject hypotheses 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Psychic distance had significantly negative relationships with the learning of all management competencies (Table 5.5). Hypothesis 11 is accepted. In terms of cross-cultural competencies (Table 5.6) strong negative relationships were found with

[41] *p <.05. **p <.01. Pdi = power distance: Idv = individualism; Mas = masculinity, Uai = uncertainity avoidance

communications with locals and perceptions about the host country, as illustrated by the negative responses to the questions "I have begun to love my host country" and "I want to visit my host country again". Thus, a larger psychic distance has a significant negative effect on the liking of another culture. Hypothesis 12 is rejected.

Table 5.6. Pearson correlation coefficients among cultural distance and cross cultural competencies (N = 949)[42]

	Formal instit.	Street life	Ecol. Condit.	Comm. style	Conflict res.	Languag hindrnce	Commun. locals	Dominant views	Love HC	Revisit HC
Psychic distance	.020	-.039	-.015	-.067	-.054	-.045	-.102**	0.013	-.121**	-.133**
CD Hofstede	.031	.027	-.046	-.032	.010	-.051	.014	-.036	.007	-.040
Pdi increase	.117**	-.006	-.082*	-.111	-.076*	-.009	-.151**	-.018	.078*	-077*
Idv increase	-.089*	.027	.024	.128**	.102**	.011	.101**	.012	-.019	.087*
Mas increase	-.007	-.028	-.030	-.030	-.014	.037	-.031	-.043	.042	-.003
Uai increase	.027	-.009	0.051	-.110**	-.064	.142**	-.113**	-.030	.024	-.010

We used a one-way ANOVA to compare the mean psychic distance of transitions between different economic zones. Variance analysis showed the effect of economic zone transition was to be significant ($F = 9.468$; $df = 15$; $p < 0.00$), which justifies the use of post hoc analyses, (using the conservative Tukey HSD test). Table 5.7 shows a gradual increase in psychic distance in travel to less economically developed countries, with the perceived distance being highest when students travel to low income countries. The psychic distance differs significantly in the following economic zone transitions. Interns who live in upper-

[42] *p <.05. **p <.01. Pdi = power distance: Idv = individualism; Mas = masculinity, Uai = uncertainity avoidance

middle-income countries perceived cultural distance to be significantly higher when travelling to low-income and other upper-middle-income countries, and less so for high-income countries. Similarly, interns living in high-income countries perceived cultural distance to be significantly higher when travelling to low-income countries, lower-middle-income countries and upper-middle-countries.

Table 5.7. Psychic distance related to economic zone transition, mean (and sample size) (N = 967)[43]

	LIC	LMC	UMC	HIC
LIC	15.84 (8)	25.92 (4)	13.08 (10)	11.83 (21)
LMC	20.08 (13)	11.62 (15)	12.19 (48)	12.03 (93)
UMC	22.61 (44)	16.40 (38)	17.75 (53)	10.64 (112)
HIC	21.85 (146)	17.92 (78)	15.96 (141)	11.37 (143)

The ANOVA provided additional information on cultural asymmetry. Post hoc analyses using Tukey HSD confirmed that the mean for psychic distance was significantly higher when travelling from high income countries to low income, lower-middle income countries and upper-middle income countries than the other way round. See table 5.8 for an overview of hypotheses findings.

[43] Where LIC = low-income countries, LMC = lower-middle-income UMC = upper-middle-countries. And HIC = high-income countries.

	Hypothesis	Significance
1	Cultural distance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.	Rejected
2	Cultural distance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.	Rejected
3	An increase in power distance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.	Accepted
4	An increase in individualism is positively related to the learning of management competencies.	Accepted
5	An increase in masculinity is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.	Rejected
6	An increase in uncertainty avoidance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.	Accepted
7	An increase in power distance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.	Rejected
8	An increase in individualism is positively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.	Rejected
9	An increase in masculinity is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.	Rejected
10	An increase in uncertainty avoidance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.	Rejected
11	Psychic distance is negatively related to the learning of management competencies.	Accepted
12	Psychic distance is negatively related to the learning of cross-cultural competencies.	Rejected

Table 5.8. Overview of hypotheses findings

5.4 Discussion

The objective of this research was to measure the perceived learning effects of international internships and the influence of cultural distance. In general, the study concludes that interns think that they learn a broad range of management and cross-cultural competencies. Respondents to the survey reported only moderate improvements in their management competencies during their international internship. This finding is in accordance with research by van Wijk, Go and van ‘t Klooster (2008) and Feldman and Bolino (2000) which showed moderate satisfaction with international internships and moderate learning of management competencies. As with domestic internships, interns often end up doing secretarial jobs and other low quality assignments. This could in particular hold true for students doing an internship with multinationals, where they may be given limited responsibilities due to an oversupply in interns. Mr. Kerrigan, Deputy Director of the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) notes:

> “In Germany everyone wants to go to Berlin or a name-recognition company. But more often than not, if you're working for a small company in a small city in Germany, and you're the only intern your portfolio might be a lot richer." (McMurtrie 2010)

Feldman, Folks and Turnley (1998) argue that a lack of job autonomy and support from senior colleagues impede a student's learning. This might be particularly applicable in less-developed countries where managers are less familiar with international internships, which are mostly a western concept. The problem of under-utilizing an intern's skills can partially be solved by improving internship assignment procedures, work design, mentoring and organizational preparation for internship programs. In an international context, it should also be borne in mind that a lack of cross-cultural preparation (e.g. training and foreign language skills) could also imply that interns are not capable of doing challenging work (Feldman & Bolino 2000).

Taking into account the influence of cultural distance, the learning of management competencies decreased significantly when interns travel to countries with a higher power distance and a lower degree of individualism than in their home country. A higher power distance might imply hierarchical organization structures and rigid vertical communication patterns (as opposed to horizontal communication). This phenomenon was to a certain extent experienced by a Dutch intern in France:

> "For many years, I have been trained to work effectively in a team environment. In my view this has always meant open communication with team members, regardless of their rank. This was not the case during my internship. The definition of a team was not quite the same and as a result, it was rare to, for example tell my fellow interns what they should do or how they should do it (in the most respectful way of course). Communications were only vertical."

By contrast, an Indonesian intern in the United States experienced the benefits of low power distance:

> "In the company, everybody can call other person by their first name or even 'nickname' without being constrained by the other person's position or rank in the company. This makes it difficult for outsiders to see the difference between high ranking managers and the junior staff. Moreover, although I was only an intern in

> the company, I was given my own office next to the managers and there was a daily routine of having lunch together, showing that the managers were not distancing themselves from their subordinates".

In this sense, the intern appeared to appreciate the low power distance within American culture even though his culture of origin values high power distance as a sign of showing respect.

In general, neither psychic distance, nor cultural asymmetry, appear to influence the perceived learning of cross-cultural competencies. This finding is in line with some recent expatriate research, which revealed no significant relation between cultural novelty and cultural adjustment (Selmer 2006). Surprisingly, business expatriates find it just as difficult to adjust to a similar culture as to a very different culture. Selmer thinks that this is because expatriates tend to underestimate the cultural subtleties when they travel to foreign cultures that they expect to be similar to their home country. Our findings show that interns perceive cultural adjustment to be fairly easy, regardless of where they travel.

The rejection of these hypotheses and the discussion above suggest that our competence framework could be reduced to a model in which the only significant correlations are the effects that increased power distance and individualism and psychic distance have upon learning management competencies. However, as both psychic distance and cultural asymmetry have a significant negative relationship with the item 'interaction between interns and locals', a more nuanced picture surfaces. It is also significantly more difficult to utilize conflict resolution skills in highly collective countries and those with a high power distance. A qualitative study among American international interns gave telling examples of difficulties in negotiation, communication style, cultural etiquette, and the notion of time (Huettmann 1998). These factors can make it harder for the intern to accommodate their schema, possibly because while accepting and respecting the different values and cultural expressions, the intern might not necessarily agree with them (Bennett 1993). This argument is also supported by the many anecdotes conveyed by respondents,

recounting how they received a significant degree of social support from other interns working in same city, region or country. As one student put it:

> "If there were no other AIESEC trainees there, I think I would have gone crazy. I'm really happy that AIESEC United Arabic Emirates (UAE) had more than 11 trainees in town, it was very helpful to have people with whom you can chill out with and have fun."

This is also in line with the expatriate literature which showed that expats maintain strong ties with other expats, especially co-nationals, and do not interact much with local people outside work time (Manev & Stevenson 2001). Similarly, independent travelers often use backpacker enclaves to withdraw from unfamiliar territory, relaxing in a familiar environment where they share travel experiences with fellow travelers and plan new activities (Hottola 2005; Howard 2007).

From a managerial and learning point of view, the formation of ethnocentric networks is undesirable. Research has shown that network closeness had a negative influence on expatriate psychological well-being (Wang & Kanungo 2004). From a learning perspective, the intern may feel that he or she has largely adjusted to the host culture, while in reality the intern community buffers the effects of the foreign culture (Thompson & Tambyah 1999). The relatively short time frame of an internship, usually about 5 months (Alfranseder et al. 2011; Stronkhorst 2005; van Wijk et al. 2008), might impose limitations on realistic judgments. Hansel (1988) noted that year program exchange students were more conservative assessing how much they had adapted than students on 3 month programs. Equally, the relatively youthfulness of the students might also be a barrier to meaningful reflection and possibly explain positive biases in their perceptions (Dukes et al. 1994). Litvin (2003) argues that one must exercise caution before claiming that inter-cultural understanding is truly achieved. The student who was grateful for having fellow expat interns around him in the UAE also said:

> "Though there were other trainees in town to chill out and have fun with we still didn't know much about each other's cultures and countries. The only culture we are introduced to is Indian food and nightclubs (while we were in UAE)."

Still, the 'retreat' to expat enclaves doesn't solely contribute to negative learning effects. Robert Wood remarked on the intercultural learning experiences among travelers (cited in Hottola 2005). For example, students frequently mentioned that fellow trainees contributed significantly to their learning experience.

> "The most important and interesting part of my internship in Guatemala was living with other trainees who were going through a similar experience. Sharing time and conversations with AIESEC members, opened my eyes towards their cultures and my own, and made the experience more enriching."

Berkson (1969) addresses the question of the optimum level of integration and uses the metaphor of 'community' in which minorities live interspersed with others, engaging in the economic, political, and social life of the society, yet also maintaining their minority heritage. Subsequent theories of acculturative integration have not advanced Berkson's early work but only reinvented it (Rudmin 2003). These communities appear to provide ontological security within a larger community. Expats use familiar controlled environments to reflect upon their newly acquired experiences and then move back into the foreign environment with more knowledge and confidence about their control over situations. The regular escape to such sanctuaries results in sequential doses of cultural learning and can offset the stress of cultural confusion (Hottola 2005). Cross-cultural adaptation doesn't mean complete integration within the host country or escaping to a meta-world. Rather it involves a continual switching between familiar and unfamiliar contexts, finding a balance between withdrawal, assimilation and accommodation of schemas. Malewski (2005) notes "The only way to build a healthy intercultural relationship is to remain true to your identity while showing respect and understanding of the local culture. The challenge, of course, lies in finding this line: which aspects of your

beliefs and behavior are core to your identity and cannot be changed, and which ones are optional (p. 100).

Earlier studies have identified several specific social support functions that make it easier to achieve an increase in cross-cultural competencies. These include cross-cultural training prior to departure, guidance during the trip, and post-trip reflection (Pizam 1996; Steinberg 2002; Ward et al. 2001). This shows the importance of creating a balanced social support network of academic tutors, company mentors, co-nationals, fellow trainees and locals (e.g. buddy or host-family), in order to maximize the benefits of the foreign learning experience (Adelman 1988; Hansel 1988).

Cross-cultural training can be particularly effective for students who have to bridge a high psychic distance, such as students from high and middle-income countries travelling to low-income countries where traditional and survival values dominate (Inglehart & Baker 2000). Responses to the survey showed that students doing internships in these countries could not identify with the values of their host society and found it difficult to establish meaningful interactions. This should not come as a surprise. Said (1978) describes how for untold centuries the relations between human cultures and the linguistic construction of 'orientalism' to describe non-Western cultures is all part of a process of labelling the people of less-developed cultures as less significant 'Others'. Negative stereotypes in the western media are likely to lead students to perceive the values of these 'Others' as inferior, perpetuating a centuries-old colonial mindset and minimizing the chance of inter-cultural interactions, and, as a consequence, results in limited learning and adoption of good practices from these cultures (Park & Wilkins 2005). By contrast, the interns from less developed countries seemed to find it relatively easy to adjust to high income countries and learn management competencies. This could be due to more favourable work factors, such as autonomy, English language proficiency, support from senior colleagues and more convenient workspace conditions. It could also be that, through the media (e.g. Hollywood movies and television shows), they have become familiarized with their destination cultures whilst still at home, hence reducing the psychic distance in advance.

If an intern does not improve his or her management competencies or cross-cultural competencies, this suggests a failing in organizational and educational support. Nonetheless, even in such cases, the intern might still perceive the travel experience as worthwhile. Anecdotal evidence from the study suggests that students' motives for travelling can also be related to self-development, adventure and fun. The survey found increases in self-awareness to be a dominant aspect in the management competencies dimension, a finding that echoes the favorable retrospective perceptions of 'learning about oneself' among business administration alumni (van Wijk et al. 2008). Students also seem to become more independent and flexible, although we only have anecdotes to underpin this claim. One intern remarked:

> "It was a phenomenal, life altering experience. It may not have met my initial expectations but that was the beauty of the experience. I learned most from the times that things did not go the way that I expected them to."

Research by Erickson (2011) conducted among American engineering interns in France also highlighted the growth in their independence, together with more improvements in their language and professional skills. Gmelch (1997) investigated American students traveling through Europe and found that the main impact was on the students' personal development. Students and their parents indicated that the travels had increased the students' self-confidence and their ability to cope with / adapt to unusual and unpredictable situations. Independent travelling in unusual environments continually confronted the students with problems they had to solve themselves (where to go, how to get there, where to stay, what areas of the city to avoid, etc.), and required a certain level of organization (keeping track of their passport, money, train pass, etc.).

From a methodological point of view, the influence of cultural distance as measured by the Kogut and Singh index proved to be insignificant in respect of either management competencies or cross-cultural competencies. By contrast, as psychic distance and cultural asymmetry show significant correlations, these findings support earlier calls (Shenkar 2001) to re-examine the validity of the construct in measuring individual differences.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter explored the merits of international internships, as a learning experience for bridging cultural distance. In general, overseas interns believe themselves to experience significant personal development, and learn a broad range of cross-cultural competencies but only moderate management competencies. Moreover, the study shows that students who travel to countries characterized by higher power distance, higher uncertainty avoidance or lower individualism, or high psychic distance, learn less management competencies and interact less with local people. Students traveling to low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia in particular tend to face difficulties. Hence, these findings imply a wake up call for students, and by extension, educational institutions. The inclusion of educational travel programs in business school curricula doesn't automatically produce globally competent individuals.

In order to maximally leverage the learning effects of overseas internships, the educational travel segment should overcome the weaknesses of its distributed network. Besides improving the job factors that positively affect the skill utilization of interns a more professional approach is also needed in terms of social support by different actors in the home and host country. These actors should provide services that help interns to reduce uncertainties that arise due to cultural differences. For example, Teichler (2004) notes that there is room for improvement in institutional support to ERASMUS exchange students, in terms of language, society and culture. This suggestion was to some extent confirmed in a survey among AIESEC employees[44] and some interns also commented on the lack of (personalized) cross-cultural training and leveraging of peer experiences before and after their stay abroad. These issues will be addressed more in-depth in chapter 7 (Discussion).

