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Guidance and counselling in education and training, in the perspective of LLL

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Memorandum on Guidance and Counselling in LLL

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In the present society the life-long development of an individual is generally recognised. In this development several distinct life roles are involved (Super, 1980, 1990). Each person will act as learner, worker, leisure person, family builder, citizen, etc. These roles are interconnected and influence each other mutually. One of the best analysed mutual influences is the intersection between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). However the intersection of other roles, as e.g. learner, with work and family building is as important (Van Esbroeck, 2000). The importance of each of this roles and the interference on each other, will change in an unpredictable way and be related to the individual characteristics of the person and the environmental situation.

From this point of view it is impossible to dissociate the roles of worker and learner from the rest. The person should be approached in an holistic way and the support to the development should be arranged accordingly.

The practice of career guidance and counselling: the present and the future

At the present career guidance and counselling is not organised in an holistic approach. On the contrary it is often related to specific roles. This leads to divisions as :

- learner (educational guidance) versus worker (career guidance),
- worker (career guidance) versus family builder (individual guidance)

Also the social situation of the person in our society, frequently related to a transition or crisis or exceptional situation, defines the availability and type of career guidance and counselling. Some examples:

- career guidance for employed versus career guidance for unemployed,
- career guidance for specific target groups (e.g. women, disabled, house wives, minority groups, ...) or age groups (youngster, elderly, ...).

Each of these divisions are related to institutional connections of the services. and work often under the assumption that careers are organisation tied. Support for the unemployed is often organised by employment services/departments, while the employed are rather referred to the business organisations who employ them. In the role of learner one can get ample support as long as they are in the school system. Once they are out of this system, the availability of educational guidance going beyond the information level is less evident. And what about house wives not officially in the system of unemployment but considering the possibility of re-employment? They have in many cases even less options for support. This situation will become more common than it is at the present. In a post-modern society careers are less organisation or institution related.

The dominant model for life-long career development is the juxtaposition of a wide range of specialised support systems, each of them targeting specific segments of the population. There exist in some of the EU-member states relatively broad support systems open to a variety of groups. These broader systems can be organised by public authorities, trade unions, private or voluntary

welfare organisations, etc. However well structured, highly professional organised career guidance and counselling services, widely spread, open to all, regardless their social situation, are not generally available. A “one-stop shop” system for life-long educational and career guidance and counselling is not to be found within the EU.

The division of career guidance over so many actors, makes it for a person very difficult to get, an appropriate life-long continuos support to the development of the total person. The availability of support and the service to contact will depend on the specific social situation of the individual.

How to avoid the fragmenting of a life-long guidance concept ?

- Develop a “one-stop shop” system that offers support to all throughout their entire life cycle.
- Create career guidance and counselling centres, as a kind of community service, working in an holistic approach and open to all.
- These community services could be of a non-profit type subsidised by public authorities (national, regional and/or local).
- These services work for the public authorities and educational institutions at all levels.
- These services are given the option to contract, at competitive rates, specific support activities with the private sector. This can include the development of specific guidance and development programmes for employees of the private sector (e.g. pre-retirement training in Flanders) or support to employees in their individual career management (e.g. activities comparable to the “bilan de compétences” in France).
- The development of such “one-stop shop” services will require the co-operation between several public authorities (e.g. ministries/departments of education, employment, welfare, etc. and the national and other levels of the public authorities).
- All social partners (representing employers, employees, unemployed, public authorities and the community in general) should be involved in the creation and management of these services.

The counsellor: qualifications and training

European surveys in relation to the career guidance and counselling provisions, the roles and tasks performed within the services and the training and qualification of guidance and counselling staff indicate that there exists an extreme variety (Watts e.a., 1993; Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998). The diversity between and within countries is of such magnitude that it is very difficult to set general guidelines in relation to required qualifications and training.

Everything depends on the role that the staff member holds within the service and the tasks in which they are involved. Also the general framework within which the different staff members co-operate will be decisive on the needed competencies and qualifications. If we organise the roles of the staff members according to the ideas of a client-centred holistic guidance and counselling model (Van Esbroeck, 1996, 1997; Van Esbroeck & Watts, 1998) the needed competencies can vary from a minimal to an expert level.

At the present there are no recent European studies available with a detailed analysis on the qualifications and training of the present staff involved in life-long career guidance and counselling.

However some general ideas can be expressed:

- needed skills will depend on the type of career intervention in which the counsellor is involved: career education or development, career counselling or career coaching;
- needed skills will depend on the kind of task which are performed: management, information giving, counselling (individual or group), facilitation, advice, assessment, referral, teaching or training, liaison with providers, coaching as part of placement, vacancy information,

preselection, advocacy, supporting other guidance sources, feedback to providers, follow-up (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998);

- needed skills must include skills to cope with: the diversity of the clients, the European dimension in the labour market, the use of new technologies, working with increasing numbers of clients;
- career counsellors must be trained to work with adults because this is lacking in most first level educational programmes.

The training of counsellors will require:

- a thorough analysis of the existing situation within the EU of the career guidance and counselling provisions, the roles and tasks performed within the services and the training and qualification of staff;
- the development of European standards for career counsellors;
- the creation of new postgraduate European Master's degree as one of the EU priorities;
- the development of continuing professional development programmes based upon European standards;

The educational and training programmes should :

- adopt a modular structure (ECTS);
- use the client-centred holistic guidance approach as a heuristic framework;
- cover comparisons of educational and labour markets within the EU;
- include topics like information technology, inter-cultural communication skills, management skills, etc.;
- prepare for diversity;
- prepare for flexibility;
- include stages, internships and other learning experiences at a transnational level.

However all educational and training programmes need to be grounded in day-to-day practice, and linked to national accreditation and registration structures. This may, due to the diversity in the European career guidance scene, require flexibility in admission and remedial training.

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