

Conference
Sustainable self management of competences and careers
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Report & impression

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Introduction

The conference 'sustainable self management of competences and careers' was organised by Euroguidance The Netherlands. The conference took place on a special location: the school for hospitality business of ROC Midden Nederland at Nieuwegein. The lunch before the start of the conference as well as the closing lunch on thursday were cooked and served by students. This and the continuous presence of students in the building, illustrated the subject of the conference in a very practical way. This paper gives a glance at the topics and experiences.

At the opening of the conference, Peter van Deursen introduced the themes of a sustainable competence culture. These themes had been used as the base of the programme.

- Firstly it is important to have the possibility to define the principles for an open and flexible system of competence-based formal and informal learning.
- Secondly it is necessary to create specific processes, procedures and supporting actions to guarantee acces and quality.
- Lastly it is important to set up a frame of reference for the application of the definitions. The topics on the conference, the presentations and workshops were al related to these themes.

More about these themes, contextes and goals can be found in the position paper '*From work career towards life career*' by C.C.M. Schuur, chairman of the Dutch/Belgian CH-Q Foundation. If this paper encourages you to read more, there is also an interesting article available: '*The many perspectives of Valuing Learning*' by Ruud Duvekot, InHolland University, The Netherlands.

After the opening, Rogier Elshout of the Nederlands Debatinstituut, made in a very vivid en activating way an inventory of the expectations the participants had. After a slightly hesitating start, the participants were keen to express their personal goals and expectations. In summary it can be said that most of the professionals want to improve their work, the methods they use and the interaction between the methods and instruments. They would be delighted when the conference will give them new insights, ideas and perspectives.

Jasmin Muhic

To illustrate the theme '*define the principles for an open and flexible system of competence-based formal en informal learning*', Jasmin Muhic (head of the Czech Life LLP and coordinator of the European Life Long Policy Network Work Package on Career Management Skills) gave a presentation on the European perspective on Career Management Skills. He led the audience trough the subject by the use of four themes:

- Concept of Career Managenent Skills,
- How we communicate on CMS,
- ELGPN in combination with CMS and
- Career Learning Portfolio.

Via a set of definitions about careermanagement skills, Muhic took us to a Canadian Model: 11 Blueprint Competences. This model provides a frame for working with competences from children till adults. Muhic gave a closer look at the difficulties of working in a multilinguistic project. The meaning of the word 'career' for example is not everwhere the same, e.g. is it climbing the ladder or is it fulfilling professional

happiness? And the word 'competence', not every language provides the exact equivalent.

And further: if there is such a thing as a career, what is a non-linear career? In other words: what is a career change and are there any statistics about these career changes? The answer on the last part of the question is 'no'. There is not even a common definition to be found.

Muhic talked about the importance of a conceptual framework. This issue is also related to the last of the themes which are mentioned as the base for the conference: 'it is important to set up a frame of reference for their application'. Firstly it facilitates clear communication between policy makers, guidance practitioners, users of guidance services, social partners and general public. The second advantage is laid in Career Management Skills acquisition processes – defining curriculum, training of professionals, delivery of models, formative and summative assessment.

The framework, definitions and goals Muhic mentioned and illustrated, shows the career guidance professionals how to embed the results of their work in the daily life of people. There are a few obstacles to take. In general there should be a change in the way people think and plan their 'careers' and the way career guidance is provided. For example: from choosing a career to constructing a career, from intervention at key points in life to a lifelong perspective, from psychological 'testing' to 'tasting the world of work', from external expert support to career (self)-management skills and lastly from individual guidance to group-and self-help approaches.

In the discussion after the presentation the reactions were various. In general they were strongly related to the way career guidance is arranged in the metropolitan territory and to the culture in which people think and act about their careers.

Anita Calonder

After a break Anita Calonder, president of the Swiss CH-Q gave a presentation about the framework CH-Q provides to develop self-career management for a variety of people. This presentation gave more information on the second theme of the conference: it is necessary to create specific processes, procedures and supporting actions to guarantee access and quality.

CH-Q was founded in 1999 and can be described as a non-profit roof organisation. The organisation has set up a competence and assessment model and is guarding the quality of the diversity of programmes in which other companies are using the CH-Q framework.

CH-Q is developed to supply organisations and individuals with reliable functioning systems for managing competencies (SMC). Calonder explained that a reliable SMC depends on a variety of factors. These following factors are the basis of the CH-Q system:

- a culture of competence based on continuously renegotiated values
- it is to the benefit of all participants concerned – individual users as well as decision makers
- implements interrelated valuation processes and validation procedures
- a common understanding of competence orientation by both top down and bottom up stakeholders

By using a model of strategy, frame and principles, Calonder made clear what the goals from CH-Q are, the functions they adhere to and the way the system works in order to achieve these goals.

As a reminder for those who attended the conference, the goals are: Empowering individuals to achieve personal & career goals with sustainable results, enhancing lifelong learning, promoting permeability of education & training and at last offering financial & time-related advantages.

CH-Q uses their frame of legislation for the quality assurance of the whole framework users are working with, as well as for the certification of the individual folders of evidence, which is the outcome of a CH-Q course. This transparent way of building and accomplishing the system can also be found in the principles CH-Q practises. Such as 'zones of mutual trust', 'benefits to users/clients', 'focus on processes' and 'quality assurance'.

The presentation Calonder gave did not fulfil the expectations of most of the attendants at the conference. Most of the people expected a closer look into 'the world of CH-Q' instead of a presentation about frames, principles and the goals a user can achieve by using the system. Fortunately the programme on day two provided that closer look. For many people it was the trigger for day two of the conference.

