

Aula Magna at Stockholm University. Sketch by Ralph Erskine, architect.

**The New Millennium: A Skills Challenge for Higher Education,  
the Counsellor's Responsibility for Facilitating Equality  
and Diversity in a European Society**

**Le nouveau millénaire: un défi aux nouvelles compétences.  
La responsabilité du conseiller pour faciliter l'égalité  
et la diversité dans une société européenne**

**Editor *Monica Svalfors***

**Co-editors *Jean Paul Broonen, Majken Wahlström***





The background of the entire page features the word "FEDORA" in a very large, bold, sans-serif font. The letters are white and set against a grey background. The letters are slightly offset from each other, creating a 3D or layered effect. The 'F' and 'D' are on the left, 'E' is in the middle, 'O' is to the right of 'E', 'R' is to the right of 'O', 'A' is to the right of 'R', and 'I' is to the right of 'A'.

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**FEDORA Summer University/Université d'été FEDORA  
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# Preface

IT IS A PLEASURE FOR ME TO INTRODUCE the reports of the 5<sup>th</sup> Summer University that has taken place in mid-August 1999 at Stockholm University.

The mission of FEDORA is to create opportunities for mutual understanding as well as presenting opportunities for a scientific and practical exchange in the field of guidance and counselling in the academic environment. The FEDORA event in Stockholm was in this regard a great success, preceded by the following events in chronical order:

1993 Montpellier, France

*Europe, Orientation, European Training for University Counsellors*

1995 Dublin, Ireland

*Successful Adjustment to University and Progression beyond in a European Context*

1997 Amsterdam, The Netherlands

*Decision Making for Lifelong Learning*

1998 Bordeaux, France

*University, Europe, Region – Higher Education Counsellors between Local and International Perspectives*

1999 Stockholm, Sweden

*The New Millennium – A Skills Challenge for Higher Education, the Counsellor's Responsibility for Facilitating Equality and Diversity in a European Society.*

About 120 participants shared the intensive exchange of ideas, programmes and projects in 14 different workshops focussing on four areas:

- Skills for working in a multicultural environment
- Skills for working with socio-economically deprived students
- Skills for working with students and graduates with disabilities
- Skills for working within the context of lifelong learning.

It was a well-balanced blend of old and young FEDORA members; many delegates had just recently joined the organisation and visited a FEDORA event for the first time. Other delegates joined the Summer University out of curiosity to get to know what FEDORA is all about.

I think we were all fascinated by these captivating days in Stockholm due to the quality of the presentations, the level of the discussions and interactions and by the surroundings of the University and the City of Stockholm. Following the mission of FEDORA, this summer university offered us the chance to be together. Counselling is a sensitive interpersonal interaction and therefore the informal parts are of inestimable value. The well-balanced programme of this event gave us the possibility to develop the work of the FEDORA family, with the focus on contributing to the European house of academic education.

I would like to thank all who contributed to this excellent event, and especially mention:

- The Stockholm organising team Tina Altonen, Majken Wahlström and Monica Svalfors
- Stockholm University and its Vice-President Professor Gunnell Engwall who welcomed us with friendly words,
- Our colleagues Jean Paul Broonen, Françoise Michaux and Tony Raban for their generous help with translations and proof-readings,
- The main sponsors Stockholm University, the City of Stockholm, the European Commission, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Université Michel de Montaigne and Universität Karlsruhe (TH).
- The interpreters doing a hard and intensive job,
- The keynote speakers, the working group leaders and the workshop presenters.

Let me take the opportunity to invite you to meet us in August 2000 at our FEDORA Congress in Edinburgh,

*Joachim Klaus*  
President



## Avant-Propos

J'AI LE PLAISIR D'INTRODUIRE les rapports de la 5<sup>e</sup> Université d'été qui s'est tenue à la mi-août à l'Université de Stockholm.

La mission de FEDORA est de créer les occasions permettant tout autant une meilleure compréhension mutuelle qu'un échange sur les plans scientifique et de la pratique dans le domaine de l'orientation et du conseil dans le champ de l'enseignement. La manifestation que FEDORA a organisée à Stockholm a été à cet égard un grand succès; elle avait été précédée chronologiquement par les rencontres suivantes:

1993 Montpellier, France

*Europe – Orientation, Une formation européenne pour les conseillers universitaires*

1995 Dublin, Irlande

*Une adaptation réussie à l'enseignement universitaire et la vie active dans le contexte européen*

1997 Amsterdam, Pays-Bas

*Processus de prise de décision dans un contexte de formation continue*

1998 Bordeaux, France

*Université, Europe, Région - Les conseillers d'enseignement supérieur entre insertion locale et ouverture internationale*

1999 Stockholm, Suède

*Le Nouveau Millénaire: un défi aux nouvelles compétences. La responsabilité du conseiller pour faciliter l'égalité et la diversité dans une société européenne.*

Ce sont environ 120 participants qui ont participé à un échange intensif d'idées, de programmes et de projets dans 14 ateliers centrés sur quatre thèmes:

- Compétences pour travailler dans un environnement multiculturel
- Compétences pour travailler avec des étudiants en situation socio-économique défavorisée
- Compétences pour travailler avec des étudiants handicapés en deuxième ou troisième cycle

- Compétences pour travailler dans le contexte de la formation tout au long de la vie.

