

How to improve settlement for international students



RESEARCH

‘Assessing the predictive validity of cultural intelligence over time’

by Professor Colleen Ward, Jessie Wilson and Dr Ronald Fischer (2011)

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Background

International education contributes more than \$2 billion annually to New Zealand’s GDP, and supports around 32,000 jobs.

In such a competitive market, it is important international students settle well into New Zealand life and do well in their studies.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, part of Victoria University of Wellington, undertook a study about international students to investigate whether their levels of ‘cultural intelligence’ influenced their success in New Zealand.

Main research findings

International students who exhibited a keen drive and interest in learning about new and different cultures (‘cultural intelligence’) did better socially and psychologically than their peers with lower levels of the same trait.

These international students found it easier to make friends, make themselves understood, and go shopping without difficulty. They also experienced less depression and anxiety.

The students who showed a great deal of cultural awareness when interacting with people from different cultures, including New Zealanders, also did better socially than their peers with lower amounts of cultural awareness.

It was determined that the more the students’ home countries differed culturally from New Zealand, the more difficulty they experienced fitting into New Zealand society.

Relevance of findings to New Zealand

The findings suggest that some international students come to New Zealand with an enthusiasm for exploring and living in other cultures, and these students do better both socially and psychologically.

International students who have a greater awareness of different cultures have a much easier time fitting into New Zealand’s diverse culture.

It is recommended international students automatically receive intercultural training when they arrive from countries significantly culturally different to New Zealand in order to bridge the cultural gaps.

Supporting international students to do well both socially and psychologically will enable them to be more successful in their university studies and contribute to New Zealand society during their stay.