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## Pastoral power manifestations within the guidance professionals' talk on guidance practices

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### ABSTRACT

Young people in the Nordic countries have many options and face obligations to participate in career guidance and counselling (guidance). In Finland, young people are subjected to multiple institutionalized guidance practices especially in educational transition phases. Guidance has various objectives as a public policy, thereby setting a framework for guidance professionals too. By using Foucault's conceptualization on 'pastoral' power, we studied how guidance professionals ('shepherds') guide young people ('the flock') towards 'wellbeing'. Our aim was to analyse how pastoral power is manifested in guidance practices by asking what governmental discourses the guidance professionals refer to when talking about guidance and how these discourses are practiced in guidance. Our data comprise Finnish guidance professionals' interviews ( $n = 15$ ). As a result, dominant governmental discourses of employability, economic efficiency and lifelong learning were identified. Guidance involved pastoral power and demanded employability and educability for the young. Guidance professionals have a crucial role in implementing governmental discourses into guidance practices. These practices create a narrow perspective for young people and guidance professionals, who are simultaneously the mediators and targets of governmental power.

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Pastoral power; young people; career guidance and counselling; education and employment policy

### Introduction

In the Nordic countries career guidance and counselling (hereafter referred to as guidance) has been firmly intertwined with education, employment and social policies. Also, educational institutions guidance policies are administered in multiple employment, youth or social services. Young people face many institutional options and obligations to take part in guidance, for instance, when applying for a study place, entering the workforce, or being unemployed or by other means in a disadvantaged position. Studies have shown how the Finnish institutional frame for guidance bears formal and informal cultural demands on a young person's agency or expects certain type of behaviour (Toiviainen, 2019). This article examines guidance practices and power associated with guidance. Our research aims to analyse how this power is expressed in guidance by investigating the governmental discourses referenced by guidance professionals and how these discourses are applied in guidance practices.

In Finland, guidance services are mainly provided by two public systems; the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the organization and funding of guidance at comprehensive, upper secondary and higher education institutions, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment establishes political

guidelines and strategic goals for labour market policy (Toni & Vuorinen, 2020). The context of this study is the transition phase from comprehensive to upper secondary education, when the public education and employment authorities and education providers, typically municipalities, are the main actors responsible for guidance services. Education institutions bear the main responsibility for guidance and counselling of pupils and students, whereas the Employment and Economic Development Offices are primarily intended for those outside education and training. The youth sector is involved in offering information, guidance, and counselling to young people, most commonly through Outreach Youth Work and One-Stop Guidance Centres (Euroguidance, 2022.).

Guidance as public policy has multiple objectives, which also provide a framework for the guidance professionals. According to Sultana (2014), guidance policies are driven by three main rationales. *Hermeneutic* rationality concerns the communicative 'performance' of guidance (the intersubjective communication and interaction related to self-positioning) and *emancipatory* rationality emphasizes action that expands opportunities for self-expression and self-fulfilment. Although contemporary researchers on guidance have introduced the prospects of emancipatory guidance to social justice, the

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*technocratic rationality* dominates guidance policies (Hooley et al., 2018; Plant & Kjærgård, 2016; Sultana, 2014; Varjo et al., 2022). Technocratic rationalities enhance efficiency and using guidance to achieve some larger societal policy goals. These policy goals are set by national and global organizations like Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2004), and they are often categorized around *discourses* of economic efficiency, effective co-operation of education system and labour markets, and social justice.

Whereas rationalities are inherent within guidance policies and practices (Dean, 2009; Miller & Rose, 2008), discourses construct a broad and normative framework, which infiltrate guidance actors' activities and various transnational, national and local levels (Dale et al., 2016). Discourses are constantly travelling and transforming, and in the field of guidance, the discourses of the knowledge-based economy, lifelong learning and social justice have been the main thriving contemporary discourses. The dominant discourse within the Nordic context has been described as the *knowledge economy* discourse (Kjærgård, 2020), which has the focus on skills and competence, lifelong learning and economic competitiveness. Nevertheless, there is constant fight for hegemony among the discourses of egalitarianism, solidarity, citizenship and economy, among others.

Related to the knowledge economy discourse, the aim of the global educational policy goals of lifelong learning is for the individuals to modify themselves to become aware of active labour market citizenship (Kinnari, 2020). According to Brunila et al. (2013) this refers to the status gained from participating in a working society; citizenship is achieved through salaried work from which individuals pay taxes and make other social payments. It is crucial for the society for most people to be in salaried work; jobs, positions and salary define an individual's place in society, which means that the ones at the margins of education and the labour market are typically placed elsewhere and outside 'normal' (Brunila et al., 2013).

Our perspective in this study is that those who deviate from 'normal' must be managed for their own benefit as well as that of society. The *pastoral* nature of guidance (Foucault, 1982) has a role in managing these deviations. According to Helen (2010) that nature emerges from the personalized counselling features of society's welfare systems which pursue the wellbeing of its citizens. Pastoral efforts strive to change individual lives and experiences into political matters while subjecting them to subtle governing practices and complex forms of expertise (e.g. guidance) (Helen, 2010).

