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# The Benefits and Challenges of Study-Related Global Mobility Programmes in Teacher Education: A Case Study

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*Adventure is something you seek for pleasure, or even for profit, like a gold rush or invading a country [...] but experience is what really happens to you in the long run; the truth that finally overtakes you. Katherine Anne Porter*

## Introduction

We live in a world that is constantly "moving closer together". Thanks to numerous means of transportation and modern technology, spatial distance can be overcome faster than before. People are mobile, and in one moment they are here and in the next, already there. Travel and longer stays abroad simply belong in the curriculum vitae and are a course of matter. This has been the case for some years now with the cross-border mobility of students, and it gains increasing popularity, independent of the course of studies and subject area. This mobility now also includes teacher education, in which study-related stays abroad are also increasingly being undertaken but still do not seem to be a point of emphasis.

Study-related stays abroad mainly pursue two goals. From the perspective of the higher education institutions, international student mobility promises to contribute to the internationalization of the institutions. From an individual perspective, the focus is on personal development (cf. Leutwyler 2014, 106) among studies. A closer look at the benefits on the individual level suggest that stays abroad can contribute to academic learning, career opportunities and personal development. Increased intercultural knowledge and a broader global perspective are expected. Importance is attached to the development of personal and social skills, such as self-efficacy, flexibility, openness, self-confidence, the ability to self-reflect and intercultural competence. These knowledge, skills and attitudes are of great importance in today's multicultural society and which have become indispensable in everyday life as well as at the workplace.

The earlier mentioned metaphor of moving together applies to the world, every country and the individuals living in it who are part of a society in which they encounter each other. These encounters take place both within and between cultures. As creators of these encounters, one must be aware that each person is shaped by his or her previous experiences, including their culture, and what competences have been bestowed upon them along the way. This surmounts to the ongoing life story. In the process of creating an encounter in which people have different stories, it can lead to complications depending on the design (Gestaltung) of this encounter. At the same time, misunderstandings or complete helplessness can also appear because one does not understand the words and gestures or motives and attitudes of the other individual or group. In the worst case, this leads to stereotyping, discrimination or forms of racism. For this reason, encounters require the "ability to understand one another across and beyond all types of cultural barriers" (Huber 2014, 7). This includes certain attitudes, skills and knowledge, all of which are embodied in the concept of intercultural competence.

The world that continues to grow together also has an influence on the educational system and schools of societies. Teaching and learning in a globalized classroom is the contemporary challenge facing teachers. In Europe and Germany, the political level is increasingly ensuring that a European or international dimension is anchored in policies and educational plans. For this reason, students and teachers, as actors in school and teaching development, should work on their own professionalism (cf. Holzbrecher & Over 2015, 9).

The central tasks and competences of teachers in Germany include teaching, educating, diagnosing, assessing and evaluating. In addition, knowledge, action routines and forms of reflection for appropriate action are expected. Teachers are supposed to have solutions for meeting their students' various needs in a social, motivational and cognitive manner which that is in constant flow. In turn, demands are also made on the teacher personality. Teachers must have social skills, empathy, commitment, patience and confidence, open-mindedness and frustration tolerance (cf. Tehrart 200, 48 ff). In the heterogenic and intercultural classroom, these demands take on a completely different dimension.

In summary, three social developments can be stated for this thesis: First, the importance of competences, particularly intercultural competence, has increased in the previous years, both in the professional and private sphere. Second, study-related stays abroad are no longer a rarity among students of all subjects, and their added value in terms of personal and professional development is recognized. Third, teachers are required to possess a range of knowledge and skills, including effective and appropriate approaches to diversity.

Consequently, the question arises as to how these three aspects relate to each other, the focal point of this thesis. To begin, the first chapter explores the historical and quantitative developments of global student mobility abroad and considers the two drivers of this mobility, globalization and internationalization. Chapter two is intended to shed light on what is meant by study-related stays abroad by distinguishing it from other forms of mobility. Next, the motives and assumed outcomes on institutional and personal levels will be examined. Student mobility has increased in the last decades and such a stay seems to be welcome in curricula vitae or even expected by employers. Nevertheless, fewer than half of all students in Germany are not mobile. Possible reasons for this shall be mentioned.

Study-related stays abroad seem to be a valuable source for attaining personal and academic grandeur. This is since widely recognized, and the success or failure of global student mobility is no longer measured solely by the sheer numbers of outgoing students

of a higher education institution. In the meantime, research in Europe and the United States of America has focused on the assumed outcomes and the quality of stays abroad. Chapter four describes the current state of the art and what factors influence whether a stay abroad is successful or not.

In everyday conversation, a stay abroad is presented flatly as positive. All too often, only the issue of budgeting is presented as an obstacle. However, students confronted with the complex undertaking of a stay abroad can face far more and greater challenges. Chapter five is intended to take a more in-depth look at these.

Intercultural competence has become essential in the 21st century, and the claim is made that study-related stays abroad can contribute to the development of this sought-after set of skills. Chapter six deals with the complex construct of intercultural competences. This term is used almost liberally and thus also receives the status as a fashion or buzz word which compromises its meaning. Everyone talks about it, but very few know what it really means. However, it is of great importance and avoiding ambiguity is a prerequisite for a better and common understanding of what is meant.

In order to forge a bridge, chapter seven examines the relevance of study-related stays abroad in teacher training based on the previous chapters and with a specific view to the profession of the teacher. The aspects dealt with will then ultimately be summarized in chapter eight.

The study contributes to the existing research on study abroad learning outcomes by eliciting students' own descriptions of significant learning experiences over time. Six teacher students who had different stays abroad were interviewed after their abroad experience.

Based on the previous research, a study is presented in chapter nine. Five teacher training students from the University of Education Karlsruhe in Germany, each having completed a stay abroad, were asked in the form of one-to-one post interviews to subjectively evaluate their experiences. In the process, attention was paid to possible increases in learning, but also to difficult situations. Since this was a qualitative study, no measuring instrument was used to that quantified intercultural competence, competences in general or knowledge. Nevertheless, special attention was paid to whether the statements of the interviewees had an intercultural dimension.

The thesis closes by bringing together the findings from literature with those of the carried-out research. An outlook will be given on what should be considered in the future with regard to study-related global mobility.

## **1 Background and context**

As Boye (2016, 18) states, “Student mobility is on the rise!” Over the past decades, the number of students who go abroad during their studies has increased worldwide, with no exception for Germany. This trend is not only a reflection of the generally increasing mobility due to our globalized society, but also a measure of higher education policy for the internationalization of institutions, knowledge and society (cf. Teichler 2007, 13). In Germany, international student mobility began to increase in the 1970s. Through established funding programs, it has also become possible for students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds to spend time abroad during their studies. The following two chapters intend to place the phenomenon of study-related stays abroad into a broader context with the support of historical and quantitative developments.

### **1.1 Globalization and internationalization – rationales guiding mobility**

There is no doubt that the world is growing together. A mutual interconnectedness can be observed in almost all areas of life. Society, commerce and education, which were defined within the context of nation-states, are now increasingly seen as part of a global-community (cf. Kauffmann et al. 1992, 1). “Products from all parts of the world are used daily by people from the most developed to the least developed nations” (ibid.). This interweaving is often referred to as the highly discussed concept of globalization. From the point of view of sociology, globalization is the experience of everyday actions in the various dimensions of economy, information, ecology, technology, transcultural conflicts and civil societies which are becoming boundless, and thus it is both familiar and elusive. As such, globalization has the power to fundamentally change everyday life and forces everyone to adapt and respond in some way (cf. Beck 1997, 44).

The intensity of globalization can be traced to advancements in everyday networking capabilities, especially through the internet. This is made visible in increased economic and transport possibilities and give way to a new scope of cross-border interaction relations, i.e. economic, informational, cultural and political exchange. In short, globalization is not only a process that increasingly links politics and economy, but it also means social and intercultural coalescence and rapid, sometimes erratic, processes of change that can evade anticipation. This has implications for all education systems. Educational offers in institutions must now be aligned in such a way that individuals can acquire the social, interactive and cognitive knowledge and skills necessary to cope with the demands and opportunities of living and working in a constantly changing, digitalized and multicultural world. (cf. Vereinigung der Bayerischen Wirtschaft 2017, 25 ff.).



In today's global society, the higher education institution has a double role to play. As knowledge-generating organizations, they have influence on shaping the "knowledge society", and on the other hand, they must meet the demands of change (cf. Hahn 2004, 13). Institutions of higher education are striving to address this need, and one response is internationalization. According to Knight (2012, 22), internationalization is "the process of integrating international, intercultural and global dimensions into the goals, primary functions and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels." In this definition, internationalization is seen as a means to an end and not an end in itself. However, Knight (2012, 22) also points out that some ends are unexpected and therefore worrisome, such as rankings, profit, soft power, competitiveness and commercialization.

At the European level, internationalization of higher education is coming to the focus as part of the Bologna States' Mobility Strategy 2020. Moreover, international relations and exchanges between universities have been supported with funding programs, such as Erasmus+, by the European Union for decades. Thus, the European Education Area and internationalization at this level are of particular importance (cf. Wernisch, 2017, 8; European Commission 2006). In Germany, internationalization is seen as a central element for an innovative profile in higher education (cf. Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz 2013, 2), and the federal and state science ministers have adopted a strategy for the internationalization of German higher education institutions with common mobility goals and approaches to internationalization (cf. BMBF 2013). The importance of internationalization is furthermore emphasized by the Conference of German Rectors' of Higher Education (HRK) by describing internationalization as a "core task of higher education development" (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz 2012, 3). This process is therefore a major concern at national, political and institutional level and can be realized by several elements or practices.

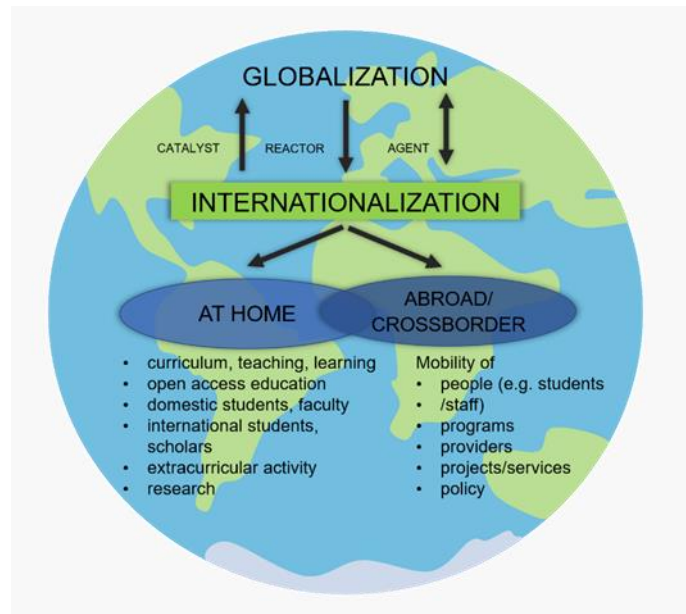


Figure 1: Two pillars of internationalization: At home and cross-border adapted from Knight (2012)

To categorize these elements, Knight (2012, 20) divides internationalization into two interdependent pillars, “at home education” and “abroad education” (Knight 2012, 20). Figure 1 shows different possibilities of the two pillars through which internationalization at higher education institutions might be useful. Nonetheless, Knight (2012, 23) notes that “for the majority of institutions, and in fact countries, the number of domestic students who have some kind of study-abroad or international research or field experience is frustratingly low.” In contrast, the situation is different with cross-border internationalization. The crucial factor here is, above all, student mobility which is part of the mobility of people. It is of such high priority that it is often recognized as “the face of internationalization” and thus the terms sometimes are even mistakenly used interchangeably (Knight 2012, p. 21).

As Figure 1 shows, globalization and internationalization are interrelated. All elements are both cause and reaction—catalyst and reactor. Similar complex interplays need to be considered when looking at study-related stays abroad as part of the internationalization of higher education institutions. As a professionally oriented field of study, teacher education forms a subsector of higher education as a whole and is thus influenced by developments in this field (Wernisch 2016, 15).

When looking at a phenomenon or a process, the different factors which have reciprocal relationships need to be considered from a multilevel perspective. Generally, there are three different levels. A distinction can be made between the macro, or context level (policy), the meso, or organization level (institutions) and the micro, or individual level (students) (cf. Wernisch 2016, 22). Since a detailed consideration of all three levels would

go beyond the scope of this work, only the microlevel, i.e. students who are studying to become teachers, will be in the foreground. However, as already mentioned, all levels remain in an interdependent relationship and sometimes no clear separation can be drawn for the identification of drivers and barriers which may be responsible for positive outcomes or challenges at the other levels. These areas must at some point be partly included. For this reason, leading processes for study-related stays abroad were explained in advance to put this phenomenon in the overall picture.

## **1.2 Historical and quantitative developments**

For the formation of scholars and exchange of ideas, academic mobility was a matter of interest among universities ever since the middle ages (cf. Teichler 1996, 153; Berg 2014, 33). Thus, this idea not a new trend or phenomenon. Nowadays, a major part of the globally mobile students moves to another country to obtain a degree. This is often the case for students of developing, low-income countries who go abroad to more industrialized countries.

In contrast, temporary international mobility for students of more advanced countries is more common. They rather spend only a certain period of time in another western foreign country (cf. mapping global mobility volume I). However, until the 1970s, international activities were rather unorganized. The two superpowers of the Cold War, the United States (US) and the USSR, functionalized student mobility to expand their power. Student mobility from the South to the North (vertical mobility), development cooperation and technical support served to expand the sphere of influence in a political and economic sense (cf. Rotter 2005, 12).

The Nord-Nord-mobility (horizontal mobility) and the popularity of spending part of one's degree abroad arose shortly after World War II in the US. Undergraduates, in general, received administrative and academic support to spend a "junior year abroad", mostly in Europe, and in this sense became mobile (cf. Teichler 1996, 153). Here lies the distinction between vertical and horizontal student mobility. In the former case, students move from a country with less academic and economic advantages to study in a more favorable country and institution to enhance the quality of their education and competences. In the latter case, the mobility happens between countries and institutions which have a similar academic and economic level. "[L]earning from valuable contrasts is the aim, rather than a leap upwards" (Teichler 2015, 17) is why most horizontally mobile students stay temporarily in the other country while vertically oriented students stay abroad for the whole study course (ibid.).

At the end of the 1970s in Europe, the concept of temporary student mobility was one of the first activities of the European Commission agenda once higher education became part of it. Before this, the Commission, founded in the 1950s to promote economic cooperation, only emphasized vocational training and the transition from education to employment. Joint Study Programs were established and provided with institutional support for departments exchanging students (cf. Teichler 1996, 153).

Also, international mobility amongst students became a democratic characteristic. International mobility was no longer thought to be open to only students whose parents have the financial capacity. The support of Western European politicians made a stay abroad interesting for a broader mass of students and, with the support of the state, also more accessible. The creation of scholarship programs, the expansion of funding opportunities under the BAföG<sup>1</sup> and the creation of an international framework facilitated both individual and organized mobility. Students began to see stays abroad as a "self-evident legal right" and "in public the value of studying abroad is now just as undisputed as the right for women to vote or the value of a low-fat diet" (Meyer-Kalkus n.d., 504). In 1987, based on the idea of the Joint Study Program, the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (Erasmus) was launched (cf. Rotter 2005, 22; Teichler 1996, 154), which is nowadays referred to as the Community's flagship (cf. European Commission 2006, 21).

Over time the number of mobile students increased. According to UNESCO<sup>2</sup>, in the year 2015 around 4.7 million students were enrolled outside their home country, which corresponds to an increase of approximately 6% compared to the previous year. By contrast, things seem to be changing only slowly with regard to the host countries and countries of origin, i.e. the direction of mobility. The leading host regions are the US as "key host country for international students", followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, France and Germany. Among the regions of origin, Asia and the Pacific represent by far the largest share of mobile students, followed by Western Europe and North Africa and the Middle East. (cf. DAAD & DZHW 2018, 17 ff.)

For Germany, students are particularly interested in temporary study-related stays in Western European countries, with Great Britain, France and Spain among the top (cf. DAAD & DZHW 2018, 94). Nonetheless, it seems that more and more efforts are being made to encourage students to also consider "non-traditional locations" such as Asia,

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<sup>1</sup> State support for the education of pupils and students in Germany is regulated by BAföG, Federal Education and Training Support Act (*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*). The abbreviation BAföG is also colloquially used to refer to the funding resulting from the law.)

<sup>2</sup> The UNESCO statistics provide an interactive tool which shows the numbers and flows of mobile students according to their country of origin: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow> (accessed Aug 11, 2018).

Africa and Latin America (cf. Rumbley & Altbach, 2016, 7). What has also risen are the formal opportunities for students in higher education to go abroad. Programs have increasingly been fostered at both national and super-national level (cf. Dehmel, Li & Sloane 2011, 12), and the overall possibilities have expanded (see chapter 3.1). The internationalization of higher education is a driving factor for international student mobility (ibid.).

Many countries have set targets regarding the numbers of incoming and outgoing international students. European countries orientate their efforts based on the “Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): Mobility for Better Learning”. The Leuven Communiqué formulated a mobility target that at least 20% of graduates of the EHEA should have completed a study or internship abroad by 2020 (cf. Leuven Communiqué 2009, 4). As described in the further specification of this mobility objective, this includes study visits and work placements abroad that last at least three months or end in the acquisition of 15 ECTS points (cf. Council of the European Union 2011). With reference to the mobility strategy 2020 of the Bologna states, the Joint Science Conference of the Federal Government and the federal states decided in 2013 on a strategy for the internationalization of higher education institutions in Germany which defines, among other things, the German mobility targets. Even though 20% of graduates at German higher education institutions had a study-related stay abroad, the GWK (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz) still strive to exceed the Europe-wide target. It is seen as a realistic goal that by 2020, half of all graduates (50% target ratio) gain experience abroad and one third (33% target ratio) can prove that they have spent at least three months abroad or gained 15 ECTS points (cf. Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz 2013, 6 ff.).

The results of the fifth survey of German students on study-related mobility abroad (cf. Woisch & Willige 2015) provide information on the status of target achievement. Across all types of degree, 35% of students in higher semesters have at least one stay abroad. By contrast, the results in relation to the 33% target ratio are closer to the target value. Overall, the mobility rate for students in higher semesters that meet the criteria is 29%. A further 6% of students in higher semesters were mobile abroad, but the stays they completed did not meet the criteria of the target rate, as they lasted less than three months and less than 15 ECTS points were earned.

The goals set for Germany have not yet been achieved, but census data suggest a consistent rise in numbers. Figure 1 shows an increase from the year 1991 of 41,800 to 137,700 in 2015 (cf. DAAD & DZHW 2018, 67).

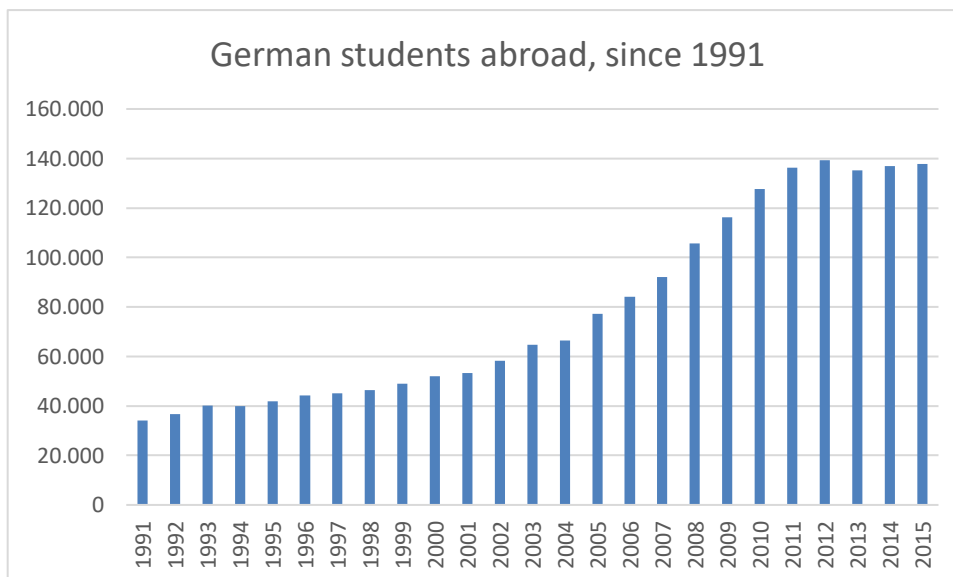


Figure 2: German students abroad (cf. DAAD & DZHW 2018, 67)<sup>3</sup>

The increase in the number of mobile German students is not surprising in view of the above-mentioned factors and changes; moreover, it seems that a stay abroad during one's studies, which used to be something unusual in one's curriculum vitae, has today almost become normal (cf. Ehrenreich 2008, 30). On the other hand, the 50% ratio which has not been reached yet, shows that what is possible for some is not for others. For this reason, it needs to be clarified what exactly students expect from a stay abroad or what obstacles prevent non-mobile students from going abroad.

<sup>3</sup> The data are primarily from the Federal Statistical Office. The decrease between 2012 and 2013 is primarily due to a change in student statistics in the two most important host countries for German students, Austria and the Netherlands (cf. DAAD & DZHW 2018, 67).

## **2 Study-related stays abroad**

The number of students going abroad each year is growing and so does the variety of programs and options for student mobility (cf. Savicki 2008, xiii). In order to support students in planning and implementing stays abroad, various exchange and funding programs are available to students. This may include transnational cooperation relations and agreements between higher education institutions and offers by travel agencies or other facilitators, all of which might differ in level, format and focus. The following chapter provides an overview of the numerous options. It will be clarified how stays abroad differ and how they can be distinguished from other forms of mobility.

Policies, institutions and individuals have different reasons why student mobility is important and study-related stays abroad should be undertaken. Motives, desired goals and assumed outcomes will be dealt with. But even if international student mobility seems promising and enjoys great popularity, more than half of the students enrolled in Germany are not mobile. Furthermore, voices are sometimes raised that stays abroad do not live up to their promises. What is behind this state of the matter and the criticism surrounding it is explored.

### **2.1 Forms of student mobility**

The European mobility strategy (“Mobility for better learning”) distinguishes between two terms, “degree mobility” and “credit mobility”. “Degree mobility” includes all study-related stays with the aim of graduating abroad. The term “credit mobility” refers to (short-term) study-related stays abroad that last at least three months and /or in which 15 ECTS or more are gained. Both types of stays abroad can take place in one of the three stages of the three-cycle system defined by the Bologna Process.

Programs of higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), usually referred to as three-cycle system are offered at three levels: undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies. For each cycle, a certain number of credit points are assigned for which accomplishment leads to a certain qualification. Upon completing the first cycle, which requires 180 to 240 credit points, a bachelor’s degree is awarded. The second cycle requires 90 to 120 credit points to gain a master’s degree. During the third cycle, one may obtain a doctorate, usually referred to as PhD and is not measured in ECTS but stipulates 3 to 4 years of independent research (cf. Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat).

