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The Development of the New Approach to Guidance in Life-Long Education within the Grundtvig Project *Counselling in Life Long Learning*

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Nowadays, guidance becomes more and more crucial at all stages of life, and it is fundamental that guidance systems and policies are able to adapt to new social conditions. Therefore it is necessary to promote cooperation in the development of lifelong guidance policies in Member States and at European level and implement the priorities identified in the Resolution on Lifelong Guidance (2004).

Guidance or counselling?

Guidance helps an individual to acquire essential skills, abilities and capacities for the tasks to be accomplished in the future. It is also aimed at assisting an individual in choosing a proper profession and role in the society and enables to play the role successfully. Guidance has personal and social significance because it focuses on the process of adjustment with the individual and the environment.

On the other hand, counselling is the service offered to the individual who is undergoing a problem and needs professional help to overcome it. The problem usually keeps the person disturbed and under tension, therefore its solution is inevitable. Counselling is a more specialized service requiring training in personality development, and handling groups of individuals. Both guidance and counselling assist the individual to become a wholesome person, but the main difference between them can be seen in the approach as in the process of guidance a ready solution is provided by an expert while at the end of the process of counselling the clients themselves have an insight to the problem and become empowered to take own solutions.

Taking into account the above mentioned facts, and also a recommendation related to terminology in the European Union, using the term guidance in connection with the process of life-long education seems to be more suitable and adequate as all people need information and advice several times in their lives.

The concept of a new approach to life-long learning

The new approach involves guidance as a continuously accessible service for all that overcomes the distinction between educational, vocational and personal guidance and which reaches new publics. Living and working in the 21st century society requires active citizens who are self-motivated to pursue their own personal and professional development, which means that the system of provision shifts from a supply-side to a demand-side approach placing users' needs and demands in the centre of concern.

Therefore, individuals should be accompanied on their journey through life by releasing motivation, providing relevant information and facilitating decision making. Moreover, it means that the new approach is expected to be more proactive, i.e. reaching people, than simply waiting for them to ask for advice, and following up on the progress that has been made.

The future guidance and counselling professionals must be aware of the fact that clients' interests are in the forefront and that they should be able to tailor a wide range of information in order to decide on the best course of action for the future. Internet based sources of information and diagnostic tools open new horizons for improving the range and quality of guidance and counselling services. However, at the same time new technologies bring potential problems to solve and it will be necessary to help people to find their way through the information labyrinth.

Recently, it has been found out that a lot of information is searched and found through non-formal and informal channels and professional guidance and counselling services must take them into consideration developing networks with local associations and voluntary groups. Traditionally, guidance and counselling services were provided as public services and were originally designed to accompany initial transitions between school and the labour market, but nowadays, in some EU members states many guidance and counselling services have been privatized.

Taking into account all the presented aspects of the approach to guidance and counselling, at present, professionals providing guidance and counselling services should concentrate on the questions related to the need of creating interconnected European databases accessible from all the countries, setting up an Internet based universal access to information of training, labour market and career opportunities, and modernizing and improving professional development for guidance and counselling services, assuring their quality both in public and private market.

Project Counselling in Life Long Learning developed within the Grundtvig programme

The project described below is aimed at a new approach to guidance in life-long education trying to bridge the gap between formal and informal systems of guidance in several EU member countries, taking into account intercultural conditions of the partner countries, and finding barriers that exist between the range of educational courses. A special emphasis is put on people from vulnerable social groups, as women, migrants, disabled, aging people, etc., in order to provide them with alternative opportunities to access adult education and a job.

The **goal** of the project is to acquaint partners with the entire range of lifelong education in each partner country provided by all kinds of educational institutions from universities to individual private providers and to enhance the European dimension of education in partner organizations by promoting joint cooperation activities with institutions from different European countries. All the partners involved in the project are supposed to learn new methods, introduce innovations, work together to be prepared to help learners and teachers to acquire and improve skills not only in the area of lifelong education including guidance and counselling, but also in the field of intercultural teamwork, social relations, using information, and increasing motivation towards language learning.

The project partners are also expected to get insight into options of better and more purposeful use of advisory instruments focusing on the knowledge of partner countries from the intercultural point of view, getting information about providers of education in the specific regions including educational opportunities for people in need as foreigners, migrants, disabled, old people, etc.

There are three **partners** involved in the project – *Centro de Profesorado de Almeria* in Spain, *Konya Meram Ilce Milli Egitim Mudurlugu* in Turkey, *School of Business Administration in Karviná*, *Silesian University in Opava* in the Czech Republic.

The Turkish partner, a coordinator of the project, is the Head Office of Apprenticeship and Non-Formal Education in the district offices of public education is aimed at adults within formal and non-formal education who especially need basic education, left any level of formal education or are unemployed, want to change a job, are disabled and have come from villages.

The Spanish institution deals with training and advising of the in-service teachers to improve their pedagogical capacities and update their knowledge. It takes care of primary, secondary schools, vocational training schools and adult training centres located in the area where the presence of immigrants and ethnic minorities has dramatically increased during the last decade. To improve the quality of education in this minority group the institution arranges workshops related to intercultural education and attempts to integrate ICT in education using open source software and e-learning.