On a assisté à un heureux mélange d'anciens et de jeunes membres FEDORA; de nombreux délégués venaient tout juste de rejoindre l'organisation et fréquentaient une manifestation FEDORA pour la première fois. D'autres étaient là en curieux pour se faire une idée de ce qui fait le propre de FEDORA.

Je pense que nous avons tous été séduits par ces journées de Stockholm qu'ont rendues captivantes la qualité des communications, le niveau des discussions et des interactions ainsi que le site de l'Université de Stockholm et la Ville elle-même.

Fidèle à la mission de FEDORA, cette université d'été nous a procuré la chance d'être ensemble. Le conseil constitue une relation personnelle d'interaction imprégnée de sensibilité et dès lors, les rapports informels qui se sont noués sont d'une valeur inestimable. L'équilibre du programme nous a donné la possibilité de développer le travail à l'intérieur de la famille FEDORA avec pour objectif d'apporter une contribution à l'édification de la maison européenne de l'enseignement universitaire.

Je voudrais remercier toutes celles et tous ceux qui ont contribué à faire de cette manifestation un événement d'exception en mentionnant en particulier:

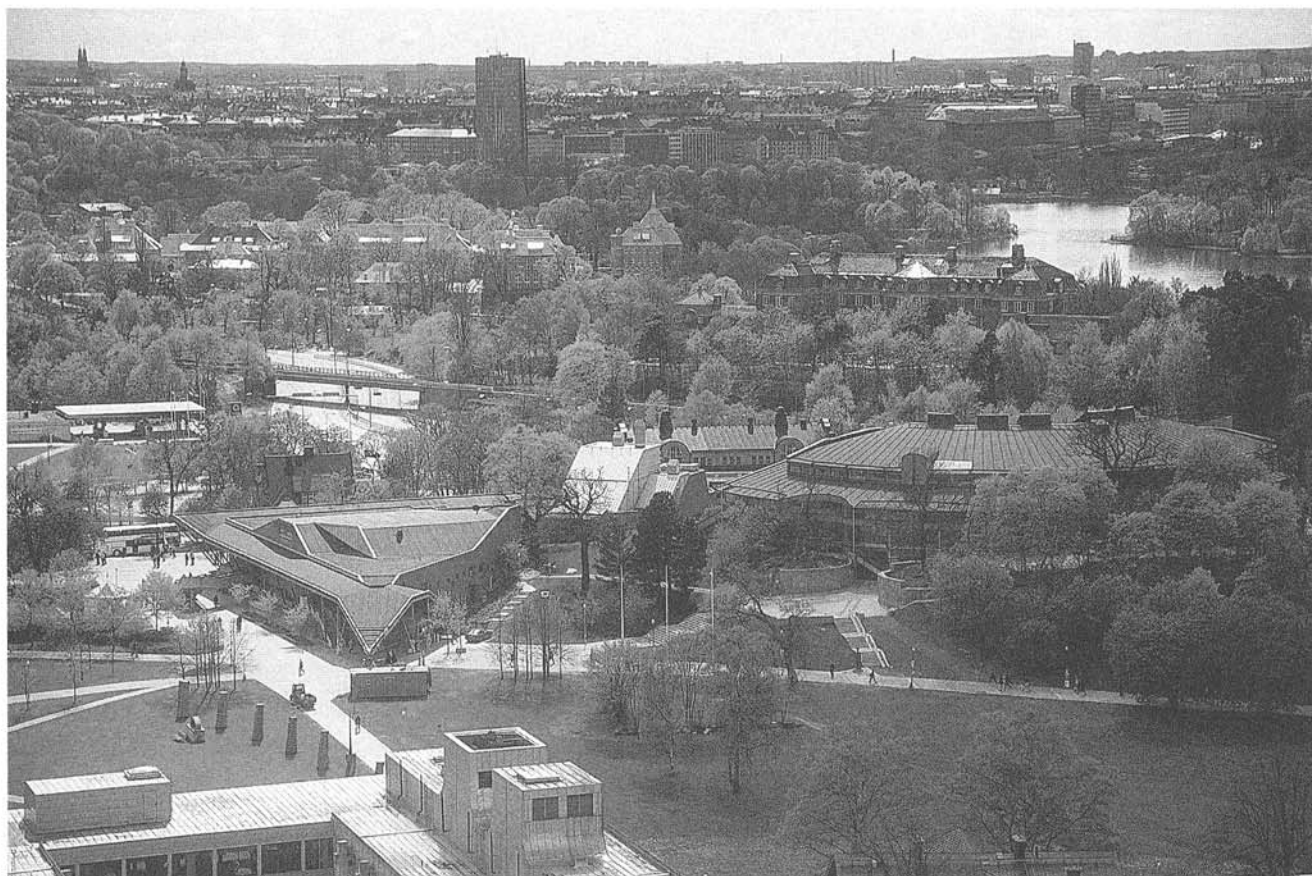
- L'équipe organisatrice à Stockholm: Tina Altonen, Majken Wahlström et Monica Svalfors.
- L'Université de Stockholm et son Vice-Président le Professeur Gunnel Engwall qui nous a accueillis si aimablement.
- Nos collègues Jean Paul Broonen, Françoise Michaux et Tony Raban pour leur aide généreuse à la traduction et aux corrections.
- Les principaux sponsors: l'Université de Stockholm, la Ville de Stockholm, la Commission européenne, la Vrije Universiteit Brussel, l'Université Michel de Montaigne et l'Université de Karlsruhe (TH).



