

Worklife guidance

Development of guidance and counselling in the workplace

Comparison of methods and tools Report FINLAND

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
1 Career Guidance in Finland.....	3
1.1 Training of guidance and counselling practitioners in Finland	4
1.1.1 Guidance counsellors	4
1.1.2 Education and training for advisers in TE Offices	4
2 Worklife guidance	5
2.1 Guidance and counselling in TE Offices.....	6
2.2 Guidance and counselling services during the enrolment phase in adult education	6
2.3 Peer counsellors at the workplace.....	7
2.4 Private career guidance services	7
2.5 Adult education is popular in Finland, and financial support is available	7
3 Human resources management and career guidance	8
3.1 Skills management and mapping of skills.....	8
3.1.1 Training planning	8
3.1.2 Staff development and training	8
3.1.3 Apprenticeship training	9
3.1.4 Some facts about companies skills management	9
3.2 Workplace coaching	9
3.3 Mentoring	10
3.4 Career counselling.....	10
3.4.1 Developmental discussions	11
3.4.2 Guidance skills of managers	11
3.4.3 Deteriorating ability to work	11
3.4.4 Work trial.....	12
3.4.5 Outplacement	12
3.5 Occupational healthcare	12
4 Validation of prior learning in the guidance process.....	14
4.1 Vocational education and training for adults	14
4.2 Competence-based qualifications for adults	14
5 Sources.....	16

Introduction

In this report I summarize the findings I've done related to the guidance at the workplace in Finland – worklife guidance, as we call it in our international Worklife Guidance project (<http://www.worklifeguidance.wordpress.com>).

Guidance experts and practitioners from abroad are often impressed by the provision and quality of Finnish guidance and counselling services. One factor is the high level and high quality nature of education and training of guidance professionals. Those planning a career as a guidance counsellor in Finland have many different paths to choose from: universities offer a master's degree in education and an opportunity to include 60 credits of guidance counselling studies in a teaching qualification, guidance counsellors in the vocational sector can take their qualification (60 credits) at Universities of Applied Sciences. The post of a vocational guidance psychologist in a TE Office always requires a master's degree with the highest possible grade in psychology. There are no formal qualification requirements for the positions of education advisers or employment advisers and counsellors.

Career guidance in Finland is provided by both educational institutions and TE Offices. These are the most traditional fields of career guidance, since the most important groups to which guidance is offered are young people in general, unemployed job-seekers and students of educational institutions. Some of the assistance offered by TE Offices is intended for other groups than unemployed job-seekers, including adults with jobs. In the last ten years, the providers of vocational adult education in particular have extended the scope of their guidance services to cover not only adults who are students in educational institutions, but also those who are interested in participating in education and seeking new career options.

In Finland, the title of career counsellor ('uraohjaaja') does not exist as an academic title or appear in named degree programmes, even if the tasks of many people working in education, rehabilitation, employment services or social services are clearly related to career counselling. In my opinion, training in career guidance needs to be developed further in Finland, because not all career guidance falls within the sphere of guidance counselling provided by educational institutions.

In Finland, services related to lifelong guidance have been built through a cooperative network of different players in the field, because lifelong guidance would be too extensive a theme to be taken up by one operator alone. In this report, I write about the sources from which an adult with a job can receive information, advice and guidance in Finland:

- guidance and counselling in TE Offices
- guidance and counselling services during the enrolment phase in adult education
- peer counsellors at the workplace
- private career guidance services
- informal actors and self-help materials.

I will also focus on guidance that takes place at the workplace and is organised or provided by the employer. I will describe some of the most common methods through which employees are provided guidance within their workplace communities:

- Skills management and mapping of skills: training planning, staff development and training, apprenticeship training
- Workplace coaching
- Mentoring
- Career counselling: developmental discussions, guidance skills of managers, deteriorating ability to work, work trial, outplacement
- Occupational healthcare

Last, I will make some notes about validation of prior learning and the role that guidance plays in this process. Finland is one of the few European countries that have permanent systems and comprehensive national policies in place for validating informal and non-formal learning (prior learning).