[44] Based on the answer of AIESEC student employee volunteers (N= 145) to the question "My organization is providing sufficient cultural training" (M=5,40; SD= 1,127 on a 7-point scale) in a survey measuring the service performance gap (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1985).

CHAPTER 6 THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT

6.1 Objective

The objective of this chapter[45] is to investigate the learning effects of the International Research Project (IRP) –a programme run by the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University - in terms of management competencies, cross-cultural competencies and personal development. It also provides further insight in the influence of cultural distance on the learning of these competencies, using Van Wijk, Go and van 't Klooster's (2008) zone distinction. In contrast to the survey method employed in the previous chapter, the international research project is analyzed in a qualitative way in the form of content analysis. This approach helps to gain deeper insight into the specific competencies learned, as articulated by the students themselves. This information can then be used in the next chapter to reflect on the competence framework. The content analysis also allows me to get a better idea of how participants in educational travel experience the effect of cultural distance.

For this research, the host countries of the international research project were divided into two groups (based on Hofstede 1991 and Inglehart & Baker 2000). Zone 1 could be labeled the 'home zone' and consisted of Protestant Europe and English speaking areas. Zone 2 consisted of the remaining regions, including the historically Catholic and communist parts of Europe together with Asia and Africa. Earlier quantitative research by van Wijk, Go and van 't Klooster (2008) shows that students who did their internship in zone 2 seemed to learn significantly more perceptual competencies and increased their state of the world awareness (international societal relations and international issues such as malnutrition, contagious diseases, poverty, corruption and war).

[45] As explained in detail in paragraph 1.4 (Research approach), parts of this chapter were previously presented in a conference paper: van 't Klooster, E., F.M. Go and P.J. van Baalen (2011). Exploring new directions in a mature educational travel market: the international research project. The Educational Travel Foundation Conference 2011: Educational travel - Expanding Horizons. Tallinn, Estonia 19th - 21st August 2011.

6.2 Research method

6.2.1 Content analysis

The content analysis technique is used to analyze comments made by students who participated in the international research project. Content analysis is the systematic quantitative description of the manifest content of a communication (Malhotra & Birks 2003). The advantage of content analysis is that it provides in-depth insights into the competencies and antecedents of the competence framework and allows for their quantification (Krippendorff 2004). In order to establish explicit and comprehensive reporting, the COREQ checklist was used for the data analysis (Tong et al. 2007).

The first step of analysis involves developing a manageable classification or coding scheme. The competence framework (chapter 4) is used as a coding tree to analyze the evaluation reports of students. This ensures that the category codes are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. Another way to optimize the validity and reliability of the coding is to use multiple coders. This research was conducted by just one person but reliability was established by coding and reviewing/recoding the interviews at three different points in time (in the summer of 2011, autumn of 2012, and winter 2014, using both excel and NVivo), based on the methodological principle of the hermeneutic circle (Klein and Myers 1999). The researcher already had some experience with the critical incident technique. The process and reporting of the critical incidents, used two additional coders and followed the guidelines laid down by Gremler (2004) and Kolbe and Burnett (1991). Finally, the students' evaluation reports were used as a basis for grading the students' participation. This has advantages and disadvantages for the content analysis. The advantage is that student put some serious efforts into their evaluation. The disadvantage is that students' may have tried to look better by exaggerating their learning of competencies. However, based on seven years of experience as the tutor of the IRP project, the researcher's perception is that their answers were quite honest.

6.2.2 Measurements

Students were asked to write down their perceptions of the learning effects in terms of management competencies, cross-cultural competencies and personal development (using approximately one page). Content analysis was used to count and then rank the themes in order of importance (Malhotra & Birks 2003). The results of the analysis are depicted in tables 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4, which describe the cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development, respectively.

6.2.3 Sample

The International Research Project (IRP) is an initiative of the Association of Marketing Students at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, the Netherlands. The project involves conducting marketing research in a foreign country for a real-life company. The student consultancy teams in the IRP work in a very independent way. The selection procedure of students by the marketing study association ensures that only highly motivated and competent students participate in the project. Social support between the students is built during an introduction weekend, social gatherings and project meetings. They have regular meetings with the client company to ensure that the project develops according to both parties' wishes. Different employees in the client company provide students with details about their product/service and market and provide input to their research design (e.g. constructing an interview protocol).

The academic support for the IRP consists of counseling sessions and providing a structure for the research project, while allowing students to make independent choices. For example, a general layout of the research proposal and consultancy report is provided and key skills, such as interviewing and project management are imparted. The academic supervisor checks the students' progress at set times during the project by reviewing and grading the research proposal, plan of action, desk research and the final report. At the end of the project each student is asked to reflect on his or her performance during the project, and evaluate the project as a whole for its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, the student is asked to write down the competencies (related to management competencies, cross-cultural competencies and personal development) learnt.

The analysis of the IRP is based on primary data retrieved from evaluation forms filled out by students from the, who participated in the project between 2008 and 2012. Its focus is perhaps a bit skewed towards marketing management as the international research project is primarily a marketing assignment. This should not be a significant problem, since marketing is considered to be an important field of expertise within international business (Chukhlomin & Chukhlomina 2013; Geringer & Pendergast 2010).

As mentioned earlier, the host countries of the international research project can be divided into two groups (based on Hofstede 1991 and Inglehart & Baker 2000). Zone 1 could be labeled the 'home zone' and consisted of Protestant Europe and English speaking areas. Zone 2 consisted of the remaining regions, including the historically Catholic and communist parts of Europe together with Asia and Africa. Table 6.1 gives an overview of countries that the students visited in each zone. Usually the students do their research in one country for approximately 3 or 4 weeks. Some research teams traveled to numerous countries in which they resided for one week each.

Zone 1: Protestant Europe and English speaking areas		**Zone 2: historically Catholic and communist parts of Europe together with Asia and Africa**		**Zone 1 and 2**	
US	(19)	China	(11)	France, Germany, UK	(9)
Canada	(5)	Brazil	(9)	Belgium, UK, Germany	(6)
Australia	(4)	Vietnam	(9)	France, Germany, UK, Denmark	(4)
		Africa	(5)	Sweden, Spain, India, Italy	(3)
		Hungary	(5)	Poland, UK, Turkey	(2)
		India	(5)		
		Poland	(5)		
		India / Bangladesh	(4)		
		Poland, Romania, Turkey	(4)		
		Mexico	(3)		
		Spain and Italy	(3)		

Table 6.1 Countries visited by IRP students according to zone. Student numbers in brackets.

6.3 Results

The international research project puts the student in the position of a market research consultant. In order to live up to this role the students to great extent improve their management competencies, before, during and after the stay abroad. Overall, the participants most frequently mentioned developing their collaboration skills and interpersonal communication competencies (see table 6.2).

Almost 80% of the participants in the IRP mentioned improving their collaboration skills. Collaboration during the IRP was experienced as much more difficult than regular student teamwork assignments. Students had relatively little control over the team formation process. As a consequence, they had to work together with widely different personalities and deal with different motivations, perspectives, and working methods. Second, students had to work quite intensively with each other for a relatively long period, which tested their patience and their conflict management skills. In order to establish a common vision and drive within the group, the students learned about the importance of building a team work atmosphere, motivation skills and of feedback. The next comment from one student is illustrative of this:

> "I think that the IRP teamwork is different from teamwork you normally have at university; you eat, sleep, spend the day and work together during field research. In other words, the teamwork goes beyond the task. The thing I learned most of all is that team tensions during such a trip have to be managed. A good team requires regular evaluations that include the emotional part."

The IRP students also learned to communicate in a more professional way with the other project stakeholders. These communications involved managing their relationship with the client company and interviewing other stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, experts and government officials. During these interactions students honed their interview skills and became more competent in asking the right questions and getting the relevant information within a limited amount of time. Sometimes, collaborating with the client company could be a challenge, as students had to retrieve information from different

employees, sometimes based in different business units (and sometimes in different parts of the world), and each with their own agenda. A few students also referred to the challenge of finding a balance between the interests of the business client and the academic supervisor.

Students also learnt a range of intrapersonal management competencies, primarily those related to problem solving. Often the students had not previously been involved in a task of such a magnitude. Not only was the desk research often extensive, but the project also involved arranging appointments in different cities in the host country. This raised challenges in terms of acquisition and travel planning. Students learned to solve these problems through improving their time management and coordination skills, often with the help of knowledge management tools such as Customer Relationship Management software, Google Docs and Dropbox.

In terms of technical competencies the project gave the participants a great deal of market research knowledge and skills, such as writing a research proposal, structuring information, methodology design and report writing. Second, the IRP allowed students to get insights into a specific business sector (e.g. real estate, travel sector, cloud computing), its ways of doing business, and learn about its market potential from and international business perspective. These practical insights led them to reflect on the theories learned during their business studies, and led some to comment on the gap between the academic and practitioners' approach to problem solving.

Management competencies	#	Examples
Collaboration	91	Working with different personalities, under stressful conditions. Consensus building, motivating others, creating a teamwork atmosphere, conflict management, leveraging each other's qualities.
Communication	73	Acquisition, communicating with client company, presenting, interviewing customers, suppliers, experts and government officials. Communicating with interpreters, finding a balance between the demands of the company and those of the university.
Problem solving	59	Project management, planning, finance administration, knowledge management, crisis management.
Market research competencies	46	Research proposal, analyzing and structuring information, identifying companies to interview, survey design, report writing, academic argumentation.
Sector knowledge	34	Related to specific sectors: e.g. insurance, airline, agriculture, real estate, facilities, logistics, cloud computing, travel sector, software programs, etc. The state of the economy. Applying theories in practice.

Table 6.2: Management competencies (N=116)

The IRP also taught the students different types of cross-cultural competencies (see table 6.3), but these were less frequently mentioned than the management competencies. More than seventy percent of the participants mentioned improving their perceptual knowledge and skills. Surprisingly, the development of perceptual competencies was not only related to the visit to the host country but almost equally to cross-cultural team management.

Through their visit to the host country, students improved their understanding of general lifestyles, foreign politics, economic policies, religion and the influence of these factors on the attitudes and behavior of local people. Students often referred to the influences of communism, corruption and bureaucracy. Sometimes the topic of their research assignment allowed students to focus in some depth on these phenomena. A selection of illustrative quotes is presented below.

> Communism (Hungary): "The way of doing business is very different from what we are used to in the Netherlands. Rules and regulations hardly exist and competence is less important than having the right connections. There is a lot of

corruption in Hungary, similar to the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. The country is also less developed compared to the Netherlands wich expresses itself in low prices and a low educated workforce. The influence of communism is still present in the inefficiënt way of working by service employees."

Corruption (India): "Corruption is a major factor holding back the many countries' economies. Corruption is still found in every sector of the BRIC countries. Brazil, China and India share the 72nd place on the Transparency International Index (www.transparency.org, 2008). It can be called 'speed money', 'business fees' or 'administration money', but every player in the logistical field understands what is meant when they hear these words. The type of corruption is mainly based on bribes which shorten lead times. This type of corruption is sustained by two main factors. The first is poor infrastructure which leads to uncertainty in lead times. TATA and Bajaj Auto Limited explain that their delivery forecasts include a two day buffer to overcome this uncertainty. The other reason is bureaucracy. Corruption is found on every level across India, although it is decreasing (www.transparency.org, 2008). The companies described a few ways of improving this. An increase in education is needed, so future generations can see corruption as a burden on the old economy. National TV often makes examples of people involved in corruption, to discourage people from getting involved in these practices. Equally, increasing international business leads to the adoption of compliance agreements which set out guidelines and frameworks on corruptive behavior."

Bureaucracy (India). "India has a really bureaucratic system when it comes to logistics. This system is sustained by a culture which accepts a patronage system and cheap labor. Patronage means that someone, 'a patron' in a certain position (for example a customs officer), helps his relatives or his cultural class to get jobs. Bureaucracy is also quite common in the governmental system, because the hierarchy is quite rigid and complex. There are many different layers, each with their own responsibilities. This means that there are, often many overlapping,

agencies involved in decision making and legislation, each holding a slightly different, but adjoining, responsibility. An example of this is the taxes that have to be paid on imported products; as many as 9 agencies receive a part of these taxes.

The prospects for India's bureaucratic system are rather mixed. New developments and a growth in the economy will increase the need for more bureaucracy. If we look at western developments, this will probably follow a trajectory from decentralized smaller agencies towards a centralized agency. But centralized agencies are often inflexible. This means inflexibility towards new initiatives, but also towards an increase in legislation over companies. The main advantage is this will lead to standardization. A lack of standardization (in documents for example) is one of the bottlenecks companies face. Several companies, national transporters, are unhappy with the different papers that have to be filled in at different state borders, which costs them a lot of extra time."

Students also identified different cultural values related to doing business and general lifestyle, such as power distance, individualism and the notion of time.

Power distance (Spain). "An interview with Vanessa Berry-Tielman of Euro Economics supported our empirical observations that show the Spanish people are 'followers' as described in the power distribution dimension. They want to be told what to do and do not take much initiative. However, as people differ, individual assessments of employees have to be made."

Individualism (Spain). "The collectivistic nature of the Spanish society became very clear during the field research. Partnerships between companies are more based on friendship than on each other's expertise. Most professional relationships are long term and quite steady, although the influence of price has been growing over the past few years."

> Notion of Time (Mexico). “In Mexico it is normal to make time for each other or to let other people wait when you don’t have time. The farmers were less punctual than we are used to in the Netherlands, but on the other hand this also meant that they were much more approachable. Everyone was willing to help which meant that it was easy to make appointments. Although I personally much more prefer punctuality, I also noticed how beneficial it can be to make time for each other.”

Several students also reported increasing their attributional cultural knowledge as they became aware of contextual appropriate behavior within a new cultural environment. These specific contexts varied according to: the type of company (large or small), the sector (western-oriented real estate or a locally-oriented lighting market), the region (east and west Belgium, regions in USA), and ethnic groups (Chinese population in Malaysia).

As mentioned students also improved their perceptual competencies as a result of cross-cultural team management, since they often needed to work closely with other nationalities. In particular, this meant that they became more tolerant and had to adjust themselves in terms of values (e.g. the disciplined German mindset), communication style (e.g. indirect communication in Asia) and working method. For example, one French girl remarked:

> “Indeed, I […] had to force myself to switch from my somewhat distant French attitude to a more open and friendly mindset. I have seen how cultural differences influenced our working methods and way of being in a more general sense. From that I have learned to accept others and to see that my perception is strongly affected by my own cultural heritage and is not necessarily the only or even the best way to see and analyze things.”

In terms of relationship competencies, students came to understand and apply appropriate business etiquette. This included the importance of building social relationships, being empathic, and understanding that some forms of behavior could be interpreted as disrespectful by a foreign colleague or business partner. Several students mentioned the

importance of preparing oneself for the customs in another culture. Students also came to realize that some local language skills were appreciated by people in the different companies that they came into contact with. The following quotes and excerpts of reports illustrate these points.