- Les interprètes qui ont accompli un travail intensif et difficile.
- Les orateurs invités, les animateurs des groupes de travail et les rapporteurs des ateliers.

Laissez-moi profiter de l'occasion pour vous inviter à nous rencontrer en août 2000 lors de notre Congrès FEDORA à Edimbourg.

*Joachim Klaus*  
Président



*Vue du campus de l'Université de Stockholm.  
View from the Stockholm University Campus.*



# The New Millennium: Introduction to the Theme

RAOUL VAN ESBROECK

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The FEDORA Summer Universities, previously called Summer Schools, are traditionally future oriented. The themes of these Summer Universities contributed to a specific topic that turned out to be key for each of guidance and counselling practice in a European higher education setting.

The theme of the 5th FEDORA Summer University in Stockholm was entitled: The New Millennium: a skills challenge for higher education, the counsellor's responsibility for facilitating equality and diversity in a European society.

Though this theme is certainly future oriented, the relatively long and complex title of this summer activity needs some explanation in order to make it clearer. There are three distinct issues within the general theme: (i) skills challenge for counsellors in HE, (ii) facilitating equality and diversity, and (iii) a European society. Each of these issues was chosen for specific reasons and each of them is of extreme importance for the guidance and counselling practice in the 21st century.

## Why the skills challenge?

All previous Summer Universities targeted the topic of preparing students for their future career development. They have to build a career within the framework of a society that is going to be rapidly and continuously changing, to be global and very diverse, and to be extremely complex and demanding.

The theme of *successful adjustment and progression* of the Dublin Summer University of 1995 helped to define the extent of the need for adjustment and progression (Van Esbroeck, 1996; Butcher, 1996). This theme proved to be of such importance that it determined the theme of the 1996 Summer

University in Amsterdam. The EU decided also to dedicate 1996 to the theme of *lifelong learning*. Indeed you can only prepare HE students for their career in that new society if you make them aware of the need to progress, and equip them with the necessary skills for a process of lifelong development and learning (Van Esbroeck, 1997). However, a key question is to what extent all students will need this awareness and these skills. Will all graduates of higher education institutions be confronted with the changes, globalisation and diversity in our new society? This is a major issue that became the theme of the Bordeaux Summer University in 1998 under the title of *Counsellors between local and international perspective* (Van Esbroeck, 1998).

All these Summer Universities, though intending to stimulate the professional development of counsellors, had as the main theme the topic of support to students. However, while studying the issue of how counsellors could help to prepare HE students for the future, a new underlying question appeared. In many workshops at the Summer Universities the question was raised of which skills counsellors will need to cope with the new demands in their future guidance and counselling practice. The issue of the competencies needed, and in particular of new skills became very important among FEDORA members. In this perspective they followed an important international trend. Many professional bodies such as the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the National Board for Certified Counsellors (NBCC) in the USA, British Association for Counselling (BAC) and the European Association for Counselling (EAC) in Europe, and many other governmental organisations, are dealing with the same issue.

This need among the FEDORA members was confirmed by the results of a FEDORA survey project, realised with the support of the European Commission, of the systems of guidance and counselling in HE in the Member States of the European Union (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, 1999).



The survey mapped the diversity of the guidance and counselling practices and also the need among counsellors for new skills to cope with the new challenges of 21st century practice.

All these developments supported the idea of dedicating a Summer University to the topic of skills for counsellors. For this reason the theme *a skills challenge for higher education* was chosen for the 1999 FEDORA Summer University.

### **Why equality and diversity ?**

Our society in general is becoming increasingly diverse. The existence of new cultural (ethnic), socio-economic and age groups, together with other special target groups (e.g. persons with disabilities) is more and more recognised. Each of these groups have their own value systems, linguistic characteristics and ways of communication which are considered to be equally acceptable and valuable as the values and characteristics of the majority group. A fundamental respect for the identity of all these groups and acceptance of the right to express this identity is widely accepted. This humanistic view of diversity has largely influenced counselling practice. It is, together with the psycho-dynamic and the behaviourist movement, one of the forces defining the guidance and counselling practice (Broonen, 1997). To paraphrase J.P. Broonen, where he refers to multicultural counselling, it can be stated that *counselling in the 21st century will respect diversity, or will not exist.*

The general diversity of society will be reflected in the workforce and the HE student population. As predicted in the Workforce 2000 project (Johnston & Packer, 1987) the present labour force is older, more female and more disadvantaged than it was before. This trend is expected to continue. Higher education in Europe, but also in the rest of the industrialised world, became a mass system with a growing participation of mature students (Williams, 1996) and "students from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minorities and with disabilities" (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, p.15). The support activities geared towards these distinct groups must take into account both the input aspects – a larger diversity of the entering students – and the output aspects at the level of the interface between higher education and the more complex labour market.

