



Institute of Adult Education in Helsinki, Catch Up with Work project, Finland
Intercultural communication and job orientation training for workplaces

Intercultural communication and job orientation training for workplaces

How does it work?

For an immigrant, it is essential to learn the work culture of the new home country, to enable functioning appropriately at work. It is equally important for employers to understand and have an awareness of their own work culture, with its underlying assumptions and unspoken agreements, so that they can explain the basics of it to the new employee. Often, we are not aware that our customs are culturally specific. We think that our way of doing things is the norm.

Whatever their origins, people tend to think that their cultural traits are the most rational ones. In the field of anthropology, this is called ethnocentrism. It is useful to keep in mind that every cultural trait has a specific history and logic behind it. When we aren't aware of these logics, we can consider others' cultural traits irrational. That's why it can be difficult to understand why an employee with a migrant background may be thinking and doing the work tasks differently from the way we are used to.

Employers need to realise that new employees with a migrant background should be oriented to the work culture as well as to the tasks assigned. This means explaining the logic and the reasons behind certain ways of doing things.

It is beneficial to offer training in different work cultures for staff responsible for orientation. This could help them understand the differences from work cultures in other countries more deeply.

The content of the training:

- Cultural differences in power distance
- Cultural differences in the role of the manager/boss
- Cultural differences in communication
- Time-orientation in different cultures
- How to provide job orientation to a new immigrant employee
- Cases to discuss

The theory of the lecture can be based on Geert Hofstede's theories about cultural differences.

Questions to discuss at the workshop:

- What is important to tell the new immigrant employee about Finnish (national) work culture?
- How can we help a new immigrant employee to adapt to the working culture?



- What kinds of challenges have you encountered in the orientation of immigrant employees?
- What kinds of matters have been easy in the orientation?

The training can be held on the premises of the workplace, and the staff manager can invite the participants to the training. The best way to organise the training is to have a theory section first and then, after the break, an exercise section. Both sections can last about one hour.