> Relationship building (Brazil). “In the plan of action document we already discussed several cultural aspects which are important in doing business in Brazil. After our visit to Brazil we have a much better understanding of these matters, due to our own experiences. We can certainly confirm the importance of personal relations. According to Kwintessential (2011) it is very important for Brazilians to get to know the person they are doing business with. More often than not, the person they are doing business with is more important than the company the person represents. In addition, the nature of business meetings is quite informal. Most meetings started with conversations regarding our impressions of Brazil, the weather, and, of course, soccer. The actual part of doing business follows later as getting to know each other is much more important. From conversations with business people in Brazil we learned that sometimes there isn’t even enough time during the first meeting to discuss business and a second appointment needs to be arranged. Therefore it is very important to free up enough time because most meetings end up taking up more time than scheduled. Most people we had an appointment with, freed up significant time for us, the Makro scheduled even a whole afternoon. Because informal conversations are very important, lunch meetings are very popular. Lunch meetings take significant time and during that time Brazilians are not available for other business matters. Brazilians are not only informal with each other during business hours, but outside business hours as well. It is common practice to meet with business partners outside business hours. This way the family gets involved and people get to know each other even better.”

> Relationship building (China). “Another important aspect that I noticed is the value of trust in China. […] Nothing happens in China without *guanxi*, which

describes a relationship of trust that includes patience, humility and reciprocity. The Chinese look for a business deal that offers a win-win situation, provides mutual benefits and the chance to start a long term relationship. This is only possible with trust, which takes time to build and to be established. Through developing the right *guanxi*, an organization minimizes the risks, frustrations, and disappointments of doing business in China. This means that western companies have to make themselves known to the Chinese before any business can take place. This relationship is not simply between companies but also between individuals at a personal level."

Communication style (Hungary). "Business meetings are conducted in a friendly but formal manner. Conversations are also very personal with a lot of hand shaking, eye contact and making the other party feel comfortable. Meetings are often intense in the way discussions flow and due to their lengthiness. Hungarians often don't work with an agenda or structure during meetings. In contrast, the Dutch are used to a fast and efficient way of doing business. For Hungarians, this way of doing business shows a lack of involvement and empathy on the part of the Dutch (professionaltravelguide 2008; EVD 2008). Because of this, our interviews didn't follow an agenda but took the form of unstructured informal conversations and we had to make sure that no questions were left unanswered."

Communication style (China). "The Chinese businessman is characterized as formal and distant. It is impolite to look for too long into each other's eyes. Chinese businessmen value the principle of rather saying too little, rather than saying too much. In addition there is a strong desire among the Chinese to please one another and it is uncommon to give a negative answer. I experienced many practical examples of this during the field research when, people appeared to be confirming something, when actually they were negating it. Finally it is important to be consistent in one's behaviour since the Chinese perceive this a sign of trustworthiness."

Business etiquette (China). “Nowadays it has become normal to shake hands in China however it is not common to shake hands as firmly as in western countries, or maintain the hand contact for too long. After the formal introduction it is custom to exchange business cards. Out of respect the business card should be offered with two hands, although the Chinese will not be offended if this is done with one hand. The business card should be kept in sight during the meeting, it will be seen as a lack of respect if the card is immediately put away. It is not appreciated when one brings business gifts at the first meeting.”

Local language (Brazil). “One challenge during our field research was the language barrier. According to the marketing manager of Makro Brazil, Brazilians don’t feel comfortable speaking English, not even at the management level. This was certainly a problem during our research and the use of interpreters was essential. It is therefore recommended to bring an interpreter to an appointment or to let the interviewee know in advance that there is no one in the research team who speaks Portuguese, in order for the interviewee to have sufficient time to arrange an interpreter.”

In the analysis of student comments it became apparent that cultural distance influences the learning of cross-cultural competencies. As with previous research on international internships (Van Wijk et al 2008), clear differences could be noted between students traveling to zone 1 countries (Protestant and English speaking), and zone 2 countries (‘historically Catholic and communist’ European countries, Asia and Africa).

Those visiting zone 2, countries such as India, China, Vietnam, Brazil and Mexico experienced significant cultural differences. This had an impact on their acquisition of perceptual and relationship competencies. The difference in business etiquette was noticed and often students made some effort to develop some proficiency in the local language. Students experienced differences in terms of power distance, the notion of time and communication style.

This cultural distance was also observed by students visiting zone 2 countries in Europe, such as Poland, Romania, Hungary, France, Belgium, Spain and Italy. Students visiting these countries more frequently referred to the need for local language proficiency, a different notion of time, a greater power distance, and communication style, than those students visiting zone 1 countries. Some of the students saw these differences as linked with historical developments, such as communism.

By contrast, Protestant European and English destinations (e.g. Germany, the UK, Scandinavia, the US and Canada) were mostly perceived as differing only slightly from the Netherlands, the students' home country. Interestingly, students who traveled to these countries had differing perceptions of the cultural distance, even when they were part of the same team. Some felt that they only had to make minor adaptations, while others were surprised by the differences between two seemingly similar countries.

Cross-cultural competencies	**#**	**Examples**
Perceptual	82	Host country: general lifestyle. Influence of history, politics, economy, corruption and religion on behaviour; Identification of cultural values (time, power distance, individualism). Attributional knowledge. Cross-cultural teams: dealing with other nationalities (values, communication style, lifestyle).
Relationship	62	Business etiquette, communication style, relationship building, empathy, use of local language.

Table 6.3: Cross-cultural competencies (N=116)

When thinking about personal development, many students noted their increased self-awareness. Intensive collaboration with team members increased students' self-assurance of their own strengths and weaknesses. For example, several students expressed a recognition of their weaknesses in communication style (too direct), work methods (too perfectionist or controlling), or having a lack of focus or a passive attitude. Students also became aware of their strengths or unique qualities, for example their creativity, observation skills, and positive attitude. Some felt that they had become more self-assured about their future career ambitions and their goals in life.

Often increased self-assurance did go hand in hand with the need for students to expand their concept of the self, and try new roles. For example, some initially, shy students experimented successfully by taking on a new role as the team leader. Others learned to be more open and speak up.

Next, students became more flexible because of the uncertain situations they encountered, for example with regard to logistics and acquisition. They improved their stress management skills, became more patient and more often adopted a 'Go with the flow' attitude.

Students felt that participation in the IRP also improved their overall feeling of independence. During the project they became more confident and proactive in dealing with the (foreign) companies that they encountered. They also received a major confidence boost from improving their proficiency in writing and speaking English.

The expansion of world view could also be noticed among IRP participants. For example they learned about different ways of living:

> "What I learned the most during our field research is the way people in different countries experience life. People in Poland, Romania or Turkey work longer shifts than in the Netherlands. In Romania we also saw small children begging, which is something you don't see in the Netherlands. That made me more appreciative of having a good life here in the Netherlands. I have also seen how beautiful other cultures can be: the food, the customs and the politeness that is often lacking in the Netherlands. Even though we're wealthier we can often learn from less wealthy countries."

Students also gained a more realistic and less biased view of other countries and their development. One student writes:

> "After having been to Poland and Romania I realize that I had a very naïve idea about Eastern European countries before. Even though some of my expectations were confirmed I experienced much more of these countries."

Other students identified best practices, for example regarding general attitude (e.g. less individualistic in Brazil) and the co-existence of different religions in some Asian countries. Similar to the results found in the research of Van Wijk et al. (2008), students traveling to countries with a high cultural distance gained a better understanding of world issues, such as social inequality in India and economic development in Africa. In turn this often made them reflect on the situation in their home country.

Personal development	**#**	**Examples**
Self-assurance	56	Learning about ones strengths and weaknesses. Better idea of career preferences (sector, international lifestyle).
Expansion of the self	43	Take leadership role, more interest in other cultures, learn to delegate, new attitude to work ethic, show more emotions, learn to speak up, give more to others.
Flexibility	39	Dealing with stress. Patience in uncertain situations. More flexible in how to perform tasks.
Independence	38	More confident in dealing with business people. Confidence in English proficiency.
Expanded world view	21	Learning about different ways of living ('the world is bigger than I thought'), identify best practices (practising of religion, attitude) better understanding of world issues (e.g. Africa's economic development, India's social inequality), gaining a new perspective of one's own culture / society.

Table 6.4: Personal development (N=116)

6.4 Discussion

In summary, I can conclude that the international research project enables students to learn a great deal of management competencies, as the project is of a complexity that they often haven't experienced before and requires them to develop new professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. More specifically they learn a lot about collaboration, communication and problem solving. These findings are in line with earlier research by Alon and Ballard

(2003 cited in: Johnson 2005: 241) who record: “the students are with one another all day, every day, for a week or more. They have to plan their activities together -- where to stay, when and where to eat, how to travel – typically in a cultural, linguistic, economic and geographic environment that is unfamiliar to them. All this can impose a level of stress and discomfort which they must learn to manage in order to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the project.” More often than not conflict management is an inevitable part of collaboration in this short-term educational travel experience.

In terms of cross-cultural competencies, this qualitative analysis seems to confirm the findings about cultural distance discussed in the previous chapter about international internships. Students needed to learn more relationship and perceptual competencies when cultural distance was significant, i.e. when they traveled to historically Catholic or communist countries, Asia and Africa. These students noted the usefulness of cross-cultural preparation more than their peers who traveled to zone 1 countries.

By contrast, students who traveled to historically Protestant European countries and English language countries, often experienced little cultural distance, although individual students differed in their assessment of this. This might imply that individual personality contributes to the perception of cultural distance, which would resonate with the findings of Ruben and Kealey (1979) who concluded that people who were more aware of the personal and subjective nature of their perceptions experienced a more intense culture shock. These perceptual differences might also be related to the previous foreign travel experience of each student.

One, perhaps surprising, finding of this research was that students learned a lot from working with team members with a different cultural background. They had to deal with different perspectives, working methods and communication styles. These differences could perhaps also be attributed to individual students’ personalities but many students mentioned working with other nationalities under the theme “cross-cultural competencies”, suggesting that this was a significance benefit. Although the international research project

is likely to be a less in-depth cross-cultural experience than the international internship, it does seem to provide a very intense cross-cultural learning experience.

The most notable effect in terms of personal development seems to have been an increase in self-awareness, flexibility and independence. In contrast, the concept of expanded world view received less attention. While several IRP students reflected on the state of the world, only a few mentioned learning any best practices or market opportunities. Perhaps they didn't spontaneously think of this item when discussing this topic in their evaluation paper. Reflection exercises should seek to explicitly bring this topic to the attention of students, as tacit interactions and innovations are becoming more important elements in the competitiveness of nations and the quality of life. A study by Alfranseder (2012) found that Erasmus students observed good practices while residing abroad. This study had a specific thematic focus on sustainability issues: environmentally friendly transportation, waste management and renewable energy. Approximately fifty percent of the students identified better practices, which led half of them to change their behavior at home. The most significant changes took place in the field of transportation (using public transport, biking or walking). These behavioral changes depended on the country visited. For example, students who studied in a country with a bicycle friendly environment, such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden or Finland) were more likely to use a bicycle (or more often) on their return home.

By encouraging students to compare practices in the host and home country, in general and with regard to international business, students may be motivated to further develop their outlook on the world, identifying opportunities, and, in the process, expand their view of themselves as well. The search for best practices could be framed in a reflective learning exercise which invites students to articulate their insights about general categories such as traffic, housing, community building, security etc.

6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the international research project shows that the IRP increases students' capacities in all three areas of the competence framework but there are some limitations in the acquisition of cross-cultural competencies and personal development effects.

The content analysis also provided more specific insights into the nature and the influence of cultural distance. Students needed to learn more relationship and perceptual competencies when cultural distance was significant, i.e. when they traveled to historically Catholic or communist countries, Asia and Africa. By contrast, students who traveled to historically Protestant European countries and English language countries, often experienced little cultural distance, although individual students differed in their assessment of this. Finally, the analysis pointed out the potential of the IRP for developing cross-cultural team management competencies. Teachers and the Student Association at the Management School should take this finding into account during the group formation process.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

Both the investigation of the international internship and international research project provided more insights in the learning effects of two types of educational travel that have received little attention from previous researchers. These empirical analyses can also be used to validate the competence framework and this is the purpose of the current chapter. First, this chapter reflects on the initial conceptual definitions of cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development. Second, it assesses to what extent students learn these different competencies, based on the evidence gathered so far. I specify this assessment by type of educational travel (study abroad, international internship, international research project, and study tour) in order to gain an overview of how the learning potential of each compares to one another. Third, this chapter discusses the implications of the empirical findings for the concept of cultural distance[46], the contextual factor that this research focuses on.

7.1 Definition of competencies

The literature review identified many different variables to measure the competencies that students develop during educational travel. Although the competence framework delineated a set of knowledge and skills, based on previous research, there was some overlap between the concepts of cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development. In particular, the content analysis of the evaluation reports written by IRP participants can be used to reflect on the competence framework from their point of view. It made clear what kind of concepts students naturally think of for each competence and helped me to adjust the competence framework according to their life world (de Boer and Smaling 2011).

7.1.1 Cross-cultural competencies

In my initial competence framework, several elements of cross-cultural competencies overlapped with those of the personal development dimension. Elements from the latter, such as independence, flexibility, self-awareness and state of the world awareness are

[46] Paragraph 7.3.2 discusses the concept of cultural distance and a part of this text was published in van 't Klooster, E., J. Van Wijk, F.M. Go and J. van Rekom (2008). Educational Travel: The Overseas Internship.Annals of Tourism Research 35 (3): 690-711.

related to self-efficacy, stress management skills and perceptual questioning skills. The content analysis of the international research project suggests that respondents tend to categorize these items under personal development. IRP students referred to cross-cultural competencies mostly in the form of relationship- and perceptual competencies and foreign language skills. Students sometimes referred to factual cultural knowledge (originally a self-maintenance concept) as a means to gain the trust of local business people. As a result I put this variable in the "relationship competencies" dimension which denotes more the behavioral and superficial component of cross-cultural competencies. In contrast, the perceptual competency dimension refers to the underlying and interacting cultural values which can help explain better the behavior and attitude of people. In my opinion these adjustments in definition make the difference between relationship and perceptual competencies more clear.

Perhaps not surprisingly, students also referred to the development of foreign language proficiency, and this should be articulated in the competence framework. The (Dutch based) students often referred to the improvement of their English language oral and written proficiency in order to hone their cross-cultural competencies in general. Students also referred to the importance of using local language as 'small talk' to gain the trust of the local people. Some students also state the need for interpreters in order to communicate successfully with local business people within certain countries, such as Brazil, China and Vietnam. I position foreign language skills under the dimension relationship competencies.

The changes in the conceptualization are summarized in table 7.1.

Dimension	**Initial variable set**	**New variable set**
Self-maintenance	Factual cultural knowledge, self-efficacy, stress management skills.	
Relationship competencies	Conceptual cultural knowledge, relationship self-efficacy, conflict resolution knowledge and skills.	Relationship self-efficacy, foreign language proficiency, factual cultural knowledge.
Perceptual competencies	Attributional cultural knowledge, perceptual questioning skills.	Conceptual cultural knowledge, attributional cultural knowledge.

Table 7.1 Summary of the changes in the conceptualization of cross-cultural competencies.

7.1.2 Management competencies

For technical management competencies, the comments of the IRP students mainly referred to sector knowledge, market research, doing business (in general and internationally) and the influence of politics and economy on doing business. As these topics differ slightly from the initial conceptualization of technical competencies it led me to a reformulate the concept, meaning a split in three parts: (a) international business knowledge, (b) functional knowledge and (c) quantitative competencies. International business knowledge refers to international legal and political issues (including corruption, political uncertainty, government bureaucracy), international marketing strategy, and market entry strategy (e.g. setting up business, finding local partners and skilled management personnel). Functional knowledge refers to sector knowledge and disciplinary knowledge such as marketing, logistics, and finance. Quantitative skills refer to analytical statistical skills.

I made only minor changes to the initial conceptualization of interpersonal management competencies. According to IRP students, this concept mainly refers to communication and collaboration, with conflict management perceived to be an essential part of collaboration.