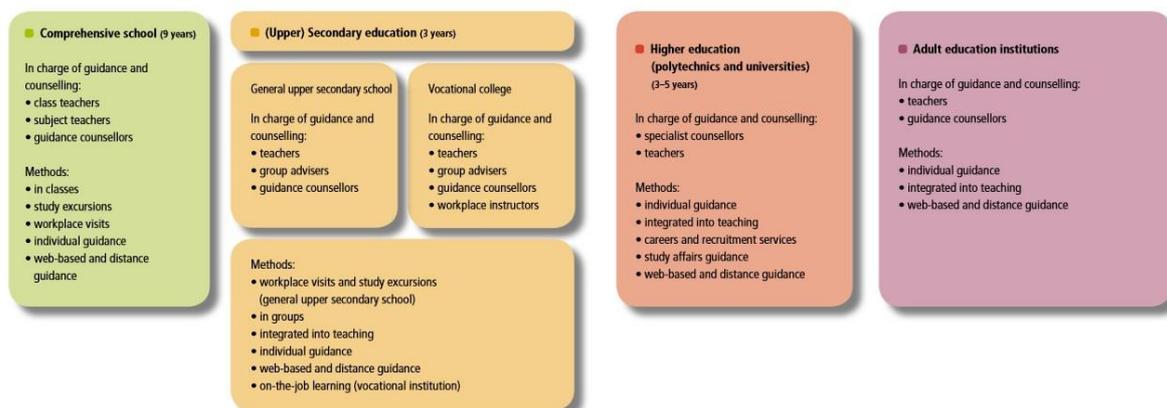
1 Career Guidance in Finland

Guidance experts and practitioners from abroad are often impressed by the provision and quality of Finnish guidance and counselling services. They have identified a number of factors contributing to the positive outcome. One is the level and nature of education and training of guidance professionals. To begin with, all teachers in Finland need a master's degree. Guidance practitioners at schools need a teacher's qualification, which secures a firm professional and theoretical basis for the job. Additionally, fieldwork and theory come together in the guidance counsellors' education and training. Standards of staff training are similarly high at the TE Offices (offices that provide employment and job related services in Finland), which serves to enhance the quality of their guidance services, too. A second factor often highlighted by foreign experts and practitioners is the strong research base in the Finnish guidance services, which is seen to ensure their high quality. For example, research reports make straightforward recommendations which are feasible to implement in everyday work. Thirdly, the way in which policy-makers at every level support the implementation of guidance is seen as essential for the provision of successful guidance policies and services. Finland is a small country; the policy-makers and practitioners know each other well. The infrastructure helps cooperation between the different sectors, and there are committed people who want to develop guidance services further. Finland also has good connections with the international guidance community. This broad perspective plays an important role in improving the Finnish guidance services, say our colleagues from abroad. The fourth characteristic feature in the Finnish guidance services is the way in which the public employment services complement the work of guidance counsellors within the school system. The guidance services provided by TE offices are widely used by young people and adults alike.

Guidance and counselling services in Employment and Economic Development Offices



Guidance and counselling services in educational institutions



Picture 1: Guidance and counselling services in Finland

As shown in the above illustration, career guidance in Finland is provided by both educational institutions and TE Offices. These are the most traditional fields of career guidance, since the most important groups to which guidance is offered are young people in general, unemployed job-seekers and students of educational

institutions. Some of the assistance offered by TE Offices is intended for other groups than unemployed job-seekers, including adults with jobs. Similarly, career guidance provided by educational institutions is available to all students, whether or not they have a job in addition to their studies. In the last ten years, the providers of vocational adult education in particular have extended the scope of their guidance services to cover not only adults who are students in educational institutions, but also those who are interested in participating in education and seeking new career options. In the context of the Door to Learning (Opin Ovi) projects, the variety of guidance and counselling services provided during the phase of enrolment to studies have been merged. This means that the guidance expertise of educational institutions operating at different levels of education is now pooled into networks for the benefit of customers.

1.1 Training of guidance and counselling practitioners in Finland

1.1.1 Guidance counsellors

Those planning a career as a guidance counsellor in Finland have many different paths to choose from. Universities offer a master's degree in education, with a major in guidance counselling (300 ECTS), and an opportunity to include 60 credits of guidance counselling studies in a teaching qualification (2 universities in Finnish, 1 in Swedish). Prospective guidance counsellors in the vocational sector can take their qualification (60 credits) at one of the three Universities of Applied Sciences that offer this qualification. As a general rule, working as a guidance counsellor requires a teacher's qualification supplemented by one of the above professional qualifications. All the above programmes provide a broad-based education: qualified guidance counsellors can work at any educational level. Guidance counsellors also have a great number of supplementary and professional development programmes available for them.

1.1.2 Education and training for advisers in TE Offices

The post of a vocational guidance psychologist in a TE Office always requires a master's degree with the highest possible grade in psychology. There are no formal qualification requirements for the positions of education advisers or employment advisers and counsellors. In practice, however, many of these practitioners have a higher education degree from a polytechnic or university. The guidance and counselling professionals in TE Offices enhance their skills through in-service training provided by the employer, in external training programmes and through independent study. Customer service personnel are given basic training in guidance and counselling. They can later develop these competences further by participating in advanced study programmes. The main training provider for staff in employment and economic development administration is the Education and Development Centre Salmia in Jyväskylä.

