

Integration Mentor – A Professional Intercultural Link for the Labour Market

The necessity to have intercultural competent employees increases as the Swedish society becomes more multicultural. A study was carried out in 2003, which showed the need for a course that would help professionals meet the new conditions in Sweden.

Therefore the board of directors with representatives from University of Borås, Västra Götalands Regionen, Gothenburg and Fristad Folk High Schools and the Intercultural Resource Centre developed a 30 credit, part-time, one year course in intercultural competence for key employees. The course contents are divided into four parts which include: Basic Scientific Theories and Concepts in Intercultural Competence, Swedish Society and its Diversity, Intercultural Skills and the Roll of the Integration Mentor in practice.

Since 2004, the course has run four times and a total of 70 professionals have been educated. Each course has been evaluated and developed accordingly. The students highly valued the course and the competence it gave them. They gained a network as well as knowledge and methods for working with diversity. They were able to expand their interest and conceptualize their experience. After completion, students requested additional courses. For that reason, during 2008 a continuation course was developed and will commence in 2010.

As a result of the course, the students have developed diversity in the work place. They have i.e. implemented diversity plans, held workshops, acted as a link between cultures and started projects and companies. The 70 professional Integration Mentor students who attended the course have made a positive impact on the society.