My initial conceptualization of intrapersonal competencies included variables which are similar to those of personal development and cross-cultural competencies, such as self-awareness and stress management. IRP students mostly wrote about these issues under the topic of personal development. In contrast, while describing the intrapersonal management competencies, students more often referred to problem solving skills, such as project management, knowledge management, time and crisis management.

Dimension	Initial variable set	New variable set
Technical knowledge	International legal and political issues, international marketing strategy and market entry strategy, quantitative skills.	International business, functional knowledge, quantitative skills.
Intrapersonal competencies	Self-awareness, problem solving skills and stress management.	Problems solving skills.
Interpersonal competencies	Communication, collaboration and conflict management.	Communication, collaboration.

Table 7.2 Summary of the changes in the conceptualization of management competencies.

7.1.3 Personal development

For the conceptualization of the personal development dimension two revisions are suggested. First is the omission of tolerance from the dimension "expanded worldview", as students often explained perceptual cross-cultural competencies as the ability to tolerate and deal with differences in multicultural teams. Second, perceptual questioning skills (initial a cross-cultural competence) were added to the concept 'expanded worldview' as several students noted that the overseas experience made them recognize biases in their perception, and, as a consequence, prompted them to change their world view.

Dimension	Initial variable set	New variable set
Independence	Independence	Independence
Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
Self-awareness	Self-assurance & expanded view of the self.	Self-assurance & expanded view of the self.
Expanded worldview	Tolerance, awareness of the state of the world	Awareness of the state of the world, perceptual questioning skills

Table 7.3 Summary of the changes in the conceptualization of personal development.

7.1.4 Implications for the competence framework

When I use the empirical studies to reflect on the initial competence framework it is possible to simplify the definitions of the competencies. The most important change to the framework is the deletion of self-maintenance competencies as, according to the students viewpoint they more naturally belong to the concept of personal development. The main implications for management competencies is that the definition of technical competencies has become more diversified, making a distinction between international business

knowledge, functional knowledge and quantitative skills. The intrapersonal management competence dimension was simplified to embody just problem solving abilities, as the other initially identified skills were more often recognized as being part of personal development. The personal development dimension stayed largely the same. The results of the reflection are shown in figure 7.1.

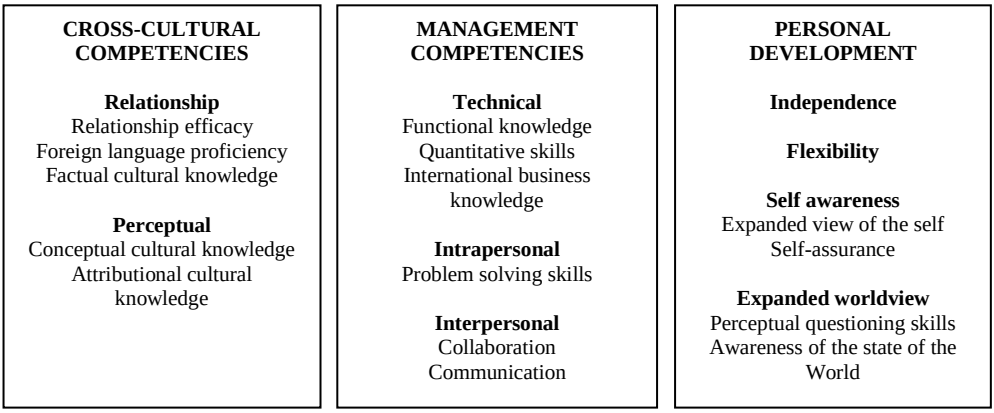

Figure 7.1 Revised definitions of competencies

7.2 Learning of competencies according to type of educational travel

Now that there is a better understanding of what competencies students should learn from educational travel, it is interesting to know to what extent different types of educational travel facilitate this learning. Before I continue with this assessment it is important to remind that some concerns should be taken into account. Although the literature review shows that students report that they learn significantly from study abroad experiences, it should be kept in mind that the learning of competencies tends to be overrated due to self-reporting bias, young age and the lack of realistic judgment due to residing in an expat bubble. This is in particular applicable to personal development and cross-cultural competencies as these include a great deal of tacit knowledge, which is harder to assess objectively. In this regard, the Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett 1993: 26)[47] could help students to more realistically assess their competencies, identify

[47] The Developmental Model of intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) links changes in cognitive structure to an evolution in attitudes and behavior toward cultural differences, moving from highly ethnocentric to highly ethnorelative stages. Ethnocentric is defined as using one's own set of standards and customs to judge all people,

barriers for learning (e.g. overdependence on schema assimilation and withdrawal strategies), and open up to cognitive frame shifting. Evaluation assignments by a select group of international interns provided evidence to support this. Here are a few examples.

> "Currently, I am still in the adaptation phase and hopefully, with the help of new friends, the acculturation process can accelerate to the next step. However, there are several differences that I find hard to accept. For example, one of my friend's relatives was accidentally shot in the head after members from two different street gangs started a shoot-out. Also everyday there is news about missing person or even children which I have never experienced before either in Europe or Indonesia. Although I recognize that American values and cultures are different from what I experienced before, trying to understand and accept this is difficult, especially with the high frequency of criminal news. I am accustomed to completely different manners. The thing that interests me the most and that I find hardest to accept is a fundamental issue about Americans attitudes to guns. Most Americans know that guns are often misused in armed robberies, slayings, etc, yet they still they like to purchase firearms and are against making them illegal for civilians because they want to maintain the freedom be able to protect themselves". Although I can now accept and respect those differences, I still do not have the same view point as most Americans. To use Bennet's theories (1993), I consider myself to be somewhere between the acceptance and adaptation phases, since I acknowledge that American culture is different to what I have been accustomed to so far. I expect to be able to successfully move to the adaptation and integration phases as soon as possible and as smoothly as possible." (Indonesian intern in the United States)

A Dutch intern in Germany noted similar processes, although the cultural gap he experienced was smaller.

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often unconsciously. Ethnorelative means the opposite; it refers to being comfortable with many standards and customs and to having an ability to adapt behavior and judgments to a variety of interpersonal settings. Ethnocentric stages include denial, defense and minimization. These are followed by more ethnorelative stages such as acceptance, adaptation and integration.

> "In terms of developing my intercultural sensitivity (as theorized by Bennett 1993) I must conclude that little progress has been made. Already at the beginning of my work placement I considered myself to be within the adaptation stage. But for me the last stage, from adaptation to integration, is a particularly slow process. But I do not consider myself to be completely in the adaptation stage either. Rather I am in transition from one stage to the other. I feel I have the ability to live effectively in my own country but that I am also able to live without problems in another culture. But to say that I am bicultural is not true. At the moment I think I will be at the end of the acceptance and at the beginning of the adaptation phase. This presumption is also just, but I personally think that I already crossed the beginning of the adaptation phase. I try to explain this assumption since I notice that I am trying to modify my behavior so as to make it more appropriate to another culture other than my own. I think it is only possible to get into the integration phase after working in a certain country for a significant number of years. I have reflected on my previous assumptions and think that integrating is working your way through and takes a long time to achieve."

As seen in the literature review, the learning of competencies is related to several contextual factors such as length, controlled experience, local interaction and cultural distance (table 7.4). Since different types of educational travel score differently on these factors it is likely that their learning potential differs too. In the table below I discuss the characteristics of different types of educational travel: study abroad, international internship, international research project and the study tour. Cultural distance will be addressed separately later on in this chapter, as it is a focus point in my competence framework.

	Study abroad	**International internship**	**International research project**	**Study tour**
Description	Coursework at institution	Work experience	Consulting experience	Field-based visits to companies
Primary goal	Learn foreign culture and sometimes another language	To acquire work and cross-cultural experience	To acquire international business experience	Gain increased understanding of foreign culture and business practices
Faculty involvement	Often none	Often none	May or may not accompany student team	May or may not accompany student team
Length	4-16 weeks	16 weeks	4 weeks	1-2 weeks
Group size	Individual	Individual	4 to 30	20-50
Local interaction	With local students and international student community, sometimes stay with locals	With local (sometimes western oriented) business people, international student community, stay with locals	With local (mostly western oriented) business people	With local (mostly western oriented) business people
Controlled experience	Course schedule together with local and international students, but contact with locals is not always guaranteed	Daily job at (local or international) company	Schedule with local company visits and interviews	Schedule with local company visits and lectures

Table 7.4: contextual characteristics of educational travel programmes (based on Kaufman et al. 2011)

In the next paragraphs I discuss to what extent each type of educational travel is likely to contribute to the development of competencies. My assessment is based on the literature review, the empirical analyses, and earlier quantitative research among 84 foreign study program professionals (Kaufman et al. 2011). Among these professionals, approximately 25 percent were faculty members and 75 percent were administrators (i.e. deans, directors, managers, coordinators, and advisors), with a minimum of 7 years of experience overseeing or participating in foreign study programs. The respondents were asked to rate the importance of each student learning outcome related to either cultural impact and international business skill development, for each foreign study program on a 5-point scale ranging from very unimportant to very important[48]. For my own analysis I apply a more general rating scheme consisting of one plus (+) to a maximum of four plusses in order to compare the four types of educational travel. For comparison I include in my tables the Kaufman study scores of items related to my variables. Note that the assessment of Kaufman is rather positive, which the authors point out themselves as well as they found out that the experts assessed the perceived importance of the learning outcomes as significantly higher than actual expected learning outcomes (all at or below $p < .027$)[49]. Still the findings by Kaufman et al. are very useful for the comparison of the different learning effects.

7.2.1 Cross-cultural competencies

According to the research by Kaufman, Melton, Varner, Hoelscher, Schmidt and Spaulding (2011), the main goal of the international research project is to teach students management competencies (i.e. consulting competencies) and to a lesser extent cross-cultural competencies. Our content analysis of student's evaluations seems to confirm this assessment. The international research project is likely to teach students moderate cross-cultural competencies. Although the student engages with about 25 local companies or governmental organizations (ibid: 2), some of the IRP students themselves note that their acquisition of relationship and perceptual skills is hampered by the shortness of the stay abroad, and the fact that their interactions mostly exist of brief encounters with business

[48] 1 = very unimportant, 2 = unimportant, 3 = neither important nor unimportant, 4 = important, and 5 = very important.
[49] Unfortunately the actual item scores were not included in the original article.

people and hotel owners who are often accustomed to western ways. Cross-cultural learning was more significant for students traveling a greater cultural distance or those who collaborated with students with a different cultural background.

In comparison, study abroad students are likely to learn more cross-cultural competencies (Kaufman et al. 2011). They stay abroad for a longer time and are likely to interact more and build relationships with local people during and outside their academic activities (e.g. teachers, local students, students from other nationalities, guest families and local businesses). Provided that these students don't withdraw too much to their co-national peer community, it is likely that they score higher in the relationship and perceptual dimensions than IRP participants.

The international internship probably provides an even greater cross-cultural experience (Kaufman et al. 2011; Stronkhorst 2005; van den Hoven & Walenkamp 2013). Although the foreign company can be a multinational or local company, it is likely that in either case students interact frequently with local people during the day and have less opportunities to withdraw to the international student community (van den Hoven & Walenkamp 2013: 58). Indeed, my own research tells me that foreign interns seem to learn significant relationship and perceptual competencies. However, students report that some relationship skills are more difficult to acquire when travelling from high to low income countries and / or countries characterized by high power distance and collectivism, such as overcoming language differences and interaction with locals.

The evidence suggests that the IRP provides less learning of cross-cultural competencies than the study abroad or international internship. However given its shorter length (3-4 weeks abroad as opposed to approximately four months) it can still be considered a very effective alternative, especially compared to other short-term overseas projects, such as the study tour. During a study tour students are much more passively engaged, although the evidence is that these students do learn some perceptual and relationship skills (Kaufman et al. 2011; Litvin 2003; Schuster et al. 1998).

	Study abroad	International internship	IRP	Study tour	Kaufman survey item
Relationship					
- Foreign language proficiency	++++ (4.11)	++++ (4.13)	++ (3.49)	+ (2.93)	Develop foreign language skills.
- Factual cultural knowledge	+++ (4.31)	++++ (4.61)	+++ (4.46)	++ (3.59)	Develops in-depth knowledge of a particular country, industry, company, or functional area.
- Relationship efficiency	+++	+++	++	++	
Perceptual					
- Conceptual cultural knowledge	+++ (4.79)	+++ (4.61)	++ (4.29)	++ (4.31)	Develops cross-cultural tolerance/empathy.
- Attributional cultural knowledge	++	+++	++	+	
Overall	**+++**	**++++**	**++**	**+**	

Table 7.5. The learning of cross cultural competencies: a comparison of four educational travel experiences

7.2.2 Management competencies

Research by Kaufman et al. (2011) only investigated the learning of International Business skills for the four types of educational travel. For the International Business dimension it was believed that the IRP and the International internship score both higher than the study abroad and the study tour. The experts claim that interns learn more IB related knowledge than IRP student. However, my assessment for this dimension would be more modest, given the fact that interns often engage in administrative type of jobs (Feldman & Bolino 2000). While the IRP is likely to be more complex than most internships in terms of international business skills involved, the greater length of the international internship provides students with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the market and the organization they work for (Johnson 2005; Kaufman et al 2011). Reflection exercises could help to ensure that interns indeed take this opportunity to improve their understanding of IB related issues.

IRP participants and interns develop quantitative and functional knowledge mostly hands-on in a practical setting, whereas study abroad involves lectures, where these are taught on a more general and conceptual level (van den Hoven & Walenkamp 2013). In general it is believed that the learning of technical functional knowledge is most of all appreciated by students originating from developing countries in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe

(Brooks & Waters 2009; Larsen & Vincent-Lancrin 2002; Teichler & Janson 2007). This trend was also found in my study on international interns, as interns traveling from high to low power distance countries acquired more study discipline related knowledge (Feldman & Bolino 2001; van 't Klooster et al. 2008).

According to my empirical findings, the IRP students seem to significantly develop their intra and inter personal management competencies. By contrast, international interns are expected to only moderately develop these skills as their job tasks are often more administrative. Whereas IRP and international internship participants mostly develop their intra and interpersonal skills in a work setting, study abroad students improve these skills in an educational one. But this does not diminish the effect of the overseas study. Research on (European) study abroad participants shows that they viewed themselves as moderately stronger than the control group (of stay at home students) in terms of being able to work independently, their adaptability, and their general communication skills. A survey among employers confirmed these self-reported judgments (Teichler & Janson 2007).

Research by Kaufman et al. (2011) suggests that study tours also improve the international business knowledge of students. This is further underpinned by Schuster, Zimmerman, Schertzer and Beamish (1998) who found that after the study tour students feel more confident to take on new challenges and adopt a more international entrepreneurship perspective. It can also be expected that they acquire some intra- and interpersonal competencies, but given the relative passive nature of the experience it is assumed to be less effective than the international research project.

	Study abroad	International internship	IRP	Study tour	Kaufman survey item
Technical - IB knowledge - Quantitative skills - Functional knowledge	+ (3.67) +++ +++	++ (4.71) ++ ++	+++ (4.48) ++ ++	++ (3.70) + ++	Develops awareness knowledge, and skills to conduct international business activities.
Intrapersonal - Problem solving	++	+++	+++	+	
Interpersonal - Communication - Collaboration	+++ ++	+++ ++	+++ +++	+ +	
Overall	**+++**	**+++**	**+++**	**++**	

Table 7.6 The learning of management competencies: a comparison of four educational travel experiences

7.2.3 Personal development

The research by Kaufman et al. (2011) didn't discuss explicitly the personal development dimension but some of the variables of their cultural impact dimension overlapped with awareness of the world and perceptual questioning skills (see table 7.8). The international research project, study abroad and international internship are likely to score the same on the variable 'awareness of the world'. For perceptual question skills, the longer experiences are more likely to disturb current world views (Hansel 1988; McGuigan 1958). Still, for shorter experiences such as the study tour and IRP, anecdotal evidence shows that students become aware of alternative ways of doing things across places, which could help them to approach things differently in their home country.

