

Context International students in Australia are significantly more likely than their local counterparts to report difficulties within academic and everyday social interactions (Barker, Child, Gallois, Jones & Callan, 1991). Local students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) report similar problems including speaking up and giving presentations in class, mixing with other students, participating in project groups, and understanding expectations of classroom behaviour (Gorman, 1999).





What is ExcelL?

- An intercultural skills training program that promotes Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning and Leadership
 - Provides students, professionals, and business people with the tools to build effective social competencies for success in a culturally diverse context
 - 4 to 6 sessions of 2 hours each
 - Groups of 10 to 20 participants including both local and CALD participants

THE EXCELL INTERCULTURAL SKILLS PROGRAM



Developers

- Professor Marvin Westwood, University British Columbia, Department of Counseling Psychology, Canada
- Professor Anita Mak, University of Canberra, Faculty of Health, centre for Applied Psychology, Australia
- Associate Professor Ishu Ishiyama, University British Columbia, Department of Counseling Psychology, Canada
- Professor Michelle Barker, Griffith University, Griffith Business School, Australia

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How has it been offered?

- Offered to international students as a postorientation program, or
- To mixed groups of international, migrant and local students as part of an academic program, orientation program or in residential colleges
- To skilled migrant jobseekers
- To students in career transitions

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ExcelL at Griffith

- Orientation program for international postgraduate students
- In-course adaptation for International Human Resource Management
- Career transition programs
- Australian University Teaching Award for Innovation Across the Institution in 2003
- AAUT Individual Teacher Award 2005 Law, Business, Economics



What is ExcelL?

- Is skills-based and practice-focused
- Draws on the culturally diverse backgrounds and experiences of participants to develop the WHAT, HOW, and WHY of key social competencies for meeting personal, educational, and career goals
- Strong theoretical basis: Utilises integrated social learning model, classical and operant conditioning

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Key Social Competencies

- 1. Participating in a group or team setting
- 2. Seeking help or information
- 3. Making social contact or conversation
- 4. Refusing a request
- 5. Expressing disagreement
- 6. Giving feedback

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Rationale

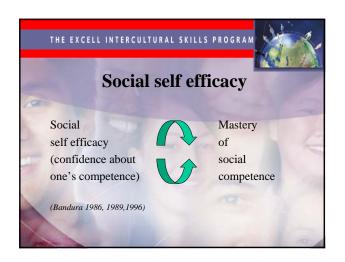
- Emphasis on social skills development, not just cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity
 - Recognises newcomers' need for cultural maps
 - Targets generic social scenarios that are relevant to both student and professional contexts, e.g., participation in a group, making social contact, giving feedback, seeking help, expressing disagreement

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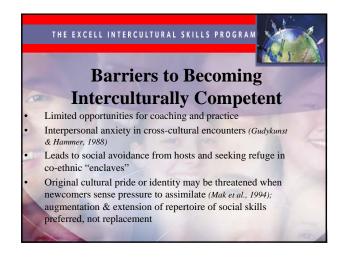


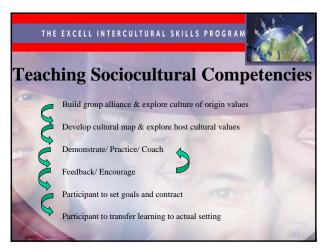
Rationale

- Where possible, use culturally diverse role models for credibility and models from host culture background for authenticity
- ExcelL augments repertoire of skills rather than replaces original sociocultural skills and identity











Constructing Cultural Maps

- 1. Behaviours are precise and specific
- 2. Described in sequential steps
- Behaviours are described as observable units that can be reproduced by the observer.
- Cultural explanations are given (values behind the behaviours, and compared with the cultural explanations of the learners.

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Constructing Cultural Maps

- 5. Provide alternative supportive strategies.
- 6. Context-specific nature of cultural maps; trainer must be able to construct maps for and with their participants.
- 7. Offered as one socially appropriate way to navigate in the new culture, but not prescriptions to follow without question.
- Ishiyama's ABCD Model of Interactions provides a useful framework for outlining cultural maps.