In Finland, the title of career counsellor ('uraohjaaja') does not exist as an academic title or appear in named degree programmes, even if the tasks of many people working in education, rehabilitation, employment services or social services are clearly related to career counselling. There are some Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland providing specialised studies in career planning and rehabilitation.

In my opinion, the training of guidance counsellors in particular does not emphasise career guidance to a sufficient extent. In the case of Finland, studies focus on the mandatory tasks of guidance counsellors, since secondary schools and (non-adult) educational institutions are required to have qualified and trained guidance counsellors. Training is largely focused on collaboration between home and school, concrete guidance of a pupil's studies, and the multi-professional cooperation within the educational institution. During the ESF programming period 2008-2014, short study programmes (30 ECTS) in the field of adult guidance were organised for adult guidance professionals and separately for the staff of TE Offices in the context of a national development programme Door to Learning (Opin Ovi). These study programmes also included some content related to career guidance. Training in career guidance needs to be developed further in Finland, because not all career guidance falls within the sphere of guidance counselling provided by educational institutions.

2 Worklife guidance

In this section, I list the sources from which an adult with a job can receive information, advice and guidance in Finland. The perspective taken here is that of individual adults, not their employer organisations.

In Finland, services related to lifelong guidance have been built through a cooperative network of different players in the field, because lifelong guidance would be too extensive a theme to be taken up by one operator alone. Adult guidance is provided by adult education institutions, TE Offices, trade unions, employers and private companies specialising in guidance services. Informal support provided by friends and colleagues, independent searches for information, as well as materials promoting a self-directed approach can also be considered to constitute adult guidance.



Picture 2: Karjalainen, M. 2010.

Lifelong information, advice and guidance services can also be interpreted more narrowly to only include services from which adults receive information and advice related to the maintenance and development of their professional skills. Understood more widely, worklife guidance means any guidance that enables employees to assess their position at work and in the labour market, the direction and content of their careers and their need for development and regeneration. Another purpose of guidance is to provide employees with time and space to pause for a moment, take a breath, become empowered and regain their job satisfaction.

In other words, adults with jobs may independently look for suitable sources of guidance that provide precisely the kind of information, advice and guidance currently required. At the workplace, employees have the opportunity to participate in guidance activities offered by the employer. Here, too, diversity is a positive thing, since it allows employees to decide for themselves the sort of career-related plans and issues they want to discuss within their workplace community, and what they choose to discuss with a person who does not belong to this community. However, it should be noted that the majority of trained guidance professionals in Finland work as guidance counsellors in educational institutions. Their day-to-day work focuses on the students of that educational institution and is rather detached from the guidance needs of adults with jobs.

With respect to training options, planning one's own career and the options related to one's own career path and career development, adults get the best help from educational institutions that provide adult education, from the guidance and counselling services of educational institutions, or from TE Offices. Today, not many employees are yet willing to pay for the services of a private career counsellor. However, this does not mean that neither private career counsellors nor paying customers would not exist at all.

2.1 Guidance and counselling in TE Offices

The services available in TE Offices build on four key objectives of employment and entrepreneurship policy. While existing companies should be able to grow further, the creation of new companies should also be promoted. A prompt re-employment is supported, for example, by offering services even before the notice period ends. At the same time, those in the weakest position in the labour market also need support.

Regional state administration in Finland encompasses Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, also charged with implementing regional employment and entrepreneurship policies. The centres promote entrepreneurship, labour market functioning, competence and cultural activities. **They are also in charge of the development of information, advice and guidance services.** Local TE Offices provide labour market services to individuals and businesses. The extent and means of guidance and counselling to individuals are determined by their needs: are they jobseekers, do they need to work on their professional skills or are they being rehabilitated for the labour market and do they therefore also need other than public employment services? TE Offices aim at using multiple channels for providing information, advice and guidance services to the citizens in a client-centred manner. This allows clients to consult the services at a time, place and method most appropriate and convenient to them. The majority of services are targeted at unemployed job-seekers, but adults with jobs are also entitled to receive information, advice and guidance from the vocational guidance and educational information services and other expert services provided by TE Offices. The services are free of charge to all personal customers.

2.2 Guidance and counselling services during the enrolment phase in adult education

A national adult guidance development programme worth more than EUR 20 million was recently carried out in Finland.