Besides temporary study abroad, credit mobility also includes visits for placements, language courses, study tours, project work and summer schools (cf. Bucharest Ministerial Conference 2012, 1 ff.). Beyond transferring study credits back home, it is of

course also intended that students develop and gain competences; however, this description primarily serves for distinguishing stays abroad for data collection and quality assurance. That is why a more detailed description is not given and the focus is on obtaining credits and degrees. Yet this is not sufficient in order to get the broader picture of student mobility in its multiple formats.

Dehmel, Li & Sloane (2011, 12) list an exemplary enumeration: "The variety of student mobility programs ranges from academic stays to language courses, internships and study trips to foreign higher education institutions (excursions, summer courses, research stays, etc.)". Drawn upon the definition of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), furthermore, they distinguish between short-term and long-term stays abroad. Short-term refers to stays lasting from one week to 3-4 months or one semester. Long-term refers to stays of a period longer than 6 months (cf. Dehmel, Li & Sloane 2011, 34).

Weichbrodt (2014, 6 ff.) goes further and describes stays abroad which are undertaken within the framework of studies as "education-related stays abroad" or as "educational stays abroad" according to certain criteria. He distinguishes education-related stays abroad from other forms of stays abroad such as general tourism or other short-term programs. Weichbrodt (2014, 6) lists six formats of education-related stays abroad: study abroad, student exchange, internship abroad, voluntary service, au pair stay and long-term travel. These can be distinguished from other forms of mobility by four categories: duration, age, type of travel and educational purpose. However, the transitions are partially fluid.

In terms of duration, most stays abroad are planned for a longer period of time. However, the end point, marking a return to the country of origin, is often determined from the outset. This also allows a distinction to be made from emigration. In general, an education-related stay abroad takes place in adolescence or young adulthood. Most education-related stays abroad are individual trips and it is rather rare to travel in a family relationship or in a larger group. All these formats are directly or indirectly related to education. In the case of study visits, this can be clearly recognized, while there is an indirect reference in the case of the other formats. Voluntary services, au-pair stays, long-term travel and internships often include components such as global and social learning, improving or learning a foreign language, developing one's personality and improving one's career prospects. According to Weichbrodt (2014), the type of mobility described above is thus defined as follows:

Educational stays abroad are longer but temporary stays in countries other than the country of origin, most of which are undertaken as individual trips in adolescence or young adulthood and at least partly have a direct or indirect educational purpose (formal education, language acquisition, global/social learning, personal development or professional orientation and qualification (Weichbrodt 2014, 7).



In higher education there are different types of mobility, such as inter-institutional, intra-national (cf. Wernisch 2016, 14), content, occupational or social (cf. Dräger et al. n.d, 3). However, in this context mobility is meant in the sense of actually crossing borders, which in literature is often referred to as either international, transnational, global or cross-border mobility.

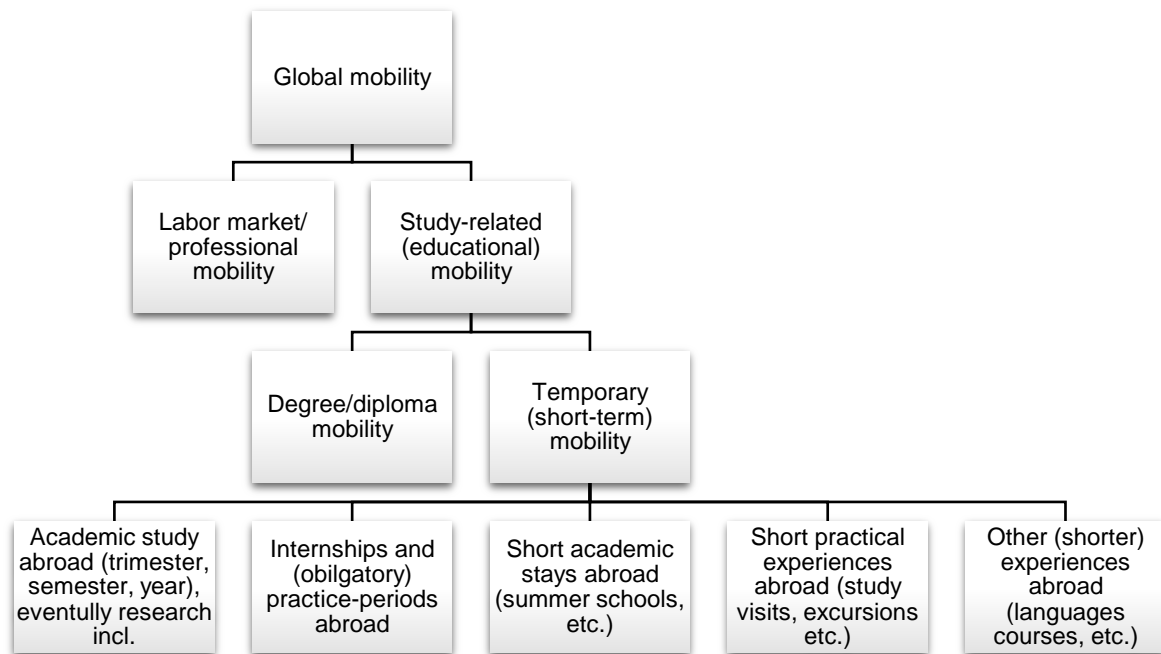


Figure 3: Concept of international mobility and distinctions of different forms (adapted from Wernisch 2016).

Figure 3 shows different types of mobility. In the following, it will be only referred to study-related mobility. Similar to the European mobility strategy, a further distinction is made between study-related degree and study-related temporary mobility. In this context, only the second, study-related temporary mobility is meant as international mobility for a limited period of time during the course of studying with the aim on graduating in the home country. This mobility form is the one with probably the largest tradition and visibility in the European higher education arena (cf. Wernisch 2016, 14) and thus different terms are used synonymously within literature, e.g. short-term mobility, credit mobility, temporary study-related mobility (cf. *ibid.*) or visits abroad (cf. DAAD & DZHW 2018).

In the following, the term study-related stay abroad will be used in addition and interchangeably together with other terms in the sense of temporary international or global mobility of students who cross a national border to start a course of study or other study-related activity in another country (cf. Teichler 2007, 74). Study-related is meant in the sense of Weichbrodt's educational stays (see above), i.e. stays that distinguish

themselves from tourism and contain learning components. Temporary mobility means the stay is undertaken for a limited period of time which is known in advance.

According to Wernisch (2016, 15) the different forms of temporary student mobility are differentiated according to their focus which can be academic or practical. There are conspicuous differences with regard to the popularity or frequency of certain forms of stays abroad. Compared to other possibilities of stays abroad and since 2007, study visits (first position) and placements (second position) have continued to be the most prominent types of global student mobility within German students during their studies (cf. DAAD & DZHW 2018, 93).

The semester abroad or the study stay abroad usually lasts at least three months, i.e. one or more semesters. However, it must be distinguished from full studies, i.e. degree mobility. On average, it takes six months. Regarding average duration and especially frequency, this form occupies the most important position among all possible study-related stays abroad. (cf. Nothnagel 2010, 436). National and international student mobility has played a role from the very beginning of university education and can be regarded as a defining feature of the European university system. As a mass phenomenon, however, it does not occur until the end of the 20th century (cf. Weichbrodt 2014, 14; cf. Chapter 1).

Internships generally focus on further training and professional orientation. In contrast to employment abroad, in the case of internships, earnings usually play a subordinate role. For this reason, traineeships and voluntary work can also be counted in this type of international mobility and, in a broader sense, foreign language assistants and traineeships abroad (cf. Ehrenreich et al. 2008). In comparison to employment mobility, which has been researched in economic and social sciences, this is less the case with internships abroad. Heimann (2010) provides an approach to this in the field of vocational training. In the field of teacher training, Ehrenreich (2004) has concentrated research efforts on the foreign language assistant program. Unfortunately, there are no exact figures on how many students have completed an internship abroad. The Erasmus program, for example, also offers internships. However, the demand here is lower than for study programs (cf. Weichbrodt 2014, 13). The average duration of an internship abroad is three months (cf. Nothnagel 2010, 436).

Finally, there are also shorter stays abroad such as language courses, excursions abroad, project work and summer schools. They are often organized as group stays and sometimes accompanied by lecturers (cf. *ibid.*). However, as these occur comparatively less often, these formats are not described in more detail here. In the further studies, the focus is mainly on study stays and internships.

It became obvious that there is a multitude of possibilities and programs for going abroad offered for students. Already by searching the internet one gets a multiplicity of offers. However, it should be noted here that, especially in the case of travel agencies, it is often only the spirit of profit that prevails. Information brochures and information fairs also advertise various programs and destinations abroad. In April 2018, for example, the information fair "Crossing Borders. Work and study worldwide!" took place in which at least 13 exhibitors were represented. Students can also contact the International Office at their university or obtain information from the websites of relevant authorities such as the Ministry of the respective country or funding organizations like DAAD or Erasmus.

The above description illustrates the wide range of options and programs that are now available to students. What all these formats share is that they take place abroad in a different environment that is foreign to the students. In addition, however, there are certain frames for each format that can influence a stay abroad. These are given, for example, by the facility or institution where the students are staying or by the social networks in which they move. These new conditions represent the crucial environment in which students live, work, experience and interact with people. Together, they represent the new potential learning environment.

## **2.2 Motives, desired goals and assumed outcomes**

It is supposed that spending time abroad during one's studies is a worthy goal as students learn valuable things (cf. Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012, 3). But what exactly is expected and from whom? The driving forces behind global student mobility have different origins. Depending on from which perspective student's stays abroad are seen, there are different motives and expectations. As already mentioned above, the focus of this thesis is mainly on the students themselves. However, when considering the phenomenon of study-related stays abroad, the overall picture must always be considered. Regardless of which level it is located, it always stands in a conditional relationship to the other levels and on its own level (cf. Rotter 2005, 82). Students have their own conscious and unconscious reasons why they want to go abroad, but many can only do so because they are supported by funding programs or because there are offers by their university. These, in turn, also pursue their own goals and are oriented towards national, social, economic or political guidelines.

The concept of internationalization has already been mentioned above as a driving force for student mobility, but what exactly are the motives behind it? In a world with a globalized economy and the transition to a knowledge-based society, new demands are being made on the quality of education, research and science. These are important for the

development of each individual country which is why national governments support internationalization in higher education. Consequently, internationalization and Europeanization are currently a requirement, strategy and implementation at universities in Europe, and student mobility is its dominant element. In Europe the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) plays a special role. For decades, international relations between universities have been supported by funding programs of the European Union (EU). Furthermore, the Bologna Process has strengthened the European orientation of higher education institutions (cf. Wernisch 2017, 8). On European level, international student mobility is surely seen as a contributor to the goals of the Europe 2020 mobility strategy formulated by the ministerial conference of the EHEA in 2012. One of the central goals is creating a common level in higher education in Europe. One key to this is mobility of high-quality. Mobility of high-quality describes pursuing educational goals in the fields of competencies, knowledge, abilities and contributions for developing and improving scientific cooperation, dissemination of innovations and knowledge amongst the EHEA. This then allows further internationalization of higher education systems and universities and their improvement through mutual comparison, promoting the employability and personal development of mobile people and strengthening Europe's cultural identity. Thus, mobility is seen as crucial for high-quality higher education, the European integration process and as an instrument for exchange and cooperation with other parts of the world. (cf. Bucharest Ministerial Conference 2012, 1). In Europe, education policy is a matter for the individual countries, but funding programs can also influence the internationalization of higher education institutions (cf. Flotzinger-Aigner 2013, 10).

On the institutional level, student mobility as part of internationalization (cf. Leutwyler 2014, 106) should ideally contribute to the different motives of universities, national governments, international organizations and the private sector. Traditional rationales for internationalization in higher education in Europe are societal, economic and educational needs. Nowadays, emphasis is placed on economic, political, and academic-quality rationales (cf. Wernisch 2016, 16). Based on current studies, Rotter (2005, 16) summarized four main reasons to include security, competitiveness, international understanding and the requirements of the labor market. Policies, programs and strategies are pursued depending on the actors involved, e.g. governments, institutions or disciplines. "Internationalization in higher education is not a static concept serving one specific purpose and to which a basket of strategies and elements are linked" (Wernisch 2016, 16).

The perspectives listed reflect study-related stays abroad as an instrument for achieving goals that are important at the collective level. Competence development in various areas

through foreign experience should form students into citizens and employees who serve the common good, the economy, science and thus the institutions and companies which can be described as a commodification and functionalization of education (cf. Hu & Byram 2009, x).

Conversely, the individual student has his or her own individual and personal ideas about the added value of a study-related stay abroad. Nothnagel (2010, 434) states that there are various reasons for this and it depends on the university, subject area and degree program. These include the continuation of a course of study, the interest in studying subjects outside the subject area, the study of one or more languages, the acquisition of knowledge specific to the host country or region, the acquisition of social and intercultural skills and the realization of personal leisure interests (travel, holidays, parties).

That a stay abroad may have positive effects on the future professional career (cf. Netz 2018, 22-23) is probably also believed by students. However, studies show that the individual motives of students do not always meet the above-mentioned collective, political or economic interests. The Erasmus Impact Study (EIS) gives a very broad picture of the reasons for a stay abroad, as students are represented here throughout Europe and in all three Erasmus actions (study, work placement and intensive program). The analysis of the reasons given by the students show that the opportunity of living abroad, learning or improving a foreign language, meeting new people, developing soft skills are ranked higher than improving and widening career prospects in the future (cf. European Commission 2014, 73 f.). The objectives of a stay abroad are thus directed towards a gain in competence that goes beyond university teaching and is tied more to informal learning. Above all, regional, intercultural, social and foreign-language goals seem to be of importance (cf. Nothnagel 2010, 435). The motives mentioned so far concern students all over Europe and of all subject areas.

The mobility study 2015 investigates German Students only. For the survey, 13 individual items were grouped into six motivation themes: personality development (strengthening self-confidence, recognizing one's own strengths and weaknesses, gaining independence), occupation and career (improving one's CV for job applications, improving one's chances of finding a good job), academic education (taking advantage of specific study and research opportunities offered by a foreign university, broadening one's subject-related knowledge), experience (experiencing exciting and exciting times, experiencing something special, getting to know a different culture), language (deepening one's knowledge of a language), social recognition (sharing experiences with friends, making

my parents proud). The evaluation shows that the three main reasons, including their hierarchy, were experience, language, occupation and career.

Both studies show that the excitement about new adventure, living in an unknown place and getting to know new individuals and cultures as well as the improvement of language skills are considered the most important reasons for spending time abroad during the course of studies.

Depending on the level, different target perspectives seem to prevail, for instance, the idealistic perspective on education and international understanding and a utilitarian-economic perspective with a focus on employability (cf. Ehrenreich 2008, 33). Added to this is the realization of personal interests. There seems to be an issue with stays abroad that are seen as a "recruiting tool" (cf. Engle & Engle 2003, 1) that make students "ready for the labor market" and the "individual fulfilment". One possible explanation could be that students who are mobile seem to be intrinsically motivated and "they value international experience as a whole and not so much in terms of immediate outcomes" (Brandenburg, Taboadela & Vancea 2015, 5). It is also worth noting that expectations of a stay abroad should ideally match the outcomes (the term "outcome" is critically discussed in chapter 4.1). Nevertheless, the setting of concrete aims generally remains very vague. In many cases, support for achieving or monitoring outcomes is also limited (cf. Ehrenreich 2004, 26).

In addition, some authors criticize that stays abroad are seen exclusively as something positive and that possible challenges or even unintended outcomes in general never come up. One needs to keep in mind that the reasons above are only assumed outcomes, however the general assumption in society is that going abroad is inherently good (cf. Ehrenreich 2008, 32). The title from an article from the US, for example, says "Overcoming the Study Abroad Hype". Why stays abroad should sometimes also be viewed critically is explained later.

### **2.3 Mobile and non-mobile students**

The EIS and the Student Mobility Study 2015 also surveyed the European students to find out what reasons exist for not planning or implementing a stay abroad. The five most frequently given reasons (in hierarchical order) are uncertainty about costs, family reasons or personal relationship, lack of financial resources needed for a stay abroad, uncertainty about the grant and lack of information on how the program works. Other important reasons are uncertainty about the foreign education system, language issues and the recognition of credits in the home institution (cf. European Union 2014, 74-76).

If one considers only the German students, two thirds state that they fear a loss of time during their studies. The second most common reason was that it presents financial difficulties. The separation from a partner or friends is almost as important. Approximately half see a difficult compatibility with the specifications and requirements of their study program. Three further reasons include the effort involved in organizing a stay abroad, one's own motivation and the fact that only little benefit is seen for one's own studies and no improvement in better career opportunities. Difficulties of orientation in the foreign education system or language difficulties are mentioned, but in hierarchical terms they come last (cf. Woisch & Willige 2015, 94).

Overall, decisive factors include the individual's own study organization, language difficulties as well as problems to get helpful information or support. Also factoring in are assumed low benefits in comparison to expected financial costs of a stay abroad. The latter reason is sometimes mentioned as a further problem because it can lead to a bias within the labor market towards financial stable students with experience abroad (cf. Bargel, et al. 2009, 54). "If experiences abroad are so advantageous, both personally and professionally, then studying abroad is a particular example of the lasting aftereffect of social inequality in higher education, a fact that has hardly been problematized so far" (Bargel, et al. 2009).

The aspiration to undertake a stay abroad also correlates with socio-demographic characteristics. Whether students go abroad on a study-related basis or not has been correlated for years with various socio-demographic characteristics in a relatively stable way. Women are slightly more likely to spend time abroad than men. There are also differences according to educational background (oriented towards the highest education level of the parents). The higher the educational background, the greater the proportion of those who were study-related abroad. Another factor is family status. Students with children are less likely to go abroad. There is a close connection between migration status and international mobility, which can be attributed, among other things, to differences in language skills and experiences abroad outside the study context. (cf. Middendorff et al. 2017, 20 ff.). Furthermore, previous experience abroad (e.g. during school time) can be conducive to the tendency of students to become mobile during their studies (cf. Woisch & Willige 2015, 92).

#### **2.4 Two takes on study-related stays abroad**

When searching the web on stays abroad, one may find plenty of websites with diverse offers or articles on its advantages. In most cases, it is study visits or spending a semester abroad advertised by enumerating "15 reasons to study abroad" or justifying "Why a

semester abroad is worthwhile?" (e.g. College Contact GmbH, EF Education GmbH, Zeit online GmbH).

The lists of positive learning opportunities and student reports stating that it was the best time of their life, make it hard to refute the positive effects of stays abroad and this leads to the assumption that such an undertaking helps to develop skills and to acquire knowledge which is important to live and work in a global society. In our society this media has led to the stereotypical image that people who are mobile or students who have spent part of their studies abroad enjoy professional challenges and have higher social and professional skills than people with low geographical mobility (cf. Flotzinger-Aigner, 2013, 9).

It appears as if a range of new knowledge and skills simply falls into the lap of students during a stay abroad. What is often not addressed is whether these assumptions are warranted. This is why some authors take a critical view of this almost unlimited positive portrayal in education and higher education policy (cf. Ehrenreich 2008; Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012). Thus Ehrenreich (2008, 32-33) ironically speaks of the "general euphoria about mobility" and of "stereotypical generalizations instead of differentiated reports".

Vande Berg, Paige and Lou (2012, 5) are critical of the fact that not all students automatically acquire the knowledge, perspectives and skills necessary to live and work in a global society simply because they are exposed to "the new and different in another country" (ibid.). They report about studies including students that making either modest or no remarkable gains in second-language acquisition. At times stays abroad are not seen as "meaningful engagement with the host culture", but that "US consumer culture is being transported abroad". Reports from students who report on their drinking and forms of misbehavior also cast doubt on what distinguishes a study-related stay abroad from a vacation (Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012, 5). On the German side, Ehrenreich (2008, 30) refers similarly critically to the glowing presentation of stays abroad in the media in Germany. Almost mockingly, she speaks of various television series and films for which an Erasmus series is the only thing missing.

This results in an ambivalent appraisal of the phenomenon study-related stays abroad. An "optimistic and often enthusiastic view that students normally and naturally learn a lot of useful things, and a more skeptical and sober appraisal that too many of them are at this point not learning very well" (Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012, 7). The two very different interpretations coexist since decades and this has led to various anecdotes about why students who learn abroad might fail to engage and learn effectively. A very common



metaphor compares education abroad to a swimming pool. "Immersing" and "throwing" students "into the deep end" of the foreign culture in order to make them learn linguistically, interculturally or academically may lead to a "sink-or-swim" environment which might frighten students and let them flee from the new and unfamiliar waters (Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012, 6). Another metaphor is that of the "colonials" which expresses that students would rather observe locals from a distance, live at ease and be privileged like British administrators sitting comfortably on the veranda (cf. *ibid.*). A third metaphor is that of the "safety net" or "cultural bubble"<sup>4</sup> (cf. *ibid.*). This suggests that students would only stay within groups of students of their own country while abroad and avoid encounters with others entirely.

This is not to imply that students are not learning anything or that participants whose experiences contradict the widely positive beliefs must be deficient. Some students may be indeed lazy or unmotivated, which might then lead to failure (cf. Wilkinson 1998, 33). However, it is not always up to the students if they don't learn well. Some return and report that they were unable to achieve the goals expected of them (cf. Zemach-Bersin 2008, 6).

Zemach-Bersin (2008) reports about her stay in Delhi. She arrived there full of expectations and ready to dive into an exotic culture, as she was told that she will develop a greater awareness of the world beyond American borders and become a global citizen. This turned out not to be true. Instead of experiencing global citizenship, she got to know what is power and privilege. As American, her race, nationality, education and class were so obvious that it was impossible for her to act like a local.

Mobility research agrees that a positive experience and goals can be the result of a stay abroad. However, this does not always happen automatically for every student and undesirable or negative effects might also occur. The so-called desired outcomes depend on various factors and therefore a differentiated evaluation of study-related stays abroad must be undertaken (cf. Ehrenreich 2008, 33-34). In this way, "myths of study-abroad *magic* that lead to disillusionment and frustration" could be curbed (cf. Wilkinson 1998, 33). What exactly has to be considered in order to achieve this will be discussed in more detail later.

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<sup>4</sup> Sometimes it is also referred to "Erasmus bubbles" (cf. Nothnagel 2010, 438) which is not always forcibly a bad thing. This will be explained later.