The recognition of these different groups in our

society, certainly in our student body, and their special needs had implications for guidance and counselling services and their staff. The FEDORA survey (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, 1999) indicated clearly that a growing number of specialised services and/or specialist provision within generic services are to be found in HE institutions. In general this special support is geared towards four main special target groups, within which some subgroups can be identified:

- students with disabilities,
- mature, distance-learning and postgraduate students,
- international and ethnic minority students,
- economically disadvantaged students.

However, the task of counsellors is much broader than only passively answering demands for support from their clients. Though a counsellor must recognise and respect the identity of their client, it must be clear that the counsellor also has to contribute to the development of the client. In cross-cultural psychology theories this is very often related to the concept of cultural identity development (Atkinson, *et al*, 1993; Sue & Sue, 1990; Suin, *et al*, 1987). Within each of these identity development theories it is accepted that the ultimate developmental stage, given different names in the different theories, is a kind of maturity stage within which the individual recognises and accepts positively their own minority cultural identity, while the same attitude exists towards the majority culture.

These theories can easily be transposed to other types of target groups. Indeed, for instance students with disabilities often have their own cultural group identity. This is for example very strongly the case for deaf (Chovaz, 1998) and blind students. For them growing to a recognition and acceptance of their own subculture and the majority culture can be essential for their career development.

In order to bring as many of our graduates from target groups to this group identity maturity, the counsellor very often has to take on several tasks (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, 1999). Evidently the *advocacy* task can be extremely important to make institutions and the labour market more aware of the existence and specificity of the different target groups. Even more, counsellors have the duty to support these groups in order to overcome the



barriers of access to education and the labour market. However, counsellors also must contribute to the individual growth of their clients to the desired stage of group identity maturity. This may require the fulfilment of tasks such as *information giving, advice, teaching, feedback*, etc.

Working in such a diverse environment with such a wide range of tasks certainly will require specific skills. The question remains if this means acquiring new skills or is it just a question of adapting existing skills?

From this analysis the importance of *diversity and equality* in guidance and practice is evident. Making this issue part of the 1999 FEDORA Summer University is in this case an obvious choice.

### Why the European society ?

The issue of Europe is one of the main reasons of the existence of FEDORA. One of the fundamental goals of FEDORA has been from its foundation onwards to give support to the development and growth of the idea of the European Community.

Next to this in-built reason, the choice for including the European dimension is closely related to the increasing internationalisation of the student population. Student exchange programmes like SOCRATES, ERASMUS and TEMPUS have led to an increasing student mobility between European countries. These study abroad students, though all of European origin, also have their special needs. The cultural differences among EU countries are sometimes as large as those between a European and a non-European country.

To enhance the awareness among its members of which skills are needed and which skills must be acquired in order to deal appropriately with students from this specific target group is extremely important to FEDORA. The choice to include this topic into the theme of the 1999 FEDORA Summer University is in this way an obvious one.

### Conclusion

It must become clear from the above analysis that the theme of the 1999 FEDORA Summer University is indeed a future oriented one. The titles and the content of the different keynotes and workshops will only make this clearer. At the same time, many of the activities may include some answers

to questions which were raised at the past FEDORA Summer Universities. Indeed one of the concluding questions at the Amsterdam Summer University was how to manage "the differences between students in higher education and the reconciliation of such a differential approach with mass higher education" (Van Esbroeck, 1997, p. 31).

Terms like equal opportunities, multicultural environment, the self of older students as learners, adult students, enabling disabled students, guidance skills in relation to socio-economically deprived students, etc. are frequently found in the titles of the proposed contributions. Each of them directly supports the general theme of the Summer University.

However, the issue is also projected in a broader framework. Diversity is approached as an aspect of *human rights*, but also as an aspect of a *conflicted society*, with reference to the topic of the *gender perspective* in one of the workshop titles. These projections of the theme into a broader perspective will not only make clear the importance of the present Summer University theme, but it also includes a possible point of departure for discussions and themes for future FEDORA activities.

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# Le nouveau millénaire: introduction au thème

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Les universités d'été de FEDORA, autrefois appelées *écoles d'été*, sont traditionnellement orientées vers l'avenir. Les thèmes de ces universités d'été sont consacrés à des sujets spécifiques destinés à être des guides pour chaque pratique de guidance et d'orientation dans l'enseignement supérieur en Europe.

Le thème de la 5<sup>ème</sup> université d'été de FEDORA à Stockholm est intitulé "Le nouveau millénaire: un défi aux nouvelles compétences pour l'enseignement supérieur. La responsabilité du conseiller pour faciliter l'égalité et la diversité dans une société européenne".

Bien que ce thème soit orienté vers l'avenir, le titre relativement long et complexe de cette université d'été mérite quelques explications afin de le rendre plus clair. Il y a trois parties distinctes dans le thème général:

- le défi des compétences pour les conseillers de l'enseignement supérieur;
- la promotion de l'égalité et de la diversité;
- une société européenne.

Chacune de ces parties a été choisie pour des raisons précises et chacune revêt une importance particulière pour les pratiques de l'orientation et de la guidance au XXI<sup>ème</sup> siècle.

## Pourquoi le défi des compétences?

Toutes les universités précédentes visaient la préparation des étudiants pour leur futur développement professionnel. Ils ont à construire leur carrière dans le cadre d'une société qui change continuellement et rapidement, qui tend à devenir globale et très diverse, à être extrêmement complexe et demandeuse.