"Usefulness and needs as the basis for adult guidance, using a development programme on information, guidance and counselling services" was a European Social Fund development programme within the third priority that was implemented through national and regional projects in 2008-2014. The goals of the project were 1) developing the operational practices of guidance and counselling services for adult guidance and counselling professionals and adult trainers, 2) strengthening the skills and 3) recognition and accreditation of adult students' prior learning. Adult guidance and counselling services were developed through more than 30 regional Door to Learning (Opin ovi) projects. The projects belonging to the Door to Learning programme produced new kinds of models and operational methods for adult customer guidance and counselling: both network-based service models and flexible, knowledgeable guidance networks. It gave birth to a new kind of know-how: not only basic know-how about networks, but also a networked approach to guidance work. In conjunction with the development work, many guidance tools and guidelines were created, and several agreements entered into that guaranteed sustained collaboration and actions. The objective was to create a

one-stop shop guidance and counselling service available for all citizens that would help people considering applying for adult education. After the projects, some regional services survived while some were terminated due to lack of funding. In the Oulu region, the OpinTori service has been offering guidance and counselling to help in the individual career planning of all adults for 4.5 years now. Thousands of adults have contacted the service, some of which are currently in employment. The adult guidance counsellors and career counsellors of each local educational institution take turns at the OpinTori service desk. The Oulu Adult Education Centre is one of the institutions involved in the provision of the service.

2.3 Peer counsellors at the workplace

Worklife guidance can also be provided through peer support. In at least three different projects carried out in Finland, the purpose has been to train peer counsellors for workplaces. In 2002-2004, workplace study counsellors who could inform their fellow employees of adult education options were trained in the context of a project called Life Long Learning Animators. In 2003, a three-year Noste programme was launched to raise the educational level among adults. In the context of the programme, the trade union organisation SAK and its member unions trained competence counsellors, whose task was to raise awareness among their colleagues about training options and encourage them to reflect on their own skills and competence development needs. The duties of a competence counsellor had to be performed in addition to other duties, without separate compensation. In 2010-2013, a project called OpinVerkko – Työelämän koulutusneuvojat provided training for workplace study counsellors, who provide peer support for colleagues in their competence development needs. Study counsellors raise awareness among colleagues about adult education pathways and encourage them to apply for vocational or other training that improves their professional skills. The operational area of a workplace study counsellor is an individual organisation or a union branch. Workplace study counsellors are voluntary trade unionists. Peer-group mentoring, particularly popular in the educational sector, is another form of peer counselling in the field of worklife guidance.

2.4 Private career guidance services

Individuals and organisations may also purchase career guidance services from private service providers. Such services may include: recruitment services, aptitude assessments, potential assessments, career consultation, placement consultation, leadership training, management coaching, 360-degree leadership and management appraisals, team building and organization development. Service providers are usually trained guidance counsellors or psychologists.

2.5 Adult education is popular in Finland, and financial support is available

In Finland, studying as an adult is financially viable. The Study Leave Act provides for the right of an employed person to take unpaid leave for studies. Many organisations also allow their employees a few paid study days a year because of the tax benefit involved. An adult study subsidy is an economically feasible option for adults with jobs to finance their studies. It is granted for applicants who have been in paid employment for at least a few years, and the sum is more or less equal to earnings-related unemployment allowance. The majority of training available is free of charge to the student, and adults may study either full-time or while working.

3 Human resources management and career guidance

In this section, I am focusing on guidance that takes place at the workplace and is organised or provided by the employer.

In Finland, guidance at the workplace is still rather unplanned and unsystematic. Only the largest companies have realised that career planning is beneficial to employees and that advertising career planning opportunities attracts new job applicants. Below, I am describing some of the most common methods through which employees are provided guidance within their workplace communities. I also look at the role of Oulu Adult Education Centre in the actual provision of such forms of guidance.

3.1 Skills management and mapping of skills

Skills management refers to all activities within an organisation aimed at the development, renewal and acquisition of the skills required by the organisation's strategy. Skills management requires planning, defining, development and evaluation, in which the organisation must be able to assess its present state and spell out its future goals. The current and future skills needed by the organisation may be defined through skills mapping. This means that employees, under the guidance of their supervisor, review the organisation's future objectives and the skills required to achieve these objectives. Next, the current skills level of employees is compared to the organisation's future needs. With the help of knowledge gained from skills mapping, it is possible to structure and direct the skills development of individual employees and organisational units. In this case, skills development measures – such as training or job rotation – are not random, but based on identified needs, strengthening the functioning and competitiveness of the organisation.