### **3 Previous research on student mobility**

The interest in student mobility increases and so does the accompanying body of research on study-related stays abroad. It is estimated that the number of scholarly publications published on study abroad within the last decade is about more than a thousand (cf. Comp et al. 2007; in: Vande Berg, Paige & Lou, 3). Besides administration and policy recruitment and participation and re-entry, some of the most common subjects of research and evaluation are intercultural competence and development, personal growth and identity development, language learning and acquisition (Streitwieser, Le & Rust, 2012, 10). The number of scientific publications on the topic of study-related stays abroad has now reached a large dimension with different foci. The following chapters deal with the impacts and challenges that study-related stays abroad might have on the participants. Effects on the meso and macro level, such as university or macroeconomic consequences must be excluded at this point.

#### **3.1 Impacts on student learning abroad**

„There is, of course, a considerable amount of evidence that bears on student learning abroad, and no single volume or a whole series of volumes devoted to the topic could begin to exhaust it” (Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012, xii). Positive outcomes have been recognized multiple times, as well the fact that a stay abroad is not always an experience that leads to success.

Engle and Engle (2003, 5) suggest that it is necessary to take a critical look at what stays abroad are intended to achieve. In this context, it is often referred to as outcomes, values, goals, effects, impacts or successes of global student mobility.

Admittedly, the land of values and goals is a rocky territory, for it is daunting to generalize about appropriate student outcomes in the highly complex personal and institutional interaction that is study abroad. In one sense, of course, desired and real outcomes are as individual as the students themselves, each with her or his unique life tale, motivation and imagined future (Engle & Engle 2003, 5).

Compared to terms such as "values" or "goals", the term "outcomes" is rather clean and technical. For this reason, it is more likely to be used in research and literature and has largely dominated other more normative terms (cf. Engle & Engle 2003, 5). Since it is the commonly used term, it is also used in the following. It should however be noted that this term, which in most cases refers to knowledge or competences, is not seen in the sense of product(s) which are at the end of a stay abroad. With such a term one expects convincing, generalizable results. In the field of education, and therefore also in the field of education abroad, teaching and learning processes not only concentrate on qualifying

functions in the economic sphere, but also promote social integration, participation in organizations and the reproduction of cultural values (cf. Edelmann & Tippelt, 2004, 7).

It should be called upon to see the undertaking of study-related stays abroad and related learning as processes, not as something that is immediately there. Cognitive learning is a restructure of knowledge as a result of "good information processing". Learning as a change in behavior happens by linking events or event sequences. This in turn requires the right learning opportunity and also depends on motivation, individual learning ability and framework conditions (cf. Gold 2015, 35). Thus, competences and knowledge develop over time. Hutchins (1996, 345) found that participants of study tour abroad programs claimed that they did not see immediately professional growth after their stay, but rather that it developed over time. What was rather obvious immediately after a stay was personal growth, however. Moreover, this did not stop by coming back home. The development sustained (ibid., 343). Also, Smolcic (2009, 21) claims some aspects may be obvious already during or after the stay, others might be "long-term processes of growing awareness and change that may take place over a lifetime". Such a long-term effect was also reported by Franklin (2010). Former participants of exchange programs attribute development in language skills, intercultural competence, disciplinary knowledge and social growth to the gains they made during their time abroad (ibid. 183 ff.).

According to Rubin and Sutton (2001, n.p.), quoted in: Hoff 2008, 54), learning outcomes of a stay abroad can be divided into two areas of development; nonacademic (affective and attitudinal, personal development, awareness) and academic (knowledge and skill development). In the following, some of the multitude findings on study-related stay outcomes are outlined to provide an overview.

Second-language acquisition is traditionally seen as the central, most important benefit of study-related stays. For a long time, it was assumed that immersion in the native speech community combined with formal classroom learning achieves the best results in foreign language learning. Consequently, many students travel each year to the country of the target language to improve their language skills (cf. Freed, 1998, 31). However, the focus of this thesis is not on the acquisition of language skills. For the sake of completeness and because foreign languages play an important role in a globalized world, the topic is nevertheless depicted, even if only in a sketched form. For this, three studies are outlined to display empirical findings. Special attention will be paid to intercultural learning abroad.

### 3.1.1 Language skills

For a long time, it was assumed that a stay in the country of the target language was the only way to learn it (cf. Flotzinger-Aigner 2013, 16; Freed 1998; 31). The improvement of foreign language competency is considered as the most evident effect of staying abroad and has been rated positively upon returning students multiple times (cf. Teichler 1996, Teichler et al. 2000, Bracht et al. 2006). Nevertheless, various limitations exist.

In order to give an overview of the vast scope of inquiry of the area of second language acquisition abroad Freed (2005) reviewed several studies. She concludes that there are indeed differences in language proficiency between students who had the opportunity to go abroad and those who only learned at home in the usual classroom setting. Further, she found that most research supports the “long-held popular belief in the power of a study abroad experience to profoundly influence the linguistic skills” of students (Freed 2005, 50). However, to which extent the language is learned depends on numerous variables (ibid. 32).

In its investigation, the Georgetown Consortium Project considered such variables regarding the frame given by the program and characteristics of the learners. The findings support that students enrolled abroad showed more progress in oral proficiency in the target languages. It could also be revealed that there are significant relationships between the influencing factors and the students gains. A connection between increased exposure and increased language learning could be found. However, the traditional view that students learn more effectively by immersing them in the environment of the target language could not be supported (cf. Vande Berg, Connor-Linton & Paige 2009).

The traditional view that makes a straight-line equation between exposure and proficiency fails to account for the very different knowledge, attitudes, skills and perspectives that learners bring to the learning environment. [...] Left to their own devices, too many students fail to learn effectively. Merely exposing them to the potentially rich linguistic environment they will encounter abroad is a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for improving their language learning (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton & Paige 2009, 17).

Wilkinson (1998) reports about her qualitative investigation that tracked a group of American participants who undertook a summer study-abroad in France, beginning from their transition from America to France and back home. The motives of the participants were learning to interact in a foreign language and adapting to a foreign culture, however the expected outcomes could not be met. Three primary themes were found. Strong influence of classroom discourse norms in out-of-class speech practices may lead to clashes over discourse and role expectations and to additional cross-cultural

misunderstandings (cf. *ibid.* 28). Further, cross-cultural communication problems are often stemming from cultural misunderstandings, not linguistic.

### **3.1.2 Impacts of study-related stays abroad in general**

When examining study abroad, it is likely to look at both outcomes in the academic area and personal growth. The latter refers to outcomes that pertain to attitudinal and dispositional changes influenced by social and psychological variables. Such personal developments are certainly the most desirable benefits of a stay abroad. However, they are difficult to define and to measure. Moreover, they are often not direct considerations of academic achievement in higher education (Sutton & Rubin 2004, 86).

Academic outcomes might include development of foreign language proficiency, academic learning in general and in the students' major fields, a more rounded intellectual view of the world arising from the contact with foreign science and scholarship as well as the cultural, intellectual and political milieu of the host country (cf. Steinberg 2007, 17). In contrast to the effects on foreign language competence, little research has been done so far on discipline-specific learning. However there indeed are some findings on future job-related benefits (cf. Flotzinger-Aigner 2013, 21; Hoff 2008, 56). The studies presented in the following give an overview of empirical findings, including both academic and non-academic outcomes.

#### *Erasmus evaluation studies*

The ERASMUS Program of the European Union supports European student exchange and mobility since 1987 and is reckoned to be one of the most successful programs for mobility (cf. Kehm 2006, 21). Since its introduction, the program has been monitored and evaluated. The evaluation projects are high in their complexity and provide a broad overview of the total returns of students of all subjects within Europe (cf. Ehrenreich 2004, 41). The evaluation in 2000 reports that Erasmus students took courses on topics which are not available at their home institution, language courses in the host country language, courses to broaden their academic and cultural background and courses involving teaching methods that are not used at the home institution (Teichler et al. 2000, 84). Fifty-five per cent of students rated that for the given period, their academic progress was better abroad than at home. Further, they claim that their foreign language proficiency increased as well as their knowledge about the host country, which was quite limited before departure (*ibid.* 93 ff.). In the overall assessment Erasmus students rated culture and foreign language outcomes most positively. Furthermore, they considered the stay abroad as worthwhile and an opportunity to develop personal experience and enhance

career prospects (ibid., 96). Participating in the Erasmus program was also seen as helpful in obtaining the first job and had a strong impact on international professional mobility after graduation. However, status and income of mobile students are only slightly higher than that of non-mobile students. Also, mobile students work more often in international jobs or abroad, feel better prepared for them and use corresponding competences (Kehm 2005, 22).

#### *The GLOSSARI Project*

Sutton and Rubin (2004) report about the initial results of the GLOSSARI Project (University System of Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative) of the University System of Georgia. They aim to document learning outcome of students who studied abroad and compared it to students who did not. The focus is thereby on curricular content knowledge and cognitive understanding gained abroad. The scope of the initiative encompasses six components. The reported results refer to phase I: Comparison of study abroad participants and non-participants on self-reported learning outcomes. The other phases focus on: comparison of pre-departure and post-departure self-reported learning outcomes, comparison of study abroad participants and non-participants on course-specific examinations, comparison of study abroad participants and non-participants on academic performance measures, correlation of learning outcomes with program design features, comparison of study abroad alumni and non-participant cohort on self-reported learning outcomes, career paths and other factors two-to-five years after graduation.

Phase I used a participant group and a non-participant control group, each with about 250 students. They conducted a survey from which seven underlying dimensions of intercultural knowledge were found in the responses. Study abroad students exceeded the control group in four of these factors including functional knowledge, knowledge of world geography, knowledge of cultural relativism, and knowledge of global interdependence. No great differences were found in the measures of verbal acumen, interpersonal accommodation, and cultural sensitivity. Nonetheless, they conclude that “the results warrant the conclusion that studying abroad does add value to a student’s academic achievements” (Sutton & Rubin 2004, 77).

#### *Study abroad learning assessment at MSU*

Like the GLOSSARI studies design, Michigan State University started to implement a three-phase plan to continuously assess the impact of study abroad students. Phase I which focused solely on certain aspects of students learning outcomes was completed in 2001. One data source was the student’s self-assessment through questionnaires. The

survey was conducted before and after the study stay abroad and the number of respondents was 1104 participants from 295 study abroad programs in 40 countries. Data analysis showed a strong post measure response and that study abroad has an impact on student academic performance, language learning and professional development. Further, it also impacted student intercultural awareness and personal growth, showing a positive correlation. Further length of stay and the factors personal growth, intercultural awareness and academic performance also correlated positively.

The study also included qualitative data in form of written journals of students and reports by students and faculty members. It was stated that students gained academic knowledge and intellectual maturity and that they learn more deeply while abroad. Further, the psychological challenge caused by the unfamiliar is seen as predominant effect on personal growth. Regarding professional development, the study found that it was the least impacted area. However, in some cases the study abroad experience was crucial factor in the decisions on future career. Some students felt confident in their career choices they had already made, while others changed the field or narrowed the choice. One main result of the qualitative data analysis was intercultural awareness. Many students gained insight in different standards of living, reflected common values differently (happiness), learned about attitudes of locals towards their home country (what do others think about the US) and how to appreciate things they have at home but not in the host country (tap water, ice cubes). Another important finding regarding intercultural awareness was the experience of being different to most of the other people around oneself and what it feels like to be a minority. Thus, also the qualitative data showed that spending time abroad had positive impacts on the considered areas, especially in personal growth and intercultural awareness. Ingraham and Peterson (2004, 98) conclude

[b]ut most important may be the way in which study abroad provides an opportunity for a synergy to be established between the academic, professional, personal, and intercultural components of the experience, leading to an overall effect greater than the sum of the individual pieces.

### **3.1.3 Personal growth and learning from intercultural contact**

Personal development and intercultural competence are principal goals of a period of study abroad (cf. Nash 1976, 192). Like the MSU study partially did, numerous other studies also address the question of how study-related stays abroad are related to personal development and intercultural competence. It is assumed that living abroad, i.e. in an unfamiliar environment, offers students the opportunity to gain new experiences and acquire new skills and competences. Furthermore, it should provide an opportunity to

relativize the attitudes acquired in the course of primary and secondary socialization (cf. Flotzigner-Aigner 2013, 19).

Eichhorn et al. (2002, 39) report about personal developments such as independence, sociability, increase in self-esteem tolerance and flexibility. They attribute these effects on personality development to the change of environment and the new demands due to inconvenience and adaptation (cf. *ibid.*, 37). Nash (1976) found that different investigators have different ideas about what individual changes are desirable outcomes of a stay abroad which makes comparability of results in studies difficult. Nevertheless, he found salient themes reappearing which can provide a basis for developing hypotheses. In his investigation which included an experimental and a control group he accepted the following hypotheses. First, spending a year abroad may increase autonomy including self-determination and personal freedom. Second, it expands a differentiation of self, meaning reflecting one's environment. Lastly, one must function in two cultures. It is assumed that the latter should also lead to greater association with the host people and a more favorable attitude towards the host country, however this could not be proofed. It led to positive attitude towards single individuals from the locals but not to the whole country. Hypotheses about increased tolerance and flexibility and increased self-assurance and confidence were mostly not confirmed. Nash concludes that there is evidence that indicates that the decline was due to those students who suffered during the stay as they had to leave a boyfriend or girlfriend at home. No appropriate data were available to test the hypothesis about increased objectivity as the result of overseas study. A later assessment revealed that most of the personality changes from the overseas experience did not persist over time.

As part of a multi-study project Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund (2017) investigated whether there is a relation between studying abroad and the student's personality measured by the "Big Five" personality traits, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. Further they attempted to seek whether a study-related stay abroad might change these personality traits. In the long term, it was assumed that personality traits, which can be attributed to all people in different forms, are stable patterns over time in different situations and that they hardly change (cf. *ibid.*, 55; Wolff 2017, 15). However, it was found that across time or due to critical life events they may change (cf. Wolff 2017, 15). Analyzed data of the study took sojourns and non-sojourns into account. The findings show that spending time abroad during one's studies affects extraversion and agreeableness positively. Neuroticism decreases, whereas conscientiousness remains unchanged (cf. Niehoff, Petersdotter & Freund 2017, 59).



Carlson and Widaman (1988) examined effects of study abroad on attitudes towards other cultures and international understanding. Using a control group which stayed at home, differences in the data were all in the direction of the study abroad group. The results showed higher levels of international political concern, cross-cultural interest, and cultural cosmopolitanism and more critical attitudes toward their own country.

The quintessence of Wolff's study (2017) is that stays abroad lead to an increase in intercultural competence. In addition, Wolff (2017) found that a positive side effect was an increase in general self-efficacy. Consequently, he concludes that global mobility programs can produce intercultural competent citizens (cf. Wolff 2017, 239). However, the purely quantitative study did not examine which variables and developments favor the development of intercultural competence during the stay abroad.

Such possible influencing factors were considered by the Georgetown Consortium Project, a large-scale, multi-year study of U.S. aimed to investigate U.S. students' learning abroad in language learning, intercultural learning and disciplinary learning. Based on the variables for program classification of Engle and Engle (2003), specific program components (duration, type of housing) and learner characteristics (gender, prior experience, level of proficiency before departure) were considered additionally. The learning results were compared to control groups of US students who stayed at home. Findings show that that a stay abroad can provide important opportunities for developing intercultural competence and abroad students had greater gains in intercultural development than those the control students. However, this strongly depended on several factors:

- Students who lived in a foreign culture for the first time had the greatest gains.
- There was a relation between language and intercultural learning.
- Students who took courses in classes with host country students only or mixed classes learned more interculturally than those who took courses with US students only. A similar relation was found for students who reported spending more time with members of their host family or friends from the host culture.
- Students staying in countries with cultures which were "somewhat dissimilar" or "dissimilar" from their own had greater gains in contrast to those who felt that the new culture was rather "very similar" or "similar".
- Intercultural development sustained after five months after return.

The hypothesis that students learn intercultural competencies automatically by being immersed or physical present in the culture was not supported. Yet, those who had the opportunity to learn with a mentor or those who were given proactive learning interventions learned most effectively.

This finding was also confirmed by Pederson (2009) who conducted a study with students from a year long stay in England. He compared findings from pre- and post-tests of three groups of students. Students who were in a course which integrated intercultural effectiveness and diversity training pedagogy included cultural immersion, guided reflection, and intercultural coaching. Students in the same study abroad included experience with no intervention and a control group of students who stayed at home. Significant differences were found between students of the group with intervention and the other two groups. Student changes from the other two groups were not statistically different.

The studies listed above show that a study-related stays abroad can lead to changes in many areas of knowledge, competences, attitudes and even personality traits. Some results were more significant than others. There were also areas where students showed no development. Stays abroad are not guarantee for language improvement, change in attitudes or cultural learning, for example. However, they can be enhanced by giving students a proactive learning intervention. Moreover, different factors or variables influence students, their experiences and their learning. The following chapter will illustrate this further.

### **3.2 Influencing factors**

If one starts from the generally prevailing opinion that stays abroad are generally a good thing, one will be disappointed to find that a few studies show that the hoped-for outcomes are not achieved or only to a modest degree. This does not contest the fact that students do not learn anything during stays abroad or that it cannot be relied on the students' self-reports. "Those statements from returning students to the effect that 'studying abroad changed my life' surely must mean something" (Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012, xii). One possible explanation can be shortcomings in studies. Another explanation is that one needs to realize that "the overseas experience [...] is too complex to be reduced to uniform promises of success and gain" (Wilkinson 1998, 34). For this reason, in addition to asking what students learn, it should also be asked how they learn, which factors may have impact on the experiences made by students and whether the experience of learning abroad leads to skills that would not have developed at home.

Kauffmann et al. (1992, 5 ff.) interviewed four typical study abroad students in order to demonstrate how differences of outcomes depend on the students themselves and the programs they participate in. Their findings show that the level of maturity of the students, their openness for new experiences, readiness for adaptivity and previous experience abroad influence both, whether students develop or not and if a stay abroad is seen as something enriching or turns into “a frightening and difficult time” if students cannot “make it” (ibid., 12).

Indeed, there are several factors which can either simplify learning or make it challenging to learn and make good experiences. Outcomes of stay abroad can be influenced by different variables. Engle and Engle (2003, 9) came up with the following set of “interlocking and interacting” variables:

1. Length of stay
2. Entry target-language competence
3. Language used in course work
4. Context of academic work
5. Types of student housing
6. Provisions for guided/ structured cultural interaction and experiential learning
7. Guided reflection on cultural experience

Another classification by Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004, 192) differs between internal and external variables. External variables are subdivided to those related to the program and those related to the student.

*Internal variables* are student backgrounds, characteristics, and personal circumstances including student language proficiency prior to departure, student intercultural sensitivity level, previous experience abroad, previous exposure to cultural differences, and academic discipline.

*External-Program* variables are length and location of the program, content of study, predeparture and on-site orientation programs, re-entry activities, the availability of an on-site reference person, and internships and service learning opportunities.

*External-Students* variables include housing arrangements, independent travel, and amount of contact with hosts and target language friends.

Most of the variables named concern the conditions on site though the prior preparation and re-entry work needs also to be considered. Engle and Engle (2004, 7-8) emphasize

on the pre work that needs to be done, that “culture learning is a process; that progress is earned; that , with the investment of reasonable prior work and preparation, students can begin their sojourn closer to the goals [defined”]. From the variables of Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004, 192) it becomes obvious that she also considers re-entry activities.

Another aspect that might need to be considered is the use of media possibilities. The internet and various devices, such as smartphones and laptops, enable constant contact with family and friends at home. E-mail, social networking services (e.g. facebook, Instagram), messaging and voice over IP services (e.g. WhatsApp), and video call software (e.g. Skype), to name just a few of the options available in the technological age, help to ensure that even from the remotest corner of the world you can be closely connected to your home. This could change the quality of experience abroad (cf. Ehrenreich 2008, 30). Whether and to what extent it influences the experience does not seem to have been researched yet, but since contact with family and friends is usually also emotional support, this seems to be an interesting aspect to be explored.

## **4 Challenges and difficulties**

From the overview of the studies on the stays abroad of students, it becomes clear that such an experience offers great learning opportunities and development, especially with regard to personal growth but also academic growth. However, these potential positive outcomes should not be simply taken for granted by going abroad and spending time in a foreign country. Such an undertaking can also bring challenges or even obstacles. Furthermore, a stay abroad does not only consist of the stay itself, i.e. the actual time the person is abroad. It should not be overlooked that such an undertaking consists of pre-, while- and post phase which require planning, organization and preparation, arriving and entering the country, encountering the new, finding one's way, eventually adapting and the return home, all of which cannot always be easily mastered.

Each phase can bring different challenges. Furthermore, a rough distinction can be made between structural and individual challenges. Structural conditions are often to be located at the interface between personal and administrative levels. The format of the stay also brings a certain framework which might influence conditions. In the following it will be distinguished between structural and individual challenges which might appear during each phase. Special attention is paid to the actual stay and the return.

### **4.1 Structural challenges**

In chapter 3.3 points were mentioned which hinder students from going abroad. The additional financial burden and the organizational effort are also a problem for students who decide to go abroad despite such factors. The planning, organization and implementation of a stay is often associated with a great deal of organizational and bureaucratic work, for which the scope may vary depending on the type of program and target country. These include settling matters of study such as course program, examinations, matters of recognition but also visas, health insurance, attending language courses, etc.

Having arrived abroad, students are faced with new living conditions and a new integration process. In the case of a course of study or an educational internship, one must first find one's way around the new institution. New study or work requirements such as the degree of difficulty of courses or tasks and how to deal with the new teaching and learning modalities are set. The students move in a new cultural social system that has foreign norms and values that affect private life but also the teaching and learning system of the host country (cf. Eichhorn et al. 2002, 10). Guidance from guest institutions, mentors, lecturers or peers, host families and similar reference points can certainly

provide a great deal of support here. Nevertheless, the students are tasked to find their way in these new social networks inside and outside the institution. The absence of usual and secure social contacts, as well as language barriers, can become a challenge or even a psychological burden. This will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

After the stay, in some cases the recognition of achievements in one's own institution could be a point of difficulty. Also finding one's way into the originally familiar structures in private and university life can be challenging.

## **4.2 Individual challenges**

In a new and unfamiliar setting, students have to find their way to navigate and how to interact socially. The foreign and unfamiliar at first might be interesting, but a study related-stay ideally has not the nature of a tourist or travel stay in which the individual often does not directly encounter culture but rather are distant observers. The hoped-for culture learning requires more. The students come into contact and interacts with the new environment and the people surrounding them. However, due to the unknown cultural context, this can lead to situations in which students are exposed to stress. Be it linguistic or cultural misunderstandings or behavior that is misinterpreted, the feeling of loneliness or difficulty in getting used to the unfamiliar can be challenging. Outside the comfort zone of one's own culture, stress, discomfort, negative emotions or even health problems can emerge. Many are affected by a culture-shock. Anyone who has been immersed in a foreign culture for a relatively long time knows how emotionally powerful intercultural experiences can be. Just as demanding can be the return after the stay back into the once familiar culture of the home country. In the following, consequences that new stressful situations have for students and what is to be understood by culture-shock and re-entry shock are examined.

