

Case: Ahmed's struggle for integration in Finland

Ahmed, a 32-year-old immigrant from the Middle East, moved to Finland seeking a better life for himself and his family. He arrived in Helsinki, the capital city, with high hopes and dreams of successfully integrating into Finnish society. However, his journey towards integration has been met with several challenges and obstacles.

Ahmed's biggest challenge has been the language barrier. He arrived in Finland with limited knowledge of the Finnish language, and while he has been attending language classes, he finds it challenging to communicate effectively. This has made it difficult for him to find a job and build social connections.

Despite having a background in engineering from his home country, Ahmed has been unable to find a job in his field. Employers often require fluency in Finnish, and even though he is highly skilled, his limited language proficiency hinders his job search. Instead, he has been working in low-paying, unskilled jobs, which has been a source of frustration for him.

Ahmed finds it challenging to adapt to Finnish cultural norms and customs. He often feels like an outsider, as he is unfamiliar with social norms, traditions, and expectations. This has led to misunderstandings and discomfort in social situations.

Ahmed's lack of social connections in Finland has led to feelings of isolation and loneliness. He misses the close-knit community he had back in his home country and struggles to form meaningful relationships in Finland.

Ahmed has experienced instances of discrimination and xenophobia, both subtle and overt. He has faced prejudice in housing searches, at work, and in public spaces. These experiences have further eroded his sense of belonging in his new home.

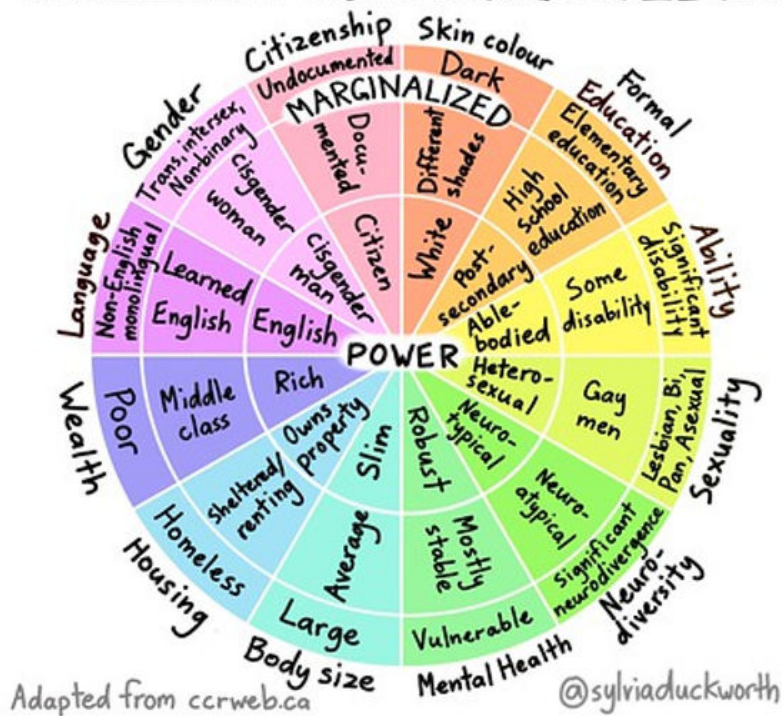
Ahmed has previously been getting guidance when being enrolled in a program for unemployed people. However, as soon as he managed to get a low-paying, unskilled job, he was discharged from the program. Now he has contacted you, a career guidance practitioner, for guidance on how to reach the life he dreams of in Finland.

Guiding questions for reflection

Opening question

What is your initial reaction to this case? What thoughts and emotions arise?

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



- Using the Wheel of Power/Privilege, what factors can you identify that do not work in Ahmed's favor in regards to integration? In what way?
- Using the Wheel of Power/Privilege, what factors can you identify that works in Ahmed's favor in regards to integration? In what way?
- How can you, as a career guidance practitioner, use the Wheel of Power/Privilege to reflect on your own positions of power and privilege in relation to Ahmed's case, and how might these dynamics impact your interactions and guidance?
- How can you incorporate insights gained from a power and privilege analysis into your career guidance practices to ensure a more equitable and supportive experience for Ahmed and other clients facing similar challenges?

The five signposts to socially just career guidance

The five signposts to socially just career guidance are a framework to support practitioners to engage with social justice. The five signposts suggest that a socially just form of career guidance will build critical consciousness, name oppression, question what is normal, encourage people to work together, and work at a range of levels.

Critical consciousness

Critical consciousness involves helping people to understand the situation and to not just react to it on a personal level, as well as becoming aware of the effect of people's surroundings, and reflecting on why things are the way they are and in whose interest they work.

1. What steps can you take to stay informed about systemic barriers and issues affecting career opportunities and social integration for marginalized individuals?
2. How would you describe your understanding of the broader social and cultural influences that affect career decisions?

Naming oppression

Naming oppression is about helping people to see and reflect on injustice and to help them organize in solidarity to access a decent career.

1. How can you ensure that you are proactive in recognizing and naming instances of oppression and discrimination in your clients' experiences?
2. What forms of discrimination or bias have you encountered in your work as a career practitioner or in your studies? Have these experiences impacted your values and work practices? How?

Questioning what is normal

Questioning what is normal is about spending time discussing what normality means and whether it is necessarily desirable.

1. How do you think cultural differences impact the way you perceive "normal" career paths for the people you work with?
2. How can you challenge your own and other's assumptions and biases regarding what is considered "normal" in our society, particularly in the context of career guidance?

Encourage people to work together

Encouraging people to work together is about facilitating social interaction and collaboration, as well as recognizing that many dilemmas in careers and in society cannot be solved only through individual action.

1. How can you, as a career guidance practitioner, foster collaboration between your clients and local communities, organizations, and employers to promote mutual understanding and cooperation?
2. What networking and partnership-building efforts can you engage in to create more inclusive career guidance practices?

Working at a range of levels

Working at a range of levels is about intervening into individual, group, organizational, social and political systems, and understanding that the obstacles individuals face does not always happen due to a lack of something.

1. How can you address career guidance challenges at multiple levels, including individual, community, and systemic levels, to better support clients like Ahmed?
2. Considering both short-term goals and long-term aspirations, how can you balance focusing on personal growth for the individual with advocating for systemic changes that will benefit the whole society?