



# Cross-cultural Experience at Home

Kiwi students' reflections on being  
Excell volunteers

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## Overview

- Kiwi volunteers
- Their reflections
- Discussion
- Conclusion



## Kiwi volunteers

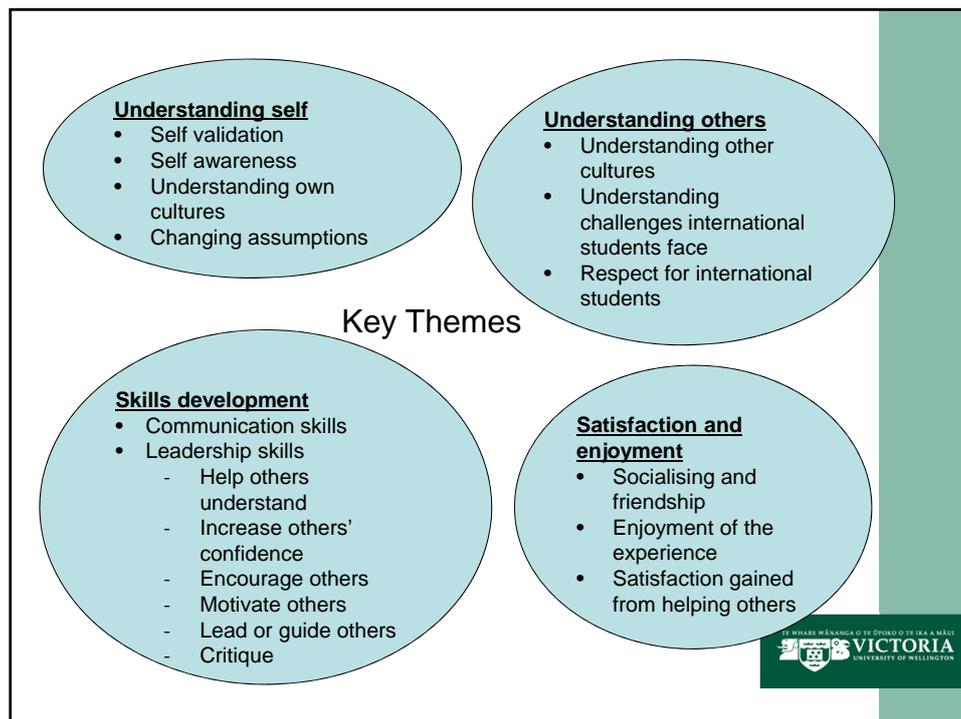
- Key contributors to Excell at Vic
- 3-5 per course
- [Recruitment](#)
- Roles of volunteers



## Their reflections

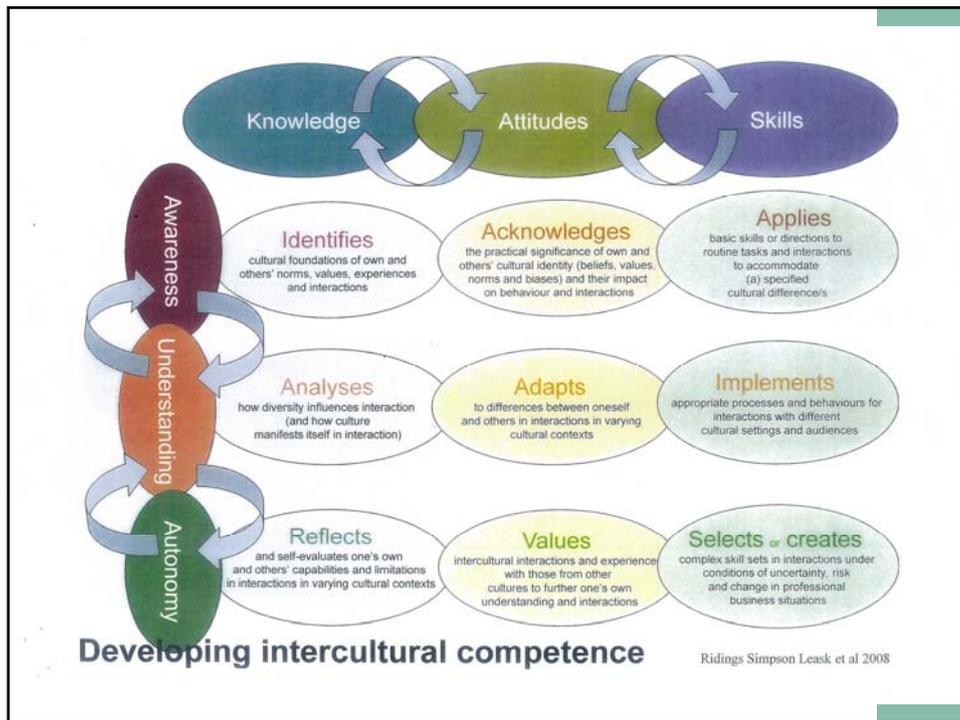
- [E-Portfolio](#)
- 13 volunteers
- 11 reflection entries on the experience and 7 reflection entries on skills gained
- Nvivo
- 4 main themes, 17 sub-categories, 102 coded references