### **4.2.1 Stress, coping and health**

During a stay abroad, an individual has to adjust and adapt<sup>5</sup> to the new way of living. Often students are affected by a culture shock in which they have to master different phases. The phenomenon of culture shock will be explained below in more detail. During these phases various factors such as the above-mentioned structural factors or others like shelter, food, sleep, health, money, climate or interpersonal relationships might occur and provoke stressful situations for an individual (cf. Ryan & Twibell 2000, 412). These so-

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<sup>5</sup> Intercultural adaptation refers to the process of adapting one's own behavior in response to a changed social environment. Intercultural adjustment, on the other hand, refers to the subjective experiences that accompany the process of intercultural adaptation (cf. Wolff, 2017, 13). In the literature, however, there is often no distinction between these two terms and they are used interchangeably.

called stressors can be assigned to the five categories proposed by Brink and Saunders (1976, in Ryan & Twibell 2000, 412) which include communication, mechanical/environmental differences, isolation, customs and attitudes and beliefs.

How stressful situations might be handled by individuals explains the stress and coping theory. A person's cognitive appraisal of a stressful situation is influenced by multiple variables, including person-related variables such as past experiences, personal values, goals and demographic profile. According to the theory, in a first appraisal, a stressful situation can be either evaluated as challenging, as threatening or as harmful. A challenging situation taxes personal resource and yet has potential for personal growth and a feeling of mastery. Threatening situations taxes or exceeds personal resources and has potential to cause harm or loss. Harmful situations are these where harm or loss has already come into effect. Whereas appraisals of threatening situations or harm and loss evoke negatively-toned emotions, challenge appraisals are associated with positively-toned emotions and the feeling of enthusiasm. In the case of challenging and threatening situations in a second appraisal, individuals seek to find coping strategies to handle the stressor and the emotions. From this decision evolve adaptational outcomes for the sake of the individual's well-being, social functioning or morale (Ryan & Twibell 2000, 410 ff.). Coping strategies can be confrontive coping, which examines facing up to the problem and finding ways for problem solving; evasive coping, which is avoiding or getting away from problems; optimistic style, which includes positive thinking, positive outlook and comparison with circumstances that are worse; fatalistic coping, which is pessimistic thinking and the expectations that the worst could happen; emotive style, where feelings are released and ventilated (get mad and let off steam); palliative style, where the persons reflect on efforts which let feel better (take medications); supportant style, which uses support systems like discussing problems with family or friends; and self-reliant style, where a person depends on self (cf. Jalowiec 2003, 76).

In their investigation, based on the stress and coping theory and with regard to the five stressors, Ryan and Twibell (2000) examined stressful situations experienced by students who went abroad. They found that a large majority reported communication as a stressor, including being misunderstood and being unable to express one's thoughts and feelings. Environmental stressors were climate, pollution and navigating around the host city. Too much or too little personal space were associated with psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. Social isolation varied in a range from no isolation at all to extreme isolation with deep depression. The highest degree of isolation occurred shortly after the arrival in the host country. Regarding customs, students reported that they usually were able to adjust but that it never became second nature. Uncomfortable

feelings arose with regard to cultural attitudes towards women and foreigners. Responses included anger at the differences and yet also the development of tolerance towards new experienced customs including variations in life pace, food, sanitation and cultural or custom practices (Ryan & Twibell 2000, 418-419). Further Ryan and Twibell (2000) investigated how students appraise a typical study-abroad experience, their coping strategies with stressful situations and how this is related to the student's health. Study abroad experiences were mostly appraised as only slightly threatening and moderately to highly challenging. A typical day abroad was evaluated as moderately-to-highly challenging and held few threats. This was perceived as taxing and difficult however most used coping strategies and the outcomes were often positive. Regarding the coping strategies, the students used only a limited number and when threatening situations occurred, they were not able to find adequate coping responses. Regarding the student's health, findings revealed that health was in general good, but the more students experienced intercultural situations as threatening the poorer was their health. This was not limited to physical functioning but also emotional problems; feelings of anxiety and depression were reported which limited social activities somewhat (cf. Ryan & Twibell 2000, 420 ff).

The findings suggest that in general a stay abroad is not evaluated as threatening, and with the right coping strategies, students were able to master difficult situations and benefit from this. However, it was also found that this does not always apply as students know little coping strategies and a linkage between psychosocial variables and health-related variables. The better students could cope, the healthier they were and vice versa (cf. Ryan & Twibell 2000, 426).

#### **4.2.2 Culture shock**

As Savicki, Cooley & Donnelly (2008, 173) claim "[e]xposure to a foreign culture presses sojourners to adjust on many different levels to the strange, exciting, exasperating, and sometimes threatening encounters embedded in everyday living". These "perplexing and multifaceted array of foreign values, attitudes, behaviors, and environmental conditions" (ibid.) are the student's new surrounding and may lead to culture shock. There are three basic causal explanations for why a culture shock might occur. This could be due to the loss of familiar cues and reinforcement that guided their daily life since childhood. Next, the breakdown of interpersonal communication, either consciously or unconsciously, can lead to alienation from others and end in frustration or anxiety. Third, an identity crisis can lead to genuine psychological growth. The loss of familiar cues and reinforcement causes



disorientation, but this is what lets people do and perceive things differently than the habitual way (cf. Weaver 1993, 144).

As with any other identity crisis, culture shock allows us to give up an inadequate perceptual and problem-solving system to allow another more expanded and adequate system to be born, representative of a death-rebirth cycle (Weaver 1993, 145).

Culture shock, formerly viewed as an ailment today, has become part of the usual sojourners jargon and sometimes is also referred to as homesickness, adjustment difficulties or uprooting. However, these terms fail to focus on the cultural aspect (Weaver 1993, 137). The more a culture is "different" from the own culture the greater may be the culture shock, as the loss of familiar things, signs and environment is greater. Also, anticipation can be an influencing factor. The reaction of a culture shock might be more severe when people enter a culture only slightly different from their own but simply were not aware of the fact that it still might differ. (Weaver 1993, 138). The range from culture shock may be quite broad. Individuals who travel abroad may be concerned with mild emotional disorders, stress related physiological ailments and even psychosis. Yet the latter is unusual as this rather accounts to people who already were predisposed to not being able to cope with stress situations e.g. by family difficulties, traumatic, stress, health problems. Typical descriptors of people who move across cultures are enumerated by Zapf (1991, 111):

sense of loss	impatient	apathetic
confused	irritable	depressed
ready	to cry frustrated	withdrawn
isolated	thwarted	helpless
afraid	angry	vulnerable
exhausted	need to complain	inadequate
panic	desire to resign	overwhelmed
homesick	need to 'get out'	self-doubt
insomnia	resentful	bewildered
disoriented	contemptuous of clients	pessimistic
cynical	unable to concentrate	hopeless
physically	ill hostile	rejected
fatigued	distrusting	unaccepted
different	alienated	anxiety
lonely	disenchanted	suspicious

How intense a reaction to the new environment is depends on the nature and duration of the stressful situation and what is even more important on the psychosocial makeup of the individual (cf. *ibid.*, 138). Some individuals quickly adjust by using coping strategies whereas others draw back on maladaptive defense mechanisms which then can lead to bad psychosocial and physiological states. Though most sojourners have moderate reactions to the stress set by the new surrounding and overcome the culture shock successfully which in some cases makes individuals even more psychologically sound than they were in their home culture (*ibid.*, 138). One aspect that increases the likelihood for such positive outcome is intercultural adjustment. (Savicki, Binder & Heller 2008, 111-112).

This complex process is generally divided into socio-cultural adjustment and psychological adjustment. Socio-cultural adjustment is predicated to culture learning meaning the attainment of knowledge and skills to cope with the tasks that daily life in the foreign culture brings (cf. Savicki, Cooley & Donnelly 2008, 173-174). Psychological intercultural adjustment is characterized by what is called the stress and coping theory, which is explained above. Cross-cultural transitions evoke life changing stressors and require coping strategies as a response (cf. *ibid.*, 174). Lack of control and helplessness are the most common symptoms of culture shock. Culture shocks are primarily unconscious, and most people do not know what happens to them and why they behave or feel in a certain way (cf. Weaver 1993, 149). Individuals react in a certain way and often they use defense mechanisms. Yet for the process of adjustment in the new culture one needs coping mechanisms. These are not reactions but actions which help to respond effectively to situations. They provide strategies how to deal with stressors or stress and increase effectiveness (cf. *ibid.*, 150). "One cannot change another culture, and the goal of cross-cultural adaption is not to avoid the source of stress (people in the host culture) but to increase interaction with local people" (Weaver 1993, 150).

Thus, by developing coping strategies and minimizing defensive reactions, effective interactions and thus adaption in the host culture can be increased (cf. *ibid.*). The intercultural adjustment process and the emotions involved are often referred to as the U-curve. Throughout this process the individual passes through four different phases. The honeymoon phase which is marked by excitement, the disenchantment or culture shock phase where the individual realizes the new setting, the beginning resolution phase, where individuals seek new patterns of behavior, and the effective functioning phase, where the individual becomes comfortable in the new culture. Culture shock is not a singular event but happens during the broad process of culture-learning. As Paige (1993, 2) puts it "Culture shock, defined as emotional reactions to the disorientation that occurs

when one is immersed in an unfamiliar culture and is deprived of familiar cues [...]”. Unfamiliar situations tend to occur more than once when living, working and interacting with people abroad. An individual goes through different stages of personal development, challenges one’s own sense of self, cultural identity, and worldview, which might cause psychological stress (cf. Paige 1993, 2). Yet, if an individual manages to cope with this stress and is able to interculturally adjust, the result might be more insight into the new culture and its people, a more tolerant attitude and personal development.

#### **4.2.3 Reentry shock**

When people have lived abroad and not only had superficial contact with the culture (e.g. short trip, vacation), but have been able to immerse themselves in the culture, the process of return is called the reentry phase. If this time of reintegration is associated with socio-cultural difficulties or psychological (negative) consequences, one speaks of reentry-shock (cf. Porsch & Lüling 2017, 260). Synonymous terms to reentry shock, like reverse culture shock or reentry adjustment refer all to the same phenomenon. Similar to the stress which can be experienced in a culture shock thus when learning in and about a new culture might occur when returning back home to the own culture. After return back home, the individual will try to readapt, to understand what happened to him or her and try to integrate the new which was learned but is not able to connect to the own culture again. Gone through the process of adjustment in the foreign environment one will expect to return to a place where everything is familiar and known but might come to the “realization that one has become marginal in one’s own culture [which] adds a new and challenging dimension to the reimmersion experience” (cf. Paige 1993, 2).

The reentry process is described in a W-curve model. This model is an extension of the above described U-curve of intercultural adjustment. The individual goes through the same stages, of euphoria, culture shock, acculturation and the stable pattern, after the return to the home country (cf. Szkudlarek 2010, 3). The readjustment to the home culture is accompanied by strong affective responses in all four stages. This can cause psychological consequences. One possible cause of such return difficulties may be that sojourners do not usually expect to have to readjust and adapt at home and assume that they do know their home country. However, since they have, often unconsciously, experienced a process of change during their stay abroad, for example in terms of values, attitudes or personality, they see their home country from a different perspective and feel alien. Possibly also a feeling of dissatisfaction can arise. On the one hand, the returnees have a lot to report, on the other hand they have difficulties to organize and articulate their thoughts. Family and friends may ask superficially what it was like and have little

understanding of the person's behavior and what they experienced, as they were not part of the experience and cannot identify with it. Another explanation is that students might have developed an idealized concept of the home country and culture and therefore are being disappointed by the real circumstances (cf. Porsch & Lüling 2017, 261). "A 'reality check', however, often reveals that both, the home-environment and the returning individual have changed substantially during the period of intercultural sojourn" (Szkudlarek 2010, 4). Further, the loss of new friendships, the new built social network and way of living might cause frustration and grief (ibid., 3).

However, not everyone is affected by a reentry shock. Transitions can be perceived very differently and can also depend on personal and situational factors such as personality, prior intercultural experience and reentry or length of stay, cultural distance of host and home culture, intensity of contact with host-country individuals and home-country individuals, housing conditions and other. This might affect the length and intensity of a reentry shock (cf. Szkudlarek 2010, 5 ff; cf. Porsch & Lüling 2017, 261). If someone is affected by a reentry shock different affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects might indicate this.

Affective aspects are emotions triggered by the reentry shock, such as wanderlust, sadness, frustration, general discomfort, alienation, loneliness, boredom. Though, some returnees also feel positive feelings such as gratitude and enthusiasm.

Cognitive aspects, likewise, have to do with the person's internal processes. Returnees reflect, evaluate and compare on the basis of (new) attitudes, perceptions and values. They see themselves in a tension between the two cultures and living environments and have to renegotiate their own attitude towards the home country and the host culture. This goes hand in hand with the mental replacement of one's own cultural identity. One must harmonize with oneself which components of the two cultures should be part of you. This can thus initiate an identity crisis (cf. Porsch & Lüling 2017, 262-263).

The letdown of "reentry shock" is not mere reverse culture shock, but rather the tedious task of having to question all one's prior experience, including the reconstruction of one's own self-image, within the context of multiple new insights but now without the sharp contrast of a "foreign" culture to define it for one. (Selby 2008, 6).

Behavioral aspects can be that the returnee feels overwhelmed by the accomplishment of even simple everyday tasks. This includes the continuation of their studies and of their way of life which actually was familiar to them. This also includes interaction with friends and family members (cf. Porsch & Lüling 2017, 263-264).

As with the culture shock, the transition back home can be described as a stressful situation. The stress and coping theory described above applies here. Consequently, a returnee can evaluate his situation as challenging, threatening or harmful and will try to cope with it with different strategies. This can be exchange with friends and family, the attempt to change one's attitudes or to use the experience as an opportunity, or retreat and distraction. Which coping strategies are effective exactly when is unknown. However, coping with this stress situation depends on the resources available to the individual. Resources can be intrapersonal, this concerns personal characteristics like self-efficacy, or interpersonal, which can be supported by social networks. At interpersonal levels, conversations with friends, family or other foreign students can be seen as a resource, as well as institutional support such as mentors or lecturers. In addition to conversations as a coping strategy, looking at photos or sharing experiences with others in the form of reflection or as a conversation impulse can also help (cf. Porsch & Lüling 2017, 264-265).

Even though reentry shock and culture shock can bring unpleasant psychological stress, these processes might also bring positive effects. It is assumed that these transitions are similar to other drastic adult transitions like for example domestic relocation, death of a loved one, a new job. They pose challenges on the individual and the individual must respond to that by coping with it. Characteristic of these transitions is loss and change including, loss of relationships, cultural frames of reference and change of the new frames of reference and new relationships. If an individual can master these, such transitions like culture shock and reentry shock can present opportunities for personal and intellectual growth (cf. Martin 1993, 302).

## 5 Intercultural competence

### 5.1 The complexity of intercultural competence as a concept

We live not only in a country, but in a world that is constantly changing and in which people from different cultural backgrounds come together every day. Be it in private life, at the checkout in the supermarket, on the bus when someone is talking on the phone in another language, the tourist asking about the way to Karlsruhe Castle, or at work, in intercultural teams, as a counselor at the authorities or as a teacher in a classroom with students who have a heterogeneous cultural background. Against this background, intercultural competence is becoming increasingly important and is now even considered as "key competence in the 21st century" (cf. Bertelsmann Stiftung 2008).

There is a felt urgency – and it touches many aspects of our lives – for education which helps citizens to live together in culturally diverse societies. The ability to understand and communicate with each other across all kinds of cultural divisions is a fundamental prerequisite for making [...] societies work (Huber 2014, 9).

The interest of institutions to develop intercultural competent and global-ready students has greatly increased in the recent years. That intercultural competence seems to be a sought-after commodity and a necessity in many areas in the future in today's society is demonstrated not only by the numerous literature and research on the construct across all disciplines, but also by methods and training courses offered in order to teach it. Moreover, is expected to be one of the many desired outcomes of a stay abroad. It is a possible achievement of socio-cultural practice and is particularly appreciated in Western cultures and societies and is nowadays even "a general binding norm" (cf. Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann 2010, 32-33). which everyone should meet if possible. Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann (2010, 33) even describes intercultural competence as "a regulatory ideal and normative imperative that has its roots in real conditions and practical necessities".

But what exactly is intercultural competence? How does it develop? How does it express itself? Can it be taught and learned? In the following chapters, efforts will be made to provide answers to these questions, but one thing should be emphasized in advance. Intercultural competence is a vast field and there could be several answers.

Already in 1962, the American social psychologist Gardner was one of the first to ask the question of intercultural competence (cf. Rathje 2006, 1). Over time, numerous publications from business administration, communication science, pedagogy and education, psychology and other fields have been published. The subject matter has taken on virtually unmanageable dimensions (cf. Wolff 2017, 6). Researchers and

scientists from various disciplines have devoted themselves to researching this construct. Sometimes almost zealous and tireless. For example, an article published in 2003 on intercultural competence by psychologist Alexander Thomas triggered a heated debate. More than 30 scientists from various disciplines commented on the article. Rathje (2006) took this as an occasion to make a status analysis of the current debate on the term from the various statements. It should be emphasized at this point that this discussion concentrates solely on the German-speaking countries and is already strongly characterized by heterogeneity and even confrontation (cf. Rathje 2007, 255). The origin of the great disagreement lies in very fundamental questions regarding the concept, namely: the goal (what is intercultural competence good for?), the scope (is intercultural competence universal or culture-specific?), the application (when is intercultural competence required?), and the foundation (which conceptual definition of culture underlies intercultural competence?) (cf. Rathje 2007, 255).

Since these aspects again depend on different contexts, disciplines and specifications, finding a uniform definition seems futile in view of this. Dreyer and Hößler (2011, 11-12) are even of the opinion that no claim may be made for a universal definition nor a generally valid model. The research field is so diverse and broadly based that theoretical basic assumptions, methodological procedures, results and definitions are just as broad and a search for general answers to the questions above is neither possible nor meaningful (ibid.) However, instead of coming to one definition which would be generally valid, they recommend to look at intercultural competence in the respective context in which it is to be applied.

Another aspect that leads to further 'muddying the waters' is that several terms are often used interchangeably within literature and the field of research. Occasionally, one comes across terms such as cross-cultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, intercultural development, intercultural adaption, intercultural adjustment, intercultural intelligence, intercultural awareness and intercultural sensitivity, in different contexts and fields. Besides intercultural competence it is often referred to intercultural sensitivity. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, they do not represent synonyms. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all the terms. However, it will be differentiated between intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity. This differentiation is intended to provide a better understanding of the two constructs and will ultimately result in a definition of intercultural competence.

## 5.2 Intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity

According to Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003, 422) intercultural competence refers to “the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways”. Deardorff (2008, 33) extends this definition by the concept of effectiveness. From this, a general definition can be formulated that despite multiple views has been accepted in discourse of research and discussion:

Intercultural competence can be described as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (cf. Deardorff 2008, 33).

Effectiveness refers to the achievement of goals in an interaction. For example, communicating a message without creating misunderstandings. Appropriateness means that in the interaction cultural rules that are considered binding are not violated (cf. Wolff 2017, 11). Just as pointing with the finger at objects in Laos is still fine, however pointing at people can be tricky (cf. Schultze 2005, 208). By acting effectively and appropriately, both an etic and an emic perspective are considered (cf. Wolff 2017, 11). Thus, a viewpoint from within a social or cultural group and a viewpoint from outside this group which is important to build an understanding on a general level.

While the concept of intercultural competence also includes personality traits and abilities, intercultural sensitivity focuses on a person's point of view. Consequently, intercultural sensitivity refers to “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” (Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman 2003, 422). The series of differences of a culture is called cultural worldview. A largely monocultural socialization of an individual only gives it access to its own cultural worldview, so that this person is not able to construct and thus not experience the difference between its own perception and that of people who are culturally different. The development of intercultural sensitivity consists in acquiring the ability to construct and thus experience cultural differences in a more complex way (cf. Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003, 422). Intercultural sensitivity is thus, so to speak, a prerequisite for the development of intercultural competence. Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003, 422) argue the greater the intercultural sensitivity is, the greater is the potential to increase intercultural competence.

“Intercultural sensitivity is not natural” Bennett (1993, 21). Bennet’s (1993) model of development of intercultural sensitivity describes how a person may transcend traditional ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism in six stages. Cultural difference is experienced on different levels. It is a development from the “mere existence of cultural difference” in a person’s perception to ultimately the development of consciousness and the



understanding how one's own identity is constructed. "At this level, intercultural sensitivity increases as people consciously select and integrate culturally disparate aspects of their identities". This awareness of identity formation as a dynamic process allows a person to function in relationship to different cultures while staying outside of the constraints of a particular one (Bennett 1993, 26).

### **5.3 The constituents of intercultural competence**

When people from different cultures meet, no matter in which environment, this contact situation places certain demands on the people involved. It requires a whole spectrum of different abilities and characteristics as well as attitudes so that interacting partners can successfully interact with each other. Intercultural competence has already been identified as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (cf. Deardorff 2008, 33).

However, such a compact description can only be understood if the components needed for intercultural competence are disassembled. Such a systematic recording is possible by using list models.

Such models can be understood as a kind of catalogue of competences (Rathje 2007, 255) which include an affective aspect such as stress resistance, empathy, flexibility or tolerance of ambiguity, cognitive aspects such as understanding of a cultural phenomenon, understanding of foreign cultural and self-cultural contexts of action or cultural differences of the interaction partners and behavior aspect searches for social competence, willingness to communicate and ability to communicate. However, these list models do not provide guidance how these elements stand in relation to each other.

For a first step, to understand what is required of a person to be able to act interculturally at all, such lists are certainly useful, but they do not yet explain the important aspect of how the individual components are connected. This is actually the crucial point. Someone is not interculturally competent because he or she has culture-specific or culture-general knowledge or is proficient in one or even more languages. More is needed for intercultural competence. It is essentially an interplay of the aforementioned cognitive, behavioral and affective competences. These will be referred to here as mindset, skillset and heartset (cf. Bennett 2008, 18-21).

*The mindset:* The cognitive competencies include culture-specific knowledge and culture-general knowledge which includes the awareness, that every individual uses cultural filters and further identity development patterns, cultural adoption process and what has first priority cultural self-awareness.

*The skillset:* The behavioral competences include skills such as the ability to emphasize, gather appropriate information, listen and perceive accurately, adapt, initiate and maintain relationships, resolve conflicts, observing, analyzing, relating and interpreting, manage social interactions and anxiety.

*The heartset:* The affective dimension is a set of attitudes and motives. Most important is curiosity which is often seen as the key to intercultural competence as well as the initiative of risk taking, further it includes suspension of judgement, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural humility and resourcefulness. (cf. *ibid.*).

