

Collection of cases - Career guidance in communities

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CASE: The career guidance wall

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In “Vejledning i fællesskaber” Thomsen examines, among other things, career guidance at a company, which has to shut down its production. As a prerequisite to the employees in connection with their dismissal, the company hires a career guidance practitioner to help them find new jobs or identify which supplementary training opportunities may be of interest to them. The career guidance in the company is initially structured as a “career guidance corner” and the career guidance practitioner is assigned an office in a building near the production hall. Here the employees can, at specific times, visit the career guidance practitioner, who has a computer, brochures as well as plenty of time to talk to each employee, create CVs etc. But nobody comes. The few that actually do show up are only there because the foreman has sent them and they only stay for a short period of time. This causes the career guidance practitioner to take her folder with job advertisements (vacancies) and supplementary courses and move to the production hall. Gradually as she is accepted by the employees, she is allowed to put up the job advertisements in the lunch room, which adjoins the production hall. The career guidance corner now becomes a career guidance wall and the career guidance becomes much more collective, as those who wish to speak to the career guidance practitioner reach out to her in the breaks and ask their questions, while others listen to the answers and possibly ask follow-up questions. The scenario can be compared to a smaller group of men that know each other well who are kicking around a tire in the parking lot of the community center in between the celebratory songs at a family gathering. The career guidance practitioner is kicking along with them. Quietly and calmly she contributes

with comments, suggestions and ideas to the collective dialogue about future opportunities (Thomsen, 2009a and 2009b).

CASE: Career guidance in practice

Translated by Euroguidance from: Thomsen, R., Skovhus, R. B., & Buhl, R. (2015) Vejledning i nye kontekster i Antologi om karriärvägledning [Career guidance in new contexts in Anthology on career guidance]. Studentlitteratur. (p. 162)

Career guidance in practice is part of wider development efforts at Copenhagen Technical College (KTS). The purpose of career guidance in practice is to make career guidance visible and present, by making the career guidance practitioner mobile and easily accessible to the students. The aim of being where the students are is that each individual student should feel that there is massive support and interest in the student completing his/her education. The career guidance practitioner is linked to a class and has close contact with the vocational teacher and contact teacher. Furthermore, the career guidance practitioner is in contact with any contact persons, whom the students have outside of KTS, and also participates in the introductory interview. Approximately once a week, the career guidance practitioner walks among the student communities – in the workshop, classrooms or the lunch room. Here she is able to follow-up on previous conversations, ask questions or start a conversation about a different topic.

An evaluation of the development efforts illustrates that the dropout rate is lower in the classes where career guidance is practiced within a community framework.

Parallel to the project, the career guidance practitioner conducted video recordings of the career guidance in her office as well as the career guidance in practice, and analysed the students' body language and speaking time. The analysis of the video recordings illustrates that the students speak for longer percentage-wise in a practical setting than in the office. The analysis of the students' body language demonstrates that the students show fewer signs of nervousness, less calming self-therapy, and that they smile more often when the career guidance takes place in practice. The recordings were supplemented with individual interviews with the participating students. The students were selected on two criteria – “at-risk youth” and “ordinary youth”. The analysis of the interviews shows that ordinary young people seek career guidance when needed and wherever the career guidance practitioner is located, while at-risk young people are hesitant to seek out the career guidance practitioner at her office, but appreciate that she comes to them (Koch 2012).

CASE: Career guidance café in Vapnagaard

Translated by Euroguidance from: Thomsen, R., Skovhus, R. B. and Buhl, R. (2013). At Vejlede i Fællesskaber og Grupper [Guidance Provision in Communities and Groups]. Valby: Schultz. (p. 54)

Since November 2011, a career guidance practitioner at Youth Guidance Centre Øresund (UU-Øresund) has worked to establish a career guidance café in Vapnagaard. Vapnagaard is a residential area in Northern Zealand with a large population of minority ethnic groups. The main target group for the effort is the 18-25 year olds, and the career guidance café is located near a popular homework café in Vapnagaard.

The establishment of the career guidance café is based on career guidance conversations that were conducted at the citizen centre in Vapnagaard with very vulnerable young people for whom going to the youth guidance centre seems inconceivable. The conversations took place in collaboration with the housing company's social worker. Experience shows that it is an advantage that the young people and their parents, not the career guidance practitioner, have home-court advantage.

The aim of the career guidance café is to establish contact and provide career guidance to 18-25 year olds living in Vapnagaard, who have not completed nor are enrolled in youth education. Furthermore, the café seeks to widen knowledge about UU-Øresund among the Vapnagaard residents and to receive input as to whether or not it is a good idea to place part of UU-Øresund's youth career guidance efforts in a residential area in the future.

Prior to the establishment of the career guidance café, the career guidance practitioner contacted a number of young people that lived in Vapnagaard, who were at the time enrolled in youth education and who were known by UU-Øresund from prior or ongoing career guidance activities. The career guidance practitioner encouraged them to come by the career guidance café and speak about their education. Furthermore, these young people were encouraged to advertise the café among their friends who had not completed youth education.