For the independence dimension, the study tour is likely to yield the least results, because of the short duration of the trip and lack of individual challenge, since students mostly travel among students from their home country (Johnson 2005). The international internship is likely to yield the highest learning, given the longer duration of the experience, individual nature and the relatively high amount of unfamiliar situations due to 'challenging' interactions with local customs and value systems. Stronkhorst (2005) found some evidence that students who had completed international internships reported higher self-efficacy than study abroad students. Both the international research project and study

abroad are also likely to develop independence. The former more due to an intensive stressful project and the latter more due to duration and frequency of interaction with locals.

All types, except for the study tour, are likely to foster a strong sense of flexibility due to the significant number of unexpected circumstances that the students need to deal with. Again, for the IRP this will be more due to the intense project schedule and intense team dynamics. For both the international internship and study abroad this is more due to longer duration and more encounters with different values and customs. For self-awareness, the same argumentation applies, but in addition I contend that the effect is greatest for international interns as they are likely to be confronted with the greatest cultural distance.

	Study abroad	**International internship**	**IRP**	**Study tour**	**Kaufman survey item**
Independence	+++	++++	+++	+	
Flexibility	+++	+++	+++	+	
Self awareness - Self-assurance - Expanded view of the self	 ++ ++	 +++ +++	 ++ ++	 + +	
Expanded world view - Awareness of the world - Perceptual questioning skills	 +++ (4.60) +++ (4.82)	 +++ (4.64) +++ (4.58)	 +++ (4.54) ++ (4.30)	 + (4.23) ++ (4.41)	Enables students to think globally about decisions. Enables a view of one's own culture from a new perspective.
Overall	+++	++++	+++	+	

Table 7.7 Personal development: a comparison of four types of educational travel experiences

7.2.4 Implications for the competence framework

The literature review shows that the learning of competencies during educational travel is based on the following contextual factors: cultural distance, controlled experience, duration and amount of local interaction. The relatively unexplored concept of cultural distance will be discussed more in-depth in the next paragraph. Together with the help of research by Kaufman et al (2011) and my empirical findings, the previous section assessed

the potential for competency learning for four types of educational travel. The overall assessment is portrayed in table 7.8.

	Study abroad	**International internship**	**IRP**	**Study tour**
Cross-cultural competencies	+++	++++	++	+
Management competencies	+++	+++	+++	++
Personal development	+++	++++	+++	+
Overall	**+++**	**++++**	**+++**	**++**

Table 7.8 Overall assessment of educational travel experiences

The analysis of the international research project shows that the IRP increases students' capacities in all three areas of the competence framework but there are some limitations in the acquisition of cross-cultural relationship and perceptual skills and only moderate personal development effects. By contrast, other forms of educational travel, such as the international internship and study abroad, in general, bring more benefits. It should be noted though that students in these programmes spend a much longer time abroad. In contrast the international research project seems to be a rather efficient learning experience. Although the IRP students spend a relative short time abroad it contributes to a significant development of professional skills which, as pointed out in the introductory chapter, are coming to be seen as increasingly important aspects of international educational experiences.

7.3 Cultural distance

Cultural distance is one of the independent concepts that has received little attention from previous research on educational travel, but was assumed by researchers to hold some explanatory power. My research investigated the concept of cultural distance more in-depth. This was done in both a quantitative and qualitative way. My quantitative empirical analysis confirmed the general relevance of the concept and specified the aspects of cultural distance that promote or impede the learning of competencies. In addition, the qualitative analysis provided a better understanding of how exactly cultural distance is experienced by the students. In my research the conceptualization of cultural distance was based on the Hofstede dimensions and Inglehart and Baker value systems, which I will

reflect on below. Next, I will discuss the importance of being aware of interacting cultural spheres, which is a theme that emerged during my research.

7.3.1 Hofstede dimensions

One widely used index for measuring cultural distance was developed by Kogut and Singh (1988) who drew on Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Shenkar 2001). I used this index to investigate its influence on the learning of cross-cultural competencies and management competencies of international interns. The Kogut and Singh (1988) index didn't produce any significant correlation. The absence of significant correlations can be due to the construct working as a black box which groups the different Hofstede dimensions together, making it difficult to assess what effect exactly happens, especially when the research includes numerous home and host countries. In contrast, when one looks at the individual dimensions some correlations appear with the learning of competencies. Increases in power distance and individualism produced the most significant effects.

For management competencies, an increase in power distance negatively affected the learning of functional knowledge, intra- and interpersonal management skills. An increase in individualism positively affected these same dimensions. For cross-cultural competencies, the influence of cultural distance was less evident. An increase in power distance had a negative influence on the communication with locals and drew more attention to the learning of factual cultural knowledge. In contrast, an increase in individualism made it easier to develop relationship competencies, i.e. adapt to the communication style of colleagues, apply conflict resolution skills, and communicate with locals.

In their comments, IRP students also recognized Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Students, especially those travelling to Asian countries, spontaneously recognized the impact of the value dimensions of power distance (hierarchy), collectivism and long-term orientation (e.g. the concept of 'guanxi'), although they found it harder to recognize the masculinity and uncertainty avoidance dimensions. Some students claimed that the differences in Hofstede's dimensions between home and host country had diminished since this model

was developed. However, as other IRP students remarked, it is likely that some cross-cultural differences only emerge over a longer time, as was confirmed in my empirical data from the international internship study. This also resonates with findings from the literature review where one year study abroad students were less confident about their cross-cultural competencies than students who had stayed one semester. The cultural factors suggested by Malewski (2005) seem to provide an useful addition to Hofstede's model, as students also frequently referred to dimensions such as business etiquette, communication style and the notion of time.

7.3.2 Inglehart dimensions

Another weakness of Kogut and Singh´s (1988) cultural distance index is that it suggests that countries are culturally homogenous. This underestimates the potential differences between ethnic, regional or social groups within countries. It is more likely that differences between countries stem from individuals' perceptions of a foreign country's general values and attitudes, often referred to as psychic distance. This research used Inglehart & Baker's dimensional value model (2000) to measure psychic distance. This model is more dynamic and more comprehensive than the relatively static work-sphere that Hofstede used to develop his dimensions (Vinken et al. 2004).

To recapitulate, Inglehart and Baker (2000) argue that cultural values shift from 'traditional' to 'secular' when an agrarian economy develops into an industrial one. Traditional values that are commonly found in pre-industrial societies include relatively low levels of tolerance for abortion, divorce and homosexuality, tend to emphasize male dominance in economic and political life, a deference to parental authority, and the importance of family life. They are relatively authoritarian and religion plays an important role. When an economy becomes more industrial, values move towards the opposite sides of these spectrums. As an economy develops further, becoming more post-industrial, cultural values shift again from survival to self-expression and embrace general trust, tolerance, subjective well-being, and political activism. Although economic development triggers these shifts in norms and values, the nature of the actual cultural changes is

dependent on a country's broad cultural heritage (e.g. Protestantism, Catholicism and Communism) which values are transmitted through educational institutes and mass media.

My research on international internships found that psychic distance had significant negative relationships with the learning of all management competencies. In terms of cross-cultural competencies strong negative relationships were found with communications with locals and perceptions about the host country. Psychic distance differs significantly in the following economic zone transitions. Interns who live in upper-middle-income countries (e.g. Argentina, Estonia, Hungary, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, Russia and Turkey) perceived cultural distance to be significantly higher when traveling to low-income and other upper-middle-income countries, and less so for high-income countries. Similarly, interns living in high-income countries perceived cultural distance to be significantly higher when travelling to low-income countries, lower-middle-income countries and upper-middle-countries.

Another criticism is that the metaphor of distance creates an illusion of symmetry. Hence one would expect the same result when a Dutch student travels to Vietnam as when a Vietnamese student travels to the Netherlands. In accordance with previous research on expats my research indeed finds that perceived distance is not symmetric. For international internships, the mean for psychic distance was significantly higher when travelling from high income countries to low income, lower-middle income countries and upper-middle income countries than the other way round.

The experiences by the IRP students are in line with the theory of Inglehart and Baker (2000) that economic development pushes society in a common direction towards more secular and self-expressive values, although cultural heritage (inherited from, say, a Protestant, Orthodox, Islamic or Confucian background) also still has a significant influence on the ways of living and doing business. The students noticed some degree of cultural convergence, especially in terms of the ubiquity of the use of English language and the standardization of doing business, but they also noticed the significant influence of culture. According to the anecdotes of Dutch IRP students cross-cultural communication

proved to be more of a challenge when visiting historically Catholic and communist parts of Europe together with Asia and Africa, particularly when dealing with smaller organizations. In contrast to students who visited Protestant Europe and English speaking areas, they more frequently referred to local language proficiency and communication style as well as underlying beliefs and values as history, politics, economy, corruption, religion, and cultural values (time, power distance, individualism).

7.3.3 Interacting spheres of culture

Both the Hofstede dimensions, Inglehart value systems and Malewski's factors for analyzing cultures, provide explanatory power in the assessment and dealing with cultural differences. However, one should keep in mind that for the analysis of cultural differences, these factors should serve as a starting point (Malewski 2005). As explained in the competence framework, attributional cultural knowledge is needed to more accurately predict how great the differences are between the student and the people of the host country he / she is interacting with, meaning students have to understand interactions between cultural spheres (i.e. the interaction between different cultural layers, such as role, family, organization, sector, region, country and history). Indeed, IRP students sometimes referred to the interactions between cultural spheres. A book chapter by Schneider and Barsoux (2003) was required reading for a small group of international business interns from the Rotterdam School of Management and the idea of interacting spheres helped them make better sense of the organization that they worked for. One Dutch student on an internship in the USA, explained:

> "United States is a big country consisting of 50 states, each of which has its own characteristics and level of economic development. My experience is that people in Houston, Texas are more collective in their outlook than most Americans, possibly due to their nature of occupations and their close links with Mexican culture. Therefore, at the beginning of my internship, I experienced behavior that was less American than I had expected and more a product of Texan culture. Instead of being very individualistic, Texans tend to be more cooperative, friendly, and warm-hearted."

An Indonesian intern in the USA noted:

> "As I expected beforehand, individualism is really strong in the US. In my opinion Americans relate individualism with a sense of freedom and privacy. They have a large car or truck to drive on the big interstate highways, but most of the time these automobiles will be only occupied by a single person. According to a survey by a local Texan newspaper (the Houston Chronicle), half of Houstonians do not like to ride on public transport, since it does not give them as much space and freedom as driving in their own cars. As a result, public transportation is almost non-existent in Texas. Only recently, because of high petrol prices, have some of them moved away from driving their cars to sharing public transportation to go to work. The local news often mention that robbers, or carjackers, come from broken families, which strengthens the idea that (unlike Indonesia), parts of American society do not maintain a close long-term commitment to the member group, such as an extended family, or extended relationships (Hofstede 1991). However, inside Oiltanking (the company where he worked) the atmosphere of individualism was less than I expected from American society. This might be down to two reasons. First, the company is originally from Germany and the facility in Texas City has a Belgian Managing Director. These two countries have a lower index for individualism than the US (according to Hofstede). Second, the company has roots of being a family-owned company and regards good relationships between employees to be essential. To date Oiltanking has organized and funded several activities for the employees, to which we can bring our family members or friends. Through these activities (which have included a picnic, fishing trips, a dinner party, trips to other Oiltanking's branches abroad, etc) the company tries to make everybody feel part of one Oiltanking worldwide family. This practice is close to what Hofstede describes as one of the characteristics that would typify Indonesian culture. So the culture of the host organization is different than the host national culture, due to its origin as a German family owned company (it is still owned by the same family today)".

An IRP participant in Vietnam referred to another cultural layer, that of generations:

> "The companies we visited operating in the software industry seemed less traditional than the desk research phase suggested. One probable reason for this is that the software market in Vietnam is very young. The majority of companies are less than eight years old and the market is still forming. This means there is less traditional hierarchy and age ranking in software firms. Even more surprising, one of the CEOs we met with was a woman and a lot of employees in the companies we visited were very young. This is probably because the youngest workers in Vietnam have the best IT knowledge. In general, the majority of companies were very welcoming and willing to cooperate as well as to share information. In a few cases, companies were more guarded in sharing information."

Hence, understanding interacting spheres of culture is an important contribution for explaining the behavior of people in the host country.

7.3.4 Implications for the competence framework

The empirical analyses show that the different value dimensions put forward by Hofstede, Inglehart and Malewski provide a good starting point for understanding other cultures and their influence on the learning of management competencies, cross-cultural competencies and personal development. Understanding the idea of interacting cultural spheres should further help students to overcome cultural differences, perform better and give personal meaning to the overseas experience. In sum, the concept of cultural distance is a relevant concept for the educational travel competence framework.

