Multicultural Mixing Bowl: Promoting Intercultural Communication at Stellenbosch University

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• Public University
• Enrolment of 30 150 students
• 3900 International Students from more than 100 countries
• Multicultural student population
• Salad bowl?
Stellenbosch University

• Institutional Intent and Strategy 2013-2018

Highlights our vision that “the Stellenbosch experience delivers thought leaders that have a better insight into world issues, an innovative unlocking of creative abilities to solve problems, and an encouragement of meaningful action to serve society through knowledge. This all happens in a context of transforming SU to be future fit and globally competitive”
What does this mean?

• We cannot underestimate the international cultural resource we have available on our campus

• We need to educate our students about global issues such as peace and reconciliation, migration, the environment, inequality and poverty and enabling them to engage with their multicultural peers in order to find creative solutions for challenges facing the world, Africa, South Africa and local communities.
Internationalization @ Home

• What is it & how do we see it?

• What we do?
  • Global Citizenship
  • Integration Activities
  • International Food Evening
  • Matie Buddies
  • Symposium on International Higher Education
  • World Café – International Week
Why did we start Intercultural Communication Initiative (ICC)?

• Since 2008 – Langa/Gugs tours
• No debriefing & no ways to measure impact
• Too much of a tourist focus
• How can we make this more sustainable?
• We needed more theoretical and reflective approach
Development of ICC

• Started with debriefings after tours
• Debriefing – shocked/surprised at how students actually experienced the tours
• We needed to make it more sustainable and with bigger impact
• Problem – Funding...
• We received funding from Rector for development
• Integration is focus point
ICC – Goals

• South African and international students
• Socially and historically enlightening experience
• Interactive cultural tours
• **The goals:** a broader, more inclusive conception of the Stellenbosch University community, its involvement, and relationship to historically disadvantaged communities; tolerance, integration, and solidarity on campus amongst students of all cultural, socio-economic, and national backgrounds and acquiring intercultural communication skills.
ICC – Objectives

• To improve knowledge of historically disadvantaged communities in the Cape
• To promote partnerships between the University and these communities
• To encourage social responsiveness to communities outside of the immediate Stellenbosch locality
• To improve knowledge of diverse groups on campus
• To initiate dialogue between University students of different social backgrounds
• To foster interaction between all varieties of students at Stellenbosch University
How do we aim to do this?

• Selection
• 9 contact sessions
• Theoretical foundation
• Students an opportunity to engage, question, understand and reflect on their experiences despite cultural differences (and sometimes even because of them), about global issues such as reconciliation, human rights, inequality and poverty
• Short presentation
Theoretical Background

- Cultural self-awareness
- Notion of culture as iceberg
- Conceptual and Operational Framework of UNESCO on intercultural competences
- Intercultural Competence Tree
The Intercultural Competences Tree, a visual conceptualization
Theoretical Background

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

-Ubuntu

-Deardorff (2013:24)
Exposure Visits

• 4 Site Visits: Langa/Gugulethu, Kayamandi, Solms Delta and Bo-Kaap
• Social Interaction - initiate dialogue & improve knowledge
• Historical tour - first-hand experience with the community
• Raising awareness of the community and local initiatives
• Emphasis upon dialogue and developmental opportunities
• Role of Food
Langa/Gugulethu

History:

• Planned townships in 1920’s
• Strictly controlled and monitored
• The townships brought together black residents from different tribal backgrounds
Langa/Gugulethu

• Walking tour – Ubizo Tours
  • Childhood Home of Local guide & Owner
  • Harlem avenue
  • St Anthony Catholic Church
  • Xhosa Initiation Ritual site
  • Langa Sports Grounds
  • Swimming Pool
  • Guga S’theba Cultural Centre
  • Pass Office
  • Smileys
Langa/Gugulethu

- Housing
  - Old Langa
  - Migrant Housing
  - Government Housing
  - Beverly Hills of Langa
  - N2 Gateway Project
  - Shacks

- Gugulethu
  - Gugulethu Seven
  - Amy Biehl
  - Mzoli’s Meat
Langa/Gugulethu
Kayamandi

• Second oldest township in Western Cape
• Sharp contrast to the Langa/Gugs - re-enforces stereotypes
• Situated on the periphery of Stellenbosch
• First residents -1940 - immigrants from the Eastern Cape.
• 30 000+ residents on 1km²
• Population growth is disproportionate to the increase in land area
Kayamandi

- Mayor issues: housing, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, alcoholism, substance abuse, illiteracy, malnutrition, crime and a high frequency of one parent households
- Unemployment rate = 40%
- Average Household income = R1000
- Sport and religion plays an important role – 50 church groups & 20 soccer teams
- Despite the obvious challenges, a feeling of hopefulness is palpable in the community - even though the residents live in extreme poverty, you are greeted with a smile and curious glances wherever you walk
- Amazink
Kayamandi
Solms Delta