Le thème de l'Université de Dublin (1995):

*Adaptation réussie et progression*, a contribué à définir l'importance des besoins en matière d'adaptation et de progression (Van Esbroeck, 1996; Butcher, 1996). Le thème est apparu d'une telle importance qu'il a suscité celui de l'université d'été d'Amsterdam en 1996. L'Union européenne a décidé de consacrer l'année 1996 à la *formation continue*. En effet, on ne prépare les étudiants de l'enseignement supérieur à leur vie professionnelle dans une société nouvelle que si on les rend capables de progresser, d'acquérir les compétences nécessaires et donc de les sensibiliser à la formation continue (Van Esbroeck, 1997). Cependant, une des questions essentielles est de savoir jusqu'où les étudiants ont besoin de cette aptitude et de ces compétences. Tous les diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur seront-ils confrontés à ces changements, à la globalisation et à la diversité dans notre société nouvelle? Telle est la question qui a servi de thème à l'université de Bordeaux en 1998 sous le titre *Le conseil entre les perspectives locales et internationales* (Van Esbroeck, 1998).

Toutes ces universités d'été, bien que conçues pour stimuler le développement des conseillers, avaient pour thèmes principaux l'aide aux étudiants. Cependant, en étudiant la façon dont les conseillers peuvent aider les étudiants de l'enseignement supérieur à se préparer au futur, une question sous-jacente est apparue. Dans de nombreux ateliers des universités d'été, une question a été soulevée: celle des compétences dont les conseillers ont besoin pour faire face aux nouvelles demandes dans leur pratique de conseil et de guidance. La question des compétences nécessaires, et en particulier celle des nouvelles compétences, est devenue réellement très importante pour les membres de FEDORA. De ce point de vue, ils s'inscrivent dans une tendance internationale. De nombreuses associations professionnelles tels que l'American Counseling Association (ACA) et le National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) aux Etats-Unis, la British Association for Counselling (BAC) et l'European



Association for Counselling (EAC) en Europe ainsi que de nombreuses autres organisations gouvernementales se préoccupent de la même question.

Ce besoin manifesté par les membres de FEDORA se trouve confirmé par les résultats de l'enquête réalisée avec le soutien de la Commission européenne concernant les systèmes de guidance et d'orientation dans l'enseignement supérieur des différents pays membres de l'Union européenne (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, 1999). L'enquête trace la carte de la diversité des pratiques en matière de guidance et d'orientation, et met en lumière le besoin des conseillers d'acquérir des compétences nouvelles pour faire face aux défis des pratiques professionnelles du XXI<sup>ème</sup> siècle.

Tous ces développements soutiennent l'idée de consacrer l'université d'été aux compétences des conseillers. C'est la raison pour laquelle le thème «*Le défi des compétences dans l'enseignement supérieur*» a été choisi pour l'université d'été de 1999.

### **Pourquoi égalité et diversité?**

D'une façon générale, notre société devient de plus en plus diverse. L'existence de nouveaux groupes culturels (ethniques), socio-économiques et d'âges ainsi que des groupes plus ciblés (comme les personnes avec handicap par exemple) est de plus en plus reconnue. Chacun de ces groupes a son propre système de valeur, ses caractéristiques linguistiques, ses modes de communication qui sont tous considérés comme également acceptables et aussi valables que les valeurs et caractéristiques de groupes majoritaires. Le respect fondamental de l'identité de tous ces groupes et l'acceptation de leur droit à l'expression est largement reconnu. Cette perception humaniste de la diversité a largement influencé les pratiques des conseillers. Avec le mouvement psycho-dynamique et le behaviorisme, c'est d'ailleurs un des axes de force de la guidance et de l'orientation (Broonen, 1997). Pour paraphraser J.P. Broonen quand il se réfère à la guidance multiculturelle, on peut dire que *la guidance au XXI<sup>ème</sup> siècle respectera la diversité ou n'existera pas*.

La diversité générale de la société se reflète dans les forces de travail et dans la population étudiante dans les établissements supérieurs. Comme cela avait été prédit dans le projet *Workforce 2000* (Johnston & Packer, 1987), la population des

travailleurs devient plus âgée, plus féminine et moins avantagée qu'elle ne l'était auparavant. On s'attend à ce que cette tendance se poursuive.

L'enseignement supérieur en Europe, mais aussi dans le reste du monde industrialisé, devient un enseignement de masse, et le nombre d'étudiants plus âgés va en augmentant (Williams, 1996) comme celui "d'étudiants issues de milieux défavorisés et de minorités ethniques ainsi qu'affectés de divers troubles" (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, p. 17). Les activités adaptées à ces groupes distincts doivent prendre en compte à la fois les aspects liés à l'entrée – une grande diversité d'étudiants entrant – et les aspects liés à la sortie, au niveau de l'interface entre l'enseignement supérieur et le marché de l'emploi de plus en plus complexe.

La reconnaissance de ces différents groupes dans notre société, en tout cas dans le corps étudiant, et de leurs besoins spécifiques a des implications dans les services de guidance et d'orientation et dans leurs staffs. L'enquête de FEDORA (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, 1999) indique clairement qu'un nombre croissant de services spécialisés et/ou de ressources spécifiques dans les services se retrouvent dans les institutions de l'enseignement supérieur. En général, ces aides spécifiques s'adressent à quatre groupes cibles, au sein desquels des sous-groupes peuvent être identifiés:

- les étudiants handicapés;
- les étudiants adultes, l'enseignement à distance et les étudiants postgradués;
- les étudiants étrangers et les minorités ethniques;
- les étudiants économiquement défavorisés.

