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Enhancing career practitioners' competence in the use of ICT

Innovative impact

This international summer school on the use of ICT in career services promotes the paradigm shift to more collaborative approaches in career services. In addition the participants had the opportunity to convert their own experiences in the use of technology to competencies in the use of the ICT in their own practice

From long-term perspective this module acts as a catalyst in developing the design and content of initial training of career practitioners.

FIER and JYUOpen have developed online course on the topic

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in career guidance

Rapid development in information and communication technology (ICT) has changed society fundamentally over the past two decades. As technological advances change how individuals explore and acquire information about education, training and work opportunities, there is a pressing need to align new technologies more closely with career services and associated professional practices. ICT offers significant opportunities for career services, but they also create demand for new competency among career practitioners.

Recent research (Kettunen, Sampson & Vuorinen) indicates that today ICT is not only a tool or an alternative medium, but an interactive working space where a synchronous or multi-synchronous collaboration increasingly occurs with and without career practitioners. The technology facilitates communication and enables collaboration and development of career-related content among users. ICT can serve as a mechanism for the development of more integrated and user-centred lifelong guidance system that transcend separate, sector-based or provider-centred provision.

In this wider context, ICT relates to the products, infrastructure, and electronic content that enhance policy and systems development for career services, resources, and tools. It refers to how interactive services, resources, and tools are designed and developed for citizens, how citizens use these, and how such use in turn reshape their design. It also refers to the digital competency required to use ICT in a career development context (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2015).

From information to co-careering

Recent phenomenographic studies (Kettunen 2017) have revealed how career practitioners conceive the role of ICT in their practice today and what are the current approaches within the field. Together, these results offer us an overarching picture of five general approaches to ICT and social media in career services. These encompass a passive approach, an information approach, a communication approach, a collaborative career exploration approach and a co-careering approach. Shifts in competency appeared as transitions from operational understanding of different technologies and tools and their use to meet the information needs of different audiences to ability to creating and maintaining reliable online presence.

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These findings show that competency for ICT and social media in career services is not only about a particular set of new skills, but about a dynamic combination of cognitive, social, emotional and ethical factors that are interwoven. These findings have been used to develop pre-service and in-service training of career practitioners and support for the deepening of their competency, using the critical aspects that were identified.

Nordic cooperation on Summer school

The impetus for development of International Summer school on the use of ICT in Guidance and Counselling emerged from VALA Nordplus network. VALA is a network of career counselling and guidance programmes at higher education institutions in the Nordic and Baltic countries. The designed course is organised by the Open University of University of Jyväskylä (JYUOpen), Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FIER) and the Faculty of Education and Psychology at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland.

The week long Summer School was based on the latest results concerning the requirements of the use of information and communication technology, and particularly the use of social media, in guidance and counselling (Kettunen et. al 2015).

The curriculum design and teaching of the course come from Finnish Institute for Educational Research (FI), Malmö University (SWE), eVejledning (DK) and Iceland University. Partners involved have extensive experience on training and research in the use of ICT in the field of guidance and counselling as well as supporting and working with practitioners in Nordic countries. They complement each other with their competence, experiences, knowledge and skills as they have experience from higher education (SWE/IS), practical field (DK), research (FI) and independent work (SWE).

Great importance during the course was attached to students' experiments and collaboration. Time was spent in interactive workshops in which the participants could deepen their know-how in a goal-oriented manner. As bilateral communication on the internet is mostly based on text, in the beginning of the week, text-based communication with email and chat services was trained. In the middle of the week, the participants went on to video transmitted communication, communal processing of directed questions, development of web discussion skills and also expression of active online presence. Attention was also paid to ethical perspectives connected with the use of information and communication technology in guidance and counselling.

Participants' feedback

During the second Summer school students (N=33) from nine countries were invited to provide feedback online. This feedback showed that they were pleased with the high level of teachers, the planning and organisation of the course and the group conversations during the Summer school days.

Students gave very positive feedback concerning teacher's way of

work on how they interacted with students and organized learning. The collaboration and mix with different teachers, themes, styles of working was well thought out and well-executed. There was good balance between theory and practice. The students were impressed by teachers' expertise on the topic.

In this Summer school, the participants had active role in their learning. Students expressed that they enjoyed the open atmosphere and the ongoing invitation to create this course together. They had a sufficient time for mutual reflections. Wide mixture of age, gender, and professional background provided rich base for collaborative learning and exchange of practices.

The students provided also proposals how to improve the pre-assignments and orientation tasks for the Summer school. As English was not the first language for most of the participants, sometimes long intensive days in a foreign language made it difficult to stay focused all the time.

Overall, the students were very satisfied with this summer school as you could notice in this feedback: "I have learned a lot this week - and I definitely will come back to Finland!"

Conclusion

Jointly developed, International Summer school used successfully researched-based model in developing competency for ICT including social media in career services. Nordic cooperation in the course development presents a concrete model on successful effort on bridging the gap in the initial and the continuing training of career practitioners. Summer school participants and trainers have established a sustainable community of practice where they can share experiences and further enhance their knowledge and competence in ICT in Guidance and Counselling.