Organisations may carry out skills mapping independently or hire for the job an external party, such as a consultant or an adult education organisation. In small organisations, skills mapping can be carried out fairly simply, using an Excel sheet, an online survey or a similar tool. Large organisations often use skills mapping tools integrated into other HR and skills management systems, such as Elbit HR. Oulu Adult Education Centre has carried out a number of skills mapping projects in small companies. Organisations in general are interested in making skills mapping a part of their skills development practices, but many of them still lack systematic skills management and development processes.

3.1.1 Training planning

In Finland, every organisation with at least 30 employees is required to draw up an annual HR and training plan during the employee cooperation negotiations to maintain and improve the professional skills of employees. In drawing up the HR and training plan, any predictable changes in the operations of the company that are apparently relevant for the structure, number or professional skills of the staff should be taken into consideration. The costs of skills development measures that are based on the training plan are tax-deductible. The sum of the tax deduction is calculated on the basis of the average daily salary of the employer's staff, with a maximum of three days per employee per year. The purpose of this arrangement is to provide financial incentives for employers to extensively improve the skills of their employees and, in the allocation of training activities, take into account the employee groups that may have particular needs relating to skills development.

3.1.2 Staff development and training

In terms of numbers, staff development and training is the most widely employed method of adult education, involving the training of the personnel in accordance with the needs of the companies. The training is normally short-term and primarily paid by the employers.

3.1.3 Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship training is intended for both young people and adults as a means to acquire initial vocational qualifications. It can also be a form of preparatory training for initial vocational qualifications or further and specialist qualifications completed as a competence-based qualification. Apprenticeship training is mainly organised at the workplace, where the guidance, education and training will be provided by a workplace instructor. Such on-site education and training is supplemented by theoretical lessons provided by a vocational institution (free of charge). The employer pays the apprentice's wages according to the relevant collective agreement for the period of workplace training. A small monthly compensation (between EUR 50 and 250) is paid to the employer for training the student at the workplace. In 2013, the number of new students in adult vocational training in Finland was 46,500, while the number of new apprenticeship training students was around 18,000. The majority of new apprenticeship training students already have a job.

3.1.4 Some facts about companies skills management

What did companies do to develop the skills of their employees in Finland in 2012?

(X per cent of the companies responding to the survey mentioned the respective measure. The total number of companies that responded was more than 1,000, and the total number of their employees was around 415,000.)

Percentage of companies / percentage of employees

84% / 60% training not leading to a degree

75% / 56% job orientation

58% / 30% skills development events

44% / 21% self-training

41% / 32% task or job rotation

41% / 29% feedback processes

34% / 15% training leading to a degree

What kind of trends do companies expect in the area of skills development in 2013-2015?

(X per cent of the companies mentioned the following.)

Knowledge transfer: increases: 21%, unchanged: 67%, decreases: 12%

Task and job rotation: increases: 18%, unchanged: 77%, decreases: 5%

Number of projects and initiatives: increases: 18%, unchanged: 71%, decreases: 12%

Self-training: increases: 6%, unchanged: 77%, decreases: 17%

Training leading to a degree: increases: 5%, unchanged: 67%, decreases: 28%

3.2 Workplace coaching

Workplace coaching means regular, process-based guidance and support for the evaluation of work, the identification of work-related problems, and the planning and execution of measures required to solve such problems. Workplace coaching is usually provided over a relatively long period of time (between 1 and 3 years) by an experienced professional in the same field who has been trained to work as a workplace coach. Workplace coaching is needed particularly in tasks that involve customer or patient relationships that are more demanding than average. Workplace coaching is an essential part of the learning and development process through which employees' competence and self-understanding required for the performance and development of their tasks takes shape. Workplace coaching supports and complements other guidance activities in the organisation, contributing to a purposeful functioning of the workplace community and organisation, and to the development of a positive organisational culture.

In the health, social and welfare sector, workplace coaching is called clinical supervision, and in Finland, employees involved in demanding client work in fields such as mental health are usually entitled to clinical supervision paid by the employer. Even if issues related to career planning may be discussed during workplace coaching, a workplace coach is not a career counsellor, and the focus should be on the job at hand and the employee.

A workplace coach may represent the same organisation as the coachee, but not the same workplace community or team. The workplace coach usually comes from outside the organisation. In Finland, there are both full-time workplace coaches and those involved in part-time workplace coaching in addition to their day job. The educational background of workplace coaches varies considerably, and anybody who has completed a vocational degree may apply to study workplace coaching. Training is provided by both secondary and higher educational institutions, and the minimum extent of the studies is 60 ECTS. Oulu Adult Education Centre employs trained, qualified workplace coaches and provides paid workplace coaching services.

