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GUIDANCE OF THE PATH STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this research and development work is to develop guidance of the path students in Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Guidance can be used to support student's development of agency. In this article, we describe growth of agency and resilience of one group of path students.

Laurea University of Applied Sciences operates in Uusimaa Finland. In Laurea the pedagogy is premised on work-based learning, and skills required for a degree are acquired through work. Laurea offers path study places in degree programs in Finnish. The path studies are always done in Open University of Applied Sciences.

Guidance and counsellor can be seen as activity, which promotes the agency and resilience of the individual. In Laurea guidance is student-driven. It is about a teacher supporting students in recognizing their learning goals and building up their study skills, as well as supporting students' competence development and career guidance.

The material for this article was collected in September 2019 with questionnaire to path students. As a result of the questionnaire the guidance is needed when considering which studies to choose and how to get the degree to be as reasonable entirety as possible. Students' own study skills have developed during the past year, but the language studies and thesis was experienced as future challenges where support and guidance was believed to be needed. The peer support of the group was seen significant resource concerning the progression of the studies and one's own resilience. Social contacts inside the student group helps furthering the studies. The results of this study will help teachers to develop better ways to organize the guidance. Constant observation, evaluation and developing are the leading principles in all processes in Laurea.

1 STUDIES IN LAUREA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Laurea University of Applied Sciences operates in Uusimaa Finland. Laurea UAS is one of the biggest University of Applied Sciences in Finland. There are about 7800 students and 500 staff members at six different campuses. Field of studies are Business Management, Social Services and Health Care and Hospitality Management. There are 16 different degree programs, of which six are taught in English. [1]

1.1 Pedagogy In Laurea UAS

Laurea has created Learning by Developing (LbD) model – an innovative operating model based on authenticity, partnership, experiential learning, creativity and research. Learning is related to development projects that are genuinely rooted in the world of work. [2]

In Laurea the pedagogy is premised on work-based learning, and skills required for a degree are acquired through work. The goal of work-based learning is to combine training and work. The guidance of work-based learning is linked with career guidance. The conscious expansion of professional skills with the student's workplace and his or her personal needs are seen as starting points. A working student ponders what the requirements of a degree are, but also which skills and knowledge need to be improved when he or she has a job and a career.

1.2 Path Studies In Laurea UAS

Open studies are open to everyone. Anyone interested in open studies should be welcomed. Therefore, many of the studies, especially in higher education, are organized online. [3] Often, it is also thought that the openness means possibility to study any time of day or night and sometimes any time of year. [4] In any case, if students are working along with the studies, the studies need to be in some way flexible.

On the other hand, some sort of timetable or schedule of studies are important in order that students will not feel studies and courses too hard. Sometimes certain order of courses is required. Students

should have enough skills and perfect timing to pass each course. [5] In addition to individual needs of openness, one important aspect is also social contacts inside the student group. It can be difficult to do teamwork with strangers. [6] There is even a bigger risk for a team or pair to break up when studies are online, and students do not know each other. [5]

In Laurea there is different kind of open studies from individual courses to path studies. Laurea offers path study places in degree programs in Finnish. The path studies are always done in Open University of Applied Sciences. A person who has earned 60 credits in path studies may apply to become a degree student through a separate application process. Path studies can be done in a group of first year degree students or on their own group of path students. [

2 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Guidance and counsellor can be seen as activity which promotes the agency and resilience of the individual. The agency is seen as individuals' possibility to influence their own lives. The agency can stay stable or change during studies. [8] Interest and motivation, self-efficacy, competence beliefs and participation activity are resources of agency. [9]

In Laurea guidance is about a teacher supporting students in recognizing their learning goals and building up their study skills. Important in guidance is that student can promote his or her agency and resilience. Guidance is student-driven and typical for guidance is that there are no certain answers. Teacher and student together look for the solutions. After the first year, the guidance also concentrates supporting student's competence development and career guidance. Values and ethical principles of the guidance in Laurea are student-driven guidance, equality, transparency, openness in guidance, as well as constant observation, evaluation and developing. [10]

In Laurea so called peer guidance is also offered. Tutor students help the younger students in the general matters that are related to the studies. The significance of the studying group in getting help and advice cannot be underestimated either.