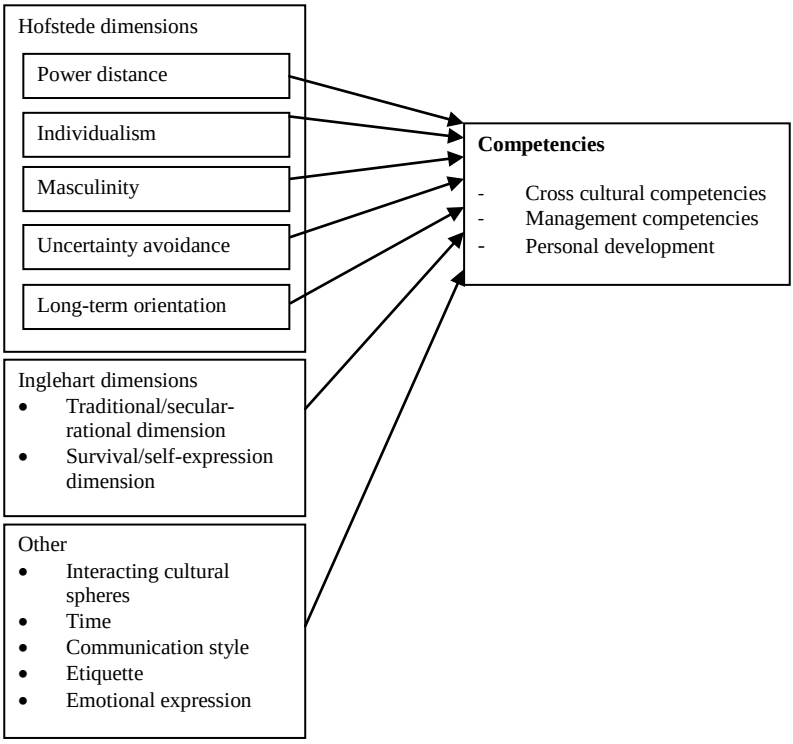
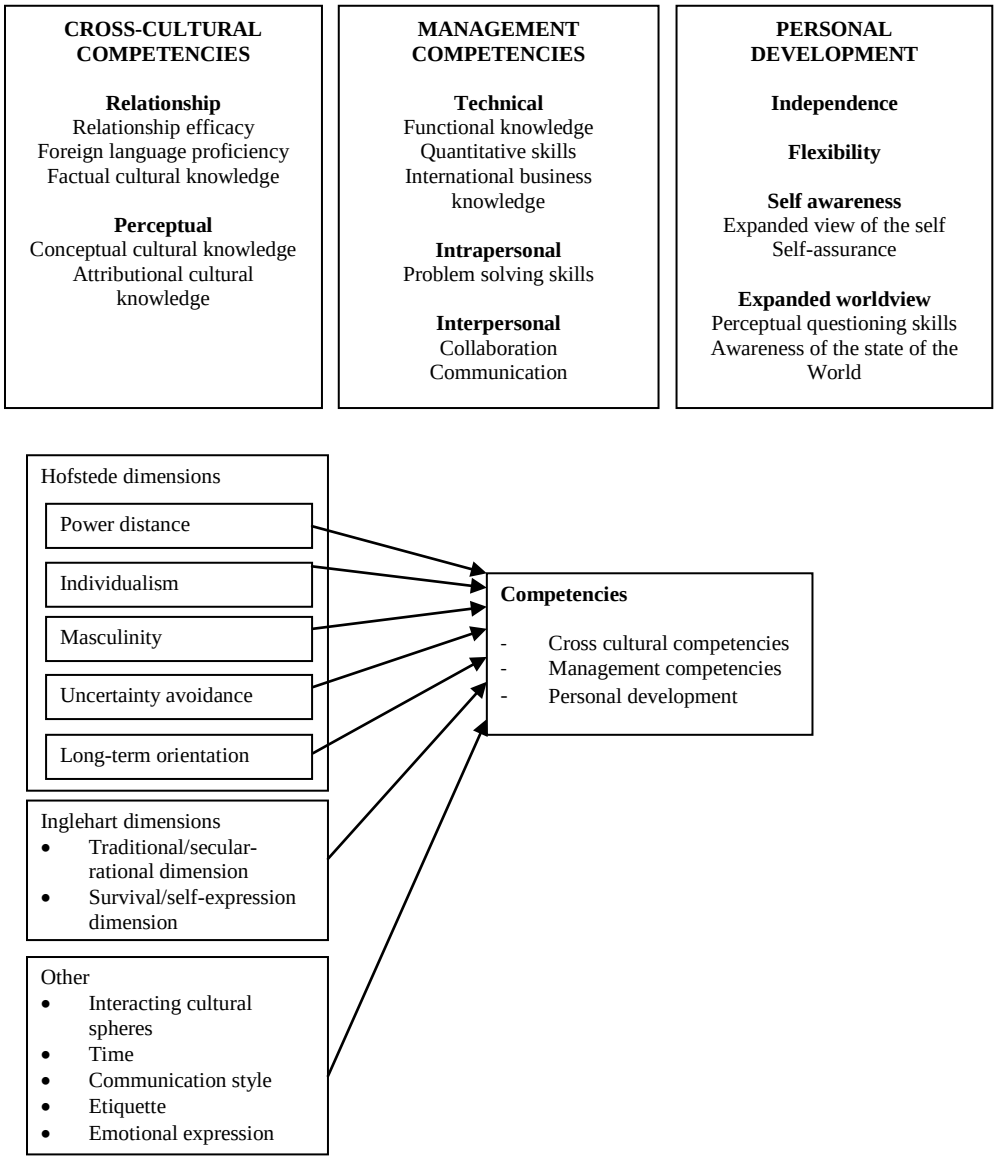


Figure 7.2 The influence of cultural distance on the learning of educational travel competencies

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter reflected on the initial competence framework with the help of the empirical findings, and addressed the conceptual definitions, learning potential and the influence of contextual factors such as cultural distance. The revised competence framework is presented below (figure 7.3).



	Study abroad	**International internship**	**IRP**	**Study tour**
Cross-cultural competencies	+++	++++	++	+
Management competencies	+++	+++	+++	++
Personal development	+++	++++	+++	+
Overall	**+++**	**++++**	**+++**	**++**

Figure 7.3 competence framework for educational travel experiences

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

This final chapter summarizes the findings of the research, practical applicability, addresses its limitations and provides recommendations for further research.

8.1 Synopsis

During the past two decades the process of globalization has helped make the educational travel sector a much more mature market. Increasing numbers of students from both the developed- and developing world participate in study abroad programs, international internships and relatively new short-term programs such as the international research project. Yet, at the same time this globalization process seems to have reduced some of the traditional benefits of educational travel. For example, the professional relevance of having studied abroad is not always immediately clear to potential employers, as the challenge of adapting to a foreign environment has now become easier than it was in the past. Equally, there is a need to reconsider the competencies that educational travel provides, as there is a noticeable shift towards a more utilitarian attitude towards these experiences. These changes increase the need to improve our understanding of the learning effects of such educational experiences, and how they come about. The aim of this research was to work towards a competence framework for educational travel and how the learning of competencies was related to overcoming cultural differences in a globalizing world. Hence, the following central research question was formulated:

"What competencies are developed through educational travel experiences, how are these affected by cultural distance, and what are the implications for learning programs? "

From a practical point of view, the insights of this investigation can be of value to students in order to help them make more informed decisions when selecting a type of educational travel and designing the context of this particular experience (e.g. length, cultural distance, stay with a local host family). The findings of this research can also be of benefit to teachers seeking to improve the learning experience of different types of educational travel in terms of competence goal setting and reflection assignments. Policy makers in education and international business will acquire better insights into the (wide range of)

competencies that students can develop during educational travel experiences and this can be used to fine-tune their priorities with regard to the human capital agenda for strengthening the international competitiveness of their workforce (van den Boom 2013).

As a first step it was necessary to conduct a literature review in order to get an overview of past research. The research field is fragmented. Different conceptualizations can be found in the literature and the researchers don't always refer to each other. My literature review identified the main concepts concerning cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development. It also looked into the findings of each article in order to find out what students actually learn from educational travel experiences. Finally, the literature review gave an overview of the individual and contextual factors that influence the learning effects. A research gap was identified with regard to the concept of cultural distance, a contextual factor which could benefit from additional empirical research, in particular now that some scientists and practitioners are suggesting that the value of educational travel is diminishing due to globalization processes. Also, investigating the phenomena related to cultural distance provide students with additional guidance in negotiating ontological security in a globalizing world.

The next step was to develop a first version of a competence framework for educational travel competencies. This framework was first of all based on the literature review, but given the lack of agreement among researchers, I used two additional approaches to strengthen the validity of the framework. First, I did research on general theories related to learning and competence development, with a special focus on experiential learning and schema theory. Second, I searched for commonly used competence frameworks in the related fields of management and expatriation.

This initial competence framework was then used to empirically explore the learning effects for two types of educational travel on which little research exists and which are likely to have high professional value for business students: the international internship and the international research project. In each of these investigations, attention was paid to the concept of cultural distance and its influence on the learning of competencies.

Finally, my research used the empirical studies to reflect upon the initial competence framework. Next, with the information gathered throughout this research, I assessed the learning potential of four types of educational travel: study abroad, study tour, international internship and the international research project. I also discussed the implications for the contextual factor cultural distance. The outcomes were framed in a new competence framework.

8.2 Main conclusions

8.2.1 Objective 1: To explain the evolution of educational travel and provide a definition.

An educational travel experience is often characterized as a form of experiential learning. Under certain conditions, such multi-sensory experiences are considered to accelerate learning more than mere cognitive learning in the classroom. The unique element of international experiential learning is the encounter with 'the Other', which this research conceptualized as the independent variable 'cultural distance'.

Given the fragmented nature of the educational travel literature, it was first necessary to understand the general context of educational travel and define more precisely what the field is about. Based on previous definitions and my insights during the research project, I define educational travel as "a program in which participants travel to a foreign location, individually or as a group, with the primary purpose of engaging in a learning experience related to the development of cross-cultural competencies, management competencies or personal development." For my study I focused on the types of educational travel that are of most relevance to business students: the study abroad, the international internship, the study tour and the international research project. These educational experiences vary in terms of objectives. Some are more oriented towards the development of management competencies and some more to cross-cultural competencies and personal development. Furthermore they differ in terms of length, group size and academic support. Lately, short-term educational travel programs such as summer school programs and the international

research project have gained in popularity. This is partly due to the more flexible nature of such programs which can run parallel to the curriculum of the students.

The origins of international educational travel can be traced back many centuries, but its size and scope grew exponentially after World War II, due to major innovations in transport and communication technology and rising incomes. In the Western world both European and American institutions were established to promote educational travel in the form of study abroad, study tours and international internships. The main rationale behind such programs was to develop cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly interdependent (and, in the early days, war-ravaged) world. Both America and Russia used such programs as a tool for inculcating their values in 'client' developing countries as part of the cold war. By contrast, educational travel offered developing countries the opportunity to attain state of the art professional knowledge, mainly technical competencies but also intra and inter personal professional skills. The maturation of the educational travel sector, at around the beginning of the 21st Century, due to cultural globalization, the lack of peace threats, and lack of exclusivity, has increased the relevance of the outcomes of educational travel programs. This raises the importance of acquiring a deeper understanding of the learning outcomes and how these are influenced by cultural distance.

8.2.2 Objective 2: To develop a competence framework for educational travel experiences, with an additional focus on the influence of cultural distance on competence development.

In practice, educators have a general idea about what students learn from their educational travel experiences, but this knowledge is often based on anecdotal evidence. One would suppose that theories about this issue would have some explanatory power but research into educational travel is highly fragmented and it can be time-consuming for practitioners to assemble the pieces of the puzzle. This research aimed to build a framework describing the competencies gained from different kinds of educational travel. This model was constructed by integrating previous conceptualizations in educational travel literature, as well as using commonly accepted frameworks employed in the literature about expatriates

and management competencies. Traditionally the literature on educational travel has focused on personal development and cross-cultural competencies. My model also includes professional competencies, specified in my research as management competencies, since these are of growing importance in determining the value of educational travel for business students.

In trying to generate a list of competencies, the list of choices seemed almost endless. As a consequence a step-wise approach was applied. First, insights from theories on competence learning, experiential learning and schema theory were used to build a fundament for the framework. Theory makes a distinction between stable and dynamic competencies. This categorization posits that dynamic competencies such as knowledge and skills are relatively easy to acquire as a means to adapt to a new environment. In contrast, more stable competencies such as personality factors, interests and motivations are harder to change and might even impede the acquiring of certain knowledge and skills (Leiba-O'Sullivan 1999; van den Hoven & Walenkamp 2013: 98). This theoretical assumption was supported by the literature review which found evidence for the influence of motivation and interests on the development of cross-cultural competencies. As a result my conceptualization of management and cross-cultural competencies refers only to the dynamic competencies that likely can be changed over the course of an educational travel experience. For the conceptualization of personal development, the focus on dynamic competencies means that I focus more on increased self-assurance and expansion of the self, rather than changes in basic personality traits. Based on modernization theory, personal development means that students become more internally oriented, autonomous and expand their identity. Indeed my own and previous research shows that self-awareness, feelings of independence and flexibility are often referred to by students. However, even when such progress is reported, researchers should be aware of potential self-report bias among respondents.

I also tried the improve the validity of my conceptualization of competencies by gaining a better understanding of the 'black box' of learning. Insights from cognitive psychology and brain research show that learning involves conscious and unconscious memorization

processes within the brain and the nervous system, which emphasize, modify or extend existing knowledge associations. The build up of memories starts during the formative years of young people and it is believed that a child's fundamental value schemes are anchored by around the age of ten (Hofstede 2003). This implies that the learning of knowledge and skills is likely to be easier than values, related to motivation and personality factors. This train of thought is further underpinned by schema theory which makes a distinction between meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, where a change in the latter is much more difficult to establish and can only come about slowly due to a chain of changes in the individual meaning schemes. This line of argumentation builds support for a distinction between behavior and perspective competencies, and it implies that the learning of, for example, perceptual cross-cultural competencies is likely to be more difficult than business etiquette and factual cultural knowledge.

This understanding of learning and competencies, as well as an investigation of previous research on educational travel, expatriate and management competencies, led to a first version of the competence framework. This framework was tested and explored during two empirical analyses of the international internship and the international research project. In addition, the IRP student evaluation reports helped me to make sense of some overlap in the initial model and determine which concepts were most relevant for each type of competence, according to the life world of the students. This reflection process led to the competence framework as visualized in figure 8.1. The conceptualization of cross-cultural competencies made a distinction between relationship and perceptual competencies. Management competencies are categorized by work related technical, intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies. In contrast, the concept of personal development was more associated with general competencies, existing of both behavioral competencies such as flexibility and independence as well as more perceptual related competencies such as self-awareness and expanded world-view.

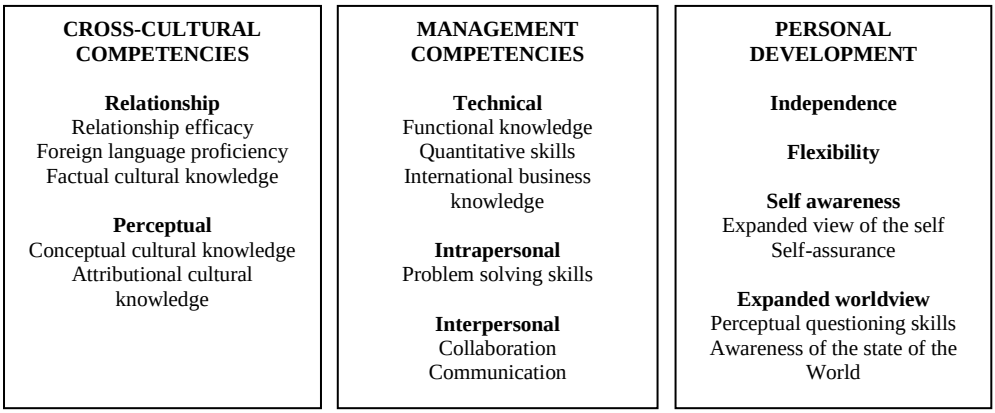


Figure 8.1: Definition of competencies

It might be argued that a competence framework that includes three types of learning (management competencies, cross-cultural competencies and personal development) is too broad to be addressed in a single research project. While recognizing that there are some drawbacks to this approach in terms of reliability and validity, this more holistic approach can also be justified. Some key thinkers suggest that a competitive world often leads people to withdraw into their specialization, which inhibits their capacity to develop a wider palette of competencies with which to meet life and societies more complex problems (Cent, 50 & Greene 2009: 108; Hofstede 2003: 298; Horney 1950[50]). It is important for students, of all disciplines, to strengthen their capacities related to professional, cross-cultural and personal development. This can be difficult since the human brain finds it hard to focus on both task and relationship knowledge simultaneously (Jack et al. 2012). For example, Ruben and Kealy (1979) found that persons who were excessively task-oriented and 'came on strong' in problem-solving in interpersonal and group contexts, tended to be less effective in cross-cultural encounters than less

[50] In line with schema theory, but from a psycho analysis perspective, according to Horney (1950) neurotic needs can be classed into three broad categories: aggressive, withdrawn, and compliant personality types, which move against, away from, or toward the environment. Horney believed neurosis to be a continuous and normal state of human condition to gain some control of a person's external environment. Well-adjusted individuals utilize all three of these strategies, shifting focus depending on internal and external factors.

consistently task-oriented persons. Shifting focus from one to the other can involve significant effort and sometimes provoke anxiety. Hence a holistic framework provides students with a guide as to how to simultaneously better understand their current competencies, and experiment with expansion.