• Sharp contrast to the first two excursions
• Chose site - story of reconciliation
• The history of the farm goes back much further than that of the townships, to round about 1690.
• The farm has been part of so many phases of South African history, including the slave history and Apartheid, both of which had left significant scars on the lives of the workers who also live on the farm.
Solms Delta

• New Chapter (Since 2005)
• Marc Solms
• Changed the narrative
• Established a trust
  • Homes
  • 1/3 Equity in Profits
  • Living Conditions
  • Crèche
  • Primary school, high school & Tertiary Education
• Harvest festival
Solms Delta

- Museum van de Caab
  - 200 stone name plaques

- “What makes this [...] museum unique is the real voices of individual people, through which the farm’s story is told. These individual voices facilitate a personal connection between the present and the past, which could not be established through abstract facts and figures. Both the historical and the archaeological traces of the people who lived on the farm are part of the displays and these elements embody the major themes of the Museum. However, the story of Delta farm cannot stand on its own. Its significance lies in its relationship to greater events and historical processes that shaped the human fabric of the Drakenstein Valley, and on a broader scale, South African society as a whole”
Solms Delta

• Music van de Caab Centre
• Fyndraai Restaurant
• Visit highlights the way in which individuals and communities can be the change
• Narrative – a blueprint for future stories of an African farm
Bo-Kaap

• First-hand account of life, food and culture of the Cape Malay people
• The Bo-Kaap (or the Cape Malay Quarter) is situated along the slopes of Signal Hill
• Its history is deeply entangled with the segregation of Apartheid
• Bo-Kaap stretches back to the 1760’s
• Group Areas Act of 1950 - exclusive home of the Cape Muslims
• People from all other religions and ethnicities were forced to leave. Today this area is still of historic and cultural significance
Bo-Kaap

- Walking Tour - Local woman who shares her roots with us
- Oldest mosque
- Confrontation at mosque – Good exercise in ICC
Bo-Kaap

• Atlas Spices
• Through food and cooking, participants took a voyage through her culture armed with wooden spoons
• Participants were taught how to make some of the most famous dishes such as curry, samosas & roti’s from scratch
Bo-Kaap

- Noteworthy observations - eating with their hands
- In some cases it was necessary to disregard your own cultural norms in order to adhere to the norms of another culture.
Bo-Kaap
Poverty as Tourism

- Surprised about the level of poverty the people are trapped in
- Poverty as a tourist attraction
- One of the students shared the following opinion:
  Especially the guided tours through some townships changed the view on my own life a lot. How can it be, that I am born into a world full of material wealth and these people are forced to live with so little? Nevertheless, I learned that a township is not a place of desperation. Through a strong community, the people within a township seem to live a happy life. But is that impression out of a guided tour for tourists’ reality?
Poverty as Tourism

- Cultural voyeurism
- Inherent inclination from people or communities to portray themselves as “the other”
- Poverty as a currency and suffering as an income generator
- Approaching the initiative dialectically
- Ethical obligation
- Engage in a partnership with the communities, setting up activities that are mutually beneficial
- Activities we deem as emancipating may paradoxically have the opposite effect
- A conscious choice for social entrepreneurship
- Stepping stones rather than stumbling blocks
Reflection

• Feedback from the participants – the proof is in the pudding as they say!
• Which aspect of the initiative surprised them most – predominately as a way to determine shifts in their perceptions.
• Broke down the stereotypes they had about the townships.
• Warned about visiting places like the townships, but saw the initiative as a way of getting first-hand experience and making their own observations.
• They regarded the excursions as interactive and engaging and enjoyed learning from each other.
• One of the prevailing insights was the fact that even people from the same country may have vastly different values and beliefs and may experience the same excursions in different ways.
Reflection

“I really enjoyed the in-depth discussions afterwards during the feedback rounds. The atmosphere was really open and it was surprising to me how the same situation was experienced so differently by the course participants. I also expected more resistance against visitors from the communities we visited, which was gladly not the case...I learned through the program to recognize better how expectations or beliefs (we are potentially not even aware of) shape our cultural interpretation of situations and other people. It is very important to always stay open and allow to update and change beliefs and cultural expectations...”
Reflection

“In a future context, the intercultural communication skills I learned during this initiative will help in the work environment - respecting and understanding each other better. In my personal life, I sincerely hope to diversify my circle of friends in South Africa more. I always had friends from many different nations, but for some reason it is more challenging in South Africa to connect long term with peers who have a different cultural background. I hope that with time and effort, we (as South African society as a whole) will naturally grow more together and share life experiences.”
Where to from here?

- For first Semester no charge
- Thereafter R500 commitment fee
- Numbers grown – 38 participants
- Want to register as co-curricular short course in 2017
- Evaluation methods
- ICC is a lifelong process
- Critical reflection
Q & A
Thank you

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