

Cultural and religious connections; community engagement; wellness and entry adjustment amongst international students in Palmerston North.

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In a survey amongst mature and post graduate students at Massey University, Palmerston North in 2011 there were indications that local religious & cultural communities served an important role as sources of information and assistance in settlement outcomes for international students and their families. The role of such connections was further reinforced in this subsequent study where the authors sought to explore further the cultural adaptation amongst a broad group of international students in Palmerston North with reference to factors that may aid settlement or act as barriers to good settlement outcomes. Through a methodology of a short survey and complementary focus groups and interviews the experiences of a range of international students were explored as to engagement with the local community groups and how such engagement facilitated a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion and recognition. This in turn contributed to growth in wellness through a lessening of acculturative stresses, a heightening awareness of social supports and a perception of paths to overcome language and communication barriers in the wider community. The sample of international students included young, single undergraduate students as well as post graduate, mature and married with family students. In this paper the authors draw from the Maori health model, Te Whare Tapa Wha and make suggestions relating to entry adjustment programmes for international students to seek to achieve a balance whereby the international student adjustment includes the spiritual as well as physical, social and mental aspects

Key Words

Community engagement , social awareness, pastoral care