

Bridging the cultural divide – a psychosocial perspective

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International students invest large sums of money when choosing to study in English speaking Universities. They are hoping for opportunities to immerse themselves in English language and Western style culture. Local students attending the same university have completely different expectations. Frequently a cultural divide occurs between the two groups typified by awkward silences, unmet expectations and stereotyping.

This widely documented phenomenon has inspired Academic staff to devise clever strategies as desperate attempts to create more inclusive working environments with their students. But the gap still exists.

An essential link is missing in these attempts to bridge the cross cultural communication divide. This is the addition of a psychosocial perspective. Including this perspective helps everyone develop an understanding of what is really happening when a cultural divide occurs.

This presentation will explore the theory and practice of a psychosocial perspective by explaining methods which actively involve students. Change occurs through focusing on the personal thoughts and experiences always present in interactions and allowing participants to explore their own actions and reactions. Practical exercises will provide opportunities for participants to build their own understanding and capacities for bridging this communication gap.

By demystifying intercultural communication dynamics both staff and students at UniSA are gaining insight and skills necessary for effective communication which enhance learning opportunities and cultural understanding for all.