3 MATERIAL AND ANALYZES

The aim of this study is to develop path students' guidance services. The research questions are:

- 1 What kind of guidance experiences path students have?
- 2 What kind of guidance they wish (or need) to have, when they start as degree students?
- 3 How is their agency developed?

The material of the article was inquired with a questionnaire that included open questions of the guidance experience in the path studies and hopes of the guidance during the studies.

The questions were answered by a study group that had started their studies in the fall of 2018. The studies were accomplished as part-time studies along with the work. The group consisted students who had completed at least 60 credits in open university, and by that had earned their place as degree students. The members of the group were familiar with each other because they had already studied one year together. The size of the group was 32 students.

The material was inquired in the first tutoring class in September 2018.

In the analysis of the material the aim is to understand the nature of the material. The method used in the analysis was content analysis where the material is classified and categorized.

Compared to interview as a method, there was its own challenges in using questionnaire. In the questionnaire the respondents were anonymous so there was no possibility to pose any further or defined questions. On the other hand, when answering anonymously, the respondents had possibility to express their opinions openly. [11] The challenge was, that the answers were left brief and sometimes ambiguous. In the results the quotations are translated from Finnish into English.

4 RESULTS

The challenges of the path studies

In the answers, the beginning of the path studies seemed challenging and ambiguous. Everything in the studies was new. New school, new learning environment, information technology and curriculum.

The start was really disordered, and it felt like the instructions changed all the time.

The group was new and since there was never been a whole group of path students before, the instructions and practices were not established, and everything was not prepared for.

The students missed individual guidance and support. In addition, receiving the place as a degree student caused extra pressure.

I was left pretty alone with the matters

More individual support on how to pay attention to already existing knowledge

Got concerned by getting the degree place

The guidance gotten during the path studies

The answers indicated that guidance and support was offered, but perhaps it was not known how to utilize them adequately. The support of the group was important and in addition to the tutor teacher, the guidance and support was gotten from the teachers of the study modules.

Peer support was vital

The Skype guidance that was offered to the group was experienced useful, and the collective meeting with Laurea and the city of Vantaa (the employer of the path students) clarified the studies and the employer was able to support and be flexible when needed.

The expectations of the guidance during the degree studies

After the path studies the university of applied sciences and its practices were more familiar, and therefore the studies seemed clearer. It appeared in many of the answers that the student felt he or she was managing and that the studies had started to proceed. The concern was mainly due to the challenges in personal life.

I don't think that there will be any bigger challenges if my situation in life stays all right.

The support was experienced to be needed mainly in the study choice and enrolment. The curriculum did not appear as a clear entirety to everyone.

I need support to schedule my studies and to choose the right studies.

I would like to discuss about orientation and different alternatives.

Combining working life, family and studies and having enough time caused deliberation.

The resilience of me and my family are important.

Combining work and studies in everyday life has occasionally felt challenging but I have really wide support net. I'm sure I will manage!

In addition, the sufficiency of study selection, getting into the study modules and diversity of the study practices were experienced important.

As a working person I wish to have as much evening and weekend tuition and online studies as possible.

I'm concerned about the internship and how to manage it besides my work.

One's own study skills caused concern.

I have dyslexia and I'm really bad with languages. There I need support.

I need support doing my thesis.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The results of the questionnaire emerged that the needs and expectations of students who come to the guidance are related to the choosing situations. The guidance is needed when considering which studies to choose and how to get the degree to be as reasonable entirety as possible. Students' own study skills

have developed during the past year, but the language studies and thesis was experienced as future challenges where support and guidance was believed to be needed.

One's own coping and the combination of family life and work to studies can cause trouble, but skills in time managing were experienced to be developed during the first year. The agency, which is seen as individuals' possibility to influence their own lives, has developed during the studies.

The peer support of the group was seen significant resource concerning the progression of the studies and one's own resilience. Social contacts inside the student group helps furthering the studies. Students felt that the guidance from the tutor teachers would have been needed more in the beginning of the studies, and many questions did not get any clear answer. After all, the idea is that guidance promotes the agency of the students. Students' experience of their own capability has indeed increased. The confusion in the beginning of the studies has changed into the feelings of resilience and thoughts of themselves as university students.

The results of this study will help teachers to develop better ways to organize the guidance. Constant observation, evaluation and developing are the leading principles in all processes in Laurea.

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