3.3 Mentoring

Mentoring means an assistance and learning relationship aimed at supporting an employee's career development and offering psychological and social support. A mentor is usually an experienced employee who knows the tasks in the organisation well. The job of a mentor is to teach a less experienced employee (a mentee), provide guidance, and act as a role model. A mentorship is usually established between the members of the same organisation and should be started on a voluntary basis. On the other hand, employees may also find mentors outside their organisation and take responsibility for their own personal and career development.

There are many kinds of mentorships, and mentoring could well be more common than it is now in Finland. Examples of mentoring in the educational sector in the context of recent development projects is the Osaava Verme network that provides peer-group mentoring to support skills development and well-being at work. The Osaava Verme network is aimed particularly at teachers at the start of their career, and its objective is to build a lifelong professional development continuum that starts with teacher training. Osaava Verme mentoring takes place in small groups in which skills and experience are shared between the members, who include both experienced and less experienced teaching professionals. There are small groups all over Finland. On the other hand, individual companies have employed mentoring to transfer tacit knowledge, strengthen the induction of new employees, help in alleviating the tension and uncertainty felt by employees returning from parental or other leave, and support work-life balance.

Oulu Adult Education Centre offers mentorship training for mentors and mentees. Mentoring is also a part of the learning process of Oulu Adult Education Centre students: for example, students studying for the Further Qualification for Entrepreneurs are required to find themselves entrepreneur mentors. Peer-group mentoring is available to the personnel of the Oulu Adult Education Centre.

3.4 Career counselling

Career counselling concerns the development of human resources and the support of employees' professional careers. Traditionally, organisations have provided career counselling only for senior management. Career counselling has been made available to all employees in situations involving major transitions, development projects or restructuring. In transition or restructuring situations, career counselling may help in employee reassignment or outplacement. When organisations are restructured, career counselling may encourage employees to acquire new skills or strengthen their existing ones.

In Finland, career counselling is usually available in major international companies (such as Accenture, in which a personal Career Counsellor, a member of existing staff, is appointed for each employee). Some major companies, such as Nokia, purchase external career counselling services for their employees from private service providers that carry out individual or group counselling. Executives and supervisors are usually of the opinion that career counselling provided to employees belongs to the responsibilities of supervisors. However, not many supervisors have the required skills.

In Finland, small and medium-sized enterprises (employing less than 250 persons) account for 99.8 per cent of all companies (321,540), and 64 per cent of all corporate employees. In SMEs, developing one's career in

the traditional way of climbing up the ladder is difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, career development by expanding one's skills is, naturally, possible even in small organisations. Generally speaking, managers and senior executives of organisations seem to think that developmental discussions once a year or once in two years are enough for discussing all career issues at work. At least, this is a very frequent response when managers and executives are asked about the guidance available at the workplace.

3.4.1 Developmental discussions

A developmental discussion means a pre-planned discussion between the superior and a subordinate with the purpose of promoting the meeting of organizational and individual goals, performance and developmental efforts. Developmental discussions are characterized by regularity and a systematic approach. Even so, developmental discussions may be implemented in a variety of ways. Accordingly, the name of the procedure varies depending on its focus, e.g. goals discussion, results discussion, evaluation discussion, planning discussion or superior–subordinate discussion.

In developmental discussions, the following topics are generally covered (depending on the organisation): review of work performance, feedback, objectives and expectations concerning work performance, evaluation criteria related to the objectives, factors increasing job satisfaction, problems affecting work, development needs, career plans and remuneration and rewards.

More than half of all Finnish organisations use developmental discussions. However, opinions on discussions between employees and their immediate superiors tend to be varied, sometimes even polarised. Annual discussions have become more common, but many think that their true benefit is negligible. Successful discussions require effort on the part of both employees and employers. The faith in developmental discussions is strong, particularly among managers and executives, who seem to think that almost any matter – employee development, training, performance evaluation, feedback to either direction, career plans – can be resolved with an annual developmental discussion. Developmental discussions are considered to be a hallmark of a well-developed organisation and leadership culture, but the benefits of discussions for the organisation, superiors and employees should be followed up more closely. In my opinion, it is also unfair to expect developmental discussions to be the be-all and end-all in job-related matters. A single developmental discussion that lasts between 90 and 120 minutes cannot answer every need. The management of workplace communities requires more opportunities for discussion for employees, such as support and guidance for career planning.