Guidance as a part of various education and youth support policies tends to cultivate young people's subjectivities in such a manner, which translates

wider societal questions into questions of individualized deficiencies through the so-called 'self-managing capacities'. As Mäkelä, Mertanen and Brunila have argued, neoliberal politics transform the subject-citizens into 'suitable vulnerable, employable and competitive subjects' (Mäkelä et al., 2021, p. 111). At the same time, the individual becomes the object of the policy, and the focus of guidance moves from structures to the individual capital-building processes (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014; Hooley, 2022; Varjo et al., 2022).

Guidance is extremely institutionalized in Finland. It is a mandatory school subject based on the national curriculum, which is taught in comprehensive education (years 1–9) to upper secondary education (years 10–12) by teachers with specialized training in guidance (Finnish National Agency for Education FNAE, 2023). Outside the educational sector multiple youth guidance services are available. Guidance has an emphasized status as a problem solver of societal issues such as the risk of dropping out, marginalization or unemployment, hence it is connected to labour, educational and welfare politics. We call this *the guidance society*, which compels especially young people to participate in guidance in the name of their own well-being and the society. It is described by demands of normative assumptions of education (e.g. each student completing comprehensive school must apply to undertake further study through the joint application procedure in the spring) and employment (e.g. young people between 18 and 24 years-of-age who are unemployed and without vocational qualifications are obliged to apply for a place of study) as well as being obliged to receive guidance and to consent to receive that guidance. Being an example of the guidance society makes the Finnish case particularly interesting, since it involves multi-dimensional power structures which affect both the counsellors and the counselees.

In this study, we focused on Foucault's (1982) 'pastoral' power<sup>1</sup> in guidance practices. Finland as a welfare state provides a fruitful environment for studying pastoral power which is more prominent in welfare societies, where young people face multiple policies attaching them into education and work. Following the writings of Kinnari (2020), Mäkelä et al. (2021) and Brunila et al. (2013) we presume that those on the margins of education and work

are governed with different guidance practices which seek to rehabilitate them back into society and shape them into labour market citizens.

According to Kjærgård, the knowledge economic discourse on guidance turns the subjects into the 'steward of a vast array of self-technologies and forms of self-control administered through demands for knowledge and flexibility and through their own personal morality' (Kjærgård, 2020, p. 86). Following

this line of thinking, guidance is analysed here as a historical and contextual ‘control practice’, tied to education and labour markets. The focus of this article is on these practices and the power within them. Our research aim is to analyse how pastoral power is manifested in guidance practices by asking what governmental discourses the guidance professionals refer to when talking about guidance and how these discourses are practiced in guidance.

### Pastoral governing and guidance

We applied the idea of Foucault’s *pastoral power* or *pastoral governing* on guidance (Foucault, 1982). Originating from Christianity, it refers to interfering with people’s behaviour and their lives. Foucault sees the pastor as an advice-giving, watchful shepherd who surveils their flock’s wellbeing, searches for those who misstep and takes care of the wounded (Foucault, 1978 [2010]). Foucault’s definition of pastoral power reaches beyond the religious contexts and adapts to numerous power relations between actors and institutions. Instead of pursuing salvation for the people, pastoral power seeks more secular objectives such as health, wealth and wellbeing (Martin & Waring, 2018).

Guidance as pastoral practice means that we look at guidance professionals (the ‘shepherd’) as a model of governing young people’s careers, in which the objective is to guide the young people (a ‘flock’) towards ‘salvation’, that is, wellbeing, fulfilment and so forth (see also Siisiäinen, 2015). In a society where citizenship is increasingly dictated by labour market participation and the constant need to learn, the definitions of wellbeing and fulfilment, which guidance practices pursue, become associated with work and education. Pastoral power may yet generate forms of resistance or ‘counter-conduct’ within the field (Lorenzini, 2016; Odyseos et al., 2016; Rust, 2021), to resist or modify the ways in which the young people are governed by guidance practices.

Following the thinking of Foucault, pastoral guidance builds on surveillance, which in our case means that the counsellor has the power to lay his/her eyes and sight on surveilling the young people towards the ideal subjectivity. ‘The pastoral gaze’ is totalizing or global (see also Siisiäinen, 2015), but also individualizing. Guidance is a process through which the counselees are guided to fabricate their subjectivity as an object of knowledge; to discover the truth about themselves. This process is referred as ‘confession’, following Foucault (1981) and many who have applied his theories within the field of guidance (e.g. Besley, 2005; Usher & Edwards, 2005). As Usher and Edwards (2005) explain, the purpose of ‘confession’ in the Western world shifts from salvation to self-regulation, self-improvement and self-development,

and ‘redemption increasingly equates to personal development, physical and psychic health, autonomy and emancipation’. The ‘confession’ is a ‘technology’ of the self. The counselling relationship has ‘performative aspects’, where the guided ones ‘reveal[s] something of their truth about themselves to the counsellor’ (Besley, 2005, p. 365). Hence, we looked at the guidance practices as ‘confessional practices’ leading to empowerment, where the guided ones confess, among other things, to those who guide them (Foucault, 1981, p. 59; Usher & Edwards, 2005, p. 400). By doing this, they create, or reinvent, their very identity (Foucault, 1981, p. 98; Russell, 1999). As Russell (1999, p. 339) interprets, ‘counselling discourse may be seen as offering a framework within which people can identify what is important to them, what they “stand for”, and how they define themselves’.

