



VIDZEME UNIVERSITY  
OF APPLIED SCIENCES

## Counselling Issues with International Students

AGITA ŠMITIŅA, DR.SC.ADMIN

Rēzekne, 2021

MADE WITH  
beautiful.ai



# About me

Career counsellor and assistant professor  
in Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences,  
Latvia

Psychologist and group trainer

More than 15 years experience in  
individual and group counselling

Mg Psych and Dr.sc.admin



# Please, choose 2 cards:

1st: Card that characterized at some way you

2nd: Association with our topic:  
Counselling of International students

BROWSE THE PROGRAMS AND  
**APPLY NOW!**



# Practical experience from 3 Universities

(Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, University of Latvia,  
Riga Technical University)

Largest international student groups in Latvia's HEI - students from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, Georgia, Ukraine, Russia

Various types of support and counseling are available - but the most common are the support of peer-mentors and psychological support

Basic career topics are related to finding temporary work, as well as financial literacy

Psychological difficulties are both general (for example, anxiety, depression, motivation, academic stressors, and homesickness etc) , and also very specific to each region and culture (gender roles, war trauma, social hierarchy, etc.)



# Multicultural counseling

Multicultural counseling **enables counsellor to better address unique challenges**, considering how a client's experience may be different from their own.

Multicultural concerns cover a broad range of topics and identities including **race, religion, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and/or disability**

People of different cultures have unique ways to cope with stressful situations in their lives. **Understanding how diverse cultures cope with hardships can help to promote mental health and prevent illness.**

Cultural understanding and sensitivity helps clients feel **more comfortable**

# Practical exercise: Privilege Walk



**PLEASE, CHOOSE ONE  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT'S  
PROFILE. THINK AND WROTE 3  
MORE THINGS ABOUT HIM/HER**

# Practical exercise: Privilege Walk



- 
- Everyone will stand in a horizontal line in the middle of the room.
- Listen to the following statements, and follow the instructions given.
- As the facilitator reads a statement or question, the participant will step forward or step back if it applies to them.
- For example, when I read “If you have blue eyes, take one step forward,” only people with blue eyes will move and everyone else will stand still
- Each step should be an average length step
- This activity should be done in silence and if anyone feels uncomfortable stepping forward and backward on any statement I read, then please stay where you are, but remember the statement read.
-

# Privilege Walk: some reflections



- Would anyone like to share more about their feelings?
- What was the purpose of this exercise?
- How did it feel to be one of the students on the “back” side of the line?
- How did it feel to be one of the students on the “front” side of the line?
- Did anyone think they had experienced an average amount of privilege, but it turned out to be more or less than they thought?
- Was anyone always on one side of the line? If yes, how did that feel?
- What might we draw from this exercise that can help us in our everyday lives?
- How can you apply what you have learned here to the work you will do as a leader, teacher or counsellor?
-



# Group work

**1** PLEASE SELECT ONE TYPICAL REPRESENTATIVE FROM A GROUP OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

**2** PLEASE VISUALIZE: WHAT ARE THEY LIKE? WHAT IS THEIR BACKGROUND? HOW DO THEY FEEL?

**3** WHAT DO THEY THINK? WHAT IS THEIR LIFESTYLE? WHAT ARE THE MAIN PROBLEMS THEY FACE? WHAT DO THEY WANT? WHAT THEY EXPECT FROM STUDIES?



# Group work-II

**1 PLEASE, CHANGE YOUR POSTERS!**

**2 MODEL: HOW CAN THE UNIVERSITY HELP? WHAT SHOULD THE CONSULTANT CONSIDER?**

**3 WHAT RESOURCES ARE NEEDED?**





# International students difficulties

International students face many of the same issues as domestic students such as - **anxiety, depression, academic stressors, and homesickness** (*Kronholz J, 2014*)

Difficulties with **financial stress, discrimination, cultural misunderstandings, dietary restrictions, and lack of support** from peers (*Olivas & Li, 2016*)

Students who are **less fluent in English** have more trouble integrating in peer groups and experience lower levels of academic tenacity (*Mamiseishvili, 2012*).

An investigation of Chinese students found that **low acculturation** was associated with psychological symptoms such as **depression and suicide** (*Suinn, 2010*)

Overall, the research suggests that the main concerns for international students include **acculturation, financial stressors, and social barriers**.



# International students and Counselling

International students are **much less likely to engage** in the counseling process, the process of obtaining rich, relevant data is rather difficult (Yakunina, Weigold, & McCarthy, 2011)

The **perceived stigma** associated with counseling, a cultural norm consisting of the avoidance of self-disclosure, uneasiness of seeking help, or because of a lack of language competence (Russell, Thomson, & Rosenthal, 2008)

Efficacy of **group counseling** with international students (Di-peolu, Kang, and Cooper, 2007)

**Psychoeducational behavioral** groups have been found to be effective, aimed at assisting students gain confidence and skills in interpersonal and academic areas while maintaining their cultural identity (Smith & Khawaja, 2011)

# Counselling Approaches



- **Person-centered approach**- the focus of being fully present and aware of self and client. By becoming **fully aware of the self and the influence of culture**, it is possible for a counselor to subscribe to the notion of being fully receptive toward international students in the counseling process (Pedersen 1990, 2013)
- **Culture-free model**- a model used in counseling that attempts to develop measures that are not dependent on a particular cultural context and are free from cultural bias. (Corey, 2001, 2011),
- Considering data suggests that international students desire amore **directive approach** to counseling (Barletta & Kobayashi, 2007; Yakunina et al.,2011)

# Counselling Approaches: APA guidelines with International Students



- Guidelines offered include a broad range of issues, discussing the **integration of counseling and ethnicity, family and community religion, communication, and prejudice**. Specifically, counselors are encouraged to explicitly define roles and expectations for counseling with their client, integrate other important individuals in the counseling process

# Role of Counselor



- Three dimensions of counsellor variables- **awareness, knowledge, and skills** (Pedersen et al., 2012)
- **Awareness of self, client, and potential barriers** in the counseling process; knowledge of culture-specific norms and values; and skill to transform such knowledge to appropriate interventions (Sue, 1982; as cited in Pedersen et al., 2012)
- Counselor **self-examination** is a central component in the counseling process
- Counselor should be aware of **overemphasizing or underemphasizing** cultural differences between themselves and the student
- The counselor offer a **clear orientation** to counseling, take **initiative** to learn about specific cultures in order to treat each student as an individual, and help students monitor the ways in which their values and perceptions impact the result of their time in the United States (Pedersen, 1997)
- Encouraging **strengthening bonds** between international students and their support system

Any Questions or remarks?

Thanks for your attention!

---

Agita Šmitiņa,  
Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences,  
Latvia



MADE WITH

beautiful.ai