These three sets are in close interplay with each other. This interlocking can be explained in more detail with the model for learning intercultural competence on Deardorff (2008). Concrete interactions, the learning of communication strategies, the development of attitudes as well as self-reflexivity determine and influence each other.

#### **5.4 Defining culture**

Before the concept intercultural competence will be looked at in more detail, the concept of culture underlying intercultural competence must be defined. After all, this thesis deals with intercultural interactions between students abroad and the people of the hosting country; here, even if erroneously, the concept of culture in the sense of nations is often still assumed. Furthermore, intercultural competence will be considered against the background of multicultural societies as a whole and with reference to school and multicultural classrooms.

“Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO 2001)

It is important to recognize that culture is learned. Individuals are not born with a genetic imprint of a particular culture. Culture is learned through interactions with parents, other family members, friends and strangers. It is learned in the socialization process and by explanations or observations. Culture is also a set of shared interpretations. This shared set is the crucial link between communication and culture. Except for external objects culture also exists in the minds of individuals in the form of shared meanings of symbols. Some cultures may have the same shared meaning of a symbol, yet this does not apply to every culture. In addition, culture involves beliefs, values, norms, and social practices. All taken together results in the “way of life” of the members of a culture. Further, culture affects behavior. Assuming culture would only take place in people's minds, one could not

really see what culture is. Shared beliefs, values and norms affect the behavior and result in social patterns. This helps to stabilize interactions over time as it makes it possible to make predictions and also expectations on behavior patterns (cf. Lustig & Koester 2009, 25 ff.). Lastly, and which needs to be emphasized at this point, culture involves larger as well as smaller groups of people. This is also to be clarified by the above definition. Individuals engage with smaller groups of people such as the family, the people one works with every day or in sports clubs and with larger groups which are traditionally associated with what culture is both may influence an individual.

This is best to describe what Rathje (2007, 261 ff.) describes as the coherence-based concept of culture and the cohesion-based concept of culture. The coherence-based concept suggests, that culture functions as a mold which makes people behave and think the same way which unifies them. In the cohesion-based concept culture functions as a glue which connects people Linking the cohesion-based concept of culture to intercultural competence, intercultural competence can be seen as the ability to bring normality about. An intercultural interaction between two people with originally differing cultures, does not need to create a “third culture” in order to make a good interaction possible, but rather “cohesion is established via normality” (Rathje 2007, 263).

This concept of culture is useful when considering the different fields that this thesis is dealing with. Against the background of education, it is claimed that intercultural competence has to be viewed within the teaching and learning context of schools, classrooms and the students. In comparison to bicultural contact, pluralism and a better view must be taken here. Children and adolescents can belong to the first, second or third generation of migrants, which creates new constellations. But socio-cultural differences and backgrounds also play a role. Age, gender, sexual orientation and other factors can also lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. Consequently, intercultural competence does not only refer to the key problem typical of the epoch migration and multiculturalism of society, but rather to dealing with the foreign or other cultures in general. Not only other cultures of origin but also milieu specific or biographic foreignness can pose challenges. In this sense, intercultural competence is required as a quasi-universal competence in foreignness with general personal attitudes such as empathy, acceptance, tolerance of ambiguity, conflict ability and the ability to gain access to other cultures of origin (cf. Fischer 2009, 36).

## **5.5 The complexity of intercultural learning**

The following should be mentioned in advance that the question whether one can learn intercultural competence is interesting for this thesis in two respects. Teacher training

students are themselves still learners, who at some point will be entitled to the role of the teacher. At this point it must be emphasized that by having completed their studies, individuals do not complete their learning processes. It is not for nothing that the importance of lifelong learning is emphasized in our society and that "becoming a teacher" is not seen as a one-off change of roles, but as a development process resulting from the interaction of personal and situation-specific factors (cf. Terhart 2001, 27-28). Thus, (future) teachers are always to be assigned to both groups of actors, that of the learners and at the same time that of the teachers.

Given that intercultural competence consists of many different dimensions and is therefore a highly complex construct, this has consequences for learning (and teaching). The learner can never focus on all aspects at once, even if a learning process takes place unconsciously. Furthermore, different variables are responsible for which component develops. Starting with the already existing skills and already acquired knowledge, current motives, intentions, interests and goals in addition contextual framework conditions and situational requirements are of importance. Consequently, learning in this context is always selective and successive; individual aspects are "updated" in extracts at different points in time. This can be seen in performance, in which other components (such as empathy, tolerance, knowledge of cultural norms) may be required depending on the situation. (cf. Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann 2010, 35-36).

The above models and definitions make it clear that intercultural competence is not only about possessing knowledge about one or more cultures. Culture-general and culture-specific knowledge and understanding of, for example, worldviews, linguistic peculiarities such as proverbs or certain cultural patterns are important part of the cognitive dimension of intercultural competence however, since the concept is so complex and consists of more than one component, further aspects are necessary when it comes to understanding, cooperation or living together in contexts with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Both Deardorff's model and the lists make clear that it requires a certain affective and emotional-motivational readiness of an individual to be open to experiences or ways of thinking, actions or wishes of others. Likewise, self-reflection, self-criticism and the openness to change oneself are important. Such prerequisites cannot be created at the push of a button. It is not only about rationality, but "touches deeper layers of a person". (cf. Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann 2010, 20-21). In such a learning process, affective, emotional and conative dimensions are addressed, i.e. deep layers of cultural and psychosocial identity are touched upon.

The necessary views and attitudes have nothing to do with only expressing noble dispositions or desired or politically correct opinions. "This is the reason why one can talk so much about intercultural competence and still not be able to act (and feel) as this concept suggests" (Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann 2010, 20). Rarely would anyone confess to ethnocentrism, intolerance or xenophobia. But it is often the unconscious motives that determine the actions of an individual. Especially in extreme situations, where more patience, flexibility, empathy or tolerance of ambiguity are required than usually, one may behave ethnocentrically or discriminating and be not even aware of this. Not because it's intentional, but because one cannot help it. Intercultural competence does not mean to approve everything and everyone, but to question things, to reflect on oneself and the others and to take the foreign seriously (cf. Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann 2010, 20-21).

Intercultural competence is not a method that can be learned in a short training course, but arises from a certain background of values. In this sense, the acquisition of intercultural competence is a lifelong task that does not end with a course or anything similar. Individuals must constantly adapt to changes in society and reorient themselves (cf. Veneto Scheib 1998, 43; in: Fischer 2009, 34).

Uedani (2015, 12) leads to the following conclusion. Both as a learner and as a teacher it is legitimate not to overcome the limits of intercultural understanding. Rather, one should try to act, feel and think in such a way that borders remain borders, but one strives to widen them. Considering the concept of culture defined above, boundaries can be different milieus, languages, biographies or contexts of understanding, views on teaching and learning and much more. Moreover, culture is a constantly changing construct and what is in flux cannot be understood once and for all. What can be done, however, is to acknowledge the equivalence of the foreign and the familiar and to give the foreign and the familiar space for their peculiarity (cf. Udeani 2015, 12).

With this thought and the fact that the above-mentioned models represent ideal conceptions whose complete achievement is virtually impossible it is reassuring that despite all the social and political pressure to fulfill the "standard of intercultural competent" (cf. Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann 2010, 32), to know that "no one must have achieved the perfectionist ideal of the interculturally competent person in order to be able to experience encounters and satisfying relationships with people of different cultural origins" (Straub, Nothnagel & Weidemann 2010, 22).

## 6 Student mobility in teacher education

In the previous chapters the background, development, and formats of study-related stays abroad were illustrated. Possible motives, obstacles, effects, benefits and challenges were dealt with. So far, however, there has been no distinction made according to the area of study or the degree programs of students who go abroad. In the following the focus will be on international mobility of teacher training students. First, the quantitative development is observed. Here, it needs to be examined whether the general aspects described earlier also apply to this group of students. The two most common forms of international student mobility, the field of action of the semester abroad and internships, will be described. In addition, it will be discussed which benefits a study-related stay abroad may have for teacher students that are specific for the profession of a teacher.

### 6.1 Quantitative development

Wernisch (2016, 130 ff.) undertakes the try to shed some light on numbers of globally mobile students in teacher education within Europe. By comparing data from different sources, she concludes that it is not possible to make a clear statement about the actual number of mobile student teachers. However, similar to other subject areas below-average rates are displayed. This is why she claims that “teacher education is a field criticized for (comparatively) low [temporary student mobility] levels” (Wernisch 2016, 130) and relevance-based calls to increase international mobility in teacher education as well as deficit-based calls have their legitimation (cf. *ibid.* 134).

Wernisch's findings are also confirmed when looking at the figures, which refer only to student teachers in Germany. The results, on international student mobility, of the 21st Social Survey of the German Student Union in the summer term 2015 show that at that time 28% of students<sup>6</sup> with the intended degree of teaching qualification went abroad for study-related purposes (cf. Middendorff et al. 2017, 20). This figure is more or less in line with the 2015 mobility study (see table 1). Teaching degree students are ranked in third position in 2015, nevertheless, the numbers of the other subjects mainly only differ slightly. In addition, no matter which source one looks at, it is pointed out that this quantitative information must always be treated with caution. Administrative practice varies and thus also the definition of the term "stay abroad". Moreover, data is obtained from different sources<sup>7</sup>, which in turn use different survey methods (cf. Ehrenreich 2004,

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<sup>6</sup> This refers to students of higher semesters enrolled at universities in the 9th to 14th semester. The percentage of teacher training students in all semesters was 17% (cf. Middendorff et al. 2017, 20).

<sup>7</sup> In Germany, the Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, Destatis) is the official provider of administrative student data. Thus, the Federal Statistical Office is also monitoring student mobility which is published in the annual report *Deutsche Studierende im Ausland*. However, in this report it is not clear how

28; Middendorff et al. 2017, 8ff.; Woisch & Willige 2015, 3 ff.). The figures below are therefore more likely to give a rather rough idea of the mobility of German teacher training students.

*Table 1 German students with study-related stays abroad, by subject group, in % of total (2007-2015)*

Subject group	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015
Language, Cultural Sciences and Sports	29	37	31	33	31
Law	23	24	22	22	28
Social Sciences	22	26	25	30	25
Economics	25	28	32	34	46
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	23	19	17	20	23
Medical and Health Sciences	30	33	25	26	28
Agricultural, Forestry and Food Sciences	18	15	21	29	24
Engineering Sciences	16	16	17	18	24
Teaching profession (state examination)	20	27	25	23	29

DAAD//DZHW-Mobility Studies 2007-2015

## 6.2 Obstacles

The reasons given in chapter 3.3 why students do not undertake a stay abroad also apply to teacher training students. Beyond that, however, it is interesting to know what other reasons there might be that specifically relate to student teachers.

One reason surely is that a stay abroad in initial teacher education in Germany is not obligatory. especially not for students with subjects that are not a modern foreign language and, as it seems, not even for those actually studying a foreign language (cf. Ehrenreich 2004, 13; Boye 2016, 16-17). Boye (2016, 16) claims "Although the teaching assistant program and now the Erasmus scheme and other opportunities to travel abroad are popular, students can, if they wish, graduate with a degree in one or more foreign language(s) without ever having left their university town". Ehrenreich (2014, 58-59) reviewed the course information of English studies of German universities with regard to the anchoring of obligatory stays abroad. For the most part, it is only pointed out that a stay abroad is "strongly recommended" or "expected". Only 7 out of 47 English departments in Germany require a stay abroad as part of their English studies. One is the department of the Ludwig-Maximilian's University in Munich. It established the Intercultural Project (ICP) in 2001. "It was introduced as a way to ensure all students who were studying English had to spend time living in a part of the world where English is spoken as a first language [...]" (Boye 2016, 73). The ICP is obligatory for all students with English

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many students have undertaken a stay abroad with the desired degree of teaching qualification. This is because the subjects in the statistics are grouped into cross-groups (cf. Federal Statistical Office 2017).

as a major (students who are studying to become teachers, Bachelor and Master students) and is a minimum eight week stay in an English-speaking country, with pre-departure workshop, de-briefing workshop and written report. The organization of the placements must happen independently and may be an employment, voluntary work, an internship or au pair (cf. *ibid.* 74).

Moreover, at some higher education institutions the importance of a stay abroad has already been incorporated. Two schools of education in *Baden-Württemberg* offer a course of study with an integrated, obligatory stay abroad. The “European Teaching Degree”, *Europalehramt* (EULA) has been in existence at the University of Education Karlsruhe since 1999 and can only be studied in Baden-Württemberg at the Schools of Education Karlsruhe and Freiburg. Besides the specific BLL/CLIL contents, as well as the educational sciences and a foreign language (English or French), another subject is studied. A further subject is added in the teaching profession for the lower secondary level and at primary level German or Mathematics.

These possibilities only apply to students of a modern foreign language, however at the University of Education Heidelberg offers an extra-curricular certificate for students of all subjects, which is not mandatory. With the individual, study-accompanying profiling one can obtain the international "Global Citizen" certificate. It should serve the personal development and documentation of key competences with regard to a global citizenship and consists of the four fields, a stay abroad, acquisition of foreign language skills, participation in courses in an international context, international commitment at the university. In addition, it also brings together the offers and projects of the Heidelberg University of Education in the international field and makes them visible. (cf. University of Education Heidelberg).

Another possible explanation could be the lack of incentives with regard to the recruitment process and career prospects in the teaching profession. In contrast to other professions, teachers cannot expect to be treated preferentially when they are given a job or even to receive a higher pay grade. The teaching profession offers a secure employment relationship that is not changed by a stay abroad (cf. Flotzigner-Aigner 2010, 11). This is in part due to the structure of teacher training in all European countries being strongly bound and shaped by national and historical contexts (Stewart 2008, 12). The hiring of teaching staff is the responsibility of the federal states. In Baden-Württemberg, for example, teachers for public schools are recruited according to suitability, qualification and professional performance in accordance with the Civil Service Status Act. The decisive factors are available positions, regional needs, subject combinations and the



average grade (cf. Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport 2018). Also, with regard to career opportunities, the teaching profession offers few incentives (cf. Terhart 2000, 146), which is why a stay abroad as a special "add-on" is of no significance. On the other hand, teacher training in Germany takes place within the framework of the federal education system.

In her study of 2016, Wernisch addresses aspects and problems of internationalization in European teacher training programs. It was in their interest to find out why international mobility among student teachers is still low despite its high relevance in the profession. She found that there was a discrepancy between the offers of formats of stays abroad and the demand. Furthermore, there seems to be a discrepancy between the argumentative objective of internationalization and the actual implementation of the element of student mobility.

Regarding the lack of correspondence between supply and demand of global mobility programs, there is a noticeable tendency that particularly relevant practice-oriented and profession-related program forms are preferred. Moreover, regarding the length of a stay, shorter stays of less than three months are preferred. Yet when taking into consideration which program forms the students' institutions offer it becomes clear that the practice-oriented and profession-related offerings preferred by teacher training students are quantitatively and qualitatively noticeably less represented than the classic semester abroad. Therefore, the 'classic semester abroad' with the support of a program (Erasmus) is with 68%, by far the most frequently implemented form of programs (cf. Wernisch 2017, 10). In contrast Internships abroad are self-organized in more than 50% of cases and only 20% are supported by a program. For the self-organized semesters abroad, only 7% are free movers. Wernisch (2017, 10) claims that this indicates what great motivation students must find if they want to implement a practice-oriented form of a stay abroad. Besides the common worries about financial issues and a delay of study time, she found that most students who show interest in a stay abroad and who are convinced of the additional value of such an undertaking still lack the motivation to act. More pre-organized and shorter programs are preferred because they have a lower inhibition threshold. On the one hand the organizational effort is estimated to be lower, on the other hand students have doubts about the challenges in a foreign environment and the separation from known social environments such as friends and family (cf. Wernisch 2017, 10).

Wernisch (2016) sees a further obstacle in the lack of an international appeal in the study environment of the teaching profession. The presence of an international dimension in study courses is rated higher by students who study a modern foreign language than by

students who do not study a foreign language. The lack of relevance of an international dimension is also reflected in the attitude of university lecturers interviewed. Study-related stays abroad are particularly conducive to the acquisition of foreign languages. The relevance of the international character and its advantages does not seem to be recognized. Therefore, the importance of stays abroad is implicitly and explicitly attributed to students of modern foreign languages only. Furthermore, it seems that it is generally seldom recognized that international mobility can serve to build up profession-relevant competences. While foreign language competence is recognized as an effect of staying abroad, this is not the case for profession-relevant competences, such as reflection competence through being aware of other school systems. The fact that the value of stays abroad for other developments than the improvement of the foreign language is not recognized is in contradiction to the general expectations attributed to teacher training, such as the professional development of competences in dealing with cultural diversity and heterogeneity in the classroom.

As already mentioned, the significance and importance of experience abroad during teacher training seems to have been recognized at national level. However, implementation still needs further development. A promotion of international mobility in teacher education would have to take these obstacles into account. Furthermore, student characteristics must also be considered. The desired target competences and developments of international dimensions can serve as a framework. Furthermore, attention needs to be drawn to the added value of stays abroad with respect to all students of teaching degrees, regardless of their major. This appeal needs to be created among both teacher educators and students.

### **6.3 Appeal**

The Resolution on the Internationalization of Teacher Training (2013) called that "[f]or future generations of teachers, international experience and intercultural competences will be indispensable in order to make use of diversity in classrooms, get to know other learning cultures and concepts and serve as models for cross-border learning" (DAAD). The GWK claims that mobility is particularly important in teacher training education as graduates of these studies, thus, future teachers will have a multiplier function (cf. Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz 2013). In the final report of the commissions set up by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, the multiplier function is again dealt with and, in view of the fact that the young generation should be offered special educational offers in preparation for an international career, it is considered

appropriate that teachers "should have gained their own experience abroad in at least one of the three phases of their educational career" (cf. Terhart 2000, 77-78).

Against this background, the question arises as to why a stay abroad for teacher training students has not long been an obligatory part of the curriculum. However, this question lies in the national and university political sphere and is therefore not explained in more detail. The following chapter however, tries to give other possible reasons what might teacher students hinder from going abroad.

#### **6.4 Field of action**

As Hopkins (1999) stated, study-related stays abroad

take many forms, but all share the characteristic that, by their very nature, they provide students with a healthy dose of experiential learning. Immersing oneself in another culture provides new opportunities for learning-by-doing, virtually twenty-four hours a day (p. 36).

Thus, the field of action of the temporary stays abroad can offer students an extensive and heterogeneous context for experiences. A semester or an internship abroad can thus also be described as an experience-oriented element during the course of study. The opportunities that are offered mainly result from the fact that things are different - that life is different. Ideally, students should be able to immerse themselves in the reality of the host country and not only stay there, but live there even if it is only for a limited time. Students abroad naturally navigate in a new, culturally different context. Often the same activities take place as at home: encounters with people, learning, teaching, working, daily life, but all this is happening in a new framework in which different cultural backgrounds, values and beliefs are prevailing. Learning how to deal with these unfamiliar conditions is not only important or necessary but also might give the impulse for gains in any respect.

##### *Semester abroad*

At a host university abroad, students navigate in a different academic and higher education system with different learning forms, methods, teaching content, performance requirements, assessment procedures and possibly other role attribution (learner and teacher) (cf. Nothnagel 2010, 436). Another point is the socio-cultural environment. There are different reference groups that can be of importance during the stay. They do not only consist of foreign persons, but also of people who most probably have a different cultural background, so that the social network is more international. In addition to members of the host country (students, lecturers, other members of the host university, host family, possibly roommates), there may also be other international students. However, the social contacts from the host country usually have a formal character. The "internationals"

usually play a greater role, especially in leisure activities. In literature and in the European context these groups of international students are often critically referred to as "Erasmus bubbles" (cf. Nothnagel 2010, 438). This criticism stems from the paradox that students often go abroad with the aim of getting to know "the country and its people" and then move mainly in these same "bubbles" of international students or even students from the own country and the contact time with members of the host country is rather low. Yet contact with nationals of the country is seen as the "supposed key which gives access to the culture of the host country and thus to a certain extent to a genuine cultural experience" (cf. *ibid.*). Even though this enclave is often point of criticism of study abroad programs, it still offers possibilities with regard to dealing with intercultural difference. Development of intercultural competence is not only tied to interaction with people from the host country. Furthermore, with regard to (self-)reflection of comparable experiences (of differences) these "bubbles" of internationals on a personal level might offer an important point of reference (cf. Nothnagel 2010, 437-438).

#### *Internship abroad*

An internship abroad also offers a different learning environment in the host country. It can be differentiated into two interactive dimensions of learning. Both the workplace and the new living environment offer opportunities for learning and development (cf. Flotzinger-Aigner 2013, 321). With regard to student teachers, here it is assumed that internships do not take place in a company, but in the educational or pedagogical field, in particular at a school abroad. According to Flotzinger-Aigner (2013, 7), an educational internship abroad is characterized by gaining work experience abroad, professional learning in authentic situations and practicing in the field of education and training, which means that students do not only observe but also get involved and active in the work and processes (cf. *ibid.*, 27). Consequently, the school system can be experienced in a different cultural context. While observing, but also in exchange with the teaching staff, and through getting actively involved (e.g. own teaching) students have the opportunity to gain insights in and practice of professional tasks of teachers at schools abroad (cf. *ibid.*). This may include into other methodical and didactic procedures and approaches, attitudes and beliefs. Additionally, they might get to know the foreign general framework conditions such as school buildings, class sizes, material used but also policies and the overall structure of the countries education system. Since internships are usually not organized for groups, or there are so-called groups of internationals or buddy programs, as it is the case with a study semester, the socio-cultural environment as well as the social network during an internship might vary. In addition to the teachers at the workplace, contacts with flatmates or neighbors or during leisure activities, trips or language courses can also be established. If the intern is

assigned a mentor in the host institution, e.g. a teacher from the host school, the mentor will probably be the reference person. Furthermore, he or she will most likely also interact with other teachers and possibly with other interns abroad. In addition, it depends on the living situation and leisure activities of the intern. The cultural background of the individual interaction partners can be different. This depends entirely on whether, for example, it is a German or international school or a regular school.

## **6.5 Teaching-specific outcomes**

The earlier mentioned tendency for students to see the opportunity in a stay abroad, in discovering something new and to develop personally is also reflected in the expectations of students studying to become teachers. Regarding the motives of teacher training students to undertake a stay abroad, experiencing also comes first, followed by language learning. Developments in personality are considered more important than the improvement in career opportunities, which has a similar significance to that of academic education. Social recognition appears to be the least important (cf. Woisch & Willige 2015, 70 ff.).