### Confession and pastors

From these premises, we analyse in this article if the guidance professionals possess the power and the authority to require the ‘confession’. Following Martin and Waring (2018) we have used pastoral power to conceptualize the ‘relationship between discourse, subjectivity and agency’. They see pastoral power as focusing on the active role of agents (pastors) in the process of converting discourses into subjectivity, action and material consequence.

Waring and Martin (2016) have constructed a model of operation regarding contemporary pastoral power. Their model has been used to analyse modern work communities. We applied it to our research since Foucault did not study guidance as a form of pastoral power. Firstly, ‘pastors’ (e.g. counsellors using pastoral power) translate information originating from the dominant governmental discourses for their communities (*constructive practices*). Secondly, they normalize and legitimize ‘truth’ and see to its adoption by having a dialogue with their communities (*inscription practices*). Thirdly, the counsellors using the pastoral power reproduce and insert new values and behaviours promoted by governmental discourse while reintegrating anyone who missteps (*collective practices*). Fourthly, they make sure appropriate subjectivities are adopted by using disciplinary approaches (*inspection practices*) (Martin & Waring, 2018; Waring & Martin, 2016).

Only by knowing the individual’s soul and secrets can pastoral power be utilized. Counsellors as shepherds guiding the flock are asking individuals to share their inner wishes and desires. When these secrets are revealed, a new and improved self emerges (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012). According to Rose (1999) the counsellors’ role is supportive; they help people to achieve their goals and ease their anxieties. Counselling works



through *confession*: the individual becomes a learning subject who should desire to learn continuously and is responsible for their own decisions (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012).

Counsellors can use several pedagogical techniques to achieve confession. For example, by engaging in a dialogue with the counsees who must speak the truth about themselves in a seemingly equal relationship or composing an individual study plan where the plan calls for individual's activity and responsibility in planning their lives and articulating their dreams (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012). The inner self is persuaded into the limelight by asking what the person's desires for the future are. These are 'technologies of the self', which are being deployed through pastoral power (Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012; Foucault, 1982). Individuals are encouraged to engage in self-reflection and self-examination in pursuit of their well-being.

Lifelong guidance is pitched as a solution to social differentiation and unemployment challenges in the European Union lifelong learning policies (European Commission, 2001; Fejes & Dahlstedt, 2012), where guidance helps the individual to know the self; knowing weaknesses or skills and the ability to self-evaluate. Foucault (1981) has argued that this constructs guidance as a power operating practice, where subjects are being modified. Power lies in the individual's action and choices (technologies of the self). Guidance requires people to know their 'true' selves and by confessing, and an enhanced individual is shaped. Waring and Martin (2016) argue that the pastors' role is crucial in advancing and confirming subjectification and self-surveillance.

## Methodology

Our research aim is to analyse how pastoral power is manifested in guidance professionals' talk on guidance practices. With the analysis we seek to answer our research questions concerning the four categories of pastoral power (Martin & Waring, 2018; Waring & Martin, 2016).

- (1) What governmental discourses do the guidance professionals refer to when talking about guidance?
- (2) How are the governmental discourses inscribed into the professionals' work?
- (3) How do guidance professionals guide young people towards a collective behaviour stemming from governmental discourses?
- (4) How do guidance professionals utilize inspection and surveillance in ensuring the adopting of collective behaviour?

The study is an *explorative case study*, and its aim is to evaluate and produce novel concepts and theories (Stewart, 2012) of guidance. The data comprises

semi-structured interviews conducted with career guidance and counselling professionals ( $N = 15$ ) in a case city in the years 2019–2020. The case city is a mid-size municipality with 50 000 inhabitants, located in southern Finland near the other largest municipalities. The participants were selected to cover key administrative sectors of the guidance policies in the case city. The professionals interviewed work as guidance counsellors or administrative staff in lower secondary education (comprehensive school), upper secondary education (general education and vocational education and training) or in employment, youth or social services (see Table 1). Administrative staff members deal with developing, planning of guidance services and overseeing them in the municipality and in their educational institution. Originally 17 interviews were conducted, but two interviews (9 and 16) were left out because the interviewees' job description did not include guidance and counselling.

Research permission was sought from the municipality and the educational institutions, but the interviews were voluntary, and all the participants were asked to provide a written letter of consent. Interviews were conducted as video-audio meetings but only the voice was archived. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, we have not revealed their names or affiliations. The research design did not require an ethical review according to the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity.

The semi-structured interviews covered themes related to the administration of guidance and the cooperation in it, as well as the aims, premises and models of guidance at the practical level, and the future of career guidance and counselling. The method of analysis was theory-driven content analysis with discursive approach. We examined the expressions of pastoral power which the guidance professionals used when describing their guidance practices (*constructive, inscription, collective and inspection practices*). By adapting these four categories of pastoral power, it was possible to draw out the important role these professionals have in promoting the re-shaping of the individual according to dominant governmental discourses and guidance policy objectives they expressed. As Waring and Martin (2016, p. 140) suggest, analysing our data through the categories also provide a 'a more adequate conceptualisation of the way in which discourses are

**Table 1.** Guidance professionals' line of work.

Administrative staff	Guidance counsellor	Outreach youth work	Employment services
Gp 7	Gp 1	Gp 8	Gp 2
Gp 11	Gp 5	Gp 12	Gp 3
Gp 14	Gp 10	Gp 15	Gp 4
Gp 16	Gp 13		
Gp 17			

translated into the practices, rationalities and subjectivities of professionals and professions – and the crucial role of pastors as nodes or conduits of governmentality in realising this process’.