During the research project several contextual factors were uncovered which influence the learning of competencies. The literature review identified individual and contextual factors. Individual factors that significantly influence competence learning of students are motivation and previous travel experience. Relevant contextual factors are length, local interaction, controlled experience and cultural distance. The findings regarding cultural distance were inconclusive and could benefit from further empirical analyses. Hence, I investigated this concept more in-depth in the empirical analysis of the international internship and international research project. These empirical analyses confirmed that cultural distance still is a relevant concept in the context of educational travel experiences, illustrating that despite the globalization of technological and economic systems, still persistent differences in cultures exist (Gray 2005; Inglehart & Baker 2000; Minkov & Hofstede 2011). The concept of cultural distance could be explained with the help of value dimensions put forward by Hofstede, Inglehart, and Malewski, as well as the awareness that the cultural context of an educational travel experience involves different cultural layers which interact with each other and require that students engage in "contextual evaluation" in order to successfully deal with cultural differences (Bennett 1993). From a methodological point of view, the Kogut and Singh index wasn't able to explain differences in competence learning, perhaps also due to a research design that included numerous home and host countries. In contrast, separate indicators such as power distance and individualism were in particular useful as well as a measurement of psychic distance based on Inglehart and Baker dimensions.

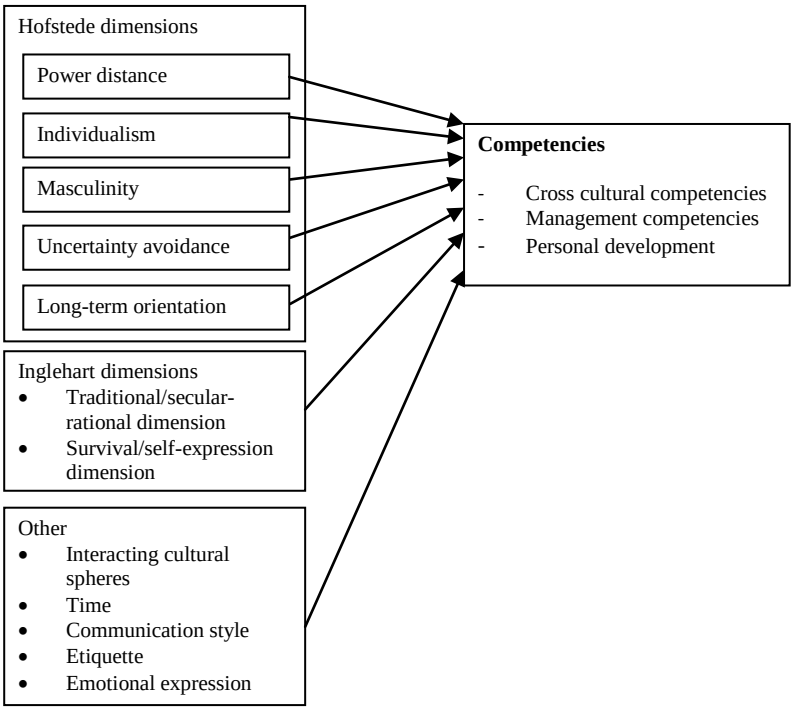


Figure 8.2: The influence of cultural distance on the learning of educational travel competencies

8.2.3 Objective 3: To test and explore the competence framework for the international internship and international research project.

Educational travel is a popular phenomenon nowadays, yet little research has been performed on it. Articles have appeared that investigated the learning effects of study abroad and study tours, but much less research is available on other segments. Recently it has become more important to point out the professional relevance of educational travel experiences and recruiters increasingly look for extracurricular activities that embody some practical work experience. Also, more short-term educational travel experiences are increasingly in demand by students. In this light, both the international internship and international research project are interesting experiences to investigate through primary research. In these empirical studies the concept of cultural distance was also looked into.

A survey among 967 international AIESEC interns around the world showed that that they generally believe to learn significant cross-cultural competencies and made significant personal development in terms of self-awareness, but the benefits were less marked for students travelling to low income countries, from low to high power distance or collectivistic countries. In particular during these transitions it became harder for students to appreciate the host culture and develop relationship competencies, i.e. interact with the locals. This group of students also acquired fewer management competencies on all dimensions: technical, intrapersonal and interpersonal.

A qualitative study among 116 participants in Rotterdam's international research project over the past 8 years addressed the most important competencies that students learn in each category (cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development). Students on the international research project made significant gains in their management competencies. However, these Dutch-based students only moderately improved their cross-cultural competencies. Students who worked in multi-cultural teams or travelled to historically Catholic and communist parts of Europe together with Asia and Africa, fared much better in this respect. Personal development also occurred as students became more self-aware and acquired a more flexible attitude during the stressful teamwork environment, both at home and abroad.

In chapter 7 (Discussion), I used the information gathered so far to get a better overview of how the different types of educational travel contribute to the learning of competencies, as defined by the competence framework. The international research project seems to provide fewer gains in terms of cross-cultural competencies and personal development than studying abroad or an international internship (see figure 8.3). However, the project seems to match well with the demand from students for shorter term and flexible overseas learning experiences which have a relatively high professional value.

	Study abroad	International internship	IRP	Study tour
Cross-cultural competencies	+++	++++	++	+
Management competencies	+++	+++	+++	++
Personal development	+++	++++	+++	+
Overall	**+++**	**++++**	**+++**	**++**

Table 8.3 Overall assessment of educational travel experiences

8.2.4 Objective 4: To provide recommendations to educational institutes regarding the design of learning programs.

In general, both the literature review and my empirical studies confirm that students perceive to learn a significant amount of competencies during educational travel but that this learning is sometimes hampered because of a lack of realistic judgment due to young age, the short duration of the experience, retreat in an expat bubble, or subpar job factors. As a consequence, an improved support structure would help students to get more out of their overseas experience. A first solution is trying to make the main experience more controlled by improving job factors. For an elaborate discussion on this topic see the article by Feldman and Bolino (2000), with the most important recommendations referring to assignment & recruitment procedures, job design and mentoring. Regarding general and cultural adjustment in the host country, a balanced global and local social support structure should be in place consisting of educational institution support, the international student community and local guidance (e.g. buddy or local guest family) (Adelman 1988; Hansel 1988).

Another form of support concerns the design of a learning program which is the focus of this research project. Although it is important to keep in mind that significant learning effects can only take place when the student learns under stress (Hansel 1988), some support is needed to prevent the experience from being mis-educative, meaning arresting or distorting the growth of further experience (Dewey 1938: 25 cited in: Giles & Eyler 1994). Research shows that the learning of cross cultural competencies requires a delicate balance between providing students with support to ‘bridge the gap’ between the schemas of the host home and host country, and letting them deal on their own with the mental tensions that will arise, in order to boost feelings of independence (Hansel 1988). This said, self-actualization learning patterns can only begin when ‘lower-level’ needs, such as

feelings of safety, belonging and esteem are fulfilled (Maslov cited in: Beck & Cable 2002: 52). Hence, more cross-cultural training may well be needed to establish a foundation for students traveling to culturally challenging low-income countries.

However, prior to traveling to the host country, it can sometimes be difficult to make students receptive to training regarding the tacit concepts of cross-cultural competencies and personal development. As a result, reflective learning during and after the experience becomes important for the student to fully understand the experience and benefit from it. There are several benefits of reflective learning. First, reflective learning exercises can help students to make sense of concepts which seem to be rather vague prior to the overseas experience, such as the concept of culture and 'dry' historical phenomena such as communism (Doppen 2010; Forsey et al. 2012). Second, reflective learning can point students to competencies and personal development topics which they tend to overlook such as identifying and analyzing best practices or international business opportunities. Third, reflective learning could help students to more realistically assess their learning of competencies, for example with the help of Bennetts developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. Reflection on management competencies is perhaps in particularly important for foreign interns who worked in organizations with a high power distance. This exercise may compensate for the limited feedback they might have received from colleagues and supervisors.

A reflection assignment can not only benefit the student during his educational travel, but also during the re-entry phase in the home country. This is the time when a student synthesizes his or her experience in the host country into everyday life, reflecting on the similarities and differences with home and any personal changes that may have occurred. There is always a danger that returning students fail to leverage their new insights due to the pressure of a familiar environment and role expectations. Kiely (2005) mentions the 'chameleon complex', which describes the struggle between perspective transformation and action. Students can grapple with the contradictions inherent in trying to act upon their expanded views and the opinions of friends, family and co-workers which can be in conflict or unsupportive (Kiely 2005). Also, there is often not much opportunity for further

reflection when students return, as they plunge straight back into their studies, or a new job, with the added pressures of readjusting to their old environment (Dunkley 2009).

One tool to help students make sense of this chameleon complex is to encourage them to write about their experiences. Interpretation exercises in the re-entry phase can highlight any major mental tensions or dilemmas and their implications for the student's choices about the future (Beck & Cable 2002: 48). The student should be encouraged to articulate these dilemmas, which may be highly personalized: they could be related to cultural values, modernization, career choices or awareness about global issues (such as war, corruption and poverty). Reflection is also likely to be particularly beneficial for students who have traveled from high to low power distance countries and from collective to highly individualistic countries, as their return home entails a transition back towards more traditional and survival related values.

While designing cross-cultural training or reflective learning exercises, teachers need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their audience. Students who are more relationship-orientated are likely to be more receptive to cross-cultural training and reflective learning exercises than others. By contrast, students with a technical background are more task-oriented and more prone to linear thinking which makes them potentially less receptive, and attentive, to, people-oriented and non-linear, ambiguous, information (Bancino & Zevalkink 2007). In order to 'build a bridge' the teacher needs to interpret the teaching materials in a way that appeals to the audience, i.e. presenting the material more in a linear and task-oriented way with examples that are closer to the experience of these students (Bancino & Zevalkink 2007). By adopting such a pedagogical approach, learning becomes an inviting challenge where the schemas of the educational programme differs from the audience schemas but not so much that the students withdraw and stop learning. Learning occurs under conditions of manageable stress, which requires a relatively open and receptive attitude. Only then can we expect to develop students' dynamic competencies. However it does need to be kept in mind that more fundamental changes, related to stable competencies (e.g. personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, and extraversion), are only likely to occur occasionally.

8.3 Limitations

This research is interpretive by nature, which puts some limitations on the validity and reliability of the findings. The main purpose of this research was to come up with a competence framework that can be used by both practitioners for assessments and researchers for further testing. The application of both quantitative and qualitative methods was beneficial as it provided insights into the fit of the empirical data with the model, both in terms of correlations and the definition of variables (Dunkley 2009; Dwyer 2004).

A potential second limitation of the research is that its scope is very broad, both in terms of competencies and the types of educational travel. Usually such research only covers one type of educational travel and one type of competency. This research covered different types of educational travel and three types of competency, which could potentially lead to a less deep, less valid and less reliable discussion. However, the aim was to come up with a holistic competence framework which could be applied to different types of educational travel. This research also makes an important addition to existing frameworks by conceptualizing and analyzing management competencies. The use of two case studies, the international internship and the IRP helped to explore the validity of these newly defined skills and to make the model more robust.

Another limitation of the research is that the learning effects for each case study were assessed for different years, which could undermine the reliability of the results. The study abroad segment was examined through a literature review that included articles published between the 1950s and 2012. The learning effects of the international internship were mainly described with data from 2005 and 2006. This said, the results of the research are consistent with findings from articles published in 2000 and 2011. This consistency also seems to hold true for the influence of cultural distance as the IRP data from 2008-2012 provides a similar picture. Recent expatriate research seems to suggest that this research stands the test of time. For example Froese and Peltokorpi (2011) found that the job satisfaction of western expatriates was dependent on cultural distance while Chen, Kirkman, Kim, Farh and Tangirala (2010) investigated the influence of motivation and cultural distance on expatriate effectiveness.

8.4 Recommendations for further research

The main objective of this research was to present a new competence framework for analyzing the learning effects of educational travel based on the comparison of multiple sources of evidence for triangulation, including previous findings drawn from the literature, different theoretical perspectives, empirical survey data and observations (direct and participant), which allowed the researcher to overcome the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of the other, often enabling the researcher to rule out alternative explanations for findings which factors determine learning effects within an unfamiliar environment. Since this research is interpretive, a logical recommendation for further research would be to test the results in replication studies, making use of a quasi-experimental research design that includes a control group. It would also be interesting to make such research more longitudinal – evaluating students' perceptions several years later when they have some work experience and can reflect from a longer term perspective upon the importance of the different competencies they acquired. If alumni were to reflect on the wide range of cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development that they experienced, this could be used to develop a detailed picture of the importance of specific competencies for a nation's workforce in a global economy. However, time and money constraints might make it difficult to realize such a design. To make up for a lack of longitudinal design, this research triangulated the perspectives of students, alumni and employers.

While doing this research, it became increasingly apparent that research on educational travel has a strong bias towards the perspective of developed countries. This perspective assumes *a priori* the benefits of cross-cultural understanding and personal development. These assumptions are not necessarily shared in developing nations where values are more related to survival than self-expression (Hicks 2003: 269; Inglehart & Baker 2000). Although I tried to provide a balanced analysis of the educational travel sector, it could be that I have some 'blind spots' that have prevented me from doing justice to the situation in developing countries. Hence, it would be in particular interesting to investigate my competence framework in collaboration with researchers or educational institutes from developing countries.

Executive summary

Innovations in transport and information communication technology have led to an ever expanding global perspective and playing field, for both business and citizens. Educational institutes play an important role in preparing students for this new reality. One way of doing this is for students to engage in educational travel experiences. Indeed, over the past two decades increasing numbers of students participated in study abroad programs, study tours, international internships and relatively new short-term programs such as international research projects. Yet, at the same time, globalization seems to have reduced some of the traditional benefits of educational travel, as the challenge of adapting to a different cultural environment has become easier than it has been in the past. Equally, there is a need to reconsider the competencies that educational travel should develop, as there is a noticeable shift towards pointing out the professional relevance of these experiences. The aim of this research was to work towards a competence framework and investigate how the learning of competencies was related to overcoming cultural differences. Based on these findings, implications for learning programs were formulated.

Due to the fragmented research field, the first contribution of this research was to conduct a literature review. The next step was to develop a competence framework for educational travel competencies, which includes both cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development. This framework was based on the literature review, but given the lack of agreement among researchers, I used two additional approaches to strengthen its validity. First, I did research on general theories related to learning and competence development, with a special focus on experiential learning and schema theory. Second, I searched for commonly used competence frameworks in the related fields of management and expatriation. Finally, my research used the empirical studies on the international internship and the international research project to reflect upon the theoretical concepts. The outcomes are shown below.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES	MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
Relationship Relationship efficacy Foreign language proficiency Factual cultural knowledge **Perceptual** Conceptual cultural knowledge Attributional cultural knowledge	**Technical** Functional knowledge Quantitative skills International business knowledge **Intrapersonal** Problem solving skills **Interpersonal** Collaboration Communication	**Independence** **Flexibility** **Self awareness** Expanded view of the self Self-assurance **Expanded worldview** Perceptual questioning skills Awareness of the state of the World

During the research project several contextual factors were uncovered which influence the learning of competencies. Individual factors that significantly influence competence learning of students are motivation and previous travel experiences. Relevant contextual factors are length, local interaction, controlled experience and cultural distance. A research gap was identified with regard to the concept of cultural distance. My empirical analysis confirmed that cultural distance still is a relevant concept in the context of educational travel experiences, illustrating that persistent differences in cultures still exist despite the influence of global technological systems and economic development. The concept of cultural distance could be explained with the help of value dimensions put forward by Hofstede, Inglehart and Malewski, and well as with the help of the awareness of different cultural layers which interact with each other.

Though a popular phenomenon nowadays, very little research has been published on the theme of educational travel. Articles have appeared that investigated the learning effects of study abroad and study tours, but much less research is available on other segments. Recently it has become more important to point out the professional relevance of educational travel experiences and recruiters increasingly look for extracurricular activities that embody some practical work experience. Also, more short-term educational travel experiences are increasingly in demand by students. In this light, I decided to investigate empirically the competence development for the international internship and the international research project, as well as the influence of cultural distance.

