

**Case study: Assessing multicultural competency: four short vignettes**

1. **Culturally entrenched:** here a process model along with the core counselling skills based on active listening, genuineness, empathy and respect, are all that is needed to be able to work with the client. From a position of unconditional positive regard (UPR), practitioners are viewed as being able to rise above any cultural or social differences between themselves and the client.

**Anya** believes that her training is sufficient as UPR and impartiality were emphasised and these are core to good practice, and she says, “I do not discriminate and I treat everyone the same.” She also thinks having a humanistic approach is enough, “After all humanism believes that everyone can think and act independently and I facilitate that in the model I use in my careers work.”

2. **Cross-cultural awakening:** here cultural differences are acknowledged but similarities are looked for to diminish difference in a liberal attempt to offer the same service across groups. The focus is on applying the same model and the same skills such as empathy and respect.

**Tom** believes that it is part of his role to help the marginalised individuals he works with understand how to operate successfully within the mainstream culture. The coaching approach he trained in highlighted the importance of demonstrating empathy and respect, aiming to see the situation from the client’s point of view, which he says, “May be very different to mine”. His goal is to equip his clients with the knowledge and skills they need, in order to motivate them to develop their career profiles.

3. **Cultural integrity:** this becomes more progressive in that a range of approaches may be considered that allows for cross-cultural communication skills, built on knowledge of different groups. In other words consideration is given to what works best for particular clients.

**Bethany** was introduced to a number of approaches in her training. “We could not look at them all in depth, but I am aware that having only one way of working will not fit all of my clients.” As she is now working in a large multiethnic city, she is reviewing her approach, re-reading her course notes on verbal and non-verbal communication, and evaluating the models that appear to work best for the diverse clients who see her for career counselling.

4. **Infusion:** this would incorporate multicultural goals in all areas of a training curriculum. Multiculturalism becomes embedded into all areas in the training programme not just the skills related elements.

**Jamaal** was also introduced to a range of approaches on his training programme, but he says, “We spent a long time thinking about the issues that underpin difference and diversity, across all the modules. Specifically we thought about our own world view and how that affects our relationships with our clients. And we examined a number of principles, or competences if you like, and reflected on these in terms of the development of our practice: we did this at various points on the programme. To prepare us for working with diverse clients in career counselling, we then set ourselves tasks to increase our multicultural understanding.”

Reid, H.L. (2016) *Introduction to Career Counselling & Coaching*. London: Sage, pp. 123-143.

Infusion does not mean that the practitioner attempts to merge with the client: it should be clear in the discussion that cultural competence on the part of the career practitioner begins by acknowledging the cultural values that inform their own worldview. This is needed to avoid a 'them and us' approach to diversity which sees some groups as 'other', or as people described in deficient terms, i.e. the disaffected, the disengaged, the difficult-to-help or non-English speakers, non-indigenous people. Of course, what we see in others depends very much on where we stand to look. Our particular stance needs to be understood in terms of its social and historical origins. We need to understand how the culture we inhabit informs our views about work and career, in order to understand how the dynamics evident in other cultures prepare individuals and groups for their engagement with their 'world of work'. Arulmani describes this as 'cultural preparedness' and outlines a model to explain how this 'works' within an Asian context (Arulmani, 2014). Leong and Pearce (2014) also write about integrative and culturally accommodating models when considering the need for indigenous models in vocational psychology.

(Reid, 2016: 135/136)