The first stage of analysis focused on extracting all textual expressions of guidance practices and power relations expressed within them. All the expressions in which the professionals described the aims of the practices, the expectations of the service and the methods to achieve these goals, were analysed. The extracts were categorized into four categories: constructive, inscription, collective and inspection practices (Martin & Waring, 2018) (research questions 2, 3 and 4).

In the second stage, the concepts of pastoral power, optics and subjectivity were used to interpret the expressions of power using the discursive approach (Fairclough, 1992). We sought to identify the dominant governmental discourses and used the discursive approach to identify the rules and knowledge which constructed the guidance practices (research question 1). We constructed three governmental discourses which dominated the practices. In the final stage, we read the expressions of these discourses within each of the categories of guidance practices and analysed how the discourses were manifested in them. We also looked for counter-conduct to see if these discourses were resisted by the professionals. This led us to reaching our overall aim.

## Outcomes

Here we have introduced the outcomes according to the four categories of guidance practices and give a brief definition of each category at the beginning of each subsection. In the first subsection we also introduce the three intertwining governmental discourses we constructed from the interviews (*employability*, *economic efficiency* and *lifelong learning*), from which the professionals translated their knowledge and reasoning for guidance. Finally, we continue the discussion with the theoretical framing in discussion and conclusions.

### Constructive practices

In *constructive practices* the guidance professionals (‘pastors’) translate information originating from governmental discourses for their communities. According to Waring and Martin (2016) this category of pastoral power describes the professionals’ active role in translating and arranging the governmental discourse with their profession’s tendencies and contradictions which appear in governmental discourses. In practice and in our interpretation, this appears to be selecting the information coming from ‘above’ and

making a use of it in their day-to-day work. Professionals *construct* their practices relying on three different governmental discourses.

The most dominant discourse was *employability*, which related to labour policy, but also to education and social policies. General aims for producing workforce legitimated a range of policies to activate the young people. This target was foremost acquiring the degree from secondary education, which was considered to be a ‘life belt’ in the changing times. The professionals were closely connected to the local policies and reasoned their power to activate the young people with local responsibilities too. The surrounding municipalities needed the workforce, which the local secondary education institutes were to provide. The discourse of employability dominated with natural and unquestionable expressions the constructive practices, which became visible in professionals’ work as they translated the importance of secondary education to their counselees.

The aims of the professionals’ work were set outside their organization, for instance at the local governance level. In the quote below, the professional talked about the employment mismatch between labour and the labour markets, and how it has become a public discussion. They attached the aims for guidance to the demand for employability, set by the surrounding municipality, employer and society.

[...] Of course, from a societal point of view, people should get work, corporations and employers should get suitable workforce, but also, the more unemployed people a municipality has, the more expensive it will be for the municipality or the city. The unemployed produce a fine, which increases the municipality’s expenses. Even though I don’t think it’s the most important thing, the important thing is that people get to work and move forward. (Gp 4)

This professional recognized the demands of employability and its impact on guidance. They stated that the most important concern for everyone is people getting work, otherwise it would be extremely costly for the community. They almost took a counter-conduct stance by stating that employability is not the most important thing, but still agreed that it is vital for people to move into the labour market.

In the governmental discourse of employability, young people needed to be attached to education and work. This discourse also entailed reforms, like Youth guarantee, Reform of vocational upper secondary education and especially the novel Extension of compulsory education<sup>2</sup>. Within this discourse, full citizenship required a secondary education qualification, and it was for everyone’s best interest, if all worked together for this aim.

Most professionals agreed that entering today’s labour market was not an easy task for clients who lacked education or had been unemployed. Still, they

had to ensure their counselees were moving forward by guiding them to study or update their CVs. This is legitimized by the employability discourse (along with lifelong learning discourse) which requires full employment and learning constantly to avoid the risk of unemployment.

The second governmental discourse was *economic efficiency* which related to public funding models for guidance. Half of the interviewees recognized the power of allocating resources in their work. The fact that resources are dependent on the number of graduates, early leavers from education and students' feedback had an impact on the constructive practices. For example, one professional (Gp 13) had to monitor students so they wouldn't run off to another study place. The economic efficiency discourse involved multiple measures of evaluation, and expressions of sanctions too, so its power over guidance work was strong, as the next quote demonstrates:

[...] The aim of the municipal board is to develop guidance counselling within transition phases, and we constantly evaluate outcomes and indicators, for instance we evaluate dropout rates and dropouts from our own general upper secondary school, we evaluate positive and negative dropout rates. (Gp 16)

This discourse was closely connected to the third dominant governmental discourse, *lifelong learning* and the guidance it required. Lifelong learning and guidance related to it was foremost about constantly changing labour markets, which legitimated the power to guide young people to improve their competencies and to be ready for constant movement between education and work.

Although all interviewees derived the guidance practices from these three discourses, many of them took a counter position towards them. Some professionals expressed frustration and refusal about the efficiency requirements for young people. 'Raising some efficient work life robots' was shunned by one professional (Gp1), who wanted to 'emphasize living as a human being more'. Some professionals juxtaposed their work and the work done by other actors:

[...] We [youth workers] are not public authorities, so we have good opportunities to tackle and do things, like, reasonably. (GP 12)

Especially the youth work employees, such as the one above, positioned their work organizationally outside this discourse or openly counter-conducted against it (Rust, 2021). They legitimated their work from the counter position and sought alternative practices to economic efficiency and employability and broader comprehension of lifelong learning from broad life course perspective.