School of Business Administration in Karviná, Silesian University in Opava, was one of the first counselling university centres founded at the beginning of the 90s. The main offered service was related to psychological and socio-psychological advisory, but the Institute of Counselling Information also elaborated data about secondary education in electronic form released commercially. Another project was aimed at software presentation of data concerning university education in the Czech Republic and a further practical output involves handbooks of study opportunities abroad, French-Czech and English-Czech dictionaries of education terminology.

The synergic effort of the mentioned three partner institutions is supposed to benefit to **European added value** of the project in terms of exchanging experiences and best practices among partner countries. The gained experiences can be used in teaching activities and curricula in multicultural European context and the study of education system of partner countries and the certification in lifelong learning will contribute to finding strategies and procedures to stimulate European educators to continue the exchange of experiences.

The project proposes a new educational programme to help adults in the labour market, using new technologies and information systems effectively. It will offer new forms corresponding to present labour environment that requires new ways of learning for new kinds of problems.

All partners of the project will be involved in project activities in accordance with the character of their institutions. However, the common task is related to the joint networks and ways of counselling with regard to pedagogical tools. Each partner is expected to identify examples of good practices and place them in the Web to facilitate their exchange and diffusion. They will also be the basis for developing the proceeding report adopted and evaluated in each partner institution.

The **participants' involvement** can be also seen in evaluation of the development of the project. The international mobility will permit to observe the process of the project and enable to get information about relevant workplaces dealing with psychological and pedagogical counselling. Discussion in seminars and joint activities with the members of partner institutions make possible to transfer good experiences and integrate them into the daily teaching and counselling activities. Finally, the project is hoped to generate ways of influencing lifelong education in partner organizations by persuading managers that the transferable process of acquiring, presenting and evaluating knowledge in the European context is one of the most valuable issues.

Evaluation and dissemination of the project will be insured via quantitative and qualitative analysis of the regional conditions of lifelong education and by means of collecting data via questionnaires, which will enable regional differences to be taken into account. The partners will also be asked to submit their proposals for websites which will simplify an access to the range of lifelong education in particular regions. The output will be presented via data arranged in accordance with a mutually agreed structure. The specific results will be arranged in a database for future counselling tools of lifelong education. In addition, there will be used an advantage of seminars and meetings of the project partners to establish contact with local authorities, education institutions and teachers in the region disseminating the project.

Project activities in the first year of the project

The first opening partner meeting was held in Konya, Turkey, in October 2010. The partnership was inaugurated by the dean of School of Business Administration in Karviná, B. Fiala. The programme involved identification of the main goals and explanation of main new tasks related to a new approach to guidance and counselling being situated between the non-formal and formal education systems.

The second meeting took place in Almeria, Spain, where the Spanish partner summarized all the questions discussed in Konya. Short term goals for each partner of the project were formulated, for the Czech staff (E. Šustek – the project leader, O. Berka, V. Malátek, R. Unucková), especially participating in the meeting organized by the National Agency and participation in the Vienna conference on lifelong education for migrants. There were also formed partner working groups for the next meeting in Karviná, the Czech one consisting of five colleagues from School of Business Administration in Karviná (E. Šustek – the project leader, O. Berka, V. Malátek, R. Unucková, K. Heinz).

The partner meeting in Karviná took place between May 3-7, 2011. The programme involved not only activities related to the main goal of the project, but also events aimed at presenting Czech and regional culture, system of public administration, institutions of lifelong education to foreign guests from Spain and Turkey like for example a Karviná chateau tour, sightseeing in Cieszyn in Poland, a visit to the municipality, meeting with the staff of the J. A. Komenský Academy, and a visit to the university library.

During regular sessions the partners followed the programme prepared in Almeria. After presenting leaflets about the project, one of the tasks each partner was supposed to realize, all teams focused on the first part of the meeting dealing with the description of education system in the Czech Republic and the system of guidance and counselling. The presentation was followed by the discussion of all the partners who tried to compare some phenomena typical for Czech system of education with the ones related to Spanish and Turkish systems.

The next important topic covered during the sessions were examples of good practices.

The participants were given information about The Third Age University project, Financial Literacy project and the project PEACE related to intercultural communication.

Turkish partners continued with the description of Turkish system of education, particularly with various aspects of vocational training and the certificate system. At the end of the seminar, all the participants were given certificates, there was a summary of the results of the sessions, and the programme of the next meeting was prepared.

Conclusion

During the first year of the project the partners attempted to find out information related to the chains of providers of lifelong education in Turkey, Spain and the Czech Republic, and compare the systems involving formal and informal education, including qualifications and certificates. They have agreed on a new approach to lifelong learning that should be developed in the future within the next partner meetings.

One of them will be held in Konya in Turkey between October 5th and 9th where partners will continue the discussion related to reformulating the concept of lifelong guidance and will attempt to create a database involving institutions providing formal and informal education in partner countries. This will be the starting point for the preparation of guidance practitioners able to assist people in searching out what is useful and meaningful for their own needs. The partners from Spain and the Czech Republic also expect an exciting cultural experience as Konya is the centre of Turkish sufism that can influence international interaction.

Sources

[1] Memorandum of Life Long Learning, Brussels, 2000

[2] Project *Counselling in Life Long Learning* developed within Grundtvig programme

[3] Resolution of Lifelong Guidance, Brussels, 2004

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