3.4.2 Guidance skills of managers

As work is increasingly becoming knowledge work, and the expertise of employees becomes more important, a more inclusive and instructive approach should also be adopted in managerial work. It is important for superiors to have interaction and guidance skills. However, managerial training in Finland (including the popular Specialist Qualification in Management) does not recognise guidance as one of the expertise areas of a manager, but concentrates on broader management themes (leadership, customer accounts, production, networks, personnel). Managerial training provided by universities focuses on high-level theoretical knowledge. With respect to the leadership of organisations, there is a clear need for practical guidance skills training that is closely linked to the daily work of managers. Oulu Adult Education Centre has provided a training programme called “More professionalism in workplace guidance” between 2011 and 2013. A new series of sessions begins in autumn 2015. The programme concentrates on the development of guidance skills by managers, executives and HR specialists.

3.4.3 Deteriorating ability to work

With respect to the ability to work, many Finnish organisations employ an early intervention model or an early support model. Organisations with more than 20 employees are required to have a separate written description of the employed practice. The purpose of early support measures is to restore the employee's ability to work and prevent disability. The measures should be agreed during the employee cooperation process and implemented cooperatively. The early support model should describe when and how an issue related to the ability to work shall be raised and recorded, the roles and responsibilities of different parties (employee, superior, occupational health services, persons responsible for occupational health and safety,

shop steward, HR management), the training provided to superiors and other parties on the early support model and the monitoring and evaluation of the model and its functionality. Many municipalities, including Oulu, have a reassignment model that helps in considering new job options in the service of the same employer for employees who are no longer able to manage their tasks or suffer from a mental or physical illness. Reassignment service customers have, in most cases, been reassigned to new tasks through work trials.

Insurance payments paid by employers and deducted from the salaries of employees guarantee that in case of the deteriorating ability to work, employees have the option to study for a new profession at the expense of their insurance company. In such situations, organisations rarely have anyone who would be able to provide guidance to the employee. Similarly, insurance companies are not always willing to pay for absolutely necessary career planning measures for choosing the field of re-education, since they help in deciding which profession is the most suitable for the person concerned. However, various paid rehabilitation services also employ career counsellors that help their customers find a new profession.

3.4.4 Work trial

A work trial is designed to test a person's ability to handle different job situations and occupations. The service aims to assist with career choices and supports the return to employment. A work trial lasts between 1 and 6 months in the same duties. Powerful guidance measures will be offered for those in work trial to ensure that they will find their own path back to work after the trial. Work trials are available to all adults, including those in employment (but on sick leave due to deteriorating ability to work) and unemployed job-seekers.

3.4.5 Outplacement

In Finland, the state provides support for companies that have to make employees redundant. The employer is obliged to inform the local TE Office of the termination of employment, if the number of redundancies is at least ten. In this context, employers are also provided advice on how to manage the situation in a manner that values and respects the employees. Companies may help employees who are made redundant on economic or production-related grounds to find a new job or profession and provide support for laid-off employees through transition training. Companies only pay 20 per cent of the price of transition training. Examples of transition training include a study package for a new profession or skill or a career guidance group that lasts between 3 and 6 weeks.

In Finland, there is considerable help available to companies that have to make redundancies, provided either by the state (through TE Offices) free of charge or by paid private services. Some private consulting firms specialise in redundancies. Companies also purchase the services of external consultants, who provide guidance for teams and individuals, or job search and career guidance to employees made redundant even before employment is terminated. Small and medium-sized companies in particular often need external help when there are redundancies, as they seldom have employees specialising in HR management.

Oulu Adult Education Centre has provided a number of team career guidance sessions (transition training) for employees made redundant. The Centre's career counsellors have discussed training opportunities at employee information sessions in companies where mass redundancies have taken place and also provided individualised career counselling at the workplace in "guidance corners" during briefings organised by the company for employees that have been, or will be, made redundant.

3.5 Occupational healthcare

Occupational healthcare is available to all Finnish adults in employment. All employers must arrange occupational healthcare at their own expense to prevent and combat health risks and problems caused by work and working conditions, and to protect and promote the employees' safety, health and ability to work. Finnish occupational healthcare is based on the principles of well-being, healthy lifestyles and coping at work. In many cases, the occupational healthcare services may book an appointment with a psychologist for

employees who want to discuss their psychological coping and well-being in more detail. I am not aware of any cases in which the occupational healthcare services have organised professional career guidance.

4 Validation of prior learning in the guidance process

Finland is one of the few European countries that have permanent systems and comprehensive national policies in place for validating informal and non-formal learning (prior learning). The public and voluntary sectors in Finland have had a number of validation initiatives over the period of a decade and the private sector, as well as social partners, are integrated into the planning and development of those initiatives. The implementation of competence-based qualifications, the National Certificate of Language Proficiency and the Computer Driving Licence are prime examples of the ways in which competence and skills acquired outside formal education systems may be recognised in Finland.