## Inscription practices

Inscription practices refer to routines and day-to-day professional conduct, such as the informal norms and rituals of professional communities (Waring & Martin, 2016). We understand this second category of pastoral power as co-operation between guidance professionals, employment services, schools, businesses and surrounding municipality (i.e. communities). Inscription here means how the governmental discourses are inscribed, carved or written into the professionals' work.

The governmental discourses are constructed in these interactions and in co-operation to further legitimize them. The employability and lifelong learning requirements were adapted to communities by developing a shared understanding of the guidance work, which aimed to strengthen the safety network for all young people. Young people were not to slip out of the network, and the task of the network was to ensure that everyone developed a favourable attitude to education and reflective skills for lifelong learning. The safety net inscription practice stemmed from the power of economic efficiency as well. Strong interventions, even if the young people did not favour them, were legitimized in the community supporting societal and financial demands. The next few quotes demonstrate how the safety net practice works for labour market needs and is an example of how the governmental discourse of employability is embedded in the daily work of the professional. Also, network co-operation was strongly based on keeping young people from slipping.

[...] When we look these dropout lists together, I know that the principals might have predicted them and known they would have needed guidance for everyday studies instead of dreaming that someone would take care of them in the workplaces, when they [the young] should be the active ones. (Gp 16)

The usual obstacle is that our employees do not know enough about [those/the] study programmes. We have a basic description of them, but we can't articulate them in a tempting way to clients - - we have talked with [vocational school] that they should highlight interesting things from the studies for us, so that we can market, sell their products enough, so that they [the clients] get excited and go towards studying. (Gp 3)

In the second quote, to sell the idea of studying more efficiently, the professional needs co-operation from the school to persuade clients to study. The professional's work includes the marketing of education so that young people to become enthusiastic about it. This practice is about 'normalizing' the lifelong learning and employability discourse (by selling them in an attractive way) and ensuring it is adapted by the counselees. The co-operative network also seemed to



be in concert about the goals of guidance. One professional (Gp 4) stated that everyone in the network agrees on one 'big goal' which was advancing the clients' employment.

Employability and the lifelong learning discourse are intertwined; to become employable, one must be educated or be willing to study further. Lifelong learning must be promoted by guidance professionals – which is a shared goal in guidance work since it is believed to lead to labour market access.

The next quote is another example of how governmental discourse of lifelong learning is inscribed into guidance work. The professional is engaging in a dialogue with their counsees to normalize lifelong learning, but at the same time rejecting its omnipotence:

I also try to unwrap continuous learning for young people as something - - it's a thing which happens all the time in people's lives anyway, but perhaps concerning school it gains too much value - - continuous learning isn't always tied to education, it's a way of life, sort of, as well. (Gp 5)

This guidance professional agrees that guidance can direct young people towards lifelong learning (continuous learning) but highlights how they try to explain to the counsees that the concept does not refer to an exhausting style of learning. This we interpreted as taking a subtle counter-conduct stance.

Inscription practices also involved counter positions and the dialogue stemming of the counter position towards the three-dimensional dominant discourses were multiple. From the youth work perspective, the interviewees sought constantly to be recognized although their work was counter-conductive. They opened a dialogue on their positions, aims and means to evaluate them with the tools that were developed for other purposes. When positioned against the working society and its power, the interviewees felt they sometimes lacked the legitimated tools and community to operate. Sometimes co-operation between teachers and schools was not harmonious, as one outreach youth worker (Gp 8) perceived some teachers' practices too harsh for certain students and wished for 'mercy' on them.

The following youth worker takes the counter position when they explain how they have worked with a young person for years. Supported by proper services and procedures the youngster has been able to continue studying, but the school has not understood how much effort it took from youth services. Communal and co-operative aspect of inscription practices were resisted:

Sometimes there are differing stances on what is the state and condition of that young person at that time. We see things differently, perhaps because we get

told [by young people] slightly different things when we are ... not authorities and in no way responsible for studying and we don't make decisions if some operation continues or not. (Gp 12)

As an exception from the dominant position, outreach youth work employees were more critical of the co-operation aspect, as they positioned themselves organizationally and professionally outside of the educational institution they worked with.

### Collective practices

In the collective practices of pastoral power, the guidance professionals ('pastors') reproduce and insert new values and behaviours promoted by governmental discourse while reintegrating anyone who missteps. Waring and Martin (2016) note that in this category, professionals pursue the re-definition of community boundaries and incite activities which reinforce suitable subjectivities within that community. In their research, this included examining individual performance which led to the employee in question having to account for their performance. Through this 'public confession' the individual would be re-accepted into the work community. We understand this category as guidance professionals' desire to implant suitable behaviour (for example, having an active attitude about job seeking and willingness to self-reflect) in the counsellee. In our study, however, inappropriate behaviour did not necessarily lead to accountability for one's actions or even reintegration.