Cependant, la tâche des conseillers dépasse largement la seule réponse aux demandes d'aide de leurs clients. Bien qu'un conseiller se doit de reconnaître et de respecter l'identité de son client, il est clair que le conseiller doit aussi contribuer au développement de celui-ci. Dans les théories de la psychologie transculturelle, il est souvent fait référence au concept du développement de l'identité culturelle (Atkinson *et al*, 1993; Sue & Sue, 1990; Suin *et al*, 1987). Dans chacune de ces théories du développement de l'identité, il est accepté que l'étape ultime du développement, quel que soit le nom qui lui est donné dans les différentes théories, est une étape de maturité dans laquelle l'individu reconnaît et accepte positivement sa propre identité culturelle



mineure, alors qu'il fait preuve de la même attitude envers la majorité culturelle.

Ces théories peuvent être aisément transposées envers d'autres groupes cibles. En effet, les étudiants souffrant de handicaps ont souvent leur propre groupe d'identité culturelle. C'est, par exemple, très fort chez les étudiants souffrant de surdité (Chovaz, 1998) et les étudiants malvoyants. Pour eux, évoluer vers une acceptation de leur propre subculture et de la culture principale est essentiel pour leur développement professionnel.

De façon à guider le plus grand nombre d'étudiants de ces groupes cibles vers cette étape de maturité de l'identité du groupe implique que le conseiller prenne en charge plusieurs tâches (Watts & Van Esbroeck, 1998, 1999). Bien sûr, il y a la mission de *médiation* qui peut être très importante pour sensibiliser les institutions et les employeurs à l'existence et aux spécificités de ces groupes. Et même plus: les conseillers ont la responsabilité de soutenir ces groupes afin de les aider à surmonter les obstacles d'accès à l'enseignement et au marché de l'emploi. Cependant, les conseillers doivent également contribuer au développement individuel de leurs clients vers l'étape de maturité d'identité du groupe. Ceci peut impliquer des responsabilités telles que l'*information*, le *conseil*, l'*enseignement*, le *feed-back*, ...

Travailler dans un environnement aussi diversifié avec une telle diversité de tâches requiert sûrement des compétences spécifiques. La question qui reste posée est de savoir s'il s'agit d'acquérir de nouvelles compétences ou juste d'une adaptation des compétences existantes?

D'après cette analyse, l'importance de la diversité et de l'égalité dans la guidance est évidente. L'intégrer dans le programme de l'université d'été 1999 est donc un choix évident.

### **Pourquoi la société européenne?**

L'émergence de l'Europe est une des principales raisons d'existence de FEDORA. Un des objectifs fondamentaux de FEDORA qui remonte à sa fondation est de promouvoir le développement et la construction d'une communauté européenne.

À côté de cette raison, le choix de donner une dimension européenne est étroitement lié à l'internationalisation croissante de la population étudiante. Les programmes d'échange tels que SOCRATES,

ERASMUS et TEMPUS ont conduit à la mobilité de plus en plus grande des étudiants entre les différents pays d'Europe. Ces étudiants qui étudient à l'étranger, bien qu'originaires d'Europe, ont tous des besoins spécifiques. Les différences culturelles entre les pays de l'Union européenne sont parfois aussi importantes que celles qui existent entre pays européens et pays non européens.

Accroître la prise de conscience parmi les membres de FEDORA des compétences nécessaires et des compétences à acquérir pour travailler de façon appropriée avec les étudiants de ce groupe cible est un des enjeux de FEDORA. Le choix d'inclure ce sujet dans le thème de l'université d'été 1999 est, de ce point de vue, tout aussi évident.

### **Conclusion**

Cette analyse montre clairement que le thème de l'université d'été de FEDORA est orienté vers l'avenir. Les titres et le contenu des différentes séances et des ateliers le font encore mieux apparaître. De cette façon, nombreuses sont les activités qui apporteront des éléments de réponse à des questions soulevées lors d'universités d'été précédentes. Ainsi, une des questions qui concluait l'université d'été d'Amsterdam concernant la façon de gérer "les différences entre les étudiants de l'enseignement supérieur et de la conciliation d'une telle approche différentielle avec un enseignement de masse" (Van Esbroeck, 1997, p. 28).

Des termes tels qu'égalité des chances, environnement multiculturel, la personnalité d'étudiants plus âgés comme enseignants, les étudiants adultes, les étudiants handicapés, les compétences dans le domaine de l'orientation des étudiants provenant de milieux défavorisés, ... sont fréquemment repris dans les titres des contributions qui nous ont été proposées. Chacun d'eux s'inscrit directement dans le thème général de l'université.

Cependant, le thème s'inscrit dans un contexte plus large. La diversité est approchée comme un aspect des *droits de l'homme*, mais aussi comme un aspect d'une *société conflictuelle*, des références sont faites à la *perspective des genres* dans un des ateliers. Cette dynamique dans un contexte plus large ne met pas seulement en évidence l'importance du thème de cette université, mais constitue également le point de départ possible pour de nouvelles activités de FEDORA et des discussions.