Since the efficiency and variety of possible benefits mentioned above generally also apply to student teachers (cf. Cushner 2007, 30), it becomes clear that this undertaking has a much wider range of outcomes to offer, regarding both academic knowledge and personal growth. Increased cultural knowledge, a global perspective, increased self-confidence, openness for foreign attitudes, more flexibility, language skills and intercultural sensitivity and competence are essential in everyday life as well as working life. Therefore, they are not related only to specific groups of individuals, jobs or professions but rather universal as they are part of general education. Thus, it is indisputable that these competences and attitudes are of great importance for the teacher profession as well. In the context of teacher education however special interest lies in what opportunities does the abroad experience offer for teacher training students that might be teaching-specific competencies or attitudes or knowledge (cf. Leutwyler 2014, 107).

According to Cushner (2007, 28), “few strategies have the ability to impact the interpersonal dimension better than participation in a sustained, direct intercultural immersion experience like that which occurs during overseas student teaching”. By being exposed to new pedagogical approaches and educational philosophies teacher training students may gain self-knowledge and a greater understanding of both global and domestic diversity (cf. *ibid.*, 30). In specifically looking at the nature of international student teaching abroad, researcher found that there are several possibilities for confrontations and observations that might help teacher training student to develop a

differentiated perspective. Cushner (2007, 30 ff.) claims that possible learning gains may be learning about self and others, changes development of empathy, increased self-confidence and efficacy and an impact on global mindedness, intercultural sensitivity and domestic diversity. Leutwyler (2014, 109 ff) states that besides changes in teachers' beliefs they may gain a more global orientation in teaching, a teaching-specific flexibility and more patience with foreign-language speakers. Moreover, (future) teachers feel more prepared for unexpected situations and more motivated to teach intercultural more challenging settings (Leutwyler & Lottenbach 2008, 11). They show more self-confidence in their own teaching competence and report on "thinking in alternatives" and "relativizing one's own perspective". Students studying a modern foreign language report on better foreign language competence and professional benefit, as well as more self-confidence in language teaching (cf. Leutwyler & Lottenbach 2008, 11-12). Increasing independence, more flexibility and increased tolerance are also reported. In general, students perceive the professional benefit of their stay in the sense of general personality development. They emphasize that this is also very important in the teaching profession (ibid., 12).

Many studies report such results. Leutwyler & Lottenbach (2008), however, also examined occupation-specific replacements at other levels. So far, few studies in this format have been carried out. They examined students who had completed either a semester abroad or an internship at a school. However, these who studied abroad also had the opportunity to gain insight in teaching by observing lesson or by teaching on their own. The investigated levels included, the view on the domestic school system, the own teacher training and the benefit for the future occupation. One result that stands above everything is that the perception of one's own was also affected by the confrontation with the other. Through the foreign, the view of one's own could be sharpened.

Regarding the school system, a relativizing of the point of view could be achieved. Material and personnel resources are compared with those in the home country, as are the social and political influencing factors and what "good school" means. Depending on where the stay took place, it can lead to a higher appreciation of the own school system, but also to a relativizing and a more critical position. With regard to the organization of the school, the views on the cooperation of teachers in teams, the daily structure, structural framework conditions, the involvement of parents and the function and role of the school administration were better reflected. What is taken for granted in one's own country can work even better or not at all elsewhere (ibid., 8).

Also, regarding the teaching profession or the role as a teacher, it was recognized that one is more or less appreciated in this profession depending on the country, also with

regard to salary. More important, however, is which function a teacher is supposed to have, for example, if he is only there to communicate content. Many students more consciously reflect on the role of the teacher and come to beliefs about what role they want to play as future teachers (ibid., 9).

In relation to teaching, more conscious reflection takes place and more differentiated ideas are developed as to what good teaching is. Teaching culture can be perceived differently, or individual elements of it can be perceived differently. It does not matter whether these differences are positive or negative. The confrontation with the differently perceived teaching style can promote one's own idea of normal, intended or good teaching. However, not many students were able to gain concrete impulses for their own future teaching. Many report that they did not have the opportunity to try something new, that they were too much determined by others. However, topics such as open forms of teaching, student activation and specific teaching content or topics were addressed (ibid., 9 ff).

Lastly, by contrast, a different view of teacher training in the home institution could be established. The difference in quality in education either leads to more appreciation or allows a more critical view of strengths and weaknesses. While some students feel that their education at home is too didactic, others feel well prepared for the teaching profession (ibid., 10-11).

The study shows that by experiencing and recognizing differences, perception can be sharpened on patterns of school, teaching and the teaching profession in one's own country as well as in another. However, it is also stressed that these positive results do not affect all students. This is argued because everyone has other individual prerequisites such as openness to new things, interest and tolerance for ambiguity. The question of appropriate program support is also raised in the sense of preparation, support and follow-up. A difference between the program forms could not be ascertained. This is attributed to the fact that the students who completed a semester stay also had the opportunity to teach or observe lessons. This leads to the conclusion that opportunities for internships have a high importance for teaching-specific and profession related outcomes (Leutwyler & Lottenbach 2008, 16-17).

## **6.6 Necessity and the role of experience in intercultural education**

Not since yesterday different aspects and themes promote the discussions about fostering the inclusion of international dimensions in teacher education degree programs across Europe and also in Germany (cf. Wernisch 2016, 98). Societal developments, socio-cultural changes and pluralization but also effects of globalization have impact on

classroom realities and thus on school systems and educational goals. These new needs for the young generation put new demands on the education and competences of teachers (cf. *ibid.*).

Germany has been on the road of becoming a modern immigration country<sup>8</sup> since the recruitment agreement with Italy in 1955. In the last 50 years migrants and their descendants have become part of the German social structure. According to the last census in 2011, almost 6 million foreigners and a further 9 million "Germans with a migration background" live in Germany. The 15 million people with a migration background make up 19 percent of Germany's population. The multi-ethnic segment of the German social structure has thus increased almost tenfold since 1960, and it is foreseeable that it will continue to grow in the next two decades. That is why Germany is faced with the task of enabling them to participate in social life (cf. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung).

However, Gogolin and Krüger-Potratz show that heterogeneity in schools should not only be reduced to the aspect of migration. One group should not be seen as the "causer" or "victim" of heterogeneity. Difference is due to the different life circumstances of individuals within a group resulting from social or economic status, gender, health constitution, cultural background or language(s). (cf. Gogolin & Krüger-Potratz 2010, 12-13). This leads to the pluralization of different life styles and a changed view on childhood and youth. (cf. Terhart 2000, 34ff.).

In the view of social sciences of some two or three decades ago, social life was seen to happen in *structures* or systems, and human beings were defined, if not even determined, by their roles and *interests* which could be derived from their position in the social order. [...] More recently though, such language has fallen out of fashion. Social life now appears to be ordered by meanings and beliefs; human beings live together in *cultures*, and they recognize the similarity or strangeness of the other not by their class locations but by their identities (Friese & Wagner 1999, 101).

Against the background of ongoing globalization, migration, European coalescence, and the refugee movements the demand to educate in an intercultural way is more and more included in education policies in Germany. Only in 1996 the German Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States (Kultusministerkonferenz, KMK) formulated recommendations for intercultural education in schools. In this orientation frame work intercultural education is defined as cross-sectional task of the institution school in all *subjects* and as goal of better understanding minorities, "the intercultural aspect is not to be isolated in individual topics, subjects or projects, but a

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<sup>8</sup> For detailed overviews of the history of migration flows in Germany and the internationalization of educational sciences and pedagogy see Gogolin & Krüger-Potratz 2010; Auernheimer 2012.



cross-sectional task in the school. (cf. KMK 1996/2013). Further the term intercultural competence is used:

School is overburdened with the realisation of the social claim to guarantee coexistence on equal terms of minorities and the majority. Nevertheless, school can help to prevent minorities from being excluded and promote attitudes according to which cultural diversity is perceived as enrichment and as a desirable challenge. Intercultural competence is a key qualification for all children and teenagers; it contributes to the private and professional planning of each individual's life and helps to secure the life chance of the following generations (KMK 1996 English translation adopted from the translated version in: Allemann-Ghionda 2011, 53).

The realization of such a recommendation requires teachers who have the key qualification themselves (cf. Bender-Szymanski 2013, 201). If intercultural competence is to be regarded as an element of pedagogical professionalism, this raises the question of qualification measures for teachers and hence also for teacher training. It is claimed that prospective teachers should acquire appropriate qualifications in both the first and second phases of their training (cf. Neumann & Reuter 2004, 804). The aim is to change the widespread concept of intercultural education as a combination of "repair pedagogy" for immigrant children and "tolerance training" for domestic children (ibid.). Therefore, dealing with plurality, difference and equality is also increasingly understood as a cross-cutting task in teacher training. However, the reality looks different teachers still express the need for professionalization in dealing and teaching multicultural and multilingual classrooms (Eurydice 2015, 57-62). The need is similar high across all age groups which implies that within the last decades teacher education has not changed in respect to prepare teachers better for diversity (ibid.).

The need to sensitize prospective teachers seems to be important. This can also be seen from a study conducted among trainee teachers in Germany in their second training phase, who for the first time are exposed to prolonged contact with multicultural classrooms. The effort to overcome experienced barriers and the reflection of one's own usual cultural norms and rules in the school context regarding appropriateness in intercultural communication and cooperation is not always successful (cf. Bender-Szymanski 2013, 201 ff.).

In addition, institutional discrimination is also a recurring theme (cf. Wolf-Almanasreh 2006, 196 ff.) and in this context the social or cultural categorization of children and adolescents described in the literature as "labeling". This is based on non-reflected, universally accepted ideas and values. Teachers use socio-ecological and milieu-theoretical explanatory patterns for the interpretation of pupils' performance and behavior. Own activity and that of the school are principally not reflected (cf. Wolf-Almanasreh 2006, 199).

Furthermore, the culture of a country seems to have an influence on socialization processes and thus on the learning and teaching of teachers. In international comparative educational research, a simplified distinction is made between two major cultures. In the countries of East Asia, this is the collectivist eastern culture and in continental Europe the individualist western culture. This results in different focal points regarding knowledge acquisition (basic skills and content orientation on the one hand and creativity and process orientation on the other). This is reflected in different teaching and learning styles and a different understanding of teacher roles and teacher education.

In the East, for example, the pattern of frontal teaching, teacher as technical authority, rote learning, extrinsic motivation is pursued, and in the West that of individual learning processes, group work, teacher as pupil-oriented pedagogical specialist, comprehension orientation, meaningful learning, intrinsic motivation (cf. Blömeke 2014, 442). Even if these two directions are presented here in an exaggerated way, it is of great importance for teachers who have children with a migration background in the classroom and who have possibly already been taught in an institution in their home country for teacher-pupil interaction (cf. *ibid.*).

A positive stabilized interaction is crucial for good teaching and learning however, also content wise (future) teacher can benefit from what they experienced. It was not always the case that schools and lessons should be given an international dimension. With the former monocultural orientation of schools, cultural content was conveyed only in the form of the so-called "Heimatkunde" or "Sachkunde". Today, however, children and adolescents no longer live in monocultural environments. The foreigner is right next door and you constantly encounter them. "Consequently, we need to integrate young learners' environments and prepare them for intercultural encounters (Legutke, Müller-Hartmann & Schocker-v. Ditfurth 2009, 85). Therefore, it needs teachers that are self-confident and enthusiastic with intercultural topics. Pure factual knowledge cannot provide this, and yet a first-hand experience can lead to this enthusiasm and provide an authentic lesson (cf. Woodman 2008, 140). This is of especially strong importance for foreign language teachers as it is the most obvious that culture learning happened in foreign language lesson only for a long time (Risager 2007, 5 ff).

Besides the international competences that teachers need to teach in a more culturally diverse setting and integrate an intercultural dimension into the teaching, they must also function as multipliers and should be role models with regard to mobility, knowledge, skills and attitudes (cf. Wernisch 2016, 103).

## 7 Implications for global mobility programs

Lived intercultural experience, for which a study-related stay abroad might deliver, can lead to a developed range of knowledge, attitudes and skills and above all foster the understanding of other cultures and people. As “[h]umans, as social beings, learn best in situations when the complexity of social reality is encountered, examined and understood” (Cushner 2007, 36). Studying or teaching in a setting culturally different than one’s own is a great opportunity for teacher training students to develop and learn, even with its limitations and challenges.

It must be borne in mind that every format of study-related stays abroad offers opportunities for learning processes, for experimental learning and learning by contrast. Nonetheless, whether knowledge and skills can be acquired and developed that are specific to the teaching profession also depends on the format.

Furthermore, it must be considered that students are often left to their own devices in a foreign environment, must find their way around and that this can trigger psychological stress and even health problems. The same applies to the return of students to their home countries. Transitions are not always easy to master. Being aware of the phenomena of culture shock and reentry shock, students, as well as program leaders and student educators at the home institution, should not underestimate how emotionally powerful a stay abroad is. Transitions can be difficult and put a lot of stress on a student. The process of adaption in the new country, with its culture, people customs, climate, structures, social infrastructure and the entire new experience of living in an unfamiliar environment is highly demanding in affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects. As Paige (1993, 1) states “communicating and interacting with culturally different others is psychologically intense”. Intercultural educators claim that the entire sojourn need to be looked at in a broader context. Cultural (re)adoption should be conceptualized as a process and culture shock and reentry shock as phases within this process (Martin 1993, 302). La Brack (1993) speaks of “the missing linkage” between orientation and reentry. He highlights the importance of providing students a well-designed orientation prior to the cultural immersion, as well as the offer of a structured and thoughtful setting upon return to assist students to achieve positive cultural adjustment and analyze the impact of the foreign culture experience and the impact of reentry into their own culture and society (ibid., 242). A body of literature on the education of intercultural experience has meanwhile also developed, for which it has been long recognized that:

“[...] most students abroad are at this point not learning to negotiate cultural differences, whether inside or outside the classroom, unless educators intervene in their learning in ways that help them to develop

the types of knowledge and skills that will allow them to shift perspective and adapt behavior to new and often challenging cultural contexts” (Vande Berg, Paige & Lou 2012, xiv).

Knowledge about the country and its culture as well as explanations about the phenomena culture shock, adjustment and reentry shock help to anticipate stressors. Knowing about certain patterns can help to better classify confusion, ambiguity and disorientation and also make it predictable that the high stress one is exposed to is normal and can be overcome (Weaver 1993, 150-151). Moreover, La Brack (1993, 242) outlines to encourage also the students to see their stay abroad not as an isolated phase but as an ongoing process of change and growth in the larger educational context of each student.

This view of cultural learning is also suggested by Dehmel, Li & Sloane (2011, 28) who indicates that “[h]igher education institutions miss the opportunity to use the study abroad programs for the development of their students’ intercultural competence” and he suggests “systematic and holistic pedagogical designs at higher education level”. Also, Nothnagel (2010, 433) sees the need to better integrate the often “lonely” stay abroad during the course of studies into the curriculum. Preparation and follow-up work are often missing, and there is seldomly a back reference within further course of studies to experiences or knowledge gained abroad.

Exposure to a foreign culture cannot and should not be completely structured. The unpredictability and uncertainty are what makes such experiences valuable. Critical incidents result from the interplays between the student and the foreign culture and its people. Such incidents are can be predicted and should not be arranged in an artificial setting, and therefore some foreknowledge can be helpful. (Savicki, Binder & Heller 2008, 111)

Self-reflection in form of analyzing observed local patterns of behavior and one’s own reaction to these patterns should be an explicit part of study abroad programs. However, this needs special pedagogical skills and foundation in intercultural and developmental theory (cf. Selby 2008, 2). Therefore, students should be provided insight into these aspects. Also, as this learning process is so laborious, special attention should be paid to intercultural competence.

Ehrenreich (2004, 432), based on appropriate preparation, proposes a two-part assignment. On the one hand, this includes self-reflective work on the professional self and, on the other hand, ethnographically oriented observation and investigation of a selected aspect of the school and teaching culture of the target country. In this way it

would be conceivable to establish links that allow application back in the home country and to one's educational biography.

The shift in focus for why a stay abroad is worthwhile, from an appraisal of the sheer numbers of students going abroad to the quality of their experiences abroad and the outcomes of stays abroad (Engle & Engle 2003, 1) should be considered and appreciated. Therefore, measures should be taken by higher education institutions and teachers not to see a stay abroad as something isolated in the academic and professional careers of teacher training students, but to integrate it in such a way that it can be benefited from in the best possible way.

## **8 Research**

*“Students themselves are the most articulate sources of information about the value of study abroad [...]” (Hopkins 1999, n.p.).*

This part of the thesis contains a study and its findings which included the participation of five student teachers at the University of Education in Karlsruhe who had a study-related stay abroad in Laos, Norway, Israel or Argentina. In the following section, the research interest and the methodical procedure are described, and the results provided. Due to the background of the researcher, the focus on the students in the Laos is deeper.

### **8.1 Research question**

Against the background of the findings described above, it became clear that study-related stays abroad in teacher education, albeit with limitations, can contribute to the development of a range of competences, knowledge and attitudes which are or can also be recognized as profession-specific for the teachers. Then again it might also pose challenges on them they have to cope with. Most of the studies however, were quantitative which often includes questionnaires that limit participants’ responses and thus these might be circumscribed. This current research explores how teacher students themselves perceive the experience of a semester stay or an internship abroad. The study aims to examine which experiences five student teachers of the University of Education in Karlsruhe, Germany made and whether they consider these as meaningful themselves and with regard to their future profession. It is sought for indications of intercultural competence, personal traits and knowledge gained related to the abroad experience. Yet no claim is made to measure intercultural competence nor personal development or to test specific knowledge. Rather, the interviews are intended to shed light on the students’ subjective self-assessment of their stay abroad with regard to these aspects. In addition, it is questioned what their motives were to undertake a stay abroad and whether they had to face difficulties.

### **8.2 Methodology**

For this investigation it was chosen to conduct semi-structured one-to-one interviews by talking to the participants face-to-face. The advantage of the semi-structured interview was seen in the fact that it includes has a clear list of questions to be addressed and answered, however the interviewer is flexible in terms of the order in which topics are considered. What is even more important is that it leaves the interviewee space for developing ideas, elaborating points of interest and to speak in a broader way about a topic raised by the interviewer (cf. Denscombe 2014, 186). The one-to-one setting was

chosen in order to better be able to locate ideas in the data analysis. In one-to-one interviews opinions and thoughts only, stem from one source. In addition, it is easier to control as the interviewer has to guide only one person through the interview (ibid., 187). Choosing a qualitative approach for this investigation was not arbitrary. Often qualitative research is criticized due to the small numbers of participants which does not allow to draw generalizations. It is not claimed that generalization might be drawn from these cases but what is important here are the students' personal perceptions of what they have gained and how they changed and developed. Thus, findings from this inquiry ought to contribute to an understanding of how experiences of stays abroad can be academically and personally meaningful for pre-service teachers. It is not to show what has to happen in general but rather what happened in a particular case. Qualitative research methods justify their approach in contrast to quantitative research methods with the specific character of their subject. They reconstruct meaning or subjective perspectives in general described as subjective sense, everyday theory, subjective theory, patterns of interpretation, concepts or constructions of reality, patterns of coping or narrative identity (cf. Helfferich 2011, 21-22). The research mission of qualitative research methods is understanding. It is worked with linguistic expressions which cannot be captured through the methodical approach of standardized research, i.e. through measurement. An example here would be that certain concepts, e.g. the meaning on terms used in interviews, are not agreed on in advance to have a common meaning. Rather, this specific meaning on which a statement is based is to be interpreted in the evaluation. Qualitative research thus leaves room for a different meaning of researchers and of the interviewees. It examines the constitution of meaning, which in standardized research is already complete and given as a basis for understanding (cf. ibid., 22).

### **8.3 Sample**

The researcher sampled from the population of the University of Education Karlsruhe by asking for volunteers for an interview in an English course. This course was attended by students of higher semesters (most of them close to graduation) and also international students during summer term 2018. Before volunteers were asked for the interviews, however, criteria were established. It was looked for students who had either been to Laos, the USA, Israel or Norway. The selection of exactly these countries was made in order to have a wide range of perceived culturally different countries and with respect to the mobility program offers at the University of Education Karlsruhe. Due to the background of the researcher, Laos should definitely be represented as a host country. Students were asked to sign up for a list asking for the host country as well as contact details. Six students from the University of Education Karlsruhe with English as a major

who were in Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Scotland, USA, Canada, Australia and Sweden (some stayed in two or more countries, the stays lasted between 2 months to 8 months) were contacted. The students received an invitation via e-mail. The responses were spotty. Initially, only English students were asked to participate. However, since no feedback was received, further work to find participants was carried out without considering the main subjects.

The final study-related stay abroad sample consisted of five participants. The participants were all female students of the University of Education in Karlsruhe and at the time of the interview, they were in their sixth, seventh or eighth study semester. All of them are German citizens, one of them with a migration background. Their age was between 23 and 25. All had prior experience abroad and also experience with regard to teaching in German schools or other pedagogical work.

#### **8.4 Interviews and data analysis**

The questions for the interviews were developed in such a way to have an instrument that would cover different kinds of learning outcomes that might be derived from a stay abroad but highlighting intercultural learning opportunities and learning outcomes specific to the teacher profession. The questions were kept rather general in order to give the interviewees room to manoeuvre for answers and to get a broad range of answers. Due to the absence of a pre-sojourn interview and comparison and as it was not clear whether specific goals were set and monitored before during and after the stay it was not possible to ask more detailed or precise questions. These, however, arose partially during the interview. Furthermore, it should be sufficiently generic to work across a wide variety of programs and countries or rather cultures. Additionally, questions regarding the students' background, demographic questions and questions regarding their international experience and their practical experience in educational or school settings were asked.

The interview situations were designed neutrally and in an informal setting. The dates for the interviews were set by the students to avoid that they might be tense or under time pressure. As both the interviewee and the interviewer have the status of a student, the participants were very relaxed and had no inhibitions to speak openly. This was important to avoid that the participants might possibly have the feeling they would be tested. In three of the five cases the interviewee and interviewer did not know each other before, but the introductory conversation at the beginning to collect the personal data created a familiar atmosphere.

After the interview most felt a little exhausted. However, they confirmed that they found the interview highly interesting. Three participants said that they of course already had



thought about their stay several times but had never reflected it so consciously and intensively and were thankful to participate.

Students were free to choose whether they wanted to conduct the interview in German or English. This decision was based on the fact that not everyone speaks English fluently in order to avoid misunderstandings and to get as detailed information as possible. To articulate oneself in a foreign language in such a way as to communicate really every thought can lead to a shortened representation of one's own thoughts due to missing vocabulary. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed according to simplified rules of conversation analysis. For the sake of authenticity and relevance of the students' statements, the answers were not translated into English.

With respect to data analysis the method used was phenomenological. This method involves four steps. First the entire material is gone through to make a general sense of the whole. In a second pass, words or sentences are marked to indicate units of meaning. Then these sentences are sorted and thematic clusters are formed and a report is created. In a concluding step the reports are compared and commonalities in the thematic clusters across the participants are explored (cf. Mayring 2016, 108-109).