## Discussion 1

- The reflections showed development of intercultural awareness and understanding.
  - [“Developing intercultural competence”](#) by Ridings, Simpson, & Leask et al, 2008)
  - [Behavioural dimensions of intercultural competence](#) (Lustig & Koester, as cited in Adams & Aqiu, 2001, p.195)



### Behavioural dimensions of intercultural competence

(Lustig & Koester, as cited in Adams & Aquino, 2001, p.195)

<b>Display of respect</b>	The ability to express respect and positive regard for another
<b>Interaction posture</b>	The ability to respond to others in descriptive, non-evaluative, and non-judgmental ways
<b>Orientation to knowledge</b>	The terms people use to explain themselves and their world
<b>Empathy</b>	The capacity to behave as if you understand the world as others do
<b>Task role behavior</b>	Behaviors that involve the initiation of ideas related to group problem-solving activities
<b>Relational role behavior</b>	Behaviors associated with interpersonal harmony and mediation
<b>Interaction management</b>	Skill in regulating conversations
<b>Tolerance for ambiguity</b>	The ability to react to new and ambiguous situations with little visible discomfort

## Theme: understanding self

- Self validation  
*"One thing that always got me about these sessions was that the things they were struggling with were things I struggled with. I have mastery of the language, but the skills required to make friends or resolve problems are more than just language skills."* - RK
- Self awareness  
*"I have become more aware of my actions especially when it comes to other cultures."* – HA
- Understand own culture  
*"The role of a Kiwi Volunteer has also increased my awareness of "Kiwi Culture". A significant part of the ExcelL programme is discussing the reasons why we are like we are, and the values behind our actions. Being expected to demonstrate these actions has challenged me to observe what I do daily, and assess what messages I am sending others."* - RS  
  
*"Explaining how we act in the New Zealand culture and why, was also an eye-opening process. There is so much that we do without thinking; so that when we do analyze it, we learn a lot about ourselves."* – HA
- Changing assumptions  
*"Examples like this have taught me to try not to make assumptions when communicating with others but to keep an open mind."* - TE



## Theme: understanding others

- Understanding the challenges international students face  
*"The ExcelL programme has also increased my awareness of the difficulties international students face, and the reasons behind certain things they do."* – RS
- Respect for international students  
*"I came to appreciate the sorts of hurdles one must face in a new country and also to admire these students for having the courage to overcome them"* – RK
- Understanding other cultures  
*"Through this program I discovered how uniquely and diversely cultures are in the way they interact and act, with cultural norms etc"* - TE



## Discussion 2

- The reflections show development of intercultural skills.
  - Sub-category: communication skills



- *"I know better what things to pay attention to and what not to be offended by when talking to people from different cultures. I know better when I should be more direct and when I should be less direct. I also know more about my body language and what I do when I am talking to people. It is these skills which I am particularly grateful for learning, and will take with me for the rest of my life. Communication is core to what we do as humans, and is core to my discipline which is design. We live in a global community and EXCELL gave me a great opportunity to learn how to better live within it."* – HA
- *"Modelling this to the students I learnt to be clear in what I said and to the point, which showed me how I would sometimes circle around an issue rather than getting straight to the point. I became more aware of the tone and rhythms I use when talking in different situations and reflected on when this is useful or irrelevant. We also gave each other feedback regarding what aided successful communication and what hindered it. All of this made me more aware of my personal and cultural communication styles and how these can be used effectively."* - TE



## Discussion 3

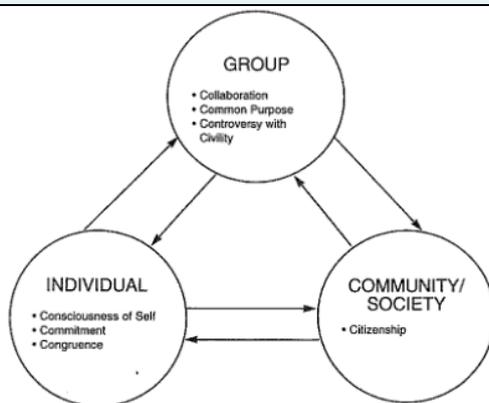
- The reflections demonstrate development of some core skills and values of leadership.



