

TIIPP SCHOLARSHIP REFLECTIVE REPORT

PROMOTING EDUCATION BEYOND BORDERS

Kutloano Malahlela | Exchange Student to EHL from UJ | November
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1 INTRODUCTION

It is truly an honor to write this report to reflect on this remarkable opportunity that I have been awarded by the University of Johannesburg and its esteemed partners. There are not enough words to express my level of gratitude. In this report, you can expect a narration of all events during my stay in Ludwigsburg, Germany. I also delve into the projects I was part of and those I will introduce at the University of Johannesburg. This report is an indication of how great academic diplomacy can influence change in one's life and the life of the institution one serves. In the first section of the report, I outline some pre-departure expectations I had as well as cultural preparations. Following that is a reflection on the modules I took, the teaching methods, and the differences between the teaching methods used in my host university. Then follows a section on cultural immersion where I narrate some of the cultural shocks I experienced and language barriers. Lastly, this reflective report provides a section on personal growth, academic achievements, and the future impact of my study abroad. With this, I invite you to delve into the memory lane of my semester abroad under the Transdisciplinary International Intercultural Partnership Project.

2 PRE-DEPARTURE EXPECTATIONS AND CULTURAL PREPARATIONS

Preparing for my semester abroad was one interesting phase of the whole trip, from applying for the scholarship to visa applications, the whole process was an interesting experience with challenges in between. As soon as I was awarded the scholarship, I began my visa application with the huge assistance of the EHL International Office my lecturer Dr. Zimba and HOD, Prof Shahana. At first, I envisioned the visa process to be an interrogatory process where I was going to be pumped with questions. So on the eve of my appointment at the embassy, I was glued on YouTube, attempting to prepare for questions I might be asked (I thought there would be an interview) and I remember on my way to the embassy I even rehearsed how to greet in German and some German phrases, to impress the consulate. Upon arriving at the embassy, all those preparations were unnecessary as I was not asked anything I prepared for beforehand.

I successfully concluded my visa application and now was the time to prepare for departure. The way time was flying and how busy the preparations had me, I never had time to process this whole adventure I was about to go on until the time I boarded my plane to Europe. The personal experiences of the students assisted me in preparing for what to expect in this new world that I was to call home for three months however, I also going into the program with an open mind a spirit of curiosity, and an interest in exploring others cultures has made my stay a memorable one.

3 CULTURAL IMMERSIONS

Germany differs so much from South Africa, in the language, food, societal behavior, infrastructure, and all these aspects that define what culture is different from South Africa and the culture I belong to. My first cultural shock was seeing people wait at traffic lights when it was red even when there was no sign of a car coming. That one on its own gave me an idea of how structured Germany is and how Germans embrace law and order. It came to my mind the only way to settle quickly is by immersing myself in the German culture and that meant learning the basics of the German language. I must say that the mindset that English is a universal language does not apply in Germany, Germans take pride in their language to the point where it feels like you are inconveniencing them by asking them to speak English.

During my first days, thanks to my buddy Pauline, I downloaded an app called Duolingo which greatly assisted me in learning the basics of the German language. I remember a day before my first day at the EHL campus, I was rehearsing overnight on how to buy a ticket, and I kept on rehearsing – *ein stadt ticket bitte*. What I think we could learn from this as Africans is to be confident and proud about our languages like how Germans are and we should drive away from the notion of measuring intelligence with English. Another aspect of German culture which I found very interesting was punctuality and how being on time is big dearly. With this aspect, I did not find it difficult as I believe in punctuality and respect for time. German cuisine is mainly plant-based and very different from South African cuisine where meat takes center stage in all dishes. Thus, changing a diet from being used to having meat in every dish to having a salad as a meal was a little bit difficult

but a great cultural experience. I must say that food is one central aspect of culture, and it is through food one can fully learn about the culture of a people. Immersing myself in the German culture meant learning the language, having great respect for time, and embracing the different cuisines. Moreover, Ludwigsburg is a very quiet neighborhood which I found greatly attractive however one culture shock I encountered during my first days of arrival was how introverted Germans are – and by this, I am referring to the minimal interaction with one another even in public spaces. As an individual who is used to the African culture of greeting everyone I come across as a means of acknowledging them and showing respect, I found it difficult to adapt to this culture of solitude where you just walk past people without greeting.

