

Problem oriented group work in a multicultural setting

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Roskilde University in Denmark is based on the pedagogical concept of problem oriented group work. It is a highly efficient way of learning demanding highly developed interpersonal skills from the student. At Roskilde University the students acquire these skills during four semesters of basic studies. Exchange and guest students, however, arrive with no prior experience in or knowledge of the Roskilde pedagogy.

What this means is that exchange students at Roskilde university use an unproportionately large part of their stay figuring out what problem oriented work is all about, because until they have experienced this kind of work themselves, they are amazed of all the free time they have at their disposal and only when they realise that they themselves are will have to do all the work, they find out that there is not at all as much time as they thought.

In addition power distance in Denmark is rather low, and that makes it hard for southern Europeans and, even more pronouncedly so, some Asians to deal with the Danish staff members, because the students take professors' suggestive answers for authoritative, final answers, when they are merely meant as suggestions or inspiration for debate.

In order to address these challenges Roskilde University's Communication Studies have introduced a series of introductory courses aimed at international students and with the expressed intent of making life as an exchange student in Roskilde easier.

My paper will deal with various aspects of international students' meetings with the Roskilde model.

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