Futures guidance as a means to promote futures thinking
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Content

• The concept of futures guidance
• Some examples and experiences
• Why to promote futures thinking / awareness?
• Conclusions
A person is always better prepared to face the sudden changes, if one has thought about the future.”

Facing the future(s)

- **Passive: what happened?**
  - You analyse after something has changed
- **Reactive: when happens**
  - You react to a change when it is happening
- **Preactive: if happens**
  - You outline several possibilities and get ready to react to any of them
- **Proactive: let's make it happen**
  - You try to make a desirable future to come true

The concept of futures guidance

- Futures guidance has been developed and tested in various European Social Fund projects within FFRC since 2009
- Futures (studies) on a personal level
- Guidance tools that combine futures studies approaches and socio-dynamic career guidance
- The pedagogical elements are designed according to the dynamic and holistic counselling model and experimental learning theories
- Tools are developed with the users and can be used in different contexts (high schools, vocational education, university students, career guidance and employment services…)

What are the key elements of futures guidance?

- It promotes active and hopeful attitude towards the future, self-reliance as well as creative and open-minded attitude towards the future.
- It promotes non-linear thinking and plurality of futures
- In futures guidance the world is seen not fixed but in constant motion.
- Connection to values and ethical thinking is strong
- It shifts guidance from collecting information to systemic thinking and finding a personal meaning
- Futures studies methods are applied (scenarios, backcasting, futures images…)
- Learning by doing
Some examples of futures guidance tools…

- Scenarios
- Backcasting
- Futures images
- Simulation
- Participative methods
- Peer support and mentoring
- Information about the future of work and education
- Futures guidance approach

Futures simulation

- Developed in Get a Life -project 2014
- The newest version of simulation in UTUA project for unemployed people within employment services
- Various scenarios on the future of work life → moving on to the next event is done partly random and partly by choice → produce alternative futures in every simulation run
- With a simulation it is possible to produce experiences of events yet unknown for the user → enables exploring and testing various alternative choices and their outcomes and can challenge users’ assumptions
- Reflection and discussion important part of using the simulation
Scheduling problems

Your first large work project is now in full swing. Unfortunately, things aren’t going as smoothly as you expected and it looks like you’re going to fall behind schedule.

What shall you do?

- You put in overtime whenever you can and make work a priority.
- You tell your colleagues about the problem.
- You do as much as you can at work and try to renegotiate the schedule.

Get a life simulation
http://www.getalife.fi/index_en.html

UTUA simulation
http://valaa.com/utua/
Statements about the future exercise

• Development started in Get a life and Koukku projects 2010
• Applied in OMASI project for young women who are unemployed, applying for school or want to make a career change
• Different statements about the future of work, education and personal futures. Also: different time dimensions.
• Exchange of opinions and experiences with other students and counsellors (learning from another)
  → Imagining alternative futures
  → Getting information about different paths to the future
  → Thinking about the values behind the choices and actions
  → Making meaningful choices

"I believe that next year my plans concerning the future are clearer."

"Smart materials and 3D printing are commonplace in the future."

"I believe that in the future I can find a job that does not exist yet."

"In the future different languages will rule in the working life that the ones now."

"I am open to new things."
Futures guidance helped participants to...

….recognize their know-hows, see new possibilities, share and learn from others, look to a future more optimistically, understand one’s potential, start a thinking process, find more realistic options.

2nd year Upper secondary school students:
"I got new ideas from senior students’ stories"
"I took the time to find out information about possible studies and application procedures"

University students:
"It was a relief to see that other people have similar issues on their mind"
"Others’ ideas were useful"
"The future is so constantly changing it’s hard to plan"

65 % of children that are starting the school now are going to work in the future in the field or do something that does not exist yet.”
Why to promote futures thinking?

• The world is complex and constant changes in the society calls for the ability of future-orientation and long-term thinking.
• We need skills such as self-reflection, proactiveness, self-directing, life and career management.
• There is enough information in the world. What is missing is the meaning!
  → The meaning can be found through doing and experimenting different alternatives
  → Futures guidance supports finding the meaning or at least can start the process of thinking about it?

Conclusions

• What is the wanted or expected influence?
  – Who’s point of view and values are represented?
  – Goals: understanding the aspect of future or making meaningful choices for oneself based on knowledge?

• Futures guidance applied only in short term guidance work
  → hard to measure the change in attitude and long term influence
• Evaluation methods: questionares + interviews + Indicators?
• Futures thinking/awareness/orientation/consiousness?
References and links

- Futures Guidance site (in Finnish): www.tulevaisuusohjaus.fi
- UTUA: www.utua-hanke.fi
- OMASI: www.omasi-hanke.fi
- Koukku -project's research in English: http://www.koukkuun.fi/p/research-articles.html

Thank you!

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Futures consciousness

• The human capacity to think about the future, create ideas, images, goals, plans and use them to direct one’s life and actions

• “Future consciousness is a total integrative set of psychological abilities, processes, and experiences humans use in understanding and dealing with the future” (T. Lombardo 2006)

• Awareness of the future grows in time and experience. It can be promoted and capacities improved

• Some cultures are more future oriented while others focus on pasta or present

• Attitudes, modes of thinking, and frames of minds vary from negative, counter-productive, or apathetic to the optimistic, positive and active