4 ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1 Reflection on Modules Enrolled

The main purpose of my study abroad was learning through teaching, research, and learning as well. For the duration of my stay abroad, I was enrolled in the module named *Inclusion, Exclusion (Why Inclusion Matters!)* coordinated by Mr. Thomas Markiefka. During the course, we learned about how multilateral institutions like the United Nations enable the ideology of what is acceptable or normal by defining humanity and imposing requirements on existence. Additionally, the module further focused on how public space is designed to serve a certain purpose, either to include or exclude people. For instance, during apartheid South Africa, townships were created as places to accommodate black people by excluding them from the cities. In the present day, wheelchair ramps are being built to foster the inclusion of people living with disabilities. Overall, this module enriched me with knowledge of how social workers and community development practitioners can influence inclusion in communities without labeling or grouping humanity.

4.2 Differences in Teaching and Learning Mode

The teaching and learning modes in Germany are quite different from the South African teaching and learning modes. The first notable difference is that EHL has a small population of students with less than 30 students in a class which is very different from my

home university where in a class you can have up to 70 students taking one module. The lectures are structured much differently from the traditional teaching method of having a lecture teaching for an hour and later on taking questions. In most classes that I have attended, the lecturer would introduce a topic, then give a small task then based on the responses of the class continue with the lesson. This way I have noticed that students can participate optimally and learn through self-reflection. With regards to assessment and examination, students get to choose whether they would like to be assessed through oral presentation or written assignment. EHL learning system encourages a lot of self-study and student participation in class.

4.3 Achievements

During my stay abroad I was offered my platforms to share my knowledge with the EHL students and staff, below are two lectures I delivered.

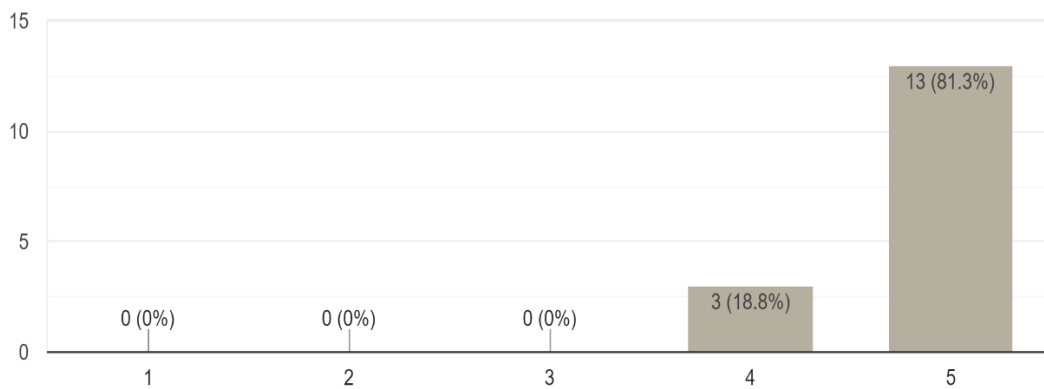
4.3.1 Workshop: *Facilitating Community Development in A Multicultural African Community Using the African Indigenous Knowledge Systems Theory and Carl Roger's People-Centered Approach*



During the workshop, we embarked on a journey to Africa by exploring some of the unique and rich aspects of African heritage. I aimed to share knowledge on how community development could be facilitated in a multicultural setting using both the African Indigenous Knowledge Systems Theory and Carl Roger's People-Centered Approach. Some of the feedback received from students:

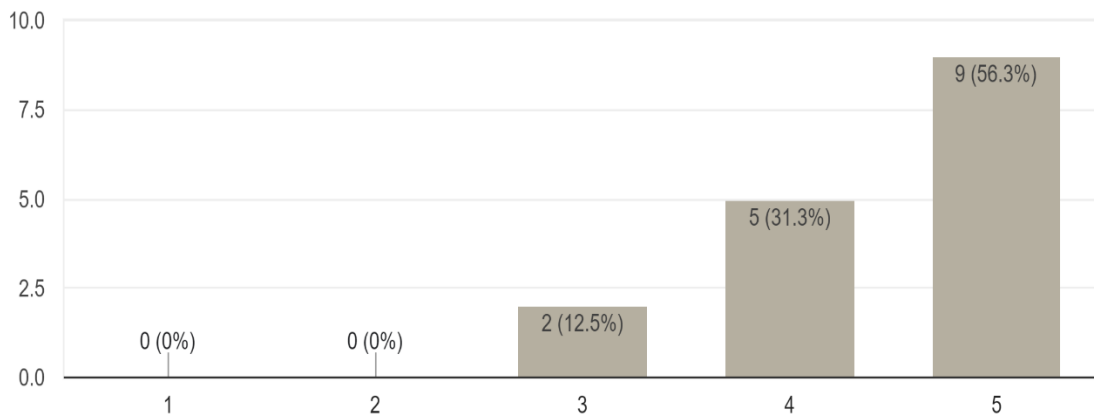
How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the lecture?