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Demonstration

- Social competency = making a request
- Scenario = request remark of an assignment
- Alliance building and explore cultural practices and values
- Group constructs local cultural map

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Scenario - Request for re-marking an assignment

- Preparations: Make appointment to see lecturer or go during consultation hours; bring along marked assignment
- 1. Approach
- -Knock on door, wait for response, enter room
- -Maintain eye contact
- 2. Breaking in
- -Clear, calm voice; body oriented to lecturer; sit if indicated
- -"EXCUSE ME, DR. XXX, DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?"
- -Introduce self and state clearly what you are seeing the lecturer for, e.g., "I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT MY RECENTLY MARKED ASSIGNMENT IN SUBJECT XXX."



Scenario - Request for re-marking an assignment

- 3. Commenting
- -Maintain eye contact, calm voice and open hand gesture
- -Ask lecturer for more feedback and to explain mark given
- -If mark still seems unexpectedly low to you, state you would appreciate to have the assignment re-marked
- -Give explanation for request, e.g., read all references, put a lot of work into essay
- 4. Developing/Closure
- -Thank for giving the time (even if negative) and considering to re-mark (if positive)

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Course Adaptation



- •International Human Resource Management Course (3rd Year Business) 93 students (2003), 105 students (2004)
- •7 two-hour lectures
- •6 two-hour workshops four combined the Excell method, an Excell skill and a relevant IHRM case study
- •Assessed with a case study analysis, 6 quizzes, an end of semester seen exam (2003), learning journal (2004).

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2004 - Restructured Assessment

Student learning journal (35%)

- Workshop reports on what students learned about IHRM; integration of content with own thought, experiences, feelings; ability to identify how the workshop has contributed to one's own professional growth.
- ExcelL homework reports from Participant's Manuals.

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Course Evaluation 2004

- Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this course – SA/A = 94%
- Overall, I achieved the aims and objectives of this course 95%
- I attended most of the tutorials (workshops) for this course – 92%
- I would recommend this course to other students 95%



Excell Comments

- "Through the ExcelL program, I learnt and understood that cultural differences must be appreciated for a successful relationship with those from other cultures."
- "Learned a lot of skills that will help me in my life and also my career. Eg. Expressing disagreement. I used this skill at Uni according to what I learned and was successful."
- "Learnt about how other cultures work and the importance of respecting them. This was very appropriate to everyday life."
- "It made myself aware of how culturally unaware I was and gave me exercises I can do to improve this aspect in all dealings with other people."

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Evaluation

Samples using local and international students (Griffith, USQ and U of Melbourne) showed

- increase in social confidence
- increase in interaction skills (Processing, Engagement, Self-Enhancement, Approach, & Interruption Skills).

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VCC EVALUATION

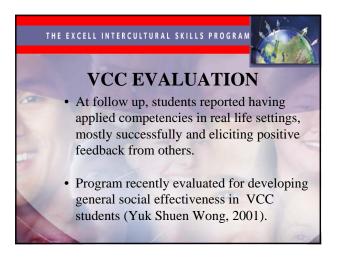
- Shergill (1997) collected data for Ph.D.:
 - prior to training
 - at completion of training
 - at 4 months' follow up
 - post-training interview with Vancouver
 Community College instructors
 - Increase in intercultural social efficacy beliefs

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VCC EVALUATION

- Independent "blind" raters gave higher ratings on trainees' interjection and clarification skills in a simulated scenario
- Trainees reported higher post-training social interaction skills and lower social avoidance tendency.











University of Melbourne Trainer's Observations

- Responded well to modelling & practice
- Safe & positive environment to practise & build confidence in real world
- Sharing, positive comments, & synergy, facilitated learning
- Real shift in students' confidence levels
- Suitable for undergrads & postgrads

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USQ TRAINERS' OBSERVATIONS

- Effective transition to university culture, both for overseas and Australian students
- Development of networks that promote feelings of community and connectedness
- Involve students in the dialogical processes of learning

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USQ TRAINERS' OBSERVATIONS

 "Of all the processes I have used to attempt to improve racial attitude, EXCELL is by far the most successful..... On a campus where we are dealing with race issues and the development of tolerance, the students of EXCELL may be the leaven in the bread".

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CONCLUSIONS

- International & migrant students benefit from increased social confidence and interaction skills
- Local students in mixed groups reap the same benefits
- Learning transferred to real life settings
- Learning about others' and own culture
- Improved racial attitudes