A survey among 967 international AIESEC interns around the world showed that that they generally believe to learn significant cross-cultural competencies and made significant progress in terms of personal development, but the benefits were less marked for students travelling to low income countries, from low to high power distance or collectivistic countries. In particular during these transitions it became harder for students to appreciate the host culture and interact with the locals. This group of students also acquired fewer management competencies on all dimensions: technical, intrapersonal and interpersonal.

A qualitative study among 116 participants in Rotterdam's International Research Project over the past 5 years addressed the most important competencies that students learn in each category (cross-cultural competencies, management competencies and personal development). Students made significant gains in their management competencies. However, these Dutch-based students only moderately improved their cross-cultural competencies. Students who worked in multi-cultural teams or travelled to historically Catholic and communist parts of Europe together with Asia and Africa, fared much better in this respect. Personal development also occurred as intensive teamwork forced students to become more self-aware, independent and flexible.

I also used the information gathered through the literature review and empirical analyses to get a better overview of how the different types of educational travel compare to each other in terms of competence development. The international research project seems to provide fewer gains in terms of cross-cultural competencies and personal development than studying abroad or an international internship. However, the project seems to match well with the demand from business students for shorter term international learning experiences which have a relatively high professional value.

In general, both the literature review and my empirical studies confirm that students perceive to learn a significant amount of competencies during educational travel but that this learning is sometimes hampered by a lack of realistic judgment due to young age, the short duration of the experience, retreat in an expat bubble, or subpar job factors. As a consequence, an improved support structure would help students to get more out of their

overseas experience. One form of support concerns the design of a learning program which is the focus of this research project. Research shows that the learning of cross cultural competencies requires a delicate balance between providing students with support to 'bridge the gap' between the schemas of the host home and host country, and letting them deal on their own with the mental tensions that arise, in order to boost feelings of independence. This said, self-actualization learning patterns can only begin when 'lower-level' needs, such as feelings of safety, belonging and esteem are fulfilled. Hence, more cross-cultural training may well be needed to establish a foundation for students traveling to culturally challenging low-income countries.

However, prior to traveling to the host country, it can sometimes be difficult to make students receptive to training regarding the tacit concepts of cross-cultural competencies and personal development. As a result, reflective learning during and after the experience becomes important for the student to fully understand the experience and benefit from it. There are several benefits of reflective learning. First, reflective learning exercises can help students to make sense of concepts which seem to be rather vague prior to the overseas experience, such as the concept of culture and 'dry' historical phenomena such as communism. Second, reflective learning can point students to competencies and personal development topics which they tend to overlook such as identifying and analyzing best practices or international business opportunities. Third, reflective learning could help students to more realistically assess their learning of competencies, for example with the help of Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. Reflection on management competencies is perhaps in particularly important for foreign interns who worked in organizations with a high power distance. This exercise may compensate for the limited feedback they might have received from colleagues and supervisors. A reflection assignment can not only benefit the student during his educational travel, but also during the re-entry phase in the home country. This is the time when a student synthesizes his or her experience in the host country into everyday life, reflecting on the similarities and differences with home and any personal changes that may have occurred. There is always a danger that returning students fail to leverage their new insights due to the pressure of a familiar environment and role expectations.

Acknowledgements

Writing a PhD has been a way for me to write about my own philosophy to life. As such, finishing my research marks the end of a period full of exploring, reflecting, trial and error, as well as the beginning of a new, more hands-on phase. Although many people and life events have contributed to my work over the past years, I would like to thank the following persons in particular. My promoter Prof. dr. Frank Go has inspired me to conduct the research that is reported in this thesis and in doing so, he has provided me with many ideas, from various research disciplines, which constantly tested my own assumptions and intentions. For this I am most grateful. My co-promotor Prof. dr. Peter van Baalen equally challenged me, in a different way and perhaps from an opposing perspective, forcing me to build a stronger foundation for my arguments and frequently asking me what the core of my research was. I also would like to thank the Department of Marketing Management for their support over the past years, which has been a great training ground for improving my research competencies.

Last but not least, I would like to thank three people without whom I could not have pulled off writing a PhD on my own, besides daily chores: Hennie van ‘t Klooster for the financial advice and business guidance; Arnaud van Beek for motivating me every time I got stuck with my research; and Marnix Bouma for being a great friend in difficult times.

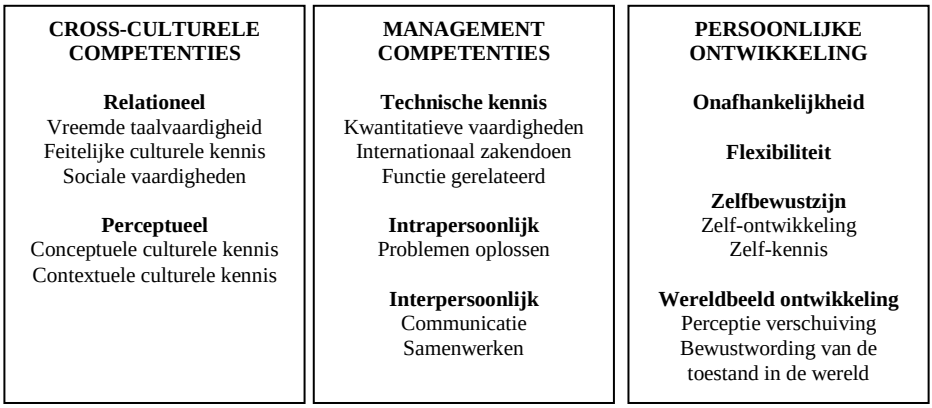
About the Author

For the past ten years, besides doing research for his dissertation on competence development in educational travel, Erik van ‘t Klooster (1979) has been working freelance under the alias of ‘Get up & Go’ in the field of marketing, international research and event & tourism management. His clients include different educational institutes such as the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University and Hotelschool the Hague as well as the student associations AIESEC International and MAEUR. In 2009 he co-founded Placebrandz.com and has consulted, for example, on the place branding strategy for the Maastricht region and the cluster brand strategy for the polymer sector in the province of Overijssel, the Netherlands. Other professional work experiences include working as a performance data analyst for Shell Asset Management Company (SAMCo) and being the project manager for several business and leisure events. In his free time Erik enjoys playing squash, swimming and has an eclectic taste in music, movies, reading and travel. For more information see: www.getupandgo.nl

Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

Innovaties in transport en informatie communicatie technologie hebben ervoor gezorgd dat het blikveld van mensen en bedrijven steeds internationaler is geworden. Eén van de taken van onderwijsinstellingen is om studenten op deze internationale realiteit voor te bereiden, en educatieve reizen spelen hierbij een belangrijke rol. De afgelopen twee decennia zijn steeds meer studenten gaan deelnemen aan uitwisselingsprogramma's, internationale stages en korte programma's zoals studiereizen en 'international research projects'. Echter, tegelijkertijd heeft het proces van globalisering ervoor gezorgd dat de oorspronkelijke voordelen van dergelijke ervaringen zijn afgenomen, bijvoorbeeld omdat het heden ten dage makkelijker is voor reizigers om zich aan te passen aan een vreemde omgeving. Ook is er vanuit het onderwijs de behoefte aan een herziening van de competenties die educatieve reizen zouden moeten voortbrengen, omdat de vraag naar meer professionele competenties is toegenomen. Het doel van dit onderzoek was om toe te werken naar een competentie raamwerk voor educatieve reizen en inzicht te krijgen in hoe het leren van deze competenties gerelateerd is aan overbruggen van culturele afstand. Gebaseerd op deze bevindingen heb ik implicaties voor leerprogramma's geformuleerd.

Omdat het onderzoeksveld zeer gefragmenteerd is, was een eerste bijdrage van dit onderzoek het uitvoeren van een literatuuronderzoek. De volgende stap was om een competentie raamwerk te ontwikkelen, bestaande uit cross-culturele competenties, management competenties en persoonlijke ontwikkeling. Dit raamwerk is gebaseerd op het literatuuronderzoek, maar vanwege het gebrek aan overeenstemming tussen onderzoekers, gebruikte ik twee aanvullende benaderingen om de validiteit van het raamwerk te versterken. Ten eerste heb ik onderzoek gedaan naar algemene theorieën over leren en de ontwikkeling van competenties, met speciale aandacht voor 'experiential learning' en schema theorie. Ten tweede heb ik gezocht naar veelgebruikte modellen in de verwante gebieden van management en 'expatriation'. Tot slot gebruik ik in het tweede deel van mijn proefschrift de empirische studies van de internationale stage en het 'international research project' om te reflecteren op het initiële competentie raamwerk. De uitkomsten van dit onderzoeksproces zijn hieronder gevisualiseerd.



Tijdens het onderzoek werden zowel individuele als contextuele factoren geïdentificeerd die het aanleren van competenties beïnvloeden. Individuele factoren betreffen motivatie en eerdere reiservaringen. Relevante contextuele factoren zijn lengte, lokale interactie, een gecontroleerde omgeving en culturele afstand. Een onderzoeksmogelijkheid werd geïdentificeerd ten aanzien van het concept culturele afstand. Mijn empirische analyses bevestigen dat culturele afstand nog steeds een relevant begrip is in het kader van educatieve reiservaringen. Ze illustreren dat hardnekkige verschillen in culturen nog steeds bestaan, ondanks de invloed van economische ontwikkeling en wereldwijde technologische systemen. Het concept van culturele afstand kan betekenisvol worden toegelicht aan de hand van de waarden dimensies geïntroduceerd door Hofstede, Inglehart en Malewski, evenals een bewustwording van de interactie tussen specifieke culturele contexten.

Ofschoon educatieve reizen populair zijn, is er weinig onderzoek over gepubliceerd. Er zijn artikelen verschenen over de leereffecten van de uitwisselingen in het buitenland en studiereizen, maar er is weinig voorhanden ten aanzien van andere type educatieve reiservaringen. Recent is het belangrijker geworden om inzicht te krijgen in de professionele vaardigheden die educatieve reizen voortbrengen. Ook korte educatieve reiservaringen zijn attractief. In dit licht heb ik empirisch onderzoek verricht naar zowel de internationale stage als het ‘international research project’.

Een enquête onder 967 internationale AIESEC stagiaires over de hele wereld laat zien dat ze van mening zijn veel cross-culturele competenties te leren. Deze competenties zijn lastiger te realiseren voor studenten die reizen naar landen met lage inkomens, van een lage naar hoge machtafstand of meer collectivistische landen. In het bijzonder was het moeilijker voor studenten om de cultuur van het gastland te waarderen en te interacteren met de lokale bevolking. Deze groep studenten verwierf ook minder managementcompetenties op alle dimensies: technisch, intrapersoonlijk en interpersoonlijk.

Een kwalitatief onderzoek onder 116 deelnemers aan het 'international research project' analyseerde de belangrijkste competenties die studenten leren in elke competentie categorie. Deelnemers boeken een aanzienlijke vooruitgang in het ontwikkelen van hun management competenties en in mindere mate hun interculturele competenties. Ten aanzien van dit laatste verging het studenten beter die in multiculturele teams werkten of afreisden naar historisch katholieke en communistische delen van Europa, Azië en Afrika. Persoonlijke ontwikkeling deed zich ook voor in de vorm van zelfbewustwording, onafhankelijkheid en een meer flexibelere houding als gevolg van stressvolle samenwerk omstandigheden.

Ik heb de verzamelde informatie uit de literatuur studie en empirische analyses gebruikt om inzicht te krijgen in hoe verschillende soorten educatieve reizen bijdragen aan het leren van competenties. Het 'international research project' lijkt minder voordelen te bieden op het gebied van cross-culturele competenties en persoonlijke ontwikkeling, dan een uitwisseling of stage in het buitenland. Echter, het project sluit goed aan bij de vraag van studenten voor kortere buitenlandse leerervaringen die een relatief hoge professionele waarde hebben.

In het algemeen bevestigt mijn onderzoek dat studenten een aanzienlijke hoeveelheid competenties leren tijdens educatieve reizen, maar dat het leerproces soms wordt belemmerd door een gebrek aan realistisch beoordelingsvermogen, de korte duur van de ervaring, het terugtrekken in een 'expat bubbel' of matige werkomstandigheden. Een

ondersteunende structuur zou studenten daarom helpen om meer uit hun buitenlandervaring te halen. Mijn aanbevelingen richten zich specifiek op leerprogramma's. Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat het leren van cross-culturele competenties een balans vereist tussen enerzijds het bieden van steun aan studenten om 'de kloof' tussen de schema's van het thuisland en gastland te overbruggen, en anderzijds hen zelfstandig te laten omgaan met de mentale spanningen om een gevoel van onafhankelijkheid te bewerkstelligen. Dit gezegd hebbende kan persoonlijke ontwikkeling alleen gerealiseerd worden als voldaan is aan 'lagere' behoeften, zoals gevoelens van veiligheid, verbondenheid en eigenwaarde. Daarom is cross- culturele training van groot belang voor studenten die reizen naar cultureel uitdagende, laag ontwikkelde landen.

Voorafgaand aan de reis naar het gastland kan het moeilijk zijn om studenten ontvankelijk te maken voor training met betrekking tot moeilijk te vatten concepten op het gebied van interculturele competenties en persoonlijke ontwikkeling. Binnen de pedagogische aanpak wordt dan juist reflectief leren van belang voor studenten, zowel tijdens als na verblijf in het buitenland, om de ervaring ten volle te begrijpen en hier lessen uit te trekken. Reflectief leren biedt verschillende voordelen. Ten eerste kan het studenten helpen concepten te begrijpen die aanvankelijk nogal vaag lijken zoals het concept van cultuur en 'droge' historische fenomenen zoals het communisme. Ten tweede kan reflectief leren studenten wijzen op competenties en dimensies van persoonlijke ontwikkeling die ze neigen over het hoofd te zien zoals het analyseren van 'best practices' of kansen op het gebied van internationaal zaken doen. Ten derde kan reflectief leren studenten helpen om hun eigen leerproces realistischer te beoordelen, bijvoorbeeld met behulp van Bennett's ontwikkelingsmodel van interculturele sensitiviteit. Reflectie op managementcompetenties is wellicht in het bijzonder van belang voor stagiaires die in organisaties werken met een hoge machtsafstand. Een dergelijke oefening compenseert het gebrek aan feedback dat ze van collega's en leidinggevenden ontvangen. Reflectie opdrachten kunnen studenten ook helpen tijdens hun terugkomst in het thuisland. Er is altijd het gevaar dat studenten hun nieuwe inzichten onvoldoende benutten door de druk van de dagelijkse gang van zaken en vertrouwde rolverwachtingen.

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Innovations in transport and information communication technology have led to an ever expanding global perspective and playing field, for both business and citizens. Educational institutes play an important role in preparing students for this new reality. One way of doing this is for students to engage in educational travel experiences. Indeed, over the past two decades increasing numbers of students participated in study abroad programs, study tours, international internships and relatively new short-term programs such as international research projects. Yet, at the same time, globalization seems to have reduced some of the traditional benefits of educational travel, as the challenge of adapting to a different cultural environment has become easier than it has been in the past. Equally, there is a need to reconsider the competencies that educational travel should develop, as there is a noticeable shift towards pointing out the professional relevance of these experiences. The aim of this research is to work towards a competence framework and investigate how the learning of competencies is related to overcoming cultural distance. Based on these findings, implications for learning programs are formulated.

Design & layout: B&T Ontwerp en advies (www.b-en-t.nl) Print: Haveka (www.haveka.nl)

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