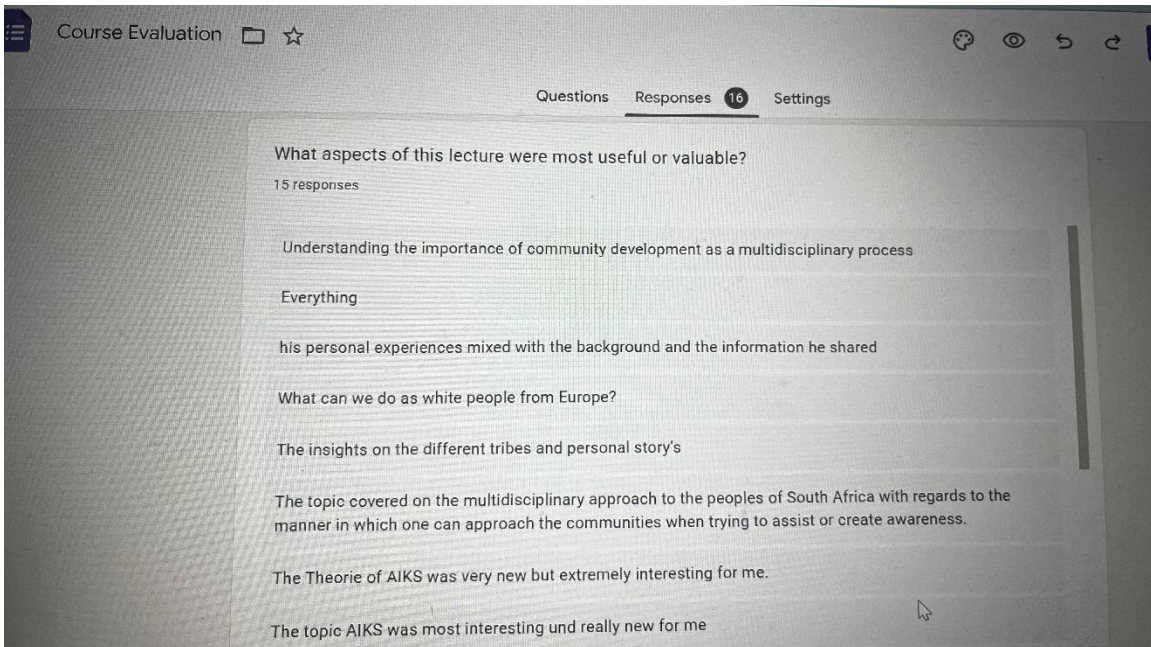
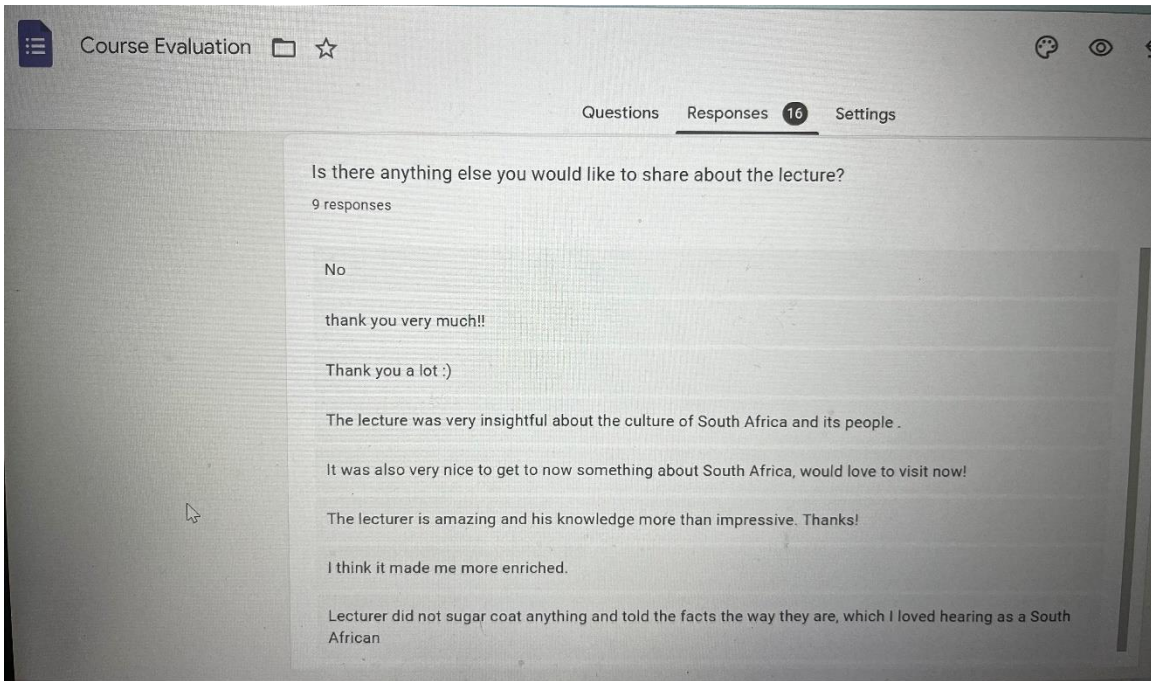
16 responses



