

TEACHING NOTE

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A Visit to the

Learning Shop –

Providing Access to

Lifelong Guidance

Competence: Enable Access to Information

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Keywords

professionalizing career guidance practitioners, competence, enable access to information, lifelong guidance, information handling skills, Learning Shop Neukölln, case study, training and teaching material

The Competence “Enable Access to Information”

CEDEFOP states the following in the publication “Professionalising career guidance”: “The career guidance practitioner needs to be a competent user of a wide range of information materials in a variety of formats. Central to this element is the practitioner’s effort to develop the ability of the client to identify, access and interpret relevant and appropriate information for their needs. Interpretation of this element can be more sharply focused [...] if there is a clear understanding of the career management competence to be developed by the individual student and citizen.”

From the point of the view of the author of the case study “A visit to the Learning Shop – providing access to lifelong guidance” another important point is that to provide a quality guidance service information provided to clients must be relevant and up-to-date. As guidance practitioners often use a wide variety of different sources to inform clients it is crucial that there is a structure to ensure that this information is regularly updated. The case study also refers to this side of the competence.

Synopsis of the Case Study

The case describes how Thomas, a forty-year-old accountant, comes to the Learning Shop Neukölln and asks for information about the programme SAP. Thomas has already been to a career guidance practitioner in his hometown but has then moved to Berlin and is again looking for information about SAP courses. Firstly Martina, one of the guidance practitioners working the Learning Shop, tries to find out with Thomas if a SAP course would really be helpful for him to reenter the labour market. Once this has been clarified they look together at different databases

for SAP courses as well as in the information folders of the Learning Shop. They identify four courses that might be interesting for Thomas. Martina tries to assess if he has got all the information and therefore asks Thomas about certain aspects of the information provided. She also summarises the information in her own words. Thomas then wants to know which course is best for him. Martina explains to him that this is something that he has to find out and gives him some hints how he could reach a decision.

Conceptual Foundation and Teaching Objectives

The case study gives students the opportunity to discuss this guidance counselling competence and how to enable access to information for their clients. They can help them identify which skills are needed for this competence.

The teaching objectives of this case study are:

to discuss how one can do the following and as a result become more competent:

- › how to assess client's information handling skills
- › to have strategies to stay updated and have the information on-hand
- › to enable clients to find information on their own

- › to help clients to improve information handling skills, if needed
- › to develop client's own autonomous interpretation of information
- › to listen carefully and not make assumptions too quickly about clients
- › to be open to different interpretations

Discussion Questions

- › How do you enable access to information for your clients?
- › Discuss how to get the information in the first place.
- › Do the structures in your region support you in getting important information?
- › Do you have defined methods in your institution to assess how your clients deal with the information provided or do you do it intuitively? How?
- › How do you make sure in your guidance counselling session that your clients interpret the information they get?

Target Group

The learners intended for this case study are guidance practitioners of all levels of experience. Information and structures are constantly changing so the case study should also be interesting for people who have many years of experience working as guidance practitioner. The case study can also be used with newly qualified guidance practitioners.

Teaching Approach / Training Situation

The case study could be used as part of group discussion. The group can be divided into smaller groups to answer the discussion questions (see page 3). Each group can then present their answers to the whole group. To conclude the trainer can then facilitate a whole group discussion on the importance of the competence and the outcomes/learning from the workshop. Alternatively the case study could also be used within a role play scenario. Practitioners could

take on the role of practitioners displaying low levels or high levels of the competence and the impact this has on the client can then be discussed. Such role plays can be done in triads, with two people involved in the role play (one the guidance practitioner and the other the client) and one person acting as the observer who can later comment on the role play and the impact on the client.

Background Information

The Learning Shop Neukölln uses different counselling approaches (s.b.). For these different approaches the competence might be needed in a different way, e.g. the information handling skills might be important in all three counselling approaches while the skill to interpret information might be most important for biography-based counselling.

Furthermore it might be more difficult to assess the clients' skills to handle information when vocational guidance takes place via email or the phone.

Personal counselling is the focus of the Learning Shop. This is orientated towards the needs of the person seeking advice and always places their personal situation at the forefront. All forms of counselling include to a greater or lesser extent a markedly reflexive element.

The individual counselling at the Learning Shops is divided into three ideal forms according to Gieseke's method, where advice and information are seen as one entity.

Informative Counselling

During informative counselling the seeker of advice is in a position to clearly state the type of counselling desired and to gather information from the adviser on the further education courses available.

Situational Counselling

Situational counselling is intended to ensure that the advice seeker knows what kind of effect further education will have on their personal situation. The client describes their current situation and its connection to their expectations from the counselling. It is important to establish whether the person's described situation can be changed through further education.

Biography-Based Counselling

During biography-based counselling the client does not give a definite consultation demand. The advice seeker hopes that, through education, they can make positive changes to their general problems. During this process personal problems are interwoven with education and qualification problems. The counsellor tries to expose hidden educational interests, problems with self-esteem and unrealistic hopes and then supports the client in their decision-making process.

People seeking education, who due to their personal situation require long-term guidance and exhibit a comparatively high level of self-reflexivity, can, upon agreement from the counsellor, receive education coaching.

Alongside these personal consultations the Learning Shops also offer short counselling sessions on the phone or via email as well as advice on given topics through online chat. At the Learning Shops themselves there are computers available to visitors to support them in their personal research and written job applications. A wide range of courses in, for example, job seeking, application training and vocational targets accompany the core business of counselling.

Some other interesting background information is the [quality assurance in counselling](#) in Berlin. The quality of education counselling is dependent on two factors: the competence of the counsellor and the smooth running of the counselling organisation. The counsellors at the Learning Shops have almost without exception a qualification in their field from a regional qualification centre (RQZ). Here, practical skills as well as specific counselling-related knowledge are taught.

In 2007 the three Learning Shops – as the first guidance institutions in Germany – with the support of the Berlin quality coordination office (k.o.s) – received the certificate for learning-orientated quality testing in further education (LQW). This ensures that the counselling process is optimally supported by functioning general conditions.

The concept of successful learning during guidance is in the focus of LQW. All the 11 quality fields reflect on the successful learning. One of the goals of the guidance process is to initiate successful learning in the customer. The aim of the work of the Learning Shop is to offer "help for self-help".

Testing Experience

The case study *A visit to the Learning Shop – providing access to lifelong guidance* was tested on 28th March 2013 in Italy, in a half day training and testing session (9.30 am – 1.00 pm). The target group involved in the testing was composed by 12 participants, all women.

All the participants were guidance practitioners or counsellors in different VET centers, many of them were also trainers and they work with adults and young people. The participants had different levels of work experience. The study case was read directly in the classroom during the first 30 minutes. Afterwards the trainer asked for questions or clarifications on the study case. Then, the group was divided into 3 small groups for 1 hour to discuss the focus questions proposed by the teaching notes and annexed to the study case. Following this the answers of each group were presented to the rest of participants and there was a discussion to conclude. The participants were very interested in the issue and the involvement on it was quite strong. It was clear that access to information is a sensitive and topical issue for the guidance practitioners and counsellors. The overall feedback was positive. The training session was interesting and learners were directly involved in discussion. The topic was linked with the daily work of learners, it helped guidance practitioners to reflect on their own competences and it facilitated the engagement of learners in the situation.

THE GUIDE

PROJECT

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