### The Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Bonous-Hammarth, 2001, p.37)

### The E<sup>6</sup> Framework of Leadership (Burchard, 2006)

- Leadership as a service (social responsibility)
- Leadership as a process (social change)
- Leaders and collaborators



***Envision  
Enlist  
Embody  
Empower  
Evaluate  
Encourage***



### Sub-category: Leadership skills

- Motivate others  
*"Over the six weeks, there would often be times when the students weren't very motivated to do an activity or were just tired. This meant that us volunteers had to really step up and pick up the overall atmosphere."* - XWY
- Increase confidence  
*"I observed that positive reinforcement was the best way to increase people's confidence in themselves."* – JM
- Encourage others  
*"When I was guiding the students in re-enacting the role-plays, I had to be very enthusiastic and encouraging. Often they found certain parts strange or even a little uncomfortable but with a bit of help, they came to understand why things are done certain ways."* – XWY
- Lead or guide others  
*"I also improved my leadership skills when helping with the role-play re-enactments by the students. I guided them in acting out the more important parts of the competency they were learning that week by critiquing their performances (gently and tactfully). I also tried to make sure everyone got a fair chance at practicing."* - XWY



### Sub-category: communication skills

- "Communication was a really crucial part of this programme. Sometimes explanations I gave were not clear due to language barriers so I had to think about re-phrasing them. Clarity in the instructions and explanations I gave were of vital importance. " - XWY
- "To be good at cross-cultural communication also requires the strong interpersonal skills and the ability to listen and understand where they are coming from; so that you can explain the new culture they are experiencing in terms of their prior knowledge of the culture that they are familiar with." - HA



## Discussion 4

- Excell promotes interaction between domestic and international students and contributes to building of community.
  - Sub-category: Socialising and friendship

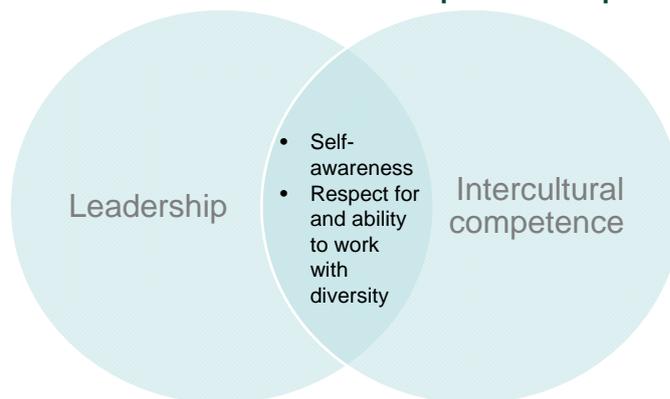


- *"One of the most valuable things about the Excell sessions was that they provided a supportive network of people with whom the students could share their struggles and celebrate their successes."* - RK
- *"The best part of EXCELL were the people. Being at the design campus, there are not as many international students, so what made me really value this experience were the lovely people that I got to meet and make friends with. The thing I found most interesting about EXCELL was the opportunity to meet and engage with people from so many different countries."* - HA
- *"I made fantastic friends with the other volunteers, and with the international students who I see and say hi to around University sometimes."* – leader 1
- *"Through being a Kiwi Volunteer for the Excell programme our community has become more united, by giving international students the confidence to relate to Kiwi students. This is of vital importance when avoiding the natural divisions so common in large cities."* - RS



## Discussion 5

- Intercultural competence development contributes to leadership development.



## Conclusion

- Excell, as an experiential programme, has contributed to the development of intercultural competence and leadership skills of Kiwi volunteers.
- The volunteering experience has given Kiwi volunteers satisfaction and enjoyment.



*"I found the Excell experience incredible because I was able to contribute to the learning of so many international students, so that they would be more comfortable with interacting in New Zealand." - leader 1*

*"It is such a worthwhile experience being able to help people adapt to life in NZ and also to learn from them about their cultures and backgrounds" - RS*



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