If there was variety in how the governmental discourses were emphasized in the other categories of pastoral power, the collective practices for reintegration of 'mistepped' young people were more uniform. The hegemonic three-dimensional discourse meant that the counsees were guided towards the subjectivity of self-reflexive, self-guiding, active and motivated youth. There were multiple tools to ensure the adaptation of self-reflection practices, such as portfolio apps and expert networks. This meant that the responsibility for lifelong learning was predominantly on the young people, as was the 'wrong' choices which needed additional support and guidance when the young were at risk of dropping out. The collective practices included attitude and behaviour modification. For example, guidance professionals inserted new values (appreciation of education) and behaviour (attitude from negative to positive) according to the employability discourse. This professional even refers to brainwashing:

For many young people, studying is a big swear word, they have bad experiences. How do we brainwash the young person and sell studying to them - -

studying has changed a lot, if there is a 30 something person who was studying 14 years ago - - we should be able to persuade them and market study stuff. (Gp 3)

Guidance professionals saw young people in two ways: they need to be reshaped to achieve the right kind of attitude to work or studying, and at the same time they were seen as self-guiding, independent individuals in charge of their situation. Yet, there seemed to be a wrong way of knowing what is best for oneself. Some professionals talked about the client as an active agent who knows their situation best. However, sometimes their goals or thoughts were not seen as realistic. In that situation, the ‘pastor’ must ‘jump in’ and guide the youth towards more favourable choices.

Sometimes the promotion of sought values overran the economic pressure prevailing within the discourse of economic efficiency, as this professional explained when discussing the aims for guidance:

[...] Their vocational identity is strengthened, and s/he will have a positive image of studying and future; preparedness and will to continue studies during the life course. We should support the student for the future instead of seeking more and more positive indicators of degrees. (Gp 11)

Even though the degrees should have less value and more emphasis should be on the supporting of the individual, the quote still entails a lifelong learning demand; one should be willing to continuously study.

The collective practices expressed with counter-conduct involved many of the same practices that were in the dominant discourse. Counter-conduct gave them the same power to ensure the motivation and responsibility of the young, but it lacked the emphasis of self-reflection. Misstepped young – those who did not engage in the guidance – were carefully, holistically and flexibly guided to take responsibility for their own life courses, which could be situated outside the ‘normal education and work careers’. The professionals in general perceived lifelong learning intertwined with all phases of life and something to be internalized by everyone.

It’s the thing, we should have the readiness for educating oneself.. like this lifelong education. It should be in the back of our minds, that we might have to do it. Or we *get* do it, it could be like that as well. (Gp 17)

However, in this quote the professional subtly recognizes the compulsory element of lifelong learning, almost resisting it, but quickly corrects herself and change the viewpoint to a more positive one. This professional hinges between counter-conduct and natural acceptance of lifelong learning discourse.

In Martin and Waring’s model (Waring & Martin, 2016) the collective practices category features the

*reintegration* of anyone who stumbles. We understand this as the pursuit of bringing a counsellee back to the service even if they have failed to do the tasks given to them. Waring and Martin (2016) call for critique of their framework and based on our analysis, we can answer this call by elaborating the third category. In some cases, the reintegration aspect of collective practices did not emerge from the talk. Some of the interviewees agreed that there is a point of no return for those who ‘misstep’. These errors were sometimes beyond repair. The guidance professionals had to ‘cast out’ the student or state that nothing could be done if they will not take responsibility or change their attitudes. Young person’s attitude could be permanently standing in the way of help, according to some professionals. One professional (Gp 8) believed that certain counsees couldn’t be effectively guided as they were unreceptive and made their own choices. Not everyone required guidance.

Negative attitudes to authority and being unreceptive to guidance might lead to termination of the guidance relationship, as well as resistance to guidance professional’s knowledge and suggestions.

[...] Or that they [client] are too stubborn, that even though you give your own knowledge what work life demands from you, the client won’t accept it, they want to do something else, then there is the idea that maybe our service isn’t ... for example, there are situations when I give tips about what would be good in your CV - - [client] does not appreciate a CV at all, or they don’t do it, or they do something that isn’t in the client’s best interest, which could prevent them from finding employment. (Gp 4)

This quote shows an example of how the guidance professionals are cutting the contact with their counsees when the implementation of desirable behaviours fails. This professional speaks about how they are partly responsible for motivating their clients, but sometimes it is not enough when the client disappears. The counsellee is often ‘returned to sender’, like the Employment and Economic Development Office (TE office) or outreach youth work and explaining how ‘sadly, we can’t work with this client’ (Gp 2).

### Inspection practices

The counselling professionals (‘pastors’) make sure appropriate subjectivities (implemented with collective practices) are adopted by using disciplinary approaches in *inspection practices*. Waring and Martin (2016) define inspection as the monitoring and regulation of community standards with an emphasis on surveillance and disciplinary gaze. These practices are for interacting with and overseeing individual and collective subjectivities. Different

tools such as evaluations and audits can be used to get information on performance (Waring & Martin, 2016). Inspection refers to surveilling and checking up on young people; how they have adopted the models of behaviour implemented by guidance professionals.

We see inspection practices as a form of surveillance, through which guidance professionals seek to gain information on their counselees after leaving their services. The professional can use various evaluation tools to keep track of their progress. Guidance professionals were also evaluated by their own organizations and counselees (performance appraisal, direct feedback), according to the economic efficiency discourse. The aim of inspection practices in our study is to ensure that the collective practices implemented before have worked.