Do you feel more confident about the subject matter after attending this lecture?

16 responses



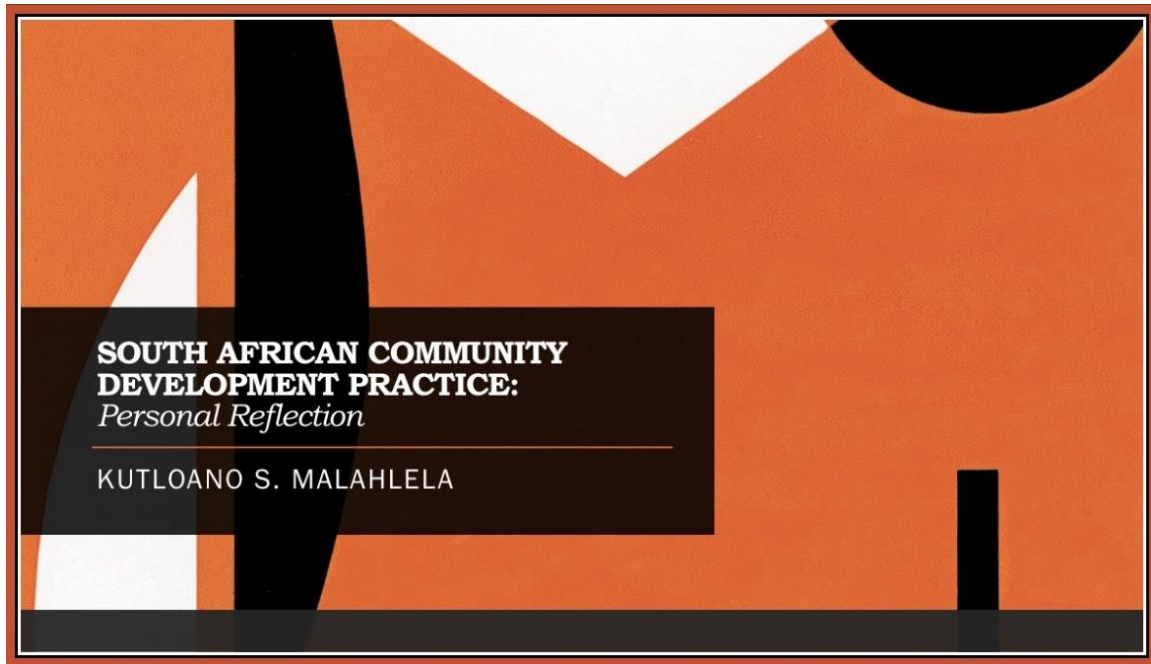


4.3.2 International Talk: *FROM AMANDLA TO ASINAMALI! The Role of Student Activism in Shaping South Africa's Democracy*



I had the privilege of presenting the international talk, "From Amandla to Asinamali!", aiming to illuminate the pivotal role student activism played in shaping South Africa's democracy. I explored the 1976 Soweto Uprising and the Fees Must Fall movement, showcasing their impact on democracy and the ongoing student struggle for quality education. The talk, enriched with multimedia elements, concluded with a reflection on the importance of encouraging student activism globally in the face of persistent human rights violations. The audience's commendable engagement reflected a genuine interest in historical context and current student activism. The shared realization about the enduring significance of student activism in societal change concluded the event, serving as a compelling call to action. My heartfelt gratitude to all attendees for contributing to the success of "From Amandla to Asinamali!"

4.3.3 Reflection: *South African Community Development Practice from A Personal Reflection*



As part of the assessment for the module Comparative National and International Social Work, I was requested to make a presentation reflecting on my personal experience in the South African community development sector. As part of my presentation, I gave a brief background information about community development practice in South Africa, highlighting its historical background and role in shaping South Africa's democracy. I further gave a brief theoretical explanation of the discipline and depicted the difference between community development and community engagement. Lastly, I narrated my journey in community development and presented about the organization I am part of.

5 FUTURE IMPACT OF MY STUDY ABROAD

With the experience and knowledge, I have received during my study abroad my certain that it will greatly influence my future. During my study abroad I developed a new interest in diplomacy and international relations, and this has fueled my passion to become an academic diplomat in the field of social and community development.

5.1 North-South Teaching Network

THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE NORTH-SOUTH TEACHING NETWORK PREAMBLE

We, the members of the North-South Teaching Network in pursuit of fostering a collaborative and enriching educational network, dedicate the NOST as a tool to consolidate resources contributed by esteemed partner universities from the Global South and North. This collaborative effort is integral to the development and implementation of an international strategic plan focusing on curriculum enrichment, personnel development, and the positioning of universities within the global community. NOST endeavours to serve as a valuable resource for research, documentation, and publication activities on an international scale. This network brings together academics and students who not only possess expertise in their respective fields but also actively engage as practitioners on three continents. Their dual role as resource persons in digital teaching and as contributors to research and evaluation activities is a cornerstone of NOST's mission. We envision NOST as a strategic and enduring forum, ensuring a network of cooperation that transcends boundaries and contributes to the collective advancement of teaching and learning on a global scale.

I am also proud to report that I was greatly involved in the development and founding of the North-South Teaching Network as an organization for young academics who are interested in fostering academic relations across the globe for the purpose of research, teaching, and learning. My involvement was mainly in the writing of 6 out of 12 articles of the constitution. I was further part of the team of students who were preparing elections for the first board of the organization. Closer to the end of the program I was elected as the Editor in Chief of North-South Teaching Network.

Newly Elected Board of North South Teaching Network

Chairperson: Makda 

Vice Chairperson: Mark 

Secretary General: Norell 

Treasurer general: Fiza 

Editor in Chief: Kutloano 

**Public Relations and Marketing Officer:
Pauline** 

Head of University Chapters: Crystal 

The role involves overseeing content development and publication processes for the network's academic and informational materials. It includes ensuring alignment with the

network's mission, goals, and editorial standards. The responsibilities encompass developing and implementing an editorial strategy that reflects the network's vision and enhances its academic standing. Defining the scope, themes, and focus areas for publications in alignment with network objectives is a key aspect. Planning the publication schedule, managing a peer review process for scholarly articles, and ensuring rigorous and impartial peer review to maintain quality and academic rigor are crucial. The overall goal is to ensure the production of high-quality, aligned, and integrity-driven academic and informational output. I am excited to begin my term and exercise these new roles.