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# Access to Higher Education – a Human Rights Challenge

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As an international worker in the disability area, I note with great satisfaction that this organization for exchange of experiences and ideas in the European Union as well as in the area of disability, exists. We need a wide exchange of experience in order to create development and promote progress in disability issues.

I have chosen to speak under the title “Access to Higher Education – a Human Rights Challenge”, and I really mean that it *is* a Human Rights challenge. I am sure we all agree that access to higher education is indeed a Human Rights issue, but when it comes to disability matters it is more than just that. It is a challenge because so much in this area must be considered to be still very unsatisfactory, even in Europe and not to mention the rest of the world. I would like to talk about the importance of higher education and about the obstacles that still prevail, and place this issue within the framework of the general struggle for better living conditions for disabled people. First of all I would like to start by explaining where disability policy stands today, and where we are heading. I begin with a short background.

## Historical background

All countries of course have a history when it comes to disability. Very simply you could say that this history describes a process that starts with more or less total exclusion and isolation, and then moves towards inclusion and participation. The disability policy process can be described as following a path from exclusion to inclusion, from segregation to integration and from isolation to participation. It is only by proving, step by step, that more can be done than has been done already, that we have

been able to influence developments in the right direction throughout our history. The last hundred years have been of special importance as so much else has happened, particularly regarding the evolution of ideas and thoughts and especially in the Western world, or the industrialized world if you prefer that term.

## The International Year of Disabled Persons

The real breakthrough in the development of disability policy was in 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons. Many of our countries have of course had a history of disability policy long before then. But it was a great thing for the whole world, through the United Nations, to recognize the disability issue and the fact that there are disabled people entitled to participation in their respective societies. It was the first real breakthrough for a more Human Rights based approach. The theme of the year, *full participation and equality*, was adopted and that was naturally a real challenge to many countries in the world as in most countries nothing at all or very little had been done so far concerning disability. To go from there and to adopt and recognize the goal of full participation, equal opportunities and equal living conditions was without any doubt an enormous step. But this step was important and it proved to be important because the theme of the year developed into the now established and recognized goal for the international development of disability policy.

## World Programme of Action

In 1981 a *World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons* was drafted and then adopted the following year. That programme is still the “Bible” of disability policy. As a matter of fact I think it has many similarities with the Bible. The structure is not very good, but the ideas and the



statements, the values and the good formulations; everything we need is there. For the first time in history there is also a reference directly to the Human Rights dimension of disability policy. Disabled people *are* citizens of their societies and entitled to full participation. That is of course an extremely important step and it turned out later that this reference to Human Rights in the World Programme was of tremendous importance for the development during the years to come. Another thing of great importance in the programme is that disabled persons must have the right and must be given the opportunity to speak for themselves, to choose their own destiny and to participate in the creation of the different societies we all live in. Therefore, the programme distributes clear roles both to the individual disabled person in his/her life, and to the organised movement of disabled people, to influence the development of society. That is a great recognition of disabled people's rights.

Those of us who participated in the activities in 1981 and who took part in the drafting of the world programme had great expectations. But time went by and two, three years after the International Year, an apparent frustration started to show. There were lots of fine words and very promising commitments, but very little happened when it came to real improvements of disabled people's living conditions. Why was that? Why is disability policy such a small issue in general politics? Why does it weigh so lightly in the development of our societies?

One answer we found at the time was that in this situation, with all the good guidelines that had been adopted by the member states in the UN through the World Programme, the UN must adopt a strong leading role and guide countries, give advice, stimulate and help them advance towards the goal of full participation. This was missing. There was no follow-up from the United Nations.

One of the great deficiencies of the World Programme was that it did not stress who was responsible for the implementation of the programme. Consequently everyone thought that it was excellent, but no one felt they had greater responsibilities and new obligations. That was the reason why the UN, in the beginning of the 90's when the decade of disabled people came to an end, felt that experiences had to be summarized to make it possible to draw the right conclusions.

## **The Standard Rules on Disability**

The UN then elaborated *The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*. As it is a long and heavy title, I usually say the Standard Rules on Disability. These rules build on exactly the same philosophy: full participation and equal opportunities. But there are differences. The rules are shorter and much more concise. They indicate clearly the responsibility of all governments for the well being of its disabled citizens and they also include a more active role for the UN to request follow-ups, give advice and support development in this area.

It is on the basis of the standard rules that I perform my work. I was appointed by the Secretary General in 1994 to monitor the development, which in this case means to find different ways to support and to stimulate, to advise but also to evaluate the processes in different countries and to what extent governments live up to their commitments. It is an interesting fact that 75 government delegations took part in the drafting of the standard rules. You may say that this was a recognition that something more substantial and more concrete had to be done than what had been done up till then. Naturally the 75 governments who actually participated in the writing of the standard rules have special obligations to live up to – and I think all the EU-countries were involved.

