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The Impact of Exposure to Diversity in the International University Environment and the Development of Intercultural Competence in Students / Jeanine Gegersen-Hermans

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Abstract

The study challenges the assumption prevalent in Higher Education that exposure to diversity through an international experience on campus leads to intercultural competence. Building on a tentative Extended Contact Hypothesis Theory model this case study uses a pre-post observational design to measure the level of intercultural competence, using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). The results demonstrate that first year master students in this study do not progress in the level of intercultural competence whilst on campus; regardless whether they progress from an undergraduate program or are new to the university; despite the fact that they study in an internationalized university environment and are satisfied with the cross-cultural cooperation and are in frequent contact. The social interactions per se did not lead to an increase of intercultural competence. Although

09.2.2026

respondents in the Denial stage with only a superficial awareness of cultural difference benefit from the presence of somewhat more advanced levels of intercultural competence on campus, the impetus to progress to more inclusive global mindsets seems to be lacking. Respondents substantially overestimated their own level of intercultural competence. The study highlights the need for more in-depth research into the actual development process and the connection with the curriculum; less reliance on self-reports but combining qualitative assessment methods with quantitative measurement of intercultural competence; and the consideration of the impact of the social environment and the organizational capability to deliver on intercultural competence development..(HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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