Through this new role I intend to introduce a platform where insightful conversations on issues of national importance can be facilitated. This platform will be under the NOST (to be proposed to the board) and shall have a sustainable plan to ensure it continues in the future. The main purpose of the platform will be to encourage youth to be active global citizens who participate in global affairs by advocating for the marginalized and disposed. I am looking forward to working on this project, and I will be sending a formal communique outlining the details when the plan is ready.

6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the TIIPP scholarship was a lifetime opportunity, in Prof Melinda's words "it is a lifetime risk worth taken". This program has enriched me with the knowledge to continue questioning societal standards and the human condition. It has increased my passion to foster community development through academia and it has inspired me to be a global citizen. I walk out of this program as an alumnus who will not only frame my certificate of participation but who will continue to be actively involved in fostering diplomatic relations with people of all societal classes across borders for the betterment of the world. My heartfelt gratitude goes to the coordinators of the programs, sponsors, funders, endorsers, and all brains that have made this idea a reality. Ke lebogile go menahane – Thank you very much.

SPECIAL THANKS

In this section, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to a set of individuals who have played a prominent role in the completion of my study abroad.

TO: *Prof Shahana Rasool and Dr. Zibonele Zimba*

To the leaders of our department (UJ Department of Social Work and Community Development and Leadership) thank you very much for believing in my potential to represent and be the voice of our University. Dr. Zimba, thank you very much for walking with me from the first day when I was selected up until now, your advice and encouragement do not go unnoticed. You are a great inspiration to me and I cannot wait to work under you and with you. Prof Shahana, thank you very much for the motherly you have played, your support during the stressful nights preparing for the trip is highly appreciated by me and my family. May God bless and Protect both of you.

TO: *EHL International Office*

To the EHL international office staff (Daniela, Verena, Julia, and Camell) thank you very much for holding me by hand from the first day you learned of my selection to join EHL. Your support throughout the processes and my stay is highly appreciated and I wish you all the best in your personal and professional lives.

TO: *Prof Melinda Madew*

Thank you very much for your support during my stay, your words of encouragement and stories of resilience encouraged me to keep on keeping on. I have learned a lot from the regular reflection sessions we had and would like to continue with them even when I am back in South Africa. Your professional journey is inspiring and commendable. Blessings upon your life.

TO: *MY BUDDIES*

I am deeply grateful to the EHL program for assigning such kind and smart buddies to me, you all have greatly made my stay a memorable one. Pauline, my friend! thank you very

much for your kindness and generosity. I will forever cherish the memories we have made together with your kind and loving family. Sarah, thank you very much for being a kind soul, it is a pity that our relations were cut short by your departure, but I assure you that you have played a great role in my early day of settling to Ludwigsburg and I greatly appreciate that. To my brother, Peter, thank you for your kindness and generosity, I am grateful for the assistance you have provided during my arrival and departure. Madam Chairperson, Makda, thank you very much for your support and kindness, I cannot wait to be part of your stay in South Africa at our university, the University of Johannesburg. May God bless each one of you.

TO: My friends across the borders

One of the biggest highlights of this program was meeting you guys! Philippines and Belgium (as we would call each other) I am grateful to the almighty for blessing me with such beautiful souls. To my brother, Norell, thank you for your generosity and always reaching out to help, your kindness melts my heart, thank you, sir! To my three sisters AKA the Belgian ladies, Loeka, Frauke, and Ilana thank you for being such kind souls. Your presence brought so much happiness to my heart, I take with me the funny moments and laughter we shared. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors, hope we get to meet soon!!!

Thank you very much to everyone who has supported me in any way during my stay abroad. Dankeschon!

GALLERY



