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VIA University College



Between Employability and Social Justice

- Career Guidance and Career
Competence in a Nordic Perspective

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A small presentation...

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Agenda

- Background: CMS & EGPLN
- What are Career Management Skills/Career Competences?
- How do we develop Career Competences?
- A critical view on Career Competences
- Recommendations and further work
- Questions and comments

Background: ELGPN & CMS

CMS = Career Management Skills

- A priority of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN)
- Other priorities: Access; Coordination and Cooperation; Quality and Evidence
- Since 2007 ELGPN has worked to promote cooperation and system/policy development in member-countries
- Focus on the implementation of the EU resolutions of lifelong guidance
- ELGPN is supported under Erasmus+



CMS in a Nordic context

- CMS (in ELGPN) is a framework, not a defined concept or method
- Nordic ELGPN group and NVL (Nordic Network for Adult Learning) commissioned jointly a concept note on development of a competence framework



Definitions

ELGPN definition of CMS:

"... a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions"

(ELGPN Resource Kit 2012, p.21)



Definitions

Definition of Career Competences in concept note:

"... competences for self-understanding and self-development; for exploring life and the worlds of learning and work; and for dealing with life, learning and work in periods of change and transition. Career competences involve being aware, not only of what you do, but also what you could do, and of how individuals are formed by their daily activities and their actions while simultaneously affecting their own opportunities for the future."

(Thomsen: Concept Note 2014, p. 4)

The challenge of 'career'

- 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'
- 'An honest, brave, compassionate human being!'
- 'No... I mean, how do you want to sell your labor?'



(‘Existential Comics’ on Twitter)

The challenge of 'career'

The concept of 'Career' is a challenge in the Nordic countries...

→ traditionally, hierarchichal connotations



The challenge of 'career'

... 'Career' in career competences means a horizontal understanding

A new etymology in guidance:
the way people live their lives

A broad and complex definition
- is it realistic?



A good, Nordic concept

The definitions have a central focus on learning processes and experience

- historically, central part of Nordic education and guidance
- part of a broader movement towards 'learning' in both guidance and education

Guidance ↔ Learning ↔ Education

Career Learning: what precedes the competences

Career Learning

So, what is career learning?

- A preliminary definition: guidance activities that contribute more to a learning perspective than to a perspective of making choices
- A movement from focus on choices to focus on learning
-> the opposite is often the case
- How do I learn to handle my career in a lifelong perspective?

Outcomes of career learning and career competences

Different research (Skovhus, Haug) tell us, that:

1. It matters, whether we are preoccupied with making choices or with (career) learning (Skovhus)
2. A focus on learning leads to an enhanced focus on the participant's outcome (Haug)
3. Guidance activities *can* contribute to career competences, but do not always do so (Skovhus, Haug)



Career learning and professional cooperation

Career learning: between guidance and education

International studies (e.g. Hooley et.al., 2015, Sultana, 2013, Vilhjalmsdottir, 2007) show the importance of integrating career learning in curriculum:

- big potential in a cooperative approach
- challenges the typical ways of cooperation and organizing
- challenges the professional competences of guidance counsellors and teachers

CASE: In Denmark career learning often equals Bill Law

What kind of learning/which skills constitute the fundamental basis for action – e.g. to make qualified choices?

4. Understanding – working out

- To know how something works and which actions seem to lead to what
- To explain, to anticipate

3. Focusing – checking out

- To know who and what you need to pay attention to and why.
- To find out what is important (to me and to others)

2. Sifting – sorting out

- To organize the informations in a meaningful way in order to understand differences and similarities
- To compare and discover connections

1. Sensing – finding out

- To get impressions, informations and contacts in order to progress
- To see, hear, feel



CASE: Norway loves career learning

"Guidance – a task for the whole school"

- A project in Sør-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune/Trondheim
- Career learning and career counselling is a task for the whole school and not just the guidance counsellors
- The central question: how do we build a guiding school together?
- The central concept: career learning



CASE: Career learning across borders

Norwegian-Danish project:

- Developing inspirational material on how to pose learning-oriented questions in career learning and career guidance
- An inspirational guide to the practitioner/the professional with concrete examples



Critical perspectives

Career competences must be understood from a social justice perspective (Sultana, 2012; Hooley, 2015b):

- Avoid latent individualization of structural problems (“you haven’t acquired the right competences”)
- We must reflect on what we are imposing – no ‘methodization’ of career learning
- Balance between employability and social justice – difference between learning *for* work and learning *about* work
- Remember the horizontal career concept – if identity identifies with work, then career learning can become excluding

Career competences and social change

The powerful potential of working with career competences:

The focus on investigating the process of career learning can bring about new insight into structural problems that need to be addressed politically or structurally.



Recommendations

In a Nordic context and tradition it is important that we:

- Connect career competences and recognition and validation of prior learning
- Recognize that career competences can be caught in other places than in formal career counselling and education ('caught, not taught', Sultana)
- Work with a bottom-up approach just as much as a top-down approach to career learning and career competences
 - > we must use it as an asset that a learning and experience oriented guidance and education is well-known among practioners

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