4.1 Vocational education and training for adults

Vocational education and training is intended for both those in employment and the unemployed. Education and training that has been specifically developed and organised for adults is available at all levels. Mature students can gain the same initial vocational qualifications as the young; all they need to do is to take a motivated decision to participate in adult education and submit their application. Adult education is also eligible for financial support by the state. Teaching is provided in vocational institutions and, increasingly, also at the workplace and through virtual learning environments. Adults can attain all initial vocational qualifications and further and specialist qualifications as a competence-based qualification. In higher education, mature students have bachelor's degree paths of their own: they have their own entrance quotas, and the education and training intended for them takes many different forms. Universities of Applied Sciences also award master's degrees that are based on the needs of the world of work. In the university sector, mature students can benefit from conversion training, which makes it possible to attain a new higher education degree in a shorter period of time if the student already has a university degree. Universities also provide specialisation courses and extension studies to higher education graduates as well as open university studies.

4.2 Competence-based qualifications for adults

The competence-based qualification system is the most established form of validation in Finland. Competence-based qualifications can be awarded regardless of how and where the skills and knowledge have been acquired, since the candidate's knowledge, skills and competence can be demonstrated in officially approved tests. The qualification system was established in 1994 through the implementation of the Vocational Qualifications Act 306/1994 and are now included in the 1998 Act on Vocational Adult Education. The framework was created by the National Board of Education in close co-operation with the main labour market organisations and teachers. It is possible to complete competence-based vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications or special vocational qualifications or only parts of them. The popularity of competence-based examinations has increased rapidly since their introduction, and they have continued to strengthen their position in the Finnish education system.

There are now nearly 380 different qualification titles, and almost 90,000 competence-based qualifications were acquired during the first 10 years of the system. Recent statistics show the continuing popularity of the system (for example, 33,168 qualifications were awarded in 2013). A total of 418,699 competence-based qualifications were awarded between 1995 and 2013.

Mature students are expected to demonstrate the required professional skills primarily with real-life work tasks. This is often preceded by preparatory training, where students learn more about the necessary skills. A competence-based qualification includes practical work assignments and written or oral assignments. The student's existing competences and know-how will also be taken into account. Students willing to complete a competence-based qualification are usually expected to apply directly to their desired educational institution. It is also possible to complete competence-based training as labour market training for adults.

The recognition of prior learning is part of the process of drafting a personal study plan during the phase for enrolment in studies for competence-based qualifications. The competence-based qualifications are subject to rules and regulations that apply throughout Finland. The provider of training must ensure that students wishing to complete a competence-based qualification receive customer-oriented advice and guidance and other services and forms of support agreed in collaboration in drafting a personal plan for 1) applying for the competence-based qualification and the preparatory training 2) completing the competence-based qualification and 3) acquiring the necessary professional skills.

Guidance during the phase of enrolment in competence-based qualification means that applicants receive advice in improving their self-knowledge, identifying their skills, finding and understanding the information necessary for completing the qualification, and making the right study choices. The aim is to identify the qualification and learning arrangements that serve the needs of the applicant in the best possible way. All instructors of the candidate should be familiar with the workplace culture, learn its operational processes to be able to share this information with the candidate, and provide guidance in completing the qualification. Applicants often need guidance and support in their learning. To take any language and learning difficulties into account, they should be identified from the onset. In the stage of enrolment in the studies, the candidate chooses the most appropriate qualification together with the employer, the body arranging the competence-based qualification and the training institution. However, the applicant should have the final word on the selection of the qualification. The task of the employer and the bodies arranging the qualification or training is only to provide support for the candidate's choice.

During the phase in which the skills required for the competence-based qualification are being acquired, and in the qualification completion phase, the student receives guidance from the teachers of preparatory training, the guidance and career counsellors of the educational institution, and other supporting personnel of the educational institution. At the stage of enrolment in the studies, however, the availability of guidance seems to leave a lot to be desired. Personalised study plans are not drafted before the selection interview for the training or the beginning of the preparatory training, when the applicant has already been selected to study for a particular qualification. TE Offices try to provide guidance and counselling during the qualification selection phase, but they often lack sufficient sector-specific information. Guidance and counselling services provided during the phase of enrolment in adult education, such as Door to Learning services, are an appropriate source of competent and relevant guidance. Adult educational institutions are also able to provide guidance, if the applicant is able to ask for it, since adult educational institutions employ a growing number of guidance professionals.

5 Sources

http://www.cimo.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/cimo/embeds/cimowwwstructure/25493_Lifelong_guidance_in_Finland.pdf

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