The career guidance consists of group and individual counselling, where the young people talk about their education, the educational system and receive help in completing applications, applying for student financing and other discounted offers for students, such as a youth railcard.

In connection with the career guidance café, the career guidance practitioner has established three dogmas for own practice:

1. UV Data serves and does not control the career guidance (UV Data is a necessary electronic student registration system that occasionally receives too much of the career guidance practitioner's attention)
2. The career guidance practitioner is alone on foreign ground (the circumstances, which the one seeking career guidance used to be under, are now the circumstances of the career guidance practitioner).
3. A maximum of 25 percent of the career guidance practitioner's time may be spent counselling people outside of the target group (the career guidance practitioner comes with attention, a desirable but scarce good, which other target groups want).

The young people become aware of the career guidance in various ways:

- The young person is invited by the career guidance practitioner
- The young person is invited by other professionals from libraries, the citizen centre and the service centre
- The young person has heard about the café from another young person
- The young person has read about the café in "Helsingør Syd"
- The young person sees the café, while attending the homework café. The young people that come to the café are mainly young men from minority ethnic groups as well as young mothers, young men of Danish ethnicity and young women from minority ethnic groups, who seek supplementary career guidance on choice of further education.

The career guidance practitioner's most important experience from the career guidance café has been the possibility to not only affect the young people, but also the community's perception of what dropping out of an education means – namely not a failure, but an experience that can be used in the next steps of the educational journey. The career guidance café has meant that the career guidance practitioner has seen the young people in their immediate environment, providing the career guidance practitioner with a more nuanced image of the young person, creating the basis for, hopefully, better career guidance. Furthermore, the career guidance practitioner has established contact with professionals and volunteers in the young person's network, which has led to not only the career guidance practitioner, but many others supporting the young person's education plans.

Source: Project description and presentation by Camilla Sneum, Career guidance practitioner from UU-Øresund.

CASE: Food workshop with career guidance

Translated by Euroguidance from: Thomsen, R., Skovhus, R. B., & Buhl, R. (2015) Vejledning i nye kontekster i Antologi om karriärvägledning [Career guidance in new contexts in Anthology on career guidance]. Studentlitteratur. (p. 163-164)

Two years ago, a career guidance practitioner in Youth Guidance Centre Skive (UU-Skive) established a food workshop¹ for young people. The background for this was her work as a mentor. Her experiences as a mentor and extensive contact with young people with different personal and social problems made it clear to her that many young people did not eat a balanced diet. As she put it, if you do not put petrol in the car, you cannot expect it to run. Some of the young people could not deal with food shopping and when they did, they did not manage to cook the food. Additionally, some of them had difficulties managing their finances, leaving insufficient funds for healthy food. When the young people were hungry they would, for example, order a pizza and coke, which meant that they had already spent a large amount of their food budget on a single meal.

One of the career guidance practitioner's students was given help, so the career guidance practitioner could assist her in food shopping, planning various meals as well as cooking. Increasingly, the career guidance practitioner became aware of the fact that many other young people had similar needs and had no opportunities for help. This was the basis for the idea to establish a food workshop, where young people could help each other cook. The career guidance practitioner presented her idea to the Director of UU-Skive, who thought it was a good idea. UU-Skive applied for and received funding from the municipal health committee (Sundhedsudvalget). Part of the career guidance practitioner's considerations about a suitable kitchen was that it should be located centrally, so it was easy for the young people to reach the food workshop, as many could not afford the bus fare.

The food workshop takes place every Monday at 15:30-19:00. The young people meet and prepare useful and good quality dinners for Monday evening as well as for the four following evenings. The dinner for the following four days are packed in portions, which the young people bring home, so they have food for the rest of the week. Additionally, fresh baked bread are baked by the young people, which they can then put in their lunchboxes during the week. The young people pay 80 kr. per workshop and for this amount they get five hot meals and bread to put in their lunchbox for four days. When the young people are introduced to the food workshop, they are met with the following description: "The food workshop is a free

¹ A food workshop refers to an activity in a kitchen, where breakfast and lunch can be cooked.

space, where you can be yourself. We need each other to make tasty and good food, which is cheap. This is easier when we work together”.



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Suggestion for further reading:

Thomsen, R. (2012). *Career Guidance in communities*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press. 240p.

Thomsen, R. (2012). Guidance in Communities - A way forward? *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 28: 39-45.

Thomsen, R. (2014). Non-participation in guidance: An opportunity for development? *International Journal for Educational and Vocational guidance*, 14(1), 61-76.

Thomsen, R., Skovhus, R. B. and Buhl, R. (2013). *At vejlede i Fællesskaber og Grupper* [Guidance Provision in Communities and Groups]. Valby: Schultz

Thomsen, R., Skovhus, R. B., & Buhl, R. (2015) *Vejledning i nye kontekster* i Antologi om karriärvägledning [Career guidance in new contexts in Anthology on career guidance]. Studentlitteratur. (p. 162)