The interest of the interpretation of the data lies in patterns and regularities that lie behind phenomena. Interpretive analysis of the data is a matter of providing an understanding rather than providing results that are the objective, universal truth. Cultural and historical backgrounds will be inevitably reflected and the researcher's personal values and experiences influence the interpretations. Consequently, any theory produced will be value-laden but as mentioned before the aim is not to discover regularities that exist objectively in the social world but rather a viable account for how things work and relate (Denscombe 2014, 244).

## 8.5 Participants context

The five students interviewed had different lengths of stay in four different countries. In addition to country of stay and duration, there were also differences in type of mobility, and accommodation.

Table 2: Participants overview

	Susie	Lola	Kim	Jannika
<b>Host country</b>	Laos	Laos	Argentina	Israel
<b>Duration of stay</b>	4 months	2 months	10 weeks	7 months
<b>Form of mobility</b>	Internship/ voluntary work at a lao school	Internship/ voluntary work at a lao school	Free mover; internship at a German school	Free mover, internship at an American school
<b>Accommodation</b>	In a house together with a German team	In a house together with a German team	Lived with a teacher from her intern school	Lived with an elderly American couple
<b>tasks</b>	Teaching English to Lao teachers, observing lessons, giving didactical advice to Lao teachers, extracurricular work with children	Teaching English to Lao teachers, observing lessons, giving didactical advice to Lao teachers, extracurricular work with children	Observing lesson in German, team- teaching together with other teachers	Observing lessons, working with students in one-to- one settings, taught only a few lessons

"Teaching English in Laos" is a project that was developed in cooperation with the foundation "Angels for Children" and Prof. Dr. Isabel Martin from the English Department of the University of Education Karlsruhe. The "Angels for Children foundation supports three government schools in the villages Sikeud and Ban Phang Heng, located close to the capital city Vientiane in Laos. Two primary schools and one lower secondary school are supported financially by renovating and maintaining the school buildings and by the provision for better learning. This also includes to improve the teaching quality which is aimed to be reached in cooperation with the University of Education of Karlsruhe, Germany. Teacher education in Laos which is regarded as one of the least developed countries is rather poor. Every year volunteers from the University of Education are send to work and live in Laos for 2 to 6 months. Together with Lao teachers of English, Science or Math they work in tandems in order to support the Lao teachers. Besides teaching and enhancing the Lao teachers' English the German volunteers observe their lesson and give them advice how they can improve their teaching didactically and methodologically.

Besides this the German volunteers also work with the children by offering extracurricular activities e.g. an English Games Club, Singlish or doing experiments in English in the science laboratory.

Student teacher who participate in this project will be prepared in advance Prof. Dr. Isabel Martin, as she is one of the project leaders. In the seminar students will receive information about the work and tasks on site. They also have opportunities to meet with former volunteers and exchange in order to be better prepared. During the stay volunteers may address the project leaders if they have difficulties or face challenges any time. After the stay volunteers join the next preparatory course in order to prepare the next volunteers similar to a post work.

Free movers are students who organize their stay abroad independently. Instead of making use of programs or partner institutions of the International Office, free movers apply themselves to institutions abroad. According to this, they also have to organize their own accommodation. There is no organization, support and supervision by a program.

## **8.6 Researcher's context**

Since in research one does not hover over things in an all-knowing manner, but is inherently part of them, the researchers positioning needs to be stated in the following. I am teacher student of the University of Education Karlsruhe in the course of studies for primary schools with the subjects German, English, Mathematics and Sciences. The interest in the study arose from the fact that I myself took part in numerous exchange programs during my school days. These took place in England, the USA, France and China and were justified by language or cultural learning. Back in school, however, the experiences that were made were never used. In adulthood I travelled further in the Asian region, which resulted in a kind of passion for Asian countries and their differences to discover. Therefore, I also became aware of project "Teaching English in Laos" (see chapter 8.6) that was offered at my teacher training college. I took part in the project twice in 2017/18 first for 2 months and then again for 3 ½ months.

Up to the time before my time in Laos I thought I was worldly-wise through my numerous journeys. I thought I knew what it was like to be abroad. This attitude changed after my first stay in Laos. I realized that there is a big difference between travelling in a country as a tourist and actually living and working there. I became aware that it makes a difference to know "In two weeks I will be home again and I have no obligations here" and "I want to do my work well here and get along with the people because I work and live with them". Shortly I became aware of how blindly I have gone through the world so far. After my second stay, this horizon continued to grow. After the experience of a violent reentry

shock, I slowly realized in which areas I had grown in relation to my future work as a teacher. The framework that had expanded to include immersion in culture and personal development was only extended. In Laos I found access to try out new things and to profit from them. To accompany students over a certain period of time, to plan everything self-determined up to the unavoidable tests - here I saw the difference, which I could not see in my internships in Germany which were determined by others. Also, what it means to work in a team with other volunteers and not only be "the intern" in the teacher's room and what it feels like to be able to create and innovate something yourself e.g. by using new media tools you felt uncertain of before, by planning and implementing extracurricular clubs or by getting to run a school's science laboratory which was rarely used before. However, it took time to realize this. I became aware of many things only in the exchange with other students, because I partly helped with the preparation of the next teams of volunteers and in exchange with my professor. My perspective was extended from "I had a great time abroad" to "and have learned to be more confident, to try new things, to find alternatives, to learn from mistakes, to try to see it from the point of view of the other, not every teaching method that is highly praised suits every student". Like a curtain that suddenly rises.

Since I was still in contact with the other volunteers after my stay, I was able to observe how they integrated their experiences into their studies. Some of their papers were written on the subject of Asia, culture and teaching. As two students asked me whether I could help them to develop ideas for their exam topics I recognized that also other areas were influenced. A network has grown and is still growing with which one is in active exchange and advises each other. This resulted in my interest in how other students assess their stay abroad and whether this confirms what previous research on the subject has established.

## **8.7 Findings**

In the following, the analyzed data are presented. Pseudonyms have been used for the participants to protect their anonymity. Institutions and places stayed unchanged.

### **8.7.1 Susie**

Susie is studying to become an English, Biology and Geography teacher at secondary school. With her studies in geography she also explains her passion to travel. "*As a geography teacher you must know and have seen the world*". Besides two weeks of travelling to Russia and Israel, she has also been to South America, Namibia and the Philippines. In terms of practical experience in the school context, she has already

completed a voluntary social year after school and all mandatory internships during her studies. Her PP took place during her stay abroad at the school in Laos. In terms of her motives why she wanted to go abroad she mentions that she wanted to have the experience it becomes clear that she is doing it to prove something to herself. She sees her stay abroad as a challenge in itself, a challenge that she wants to master.

Ich wollte auf jeden Fall mal das Erlebnis haben, dass ich mal Ausland gelebt haben, einfach so für mich, damit ich weiß, dass ich kann. So lange von zu Hause weg sein und ich komme mit der Situation irgendwie klar und ich kann mich auch in eine neue Gesellschaft, also mir fremde Gesellschaft integrieren.

With regard to her studies and profession she was eager to make a school related experience in a different country to see how things are different. Moreover, this was also an opportunity for her to complete her PP. Even if her major is English she did not decide to an English-speaking country. For her, the primary focus was not on the country, but on the experience itself, as well as on the financial factor. An internship, which was fully financed, made it possible for her to fulfil her wish to go abroad. She did not have any concerns before her stay as she said that due to the preparation she could already get in touch with the other volunteers and get a rough picture of what she would have to expect, which made it less feel to be thrown in at the deep end. Regarding her personal development she says that she became more flexible, spontaneous, and relaxed. This helps her to react better and quicker to difficult situations. Moreover, it is easier to accept things and also people and their shortcomings and also one's own mistakes. As a reason for this development she describes the experience of having dealt with recurring failures.

Ich habe gemerkt, dass ich mehr an Flexibilität und an Gelassenheit gewonnen habe und auch schneller in Situationen zu reagieren. Auch Fehler von anderen habe ich dadurch gelernt, leichter zu akzeptieren, dass ich da nichts dran ändern muss und manchmal auch einfach nicht ändern kann, und dann muss man damit halt einfach so wie es ist damit umgehen lernen. Ich glaube ich bin generell entspannter geworden, mit Sachen umzugehen und auch mit Leuten und generell also irgendwann denkt man sich wenn's zum achten Mal schief läuft... gut jetzt ist es halt schon wieder schiefgelaufen.

Back in Germany, however, she had to make an effort to maintain that which she recognizes and tries to intervene. This shows that she has not only consciously perceived her development on site, but also consciously tries to keep it in her home country.

Ich habe gemerkt, dass ich schon auch wieder in alte Muster ver falle, wie es davor war, also dass ich dann doch nicht so ganz entspannt war, aber habe mich dann wirklich drauf fokussiert [...], dass ich das, was ich gelernt hab jetzt auch hier einfach integrieren kann. Also, das ist nicht nur ein Teil von Laos war, sondern dass es jetzt einfach ein Teil von mir ist.

In dealing with the other culture and the local people, she mentions above all the differences in working attitudes in relation to working with the tandem teachers. She

cannot reconcile them with her own beliefs for a long time, especially against the background that she is there to work which puts some pressure on her.

Die Einstellung zum Arbeiten der Laoten ist da schon relativ schwierig, weil man da versuchen muss drauf einzugehen, aber es eigentlich auch fördern soll, dass es sich in eine andere Richtung sich bewegt jetzt im Laufe der Zeit, also dieses laissez faire und ja ich komme halt wann ich will und heute habe ich halt keine Lust auf Englisch das war dann schon immer wieder anstrengend. und hat mich dann auch dadurch, dass du nur zum Arbeiten dort bist du da so integriert bist in diese Arbeit hat es mir natürlich auch im Alltag immer wieder beschäftigt, wenn du dann halt vorbereitest und dich mit den anderen Praktikanten unterhältst, dann denkst du da schon viel drüber nach. Ich konnte dann kein Englisch machen, obwohl ich ja nichts dafür konnte, weil ich ja um 8 morgens in der Schule saß, nur halt einfach alleine.

In order to face the problems, she tried to balance her own attitude with that of the Laotian teachers. Which shows that she has recognized that addressing things directly is not usual in the Laotian culture in order to avoid confrontations yet in this case she tries to negotiate the German and Laotian attitudes.

Um kulturelle Barrieren zu vermeiden habe ich mich dann einfach auf Dinge eingelassen, aber in Bezug auf die Arbeitsmoral war das schwierig und für mich auch fragwürdig. Ich weiß, dass die Laoten das so niemals machen würden und etwas direkt sagen, aber das wollte ich mir in der Zeit dann auch nicht nehmen lassen also dass wenn irgendwer jetzt nicht kam oder wieder 15 min zu spät kam dass ich dann schon auch ernst sagen kann nein so funktioniert das nicht du willst ja Hilfe bekommen und dann muss das auch so laufen wie ich es dir sage.

In view of her later activities as a teacher, she draws conclusions for herself. She names methods that she was able to try out during her internship and reports on her positive experiences with them. She also sees the personal growth she has already achieved as an advantage for her ability to act in class. But also, insights into her personality let her reflect again how it affects her dealings with other people.

Ich hatte überhaupt gar keine Ahnung von Englisch games, im Klassenzimmer oder singlish, es kam im Seminar vor, aber während wir dort waren habe ich gemerkt Okay, das ist, etwas was man voll gut im Unterricht integrieren kann.

[...] einfach mit den Macken umzugehen von den andern, dass man da nicht mehr versucht, Leute zu ändern und auch dass man anfängt eigene Macken zu akzeptieren. Ich bin ja extrem pedantisch und das kann nicht von jedem erwarten vor allem nicht von den Laoten, dass sie damit umgehen können.

Ich bin jemand ich arbeite ganz viel mit Ironie und Sarkasmus und das verstehe die Laoten leider gar nicht.

Ja klar ich sehe dieses persönliche schon auch so, dass es mir beruflich was bringt, einfach weil ich weiß das werde ich die nächsten vierzig Jahre machen und da kann ich das was ich gelernt habe versuchen einzusetzen zum Beispiel wurde mir mal gesagt geht doch bitte in die Klasse und mach Englisch. Da hast du dann keine Zeit groß nachzudenken oder zu planen, da musst du spontan sein. Das ist in Deutschland ja nicht anders.

Since she always sets high standards for herself, she has also learned to put them into perspective and to deal with them more easily when things are not going as they should.

Wenn du so spontan sein musst, dann wird die Stunde halt nicht grandios und die Erwartung an dich musst du dann auch nicht haben. Das ist dann später auch so, auch wenn eine Stunde mal stinklangweilig wird, das ist dann halt so.

Regarding the country's people and culture, it became clear that she has learned things but has not really experienced them in all cases. She sometimes justifies this with the fact that she was accommodated with the German team in a separate house. She finds this to be a hindrance for the intercultural contact and the experience. At the same time, however, it is also an advantage and serves as a place of retreat. Although she considers her contact with the Laotians to be very positive, she has made many nice acquaintances, but for her the leisure activities with the Laotians are also "work". The overall picture in relation to the host culture and its people seems ambiguous. On one side she feels well on the other she cannot integrate because they some things still feel distant.

Ich glaube ja vom Komfort und Wohlfühlfaktor wars positiv aber vom Kontakt her zu den einheimischen auch von der interkulturellen Erfahrung her wars eher negativ einfach dadurch, dass wir so abgeschottet waren in unserem Haus, also ich glaube man wäre eigentlich mehr in Kontakt gekommen und hätte dann vielleicht auch sprachlich mehr gelernt, wenn man tatsächlich bei locals gewohnt hätte. Zum Beispiel dieses die stehen um 5 Uhr morgens auf und ich habe davon nie etwas mitbekommen, weil ich trotzdem immer erst um 7 aufgestanden bin und so einen ganzen Tagesablauf auch mal mitzubekommen, das wäre schon auch mal toll gewesen. Ich hätte es aber nicht bevorzugt durchgehend wie sie zu leben.

[...] dann merkt man, man ist doch irgendwo auf einer gleichen Wellenlänge obwohl man so unterschiedlich ist.

Man hat irgendwann auch nicht mehr komisch gefühlt, wenn man die Straße lang gefahren ist und auch grade so Einkauf Situationen und grade auch in der schule habe ich mich schon als Teil davon gefühlt, also da war es für mich völlig normal da mittags in der Mensa die Nudelsuppe zu essen zu achtzigsten mal also das hat einfach dazugehört.

Es wäre bestimmt auch intensiver gegangen, also dass man jedes Wochenende was zusammen macht, aber dieser Abstand war für mich auch wichtig. Weil das für mich auch wieder Arbeit war. Also es ist immer doch in diesem Schulkontext geblieben, ist. Am Wochenende hat man nicht tatsächlich Wochenende, weil die sprachliche Hürde so hoch ist. Das strengt an. Sie wollen dann auch immer noch was lernen und umgekehrt ja auch. Man selber bekommt ja auch Sachen erklärt und muss viel aufsaugen und nachdenken.

[...] klar man kann sich auf Englisch in gewisser Weise unterhalten aber nicht völlig. Ich fand oft, wenn man mit ihnen unterwegs und sie sich dann in ihrer Sprache unterhalten haben, habe ich mich außenvor gefühlt. Aber nicht nur das sprachliche, auch die Zugehörigkeit zur Gruppe, also man ist ja trotzdem nicht zu hundert Prozent so drin so wie die drin sind, also das passiert ja einfach selten.

Gerade deswegen, weil da auch Tradition großgeschrieben wird und auch sowas wie die Frau lebt zu Hause bis sie verheiratet ist und über Sex wird nicht geredet über Beziehungen wird nur gekichert so wie bei uns halt die Vierzehnjährigen. Hier in Deutschland wird im Alter von fünfundzwanzig Jahren normal über Beziehungen gesprochen. Das hat es dann auch anstrengend gemacht. Wenn man sich

normal mit einem Laoten unterhalten hat und alle (the Laotians) dachten "Oh mein Gott die flirtet gerade" und ich mir nur dachte "Hallo!?! Der ist so alt wie ich, unterhalte mich, ich muss ihn jetzt nicht heiraten nur weil ich mich mit ihm unterhalte, so nach dem Motto und das hat es schon auch anstrengend gemacht. Aber man hat dann halt gelernt damit umzugehen.

All in all, she recognizes what effect a stay abroad can have on you. It is not something that „simply passes you by “. From this she draws conclusions with regard to her work as a teacher. She recognizes the advantage of professional growth mainly by the fact that she went abroad to teach there and to experience school in reality. Every teaching experience leads in her point of view to professionalization. Also, with regard to being an English teacher in the future she claims that it helps her to see how difficult it can be to learn a foreign language, and this helps to have empathy with her future students.

[...] dass man in einer anderen Kultur gelebt hat und auch da ja nicht so ist wie man immer ist sondern sich da ja dann auch einfach anpasst und auch die Kultur so in sich selber in die eigene Identität irgendwie integriert. Also es ist nicht so, dass es irgendwie abläuft und ich mach halt irgendwie mit aber es beeinflusst mich dadurch nicht, sondern es ist ja auch immer ein Einfluss auf einen selber da und dadurch verändert man sich ja auch.

Auch ich Bezug aufs Lehrersein. Ich glaube das jede Lehrerfahrung, die ich habe, dass die dazu beiträgt, dass ich professioneller werde indem was ich mache. Also, egal ob ich jetzt Schüler unterrichten der Erwachsene oder Nachhilfe gebe, ich glaube jede Einzelheit kann helfen, dass es sich weiterentwickelt wie man als Lehrperson ist.

[...] und man kann besser nachvollziehen warum es einer Person solche Schwierigkeiten bereiten kann Englisch zu lernen. Ich glaube man selber sieht das einfach nicht mehr so. Ich habe seit der fünften Klasse Englisch uns spreche seit 15 Jahren Englisch und ich für mich kann mich nicht daran erinnern ob und wie schwer es war das zu lernen. Das lief immer so und dieser Prozess war so fließend bis jetzt. Mit Leuten zu arbeiten, die teilweise komplette Anfänger sind hat geholfen, dass man sich später einmal besser in seine Schüler hineinversetzen kann. Also, dass man besser nachvollziehen kann was für Müüühen das einem Kind bereiten kann. Oder aber du hast ein Kind, das gerade aus Syrien kommt, Deutsch lernt und dann auch noch anfangen soll Englisch zu lernen, dass man merkt was das für Anstrengungen für das Kind sind.

### **8.7.2 Lola**

Lola is studying to become a Secondary teacher for English and Social Sciences. She stands out because she was already in Japan for a school year during her school days. Her motives were that she wanted to go abroad and to learn a new language other than English and wanted to learn about a new or different culture than she knew so far and also make new friends. Due to her experiences she claims that she had developed strongly. She even claims that she was a completely different person on side and that her stay transformed her personality. In school she did not have difficulties in making friends. Regarding the lessons she only took subjects which were easy to follow. She regarded the language as main difficulty, in lessons. Another aspect she was challenged with was



the behavior in the Japanese culture. As it was a completely the one, she was used to and she had to figure out how to behave appropriately. After coming back to Germany, she had a massive re-entry shock which lasted around 2 years. However, during her time she gained more flexibility and to accept people and situations or certain attitudes. She had a good relationship towards the Japanese teachers and was very interested in the Japanese education system. This influenced her choice to study to become a teacher with the aim to later teach in Asia.

Regarding her stay in Laos she focused more on her development in professionalization. She sees the internship as an enrichment compared to her previous internships in Germany as it offered her space to plan and conduct her lesson independently.

Laos war für mich mein erstes richtiges ich sag mal Praktikum wo ich sehr viel eigenständig machen konnte. Bei meinen Praktika in Deutschland war es immer sehr viel diktiert und vorgegeben und da hatte ich zum ersten Mal so richtig Freiheit zu machen was ich gerne machen würde beziehungsweise was in dem Moment nun mal angebracht ist. Das hat mir sehr weitergeholfen, weil es auch in einem Umfeld war wo es nicht so befangen war, wo ich dann nicht das Gefühl hatte, das muss alles perfekt und streng sein, sondern es war trotzdem immer noch eine Atmosphäre in der ich mich weiterentwickeln konnte als Lehrerin.

Es war für mich auch meine erste Erfahrung als Lehrerin (betont) und als Lehrerin in Asien (betont) und deswegen war das eine sehr hilfreiche Erfahrung für meine Weiterentwicklung als Lehrerin, zum einen weil ich vielleicht ja mal Lehrerin in Asien sein werde und zum anderen dass ich diesen Freiraum hatte mich so weit zu entwickeln wie ich konnte und wollte. Auch die Grundlagen! Grundlagen und basics die ich vom Studium kenne, aber bei denen ich nie die Möglichkeit hatte diese hier in Deutschland in Praktika umzusetzen. Da konnte man das quasi ausprobieren und sehen ob das funktioniert oder nicht und ob man darauf in Zukunft dann aufbaut. Klar ist es ein anderer kultureller Hintergrund und dadurch werden auch andere Erfolge mit anderen Methoden verzeichnet, aber es ist im Grunde das gleiche. Es sind die gleichen Dinge, auf denen man seinem Unterricht aufbaut und deswegen war es so interessant zu sehen wie es dort ist und wie es hier ist.

In the personal area she sees by far the ability to be patient as valuable.

Gelassenheit! Also die Dinge so anzunehmen wie sie sind und nicht immer wütend zu werden oder frustriert zu sein über kleine Dinge sondern einfach das große Ganze sehen und darüber glücklich sein. Das ist etwas was ich sehr wichtig finde und was ich auch versuche hier anzuwenden.

Her previous experience with Japan has given her a better idea of what she needs to be prepared for. By gathering information, she tried to get an idea of the country and its culture in advance. As she already knew what it can mean to have a culture shock.

Ich habe gelesen was es zu lesen gab, ich habe mich vorbereitet so gut es ging um jetzt vielleicht nicht ganz so einen großen Kulturschock zu haben und als ich dort angekommen bin, waren Dinge auch so wie ich sie gelesen habe. Trotzdem war es auch sehr ungewohnt, also obwohl ich wusste es kommt so, war alles neu und anders.

Despite her open attitude and knowledge, however, she cannot share the political views of the host country, which she sees as problematic in working together with them.

Also das was mir jetzt am meisten in Erinnerung geblieben ist, ist das ich sehr schwer klar gekommen bin mit dem kommunistisch ausgerichteten System. Das oben jemand ist, der alles entscheiden kann und ich als Glied unten in der Kette wenig Einfluss darauf habe, dass ich eine Entscheidung, die

ausfällt nicht ändern kann. Das hat mich sehr, ich sag mal nicht wütend gemacht, aber es hat mich sehr verstört. Denn ich bin es einfach nicht gewohnt. Alle anderen Erfahrungen, die ich zuvor im Ausland gemacht habe, waren so, dass man auf einer gleichen Basis mit Menschen reden konnte und Entscheidungen treffen konnte. Hier war es aber so, wenn etwas so ist dann ist es nun mal so. Die Person hat es so gesagt du hast keinen Einfluss drauf.