Some professionals chose to end their relationship with clients immediately upon securing a job, as they feared the clients might later struggle with the job. For instance, one professional (Gp 3) maintained contact with clients who had commenced their studies to prevent them from ending the studies in case the client felt overwhelmed. The guidance relationship is continued even though the client is moving forward. Inspection practices are used because the client might change their mind or fail in their endeavours.

When positioned in line with the dominant discourse of employability, the guidance practitioners were seeking new tools (e.g. competence mapping) to ensure that the young people were open to constant career planning. This discourse gave the counselling an indisputable power to motivate young people to engage with their studying. The professionals took some counter-conductive action against some of the inspection practices, but the overall power of the three dominant governmental discourses legitimized the guidance to require the young to be open for a confidential dialogue.

Right now, we have amazing places for the young unemployed - - we have employment services, we are in control all the time. And wherever they go to when they leave us, we are in great cooperation with that place. We get information all the time, about what is going on. This network is extremely functional. (Gp 2)

This quote exemplifies inscription practices as well, where the network ensures there are no early school leavers. The surveillance aspect of inspection practices shows how the guidance professionals are in control. If the counsellee should slip through the cracks, the professionals would still know where they are and what they do.

Sometimes there is no opportunity to check up on a client after they leave the services, for example due to legal restrictions on information sharing between institutions. For example, a One-Stop Guidance Centre counsellor (Gp 5) stated that they did not know what happens to the client after the services and they get no information through guidance networks. Also, as we discovered in collective practices, some guidance professionals put an end to the clientship. However, some of the guidance professionals had the means to inspect young people's development; they kept in touch with those who moved on from the guidance service to employment or studying. The service was still available just in case the endeavour did not work out for the individual.

Pastoral power relies on confession in order to function. Inspection practices come to play when professionals require young people to speak truthfully about their progression. These next quotes exemplify the need for honest conversation between professionals and young people for the services to work. A good guidance relationship requires openness and truth-telling from both sides.

If the client is lying a bit, I can't help them. An honest conversation about what they want will take us much further. - - If a person does not keep in contact, I will quite often call back and ask 'how are you and how is it going'. But you can always sense some things are not going the way they say. (Gp 2)

I've been praised for saying things honestly. Also, I'm not a miracle worker. Sometimes you have to say that I could not help that person. Maybe an important aid is that you can guide to the right service. I've experienced, that a straightforward, matter-of-fact and respectful conversation about how I don't know how to help anymore and in what sort of things. We have decided together that maybe it's for the better to get back to it later, possibly. (Gp 4)

Honesty, which is required from both parties, can also lead to ending the service. This professional takes a counter-conducting stance since they are ceasing inspection and surveillance. Even though the professionals ended the relationship, in many cases they still agreed to guide the counsellee to a more suitable service.

## Conclusion

In this study we have analysed how pastoral power manifests in the talk of guidance professionals. Our first research question 'what are the governmental discourses which the guidance professionals referred to when talking about guidance' revealed three dominant governmental discourses, from which the professionals *constructed* their guidance work:

employability, economic efficiency and lifelong learning. They translated the desires and views of these discourses into daily practices of ensuring steady educational and labour market transitions, preserving economic efficiency by preventing early leaving from education and promoting lifelong learning. However, many of the professionals rejected the need to be constantly efficient and educationally oriented. Some recognized the precariousness of working life which made employment difficult. This we interpret as counter-conduct towards the dominant discourses.

With our second research question we asked how the governmental discourses are inscribed into the professionals' work. The discourses were *inscribed* into the professionals' daily work as co-operation between different actors which pursued shared goals for young people (early interventions preventing early school leaving), legitimizing and normalizing the discourses. With co-operation it was possible to guide young people's transitions efficiently. Sometimes co-operation was resisted, and professionals disagreed with their community about the procedures aimed at young people.

Our third question was 'how do the guidance professionals guide young people towards a collective behaviour stemming from governmental discourses?' *Collective* practices of pastoral power were in use when young people's attitudes, behaviour and values needed to be modified to match the needs of employability, economic efficiency and lifelong learning. Implementing desirable behaviour for all was done by motivating, informing and using self-reflection exercises. These practices had limitations, since those who did not subject to these modifications were cast out of the 'flock'. Counter-conduct was more difficult to detect in this category; perhaps implementing suitable behaviour (e.g. for becoming a labour market citizen) is seen as a natural part of guidance work, hence it was not questioned (at least consciously).

Lastly, we asked how the guidance professionals utilized inspection and surveillance in ensuring the adoption of collective behaviour. The professionals surveilled the young as they left the guidance services to try out a job or studying. Keeping in touch with young people was important, although not always possible; sometimes information on the counselees' development was not available. *Inspection* practices were most noticeable when talking about the availability of the guidance services. They should always be available just in case the counsellee tries studying or a gets a job but quits soon after and is again in need of guidance services.

Based on our analysis, the pastoral power manifested in guidance practices draws attention to the

dominant discourses of employability, economic efficiency and lifelong learning. The guidance professionals acted according to these discourses and expected their counselees to act accordingly too. It is unescapable in guidance work, because the work is forced to 'listen' to governmental discourses from which the guidance practices eventually stem from.

