

## **Reflective Learning Essay**

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Becoming a global citizen and learning to be globally competent has had massive positive implications on my life, specifically those of my values. Since becoming a global citizen I have gained a sense of empathy and consideration for those who are different from me to an extent that I never had before. Through my global competency, I now view people in a different perspective, and consider their mannerisms and their cultural experiences in having an influence on the way that they think and behave.

Before becoming a global citizen I thought that people from other cultures were different from me, without ever really understanding or thinking about why. Now, I am able to understand the importance of context, social values, and norms in forming who we are. For example, when I went to Japan and saw the differences between people who live in Kyoto and people who live in Tokyo, I would have never considered the reason why they are different if I did not visit. Visiting gave me context to the cities, as I was able to see all of the temples and shrines in Kyoto, and the general lack of modernism that is conversely seen everywhere in Tokyo. Before my experience with global learning, I was quite unforgiving, and thought that I was always right, in a black and white vacuum. This sense of dichotomous thinking became challenged through global learning. For example, by seeing and learning perspectives that I had never considered before, my understanding of the world largely broadened and I suddenly had this insight that others were able to see the world in a different way than I had. The best part about this realization is the realization that my ideas were no better than others ideas. For example, if I were to value my sense of self-expression, and someone from a Japanese background were to value their sense of family, neither one is more important than the other, only to each individual person. The cultures

that we grow up in shape this sense of identity, and the norms of ideas will vary by region to region.

To be able to understand what people value and why they are the way that they are, people must travel and actively pursue global learning. Just by being away from home I learnt about what I valued when it was missing. As insignificant as it sounds, I learnt that leaving my dog takes a much harder toll on me than I thought it would, since we have not been separated due to COVID forcing everyone to stay home. In order to grow as people, we must understand what our values are and build around that. So, for me, I learnt that my connections with people and animals are difficult for me to leave because I highly value them. In a more global sense, I learnt a lot about my cultural displays. Maybe not in places like Mexico and the US, because they behave in a similar Western manner, but when I visited Japan I immediately felt out of place for the first time in my life. Things like looking at strangers in public and trying to talk with random people were immediate differences that I noticed, and things that I had to change about my behaviour in order to fit in better. Values and beliefs are things that I learnt more about by the end of the three weeks that I spent in Japan by interacting with other students and learning from them directly. It is important to learn about others values, otherwise you can never truly understand them beyond a surface level. Being exposed to values that would be considered as abnormal in a Western society really puts things into perspective and allows consideration for new ideas.

These things that I learnt helped me in working with international students on exchange for summer programs at the International Training Center at Thompson Rivers University. Seeing how differently all of the students acted, depending on where they were from, gave me many different tools in connecting with them, and in growing myself. This work with students

expanded my knowledge and challenged my beliefs and norms and has really made me reconsider what I want to do for a career. While I have always had a desire to travel, I am now considering entirely new places to travel, such as Taiwan and Columbia. I am also considering completing my post-graduate education overseas by working with kids in a counselling setting, which is something that I never would have considered before interacting with all of these new people from cultures different than mine. However, I have this newfound desire to learn more and meet more people in order to continue developing my knowledge of the world that I live in, rather than the world that I know currently.

Before gaining global competency I was a closed minded person who valued only my own opinions and future, but now I want to pursue a career in something that will make the world that I live in a better place and also allows me to travel. By gaining insight into other cultures, my thinking and values completely shifted. I now feel that I am able to connect with anyone that I talk to by entering conversations with an open mind about who they might be. Gaining the ability to listen to others instead of always pushing my own beliefs has given me a lot of new information in my life, and by continuing to interact with new individuals in new cultures I hope to keep doing so.