Day two: the workshops

Wednesday the 12th of October, the second day of the conference on sustainable self management of careers, started with an inspiring mental wake-up session by Rogier van Elshout. Awake and aware of the programme this day, the crowd split up and went to the workshops. The workshops were all linked to the themes of the conference and gave the attendants an insight in the perspectives, methods and instruments other career guidance professionals use in their daily work.

There were six workshops and two rounds, so every attendant had the possibility to get a closer look on two subjects. Silvie Pychova and Vilija Duleviciute showed the way CH-Q and self management of competences are positioned in the social and educational system of the Czech Republic and Lithuania. In the same round, Jo Peeters talked about assessment of voluntary work and the way experience in voluntary work can be transferred to a professional career. The third option for a workshop in this first round, was about innovative solutions for career guidance professionals. Pierre Remijn gave a closer look on the career guiding system provided by the firm Matchcare.

In the second round of workshops there was an introduction to CH-Q by Marloes Zewuster. The main topic in this workshop was how CH-Q can contribute to self management of competences and careers. Secondly Erik Kaemingk and Femmia Haverkamp talked about new developments on e-portfolio in The Netherlands and the way e-portfolio is used in sheltered work. Lastly the attendants on the conference were able to go to the workshop presented by Agnieszka Hermans. Her topic was 'dialogical self' in selfmanagement.

A closer view

To give a nearer insight to the workshops, in the following text two of them are described. They have been chosen at random.

The workshop about CH-Q in the Czech Republic and Lithuania specifically gave an insight in the way CH-Q (or any framework) can be implemented in a national social- and educational system. The theme 'it is necessary to create specific processes, procedures and supporting actions to guarantee access and quality', is most related to this workshop. The examples in both countries made clear that it is very difficult to find and create commitment with stakeholders, when policy has been made by different government departments and the programmes should be implemented in regions, which have their own different interests. The examples also made clear that the way the framework should be positioned and provided depends strongly on the way people think about work and learning and the way work (and career) is positioned towards the private life. In the Czech Republic for example, work is generally seen as a way to earn a living. Personal and professional growth is a minor issue according to the general public. Meanwhile the percentage of students who graduate from school with a diploma is increasing. By the implementation of the CH-Q framework policymakers are trying to turn the tide and create a new national culture on thinking and acting in and on work.

At the workshop on developments in e-portfolio, Erik Kaemingk described the current situation in the Netherlands. Due to the combination of a theoretical approach and the practical example WEDEKA gave, the theme 'it is important to set up a frame of reference for the application of the definitions' is most related to this workshop. Erik Kaemingk explained the current situation and the new developments on creating a national e-portfolio, available for everyone. The thoughts so far are that every citizen should have the possibility to create an e-portfolio in which educational and non-educational experience is described. All individuals have their own portfolio and have the possibility to give others entrance to their portfolio, for example in case of an application for a new job or in case of professional guidance in professional development. The system has a few layers. The first layer is general and accessible for everyone. It shows only basic information about the individual. Access to the second and third layer is restricted. The owner of an e-portfolio – can give others access to the information that is stored in here. In the company for sheltered work WEDEKA, Femmia Haverkamp already works with an e-portfolio. In this type of company, personal and professional development is a central subject in daily work. [deze zin is in deze vorm niet te begrijpen] Every employee has his/her own development programme to raise on a participation ladder in order to develop to get entrance in regular work. The employees can fill their own e-portfolio and are



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able to share parts with teamleaders, the guidance professional and so on. The examples she showed looked very accesible and give the employees also the possibility to create a summary they can use in case of job applications. This workshop made clear that the culture on thinking and acting about personal/ professional development and the presentation towards others is very important. To implement and use an e-portfolio the user has to have a goal and the possibility to act in order to achieve these goals.

The closing of the conference

In the afternoon, the workshops were closed and all the attendants came together in a plenary session. Rogier Elshout asked everyone to interview the adjacent person, in order to complete the following phrase: 'If i go home then.....'. After the interviewing part, he collected the reactions.

There were a lot of attendants who wanted to know more about CH-Q. It was the expected that this would be provided by the conference. The ones who had followed the workshop Marloes Zewuster gave, were glad they had been there, because this workshop gave answer to the look and feel of CH-Q. Others were going home with a satisfied feeling: the conference made clear that improvements are always possible, but the national situation was not as bad as they had imagined.

With that in mind the whole setting of the conference transferred to the restaurant for a closing lunch.

Many took the opportunity to get better acquainted with some of the newly met international colleagues.

A few evaluations

As this is a brief paper about the topics and experiences from the conference 'sustainable self management of competences and careers', a few evaluations are described in the following part.

'The whole program was interesting. I appreciate the effective way in which Peter van Deursen organized the conference in cooperation with other colleagues: very good communication, giving people feeling of being welcome with care for details and organizational issues. I especially liked the clarity of presentation of Vilija Deluviciute and Sylvia Pychowa and the broad view presented by Jasmin Muhic.'

'It would have been better to have more information or a workshop on CH-Q first. That would have made the presentation of Anita Calonder, the presentation of Vilija and Virginija and the whole programme clearer.'

Hybrid competence management,

- The Swiss experience (Anita Calonder): It should have been made clear what exactly they do.
- Innovative solutions for career guidance professionals (Pierre Remeijn): Should have been much more geared towards an international audience.

My aims were directed at increasing knowledge and perspectives. The information on the guidance system in Denmark was very useful, the knowlegde about CH-Q and other topics gave me intersting questions and the posibility to reflect on my professional growth. This besides the new people I met. To me a conference with profit!

I would like to suggest organizing a similar event in the future and including additional workshops which could give participants direct experience of the presented methods.