At the beginning we referred to the guidance professionals as 'shepherds' of pastoral power; they have the power to demand a confessional relationship and guide counselees towards 'wellbeing'. However, we conclude that the guidance professionals themselves are the target of power as well. In Foucault's view, power relations are typically reciprocal, meaning that those who exercise power are also entangled in it and subjected by its functions (Deacon, 2006). One cannot accuse guidance professionals of being the oppressor of youth. They are the target, product and mediator of governmental power, which manifests in pastoral power practices. The professionals are guided as a flock by the governmental discourses. Even though they are surveilling young people, they are themselves surveilled with evaluations and performance appraisals.

One of our observations from the data concerned the lack of social justice perspective of guidance. Even though counter-conduct was detected, and some professionals talked about risks of marginalization, social justice perspective of guidance was eventually connected to the three discourses instead of evening out the effects of socio-economic background of young people, for example. When asked about the aims set for guidance work outside their organization, this professional summed up how preventing marginalization was ultimately linked to higher costs for the society:

There's a big societal pressure and desire. Young people are especially worrisome, how they could be supported and of course the upper secondary vocational qualification... Many studies say that it's a crucial part in preventing social exclusion and in the sum of the bill what one marginalised young person costs the society [...] (Gp 7)

This quote also sums up our view about the *guidance society*, in which young people are seen through risks of exclusion and unemployment while guidance is seen as a solution to these problems. Guidance can even affect the state economy by reducing the cost of marginalized youth.

Some of the guidance professionals took a counter-conduct stance and subtly resisted the dominant governmental discourses. It is yet notable how the resistance was not able to challenge the dominant governmental discourses but were practiced from a subordinate position. For instance, attempts to develop guidance practices



towards wider perspectives on personal life courses were dominated by the need to guide young people towards education or employability. Since the counter position and respective practices were marginalized, the practitioners questioned the 'epistemic justice' of the ideal subjectivity (Fricker, 2013; see also Bengtsson, 2022). The counter-conductive position had a 'voice' of the professionals, but it lacked the 'forum' for the contestation, which made both professionals and the alternative subjectivity suffering 'hermeneutical injustice' (Fricker, 2013). The guidance professionals contesting the dominant governmental discourses thought their practices lacked the recognition of their alternative discourse but needed to adjust their practices to the dominant discourses instead.

## Discussion

Contemporary research on guidance has emphasized the power of the knowledge society and demands for employability, economic efficiency and lifelong learning (e.g. Sultana, 2014; Kjærgård, 2020; Varjo, Kalalahti; Hooley, 2022). These discourses dominated the governance of guidance in this article too. The guidance practices involve pastoral power to demand employability and educability for the young. As Furlong et al. (2018) have argued, this discourse might disregard the heterogeneity of the young and not recognize the changes in labour markets. Marginalization and new work-related risks and insecurity are structural states and should not be linked merely to individuals' own actions (Furlong et al., 2018). Emancipatory guidance could work towards socially just comprehension of individuals' career, if it would question the hegemony of employability, economic efficiency and lifelong learning (Hooley et al., 2018). This would require a level of consciousness about the contexts and structures of both the counsellor and counsellee.

In Finland where guidance is strongly institutionalized, the power within the guidance practices is more visible and can be analysed from the categories of pastoral power. What can we learn from a system such as this? For Foucault (1978 [2010]) pastoral power is ultimately based on good will. If power did not aim for doing something good, the pastoralty of it would be difficult to justify (Foucault, 1978 [2010]). Our research shows that guidance professionals and guidance practices are based on good intentions such as helping young people in transitions and to move forward with their lives. However, guidance practices are a form of power to which young people are forced to submit. Furthermore, guidance professionals submit to being governed by governmental discourses. The societal structures hold power which can prevent individuals from achieving their interests or force them to normative education and employment

paths with the demand of becoming labour market citizens.

Young people being guided in transition phases are subjected to the heavily institutionalized power of *the guidance society*; every action must lead to either work or education, leaving almost no alternatives and no time to explore or even make mistakes. If one is not ready or capable of moving forward, guidance professionals have the power (which is justified by economic efficiency, employability and lifelong learning demands) to start the reshaping process of the individual. Guidance practices are directed at adults as well (i.e. in employment offices), but young people are still on the verge of adulthood; they are growing and seen as 'not-yet-ready', which makes them more susceptible to modifying attempts.

Our research focuses on guidance professionals' talk. Studying practices during guidance sessions could reveal more about how governmental discourses infiltrate their daily work. Also, our data do not include young people's own experiences of being guided. Future research could include the counter-conduct options of young people and guidance professionals. Further research on discourses affecting guidance might also be discovered if policy documents were included. Nevertheless, by utilizing pastoral power, this study displays the important, mediating role guidance professionals have in interpreting, translating and implementing governmental discourses into guidance of young people. The professionals work as shepherds but are also being guided themselves. They are not entirely free to act and must choose how to operate inside the dominant discourses. A question arises from these premises: what kind of youth and futures for the youth are being produced by this? The perspective for young people in educational transition phases seems narrow, since the three discourses dominating the talk revolve around societal demands. These demands might leave youth centred work in the background, while the current needs of society set limited boundaries and framework for guidance.

In this article we use pastoral power according to Foucault's (1982) analysis while understanding the distinct meaning of pastors in Christianity and daily language. See also Siisiäinen (2015) for similar use of the terminology.

<sup>2</sup> In 2021 (after data collection), compulsory education was extended when the minimum school leaving age was raised to 18 years. Additionally, the guidance counselling practices were revised, and additional support for students was broadened (MoEC, 2022).

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