However, this experience made her aware of her own home country. Thus, she appreciates it more. Further it helped her to accept difficult situations.

Ich habe dadurch gelernt das wertzuschätzen, was ich in Deutschland habe, nämlich dass ich mit anderen auf einer ebenen Basis zu reden und das auch im professionellen Bereich.

Due to her previous experience she was prepared for a reentry shock and so she had already developed a strategy before the transition to Germany how to deal with it.

Ich wusste durch meine Erfahrung, dass ich dazu tendiere mich stark einzufügen, die Zeit dann hinterher sehr vermissen würde und genauso auch wieder große Schwierigkeiten habe mich in Deutschland wieder einzugliedern oder einzubringen. Deswegen habe ich nach meiner Rückkehr umso mehr versucht mich so bald wie möglich mit vielen Dingen zu beschäftigen, also „to keep me busy kind of“ und dadurch war meine Reflexionsphase gar nicht so intensiv. Erst nach einem Jahr. Da habe ich mir dann auch die Zeit genommen, bin in mich gegangen und haben viele Gedanken und Selbstarbeit gemacht an mir selbst und habe versucht das zu reflektieren und zu verarbeiten was ich erlebt habe.

What she particularly appreciates is the foreign setting as social space for experience. A place where one can put into practice what has been have learned during the studies without being evaluated.

Es ist aber trotzdem immer noch ein befristeter Zeitraum in einer anderen Kultur, in der man die Möglichkeit hat das kennenzulernen. Vielleicht nicht als Experiment- aber definitiv als Erfahrungsraum. Es ist sehr bereichernd! Du bist nun mal der Lehrer, du bist der „sage on the stage“ meistens und da muss man gewisse personelle Kompetenz einbringen und die kannst du intensiver lernen und auch wahrnehmen, wenn du Auslandserfahrung hattest.

### 8.7.3 Kim

Kim's majors are German and Biology. She went to Argentina in order to a teaching experience abroad and to enhance her Spanish skills.

Ich wollte unbedingt wissen, wie es ist, in anderen Ländern zu unterrichten oder was in anderen Ländern beim Unterricht anders gemacht wird, und ich hatte nochmal Lust, ein anderes Land, eine andere Kultur kennenzulernen und mein Spanisch auch ein bisschen aufzubessern.

Since she had applied to a German elite school in Argentina, she expected the standards to be high and the students to speak German well, but this assumption was not confirmed.

This posed a challenge on her but in the same time helped her to think of alternatives.

Was in der Arbeit auf jeden Fall eine Herausforderung war, war das die Schüler sehr schlecht Deutsch sprechen konnten und man den Unterricht doch um einiges anderes gestalten musste und andere Schwerpunkte setzten musste als im Unterricht an deutschen Schulen, weil einfach das Vokabular gefehlt hat. Deshalb wurde mehr Wortschatzarbeit gemacht und weniger fachlich. Eine andere Herausforderung war, dass es an der Schule oft technische Probleme gab, die ich so gar nicht erwartet hätte. Es war auch nicht selten, dass der Strom einfach ausgefallen ist. Dadurch musste man viel öfter Spontanität zeigen oder Sachen einfach hinnehmen und eine andere Lösung finden. Das war aber auch gut, weil man daraus lernen konnte.

She sees major growth in flexibility, spontaneity and acceptance. Often, she experienced behavior from the students' side which shocked her as she was not used to this.

Der Umgang mit unerwarteten Situationen, an denen man dann aber nichts ändern kann also, dass ich flexibler geworden bin und spontaner mit schwierigen Situationen geworden bin aber auch gelernt habe die so anzunehmen. Persönlich auch im Umgang mit schwierigeren Schülern. Es war oft so, dass die Schüler wenig Respekt vor den Lehrern hatten und man sich dann durchsetzen musste. Das ist mir so an deutschen Schulen noch nie passiert. Die dortigen Lehrkräfte standen dann oft auch völlig ratlos da oder mussten kämpfen. Beruflich klar, die Unterrichtsvorbereitung, dass ich da die Möglichkeit hatte zu unterrichten und das vor allem unter anderen und erschwerten Bedingungen vorzubereiten.

During the interview it did not become obvious whether she learned culture specific aspects also she did not get engaged with Spanish speaking locals as she spent a lot of time with German speaking people. However, she perceives it as something positive.

So war ich immer in so einer deutschen Blase irgendwie. Was auch supergut war, denn ich konnte mich gut mit den anderen austauschen auch mit der Vermieterin, weil die auch Lehrerin war und die anderen waren auch Lehramtsstudenten. Da war es gut für den Austausch Gleichgesinnte zu haben, die grade das gleiche machen wie ich. Es hätte bestimmt alles anders laufen können, wenn ich woanders gewohnt hätte.

She realizes that experience always takes one further, even if it is negative, but she cannot articulate exactly what has changed in her in terms of teacher professionalism.

Ich finde das schwer in Worte zu fassen. Ich glaube das ist so die alltägliche Schulerfahrung. Da bleibt ja immer irgendwie was hängen was man mitnehmen kann, auch wenn man das so gar nicht bewusst für sich fasst, aber ich glaube unbewusst nimmt man da sehr viel an Erfahrung mit. Wenn man dann in so Situationen kommt, dass man mit dem unbewussten Wissen anders an neuen Situationen rangeht? Und auch negative Erfahrungen bringen einen weiter.

#### **8.7.4 Jannika**

Jannika is studying for a Europalehramt degree. As a free mover and through a scholarship, she had, as she describes it, free choice to which country she wanted to go. The only thing that seemed important to her was that she wanted to go to a school and that English was spoken there, so she chose an American school in Jerusalem.

Her motivation to go abroad was already there before she started her studies, when she decided to study for the Europalehramt degree.

Ich hab' mich für Europalehramt entschieden wegen dem Auslandssemester. Also für mich war irgendwie klar, das Ausland was Erstrebenswertes und ich hab immer wieder so Fernweh und dann war es eigentlich cool, dass es einen Studiengang gibt, wo ich ins Ausland gehen muss oder darf.

She had no specific goals but wanted to experience something new. This was also since she had applied to several schools and only knew at short notice that she was going to Israel. After she knew her destination, she developed an excitement about the religious aspects.

Ich war gespannt und hatte Vorfreude, was Neues kennenzulernen und Israel war natürlich auch für mich, also vom Glauben her spannend, dass ich dachte: Okay, mal gucken, was ich da von den Orten her sehe, den biblischen Orten oder jüdische Kultur und das so kennenzulernen.

With regard to her future teaching profession, she reflected many aspects by observations of lessons and of her teacher-mentor. She developed own ideas regarding her attitude and how she wants to interact with her future students. The teacher who was taking care of her also functioned as a role model for her in regard to classroom language. However, she said she seldom had the opportunity to teach herself. Mostly she was working with children in one-to-one settings or observing lesson.

Ich habe durch die vielen Beobachtungen im Klassenzimmer ganz viel gelernt eben wie die Lehrerin es mir vorgelebt hat, wie die den Kindern auf Augenhöhe und so wertschätzend begegnet ist. Und ich habe immer wieder gestaunt und habe da versucht, eben auch dann so zu überlegen, wie ich Dinge umsetzen würde. Was ich anders machen würde, aber sehr vieles, was ich auch ähnlich machen würde, zum Beispiel als Klassenlehrerin die Art der Kommunikation und die wirklich ruhige wertschätzende angenehme Haltung gegenüber den Kindern.

Ich habe ja dann von der Lehrerin immer diese englischen Redewendungen gehört, die man so in der Klasse verwendet und die kannte ich davor eigentlich nicht so sehr. Also, und die habe ich dann einfach von ihr so übernommen, also ihre Sprachmuster.

She spent most of her stay among Jewish Americans. Since she was at an American school, her host parents were Americans, and she worked in an American community. In spite of the limitation in contact with a certain group of people, she was still able to get a picture of Jerusalem. She realizes that there is no typical culture, but that it is multicultural. However, she pays more attention to her increase in learning about religious aspects.

Und dann natürlich auch glaubensmäßig hat sich einiges verändert oder wo ich Dinge neu verstanden habe. Wo ich auch durch die Gespräche mit meinen Gasteltern immer wieder, spannende Diskussionen hatten. Dinge politisch oder gesellschaftlich oder eben biblisch anders zu sehen.

Das war so ein bisschen, wo ich quasi auch jüdische Kultur erlebt habe, weil die das auch so gefeiert haben. So manchmal die Feste und, also und in meiner Gastfamilie natürlich auch, genau.

However, she does not know how to deal with the new information and cannot articulate it. Further, she had to recognize that whereas she had a lot of topics to talk about in Israel, this does not apply to Germany and her German social network.

Da habe ich gemerkt, dass sich Dinge verändert haben, die ich aber noch nicht so gut in Worte fassen kann teilweise oder wo es mir auch schwerfällt mit Leuten, die das nicht so erlebt haben, die nicht in Israel waren zum Beispiel, das zu teilen: Man stößt da dann teilweise auf Unverständnis.

She reports that she often felt lonely, that her new network was stable, but that she had no friends of the same age. Even though the loneliness often depressed her, she also sees the positive in it. She reflected a lot and could think about what she had experienced on site.

Also, vor allem hatte ich dort eben durch die Zeit mit mir alleine auf jeden Fall mehr Zeit zum Reflektieren. Und ich glaube, das ist ein so ein großer Lernzuwachs, dass ich mir Zeit genommen habe oder mir Zeit nehmen musste,

As how she describes what it felt like to be back in Germany after her stay it seems that she had suffered from a reentry shock.

Also, ich war erst relativ optimistisch. So: Hey, ich bin wieder da. Ich wurde von allen herzlich willkommen geheißen und finde es super, komme sofort wieder an. Und dann habe ich aber gemerkt nach einer Weile, vielleicht so nach paar Wochen, dass ich irgendwie doch nicht so angekommen bin, dass ich voll einsam bin oder ja, dass irgendwie alles doof ist oder komisch. Dann irgendwie wieder in die Rollen reinfinden. So in der Familie. Dann auch wieder so in die Studentenrolle reinzufinden, irgendwie noch Hausarbeit zu schreiben, aber auch Freunde treffen zu wollen und die Freunde zu vermissen, von dort. Nicht zu wissen, welche Freundschaften von hier man jetzt wieder aufnimmt. Man kann ja auch nicht irgendwie, also die Leute haben sich ja auch weiterentwickelt. Die sind ja, haben ja auch nicht auf einen nur gewartet.

Jannika feels she has learned a lot during her stay abroad but back in her home country she does not know what to do with this.

Und halt auch so dieses Ganze, was sich so verändert hatte bei mir an Verständnis, auch von jüdischer Kultur. Damit irgendwie nicht zu wissen, wohin damit oder wem ich das jetzt erzählen könnte oder so. Und es auch selber noch gar nicht so in Worte fassen zu können. Also außer jetzt die Sache mit dem Schabbat, mit dem Ruhetag. Das war dann schwierig.

## 8.8 Discussion

Since the study did not claim to measure certain learning increases of the students, but only to examine how students assess their stays abroad themselves the results suggest that each individual has grown in her own way through the study-related stay abroad. With the exception of Jannika, who is believed to have had a reentry shock after her stay, no major problems were reported. Susie and Lola, however, clearly show that they could not reconcile some of their own views with those of the Laotians. However, they found ways to deal with them. The students all unanimously report personal growth. Especially with regard to flexibility, spontaneity, acceptance, empathy and patience, they see changes in themselves. Some can maintain this back in Germany (Lola) others do not always succeed well (Susie, Jannika) but they are nevertheless aware of it and try to reflect on it. With regard to the intercultural dimension, it became clear during the interview with everyone except Kim that during the conversation typical examples of the country or culture were mentioned, which indicates that they had consciously or unconsciously become aware of them. In terms of learning growth with regard to their later profession, personal aspects (patience, flexibility, ambiguity tolerance, acceptance) are considered particularly valuable. Teaching-specific aspects are not addressed to the same extent, however. The use of methods (games, singlish) or special knowledge about a religion or culture are mentioned.

Jannika has developed ideas about what kind of attitudes they would like to have as a teacher and how to interact with their future students. They see themselves in the role of a teacher who treats the students with appreciation and patience. Lola and Susie have recognized the difficulties that learning processes can cause. Particularly with regard to learning a foreign language, they have experienced how difficult this process can be and seem to have developed an understanding with regard to students learning a second or a foreign language.

Reflection on what has been experienced seems important with regard to Jannika as she mentioned several points, which she would have preferred to get to know, however was not ready to invest enough effort to achieve this knowledge. As an approach to such a scenario, a mentor or lecturer to guide a student through these situations and show the right direction, could be considered. This also applies to the negative experiences she had after the stay and which are assumed to have been a reentry shock.

What has remained unconsidered so far in the evaluations of the individual interviews is that all five study participants agree that the mastery of the national language is decisive for how well one finds one's way, how well one can communicate and how well one can understand motives and actions of others. It is also seen as an appreciation of the country.

All in all, all students appreciate the stays abroad as a very valuable experience, which is also shown by the fact that everyone agrees to recommend a stay abroad during their studies to other teacher training students. They are also all convinced that they have developed further and that they have increased their learning. It was recognized that a stay abroad gives access to important competences and offers the possibility to get a different view on things. However, it can be seen what also Sutton & Rubin (2004, 67) confirm, that rather generic values are mentioned than exactly discrete items.

Looking at these findings, it can be seen that the students have achieved much more than they intended, starting from their original plans, which were all very vaguely formulated. With the exception of Lola, who made her decision to go to Laos with regard to her professional future as a teacher in Asia, the aim, or rather the wish of the others, was to experience something, to discover something new and get a broaden view, to face a challenge or to do something for themselves like to fulfill a personal dream.

Student goals are to be taken seriously in any case as they are the students desirable ends and guide their motivation. Nevertheless, a "see what comes out" attitude seems to lead to students noticing after their stay that something has changed, that they have even been "transformed", but certainly cannot put into words what exactly happened. Selby

(2008, 3) observed that students who went abroad stated the “life-changing impact” of staying abroad, however they are not able to describe or validate what exactly they gained. If it cannot be defined what students should take from going abroad, there is a lack of clear objectives and consequently of evaluation of goals achieved. Here lecturers and program leaders can provide support. This is not to be understood in the sense of a completely structured program or stay, this would not be possible at all. Rather, students should get the right hint from time to time, for example by formulating concrete goals in advance, getting the task to reflect certain developments or experiences or by being provided with mentors. After return learning gains then could be further discussed and elaborated in order to refer to the future profession and school context. Such a thought seems to make sense against the background that students see a benefit for them as teachers mostly in the development of personal growth. With support, their view can then also be sharpened for other aspects that allow conclusions to be drawn for the school context in their home country.

The study performed here lacks in certain points. An even more profitable study could include both quantitative and qualitative survey instruments. The interaction of the two components would facilitate the creation of a more complex image (Erzberger 1998,123). Furthermore, only a post-interview was carried out. For future studies a pre-interview would be appropriate. Also, of interest would be to interview the students again when they are already working in their profession. It could be investigated to what extent the learning outcome from abroad is being applied. Having compared outcomes of the experiences of students stays abroad it cannot be said whether there is a difference between the form of mobility. It is assumed that the element of getting to know another school system by experiencing it is crucial as also Leutyler and Lottenbach (2008) claim. However, this would be an aspect that could be considered in future studies. Furthermore, the extent to which different factors have an influence on the experiences of the students should be examined in more detail. Based on the findings of studies to date, it can be assumed that two factors in particular play a role. Firstly, in what scope the program accompanies the students and helps them to consider their experiences through the elements mentioned above, such as preparation or follow-up. Secondly, personal "capital", i.e. maturity, openness, willingness, self-reflection, is certainly of great importance to students in both cases.

## 9 Conclusion and outlook

At the beginning of this thesis, attention was drawn to three aspects that have developed in our society over the last decade. In addition to the increased global mobility of students, interest in developing social skills and intercultural competent citizens and the demands placed on teachers in multicultural classrooms are also growing. This can be related to the fact that studies have shown that study-related stays abroad can contribute to personal development and global knowledge. The view for the different is sharpened, which stimulates self-reflection and can develop intercultural competence. Because students are exposed to difficult or stressful situations, they need to look for strategies to find solutions. The result can be more personal growth or a better handling of culture. Such competencies are also desirable for the teaching profession if one considers the aforementioned demands made on teachers today. In the context of the first phase of teacher training, the inadequacy of the shares of practical school experience (internships) is repeatedly criticized. In addition, it is also stated that every teacher should have experience abroad (Terhart 2000, 77). Intercultural learning should not only be addressed in theory (ibid., 75-77).

An analysis of the research and literature showed the potential value of study-related stays abroad regarding personal growth, intercultural competence and academic knowledge. Further studies focusing on teacher training present that student teacher also can develop teaching-specific competencies. Nevertheless, positive growth is not achieved automatically. A wide range of variables can influence the learning processes of studies. These can be structural by the mobility format or on the personal level. Studies have repeatedly shown that support from the guest or home situation is also helpful and advantageous. Appropriate preparation and follow-up can provide a framework for a stay abroad in which the student can better develop his or her potential with an increased outcome. It is assumed that the students in general are motivated to learn. However, from time to time they may need a certain hint or additional instruction is needed to overcome obstacles. With regard to student teachers, a mobility format containing practical elements seems particularly beneficial. Aspects are perceived more clearly in a foreign classroom no matter if students observe lessons or get active themselves: Such a setting can help to enhance students learning and their attitude in learning by contrast.

The present study has also shown that teacher training students were able to develop positively through their stays abroad. Especially with regard to personality development, the interviewed students see great potential in a study-related stay abroad. Moreover, teaching-specific knowledge and competencies were mentioned. However, it then again



became clear that learning gains could often not be articulated clearly. It seems that students often do not realize the full potential or rather the details that a study-related stay abroad has to offer as an authentic, reflective cultural experience (Engle & Engle 2003, 17).

A connection could exist to the fact that the students mostly set themselves goals before their stay abroad, which refer to the experience itself, or because they do this for themselves. Furthermore, it is assumed that while students learn a lot, they cannot use what they bring back home immediately or at all. Where to put this new knowledge and skills? Some students may have problems to readapt and reintegrate themselves when returning home and often they do not know how to deal with the new situation. Here lecturers and program leaders should provide support and direct the students with structures.

“As the chorus of calls for study abroad and the number of students studying abroad continue to surge, honors educators need to remain vigilant that students make the most of their international learning experiences so that they are prepared to meet the challenges of globalization. Rather than unquestioningly accepting the hype of study abroad, we must critically analyze the value of study abroad and put in place support mechanisms to promote high-quality transformative learning.” (Haynes 2011, 22).

Higher education institutions educating future teachers should consider the mentioned aspects when offering global mobility programs for students. An orientation seminar could for example be established where students get to know or develop content together with a mentor which could be helpful and necessary in preparation before departure. Topics like culture shock, reentry shock; specific or general information about culture and countries can be dealt with. Students can be asked to set goals for the stay abroad or develop them together with the teacher. The stay abroad should ideally happen at a school or contain opportunities for practical work or observation's at schools. Of course, a reference person can also be of great help during the stay. After return the follow-up work could be of significance regarding the challenges reported in literature and also shown in the evaluation of the interviews.

The art of making the transfer so that what one has observed abroad can be recognized and applied in one's own country is often not easy and needs support. In seminars or groups of students who went abroad, they could exchange what they have learned and experienced, to make sense of it. As well the nature of culture shock and reentry shock which involves physical and psychological transitions which engage cognitively, affectively and in behavioral ways the opportunity for intercultural development occurs twice, once by

entering the host country and involving in the new culture and second upon return back in the home country (cf. Cushner 2007, 29) however therefore, it needs reflection and coping strategies how to handle the challenges.

Higher education institutions could develop such seminars or courses. Ideally, they would be focusing on those students going abroad or returning home. However, they should also be accessible for students which don't have the opportunity to go abroad. Students who stayed abroad could share their experiences with others. This could be a form of 'internationalization at home' and would integrate an international dimension into the curriculum.

A good practice example is the project "Teaching English in Laos" which contains such elements as preparatory, while and post work. During the internship itself students can become active in a non-evaluative situation in teaching methods, to gather pedagogical experience and to get to know many facets of the target cultural education system from the perspective of the participant observer. As described earlier, former, and future volunteers form a network and keep in touch. Elements from the stays abroad are integrated in academic papers and exam topics. These then are also shared with non-mobile students e.g. in the form of presentations in a seminar.

What has emerged is that stays abroad during their studies do not leave individuals unchanged and can actually be phases that shape their professional biographies and have a lasting influence on the professional identity of teacher training students.

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## Appendix

### Interview guide

Date:

Place:

Time:

### Personal details

Age	
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> female
Course of studies (GS, HWR etc.)	
Name of university and department	
Subjects	
Number of semester/ study phase	
pedagogical experience/ teaching experience (when, duration, what kind)	
Experience abroad (where, when, duration, what kind)	
Duration of stay, which school, special task	
conspicuities/ remarks	

Description of work/ studies abroad (only for students who did not participate in the project “Teaching English in Laos”)

When		
Where		
Reason (obligatory for studies, bilingual, relatives abroad etc.)		
Institution	school, university, other?	
	type of school/university	
	number of students and colleagues	
	grade	
work/task description	hours per week	
	type of work	
	other volunteers/ non-native students?	
Accommodation		
Pre- while- post- work		

### Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your decision-making process to go abroad. (*goals, expectations*)
2. Was there anything you were afraid of?
3. Do you have the impression that you have changed during or after to your stay abroad?
4. What is your personal opinion? Are there challenges/ difficulties to living and working abroad (in Laos/xy)?
5. What did you learn (methods, special knowledge, inter- or trans cultural experiences, personal development as a teacher, etc.)?

6. Do you think the skills you learned abroad are applicable to your home-country environment?
7. What was your attitude towards the country and its people before your stay?
8. Did your attitude change during or after your stay? Were your expectations met/ prejudices confirmed?
9. How did you feel as foreigner in the host country?
10. Can you speak the country's language?
11. Were there any socio-cultural challenges/ intercultural barriers? (promptly: Were these onerous or beneficial for you?)
12. In which areas do you see the biggest differences between your culture and the host country's culture? (everyday life, behavior, authorities etc.)
13. What did you miss from your home country while being abroad?
14. Where did you live? Had your accommodation any impact on the overall stay?
15. Did you make friends?
16. Do you think intercultural competence plays an important role in your country and school system?

**Statement of authorship**

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Ort, Datum

Unterschrift