## **A Basic Guideline**

In the European Union the Council has adopted a resolution that points to the standard rules as a basic guideline when planning the national measures for development in the disability area. So the European community has recognised the standard rules as a tool within the EU. The standard rules hold, in my opinion, one key sentence. It is to be found in the introductory part and it goes as follows: "In all societies in the world there are still obstacles preventing people with disabilities from exercising their rights of freedom and making it difficult for them to participate fully in the activities of their societies." The second sentence that follows states: "It is the responsibility of governments to take action to remove such obstacles." In other words to develop the work and develop the disability policy, means, to a large extent, to identify the obstacles. What prevents us from development,



from attaining the goal of full participation? Which are the obstacles? Once we have found them, we have come a long way in the work of removing them or at least reducing the effects of them. It is also an explicit recognition that such obstacles do exist in all countries.

## **New Challenges**

Everywhere there are still obstacles due to our history, i.e. due to the fact that we have built our societies on the assumption that disabled people do not exist. At the same time the overall development continues and creates new challenges. How do we make sure that disabled people can have access to all the new information systems? To some extent the producers have felt that they have some responsibility. However, it is a good example of an area where there are many challenges and if they are not taken seriously, we will get new gaps and new forms of isolation in our societies between those who can use the new facilities and those who can't. Obstacles in the designing of new information systems, can lead to the fact that some people can't use them.

The obstacles in the area of university education are partly environmental. Many of the academic settings we move around in today were created very long ago when the concepts of accessibility and access to the physical environment were unknown. There are obstacles in the form and design of our activities – of our training and research activities. They do not meet the requirements that make it possible for people with different kinds of disabilities to participate.

## **Two key areas**

May I repeat the obvious statement that we, people with disabilities, do exist. We have been here throughout history, we are here now and we will be part of the future. One difference in the society of today is that disabled people will not accept being excluded from or left out of important parts of the overall development. In 1998, the Commission for Human Rights organised a first debate on the situation for people with disabilities from a Human Rights perspective. The result of this session was a very strong resolution that recognised the rights of disabled people to participate in all areas of

society (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 1998:31). It also pointed out that when we do not make use of the opportunities and the technical means that are available to facilitate access, we are in a way discriminating or violating the rights of those of us who have special needs or special ways of functioning.

I would like to stress that disability policy has to work in two key areas, one of which is giving the individual as much support, as many opportunities to be independent as possible. That can be done through rehabilitation, by technical aid, personal assistance, and so on, i.e. measures directed towards the individual to help him/her become as independent as possible. The other key task is to consider all the different needs for access that different disability groups have to be able to participate in society. It is very important that these two areas are combined, because if you do badly in one area, you have a tough job getting any feed back from the other. You have to give the individual maximum support and you must at the same time open up and create maximum access to the surrounding society.

## **Education and employment**

Disability policy has a dimension in practically all aspects of society, and sectors like education and employment are key areas. If you are not educated it is very difficult for any group to assert itself, to find employment, to find an income and to live independently. Employment is in our part of the world a sort of confirmation of success. In Sweden there are much lower employment rates for disabled people than for the rest of the population. Maybe it's too much to say that the rates should be the same, as there will always be complications when it comes to disability. But the difference is dramatic and we who work with disability issues know that it does not have to be as big a difference as it is. We could make the gap in employment rates smaller. To my knowledge the situation is the same in the rest of the industrialised world.

I specialised in employment issues earlier in my life and therefore I would like to mention that different countries, also in Europe, use different methods. You could say, if you want to be a bit cynical, that as we use different methods and all of them fail, we know quite a lot about how to fail. Therefore we should try to concentrate and list



the experiences we have. What is missing in our policy to make us really open up employment for people with disabilities? I think that is a great challenge to be taken seriously by organisations like the OECD or even ILO. We know a lot and have a lot of experience of different forms of actions and still the result is that there is a very wide gap in employment rates between disabled people and others. How is the situation in higher education? I have no data on this because I have not studied this area in particular, but I have a feeling that the numbers of disabled students within higher education are very low. If that is true, I go back to my philosophy and to the philosophy of the standard rules about the obstacles. Can we find the obstacles? Can we identify them?

There are many important reasons for really concentrating on improving access to higher education. One is simply, in view of the goal of full participation, that we cannot accept great differences in opportunities between disabled students and others. In view of the importance of higher education for getting gainful employment we cannot accept such a situation. Also, with regard to the importance of higher education for the general acceptance and status of any group in society, it is not acceptable that access to education is unequally allocated.

### **So what do we do?**

Well, I cannot give you a plan of action because you all have to start in your own countries. I also know that work is going on in this area everywhere. You are at different stages, have used different methods and you have progressed in different ways. Therefore every nation has to use its own programme for the continued study of disabled people. We all know that there is no single method that will do the trick. We have to work in different ways and in many different areas to improve the situation.

If we look at obstacles and the identification of the real obstacles, which to my opinion should be the starting point, we know that there are still attitudinal obstacles. Other obstacles are disabled peoples' low expectations of themselves. They don't really believe in their potential. Low expectations of disabled people are also present among advisors, teachers in secondary schools and within the system of university training. I think that low expectations

are generally present together with a belief that it is very difficult to access a certain kind of training if you have this or that disability. Physical access is an obvious problem area. Another problem area is that there is a lack of support services for the groups who really need them. Support services are really indispensable for some people while studying, i.e. interpreter services for the deaf and the production and availability of books for blind students. I also think that guidance to disabled students should become even better than it is today. As we develop our systems there will always be a need for guiding students and giving them proper information and feedback when they are in the process of deciding possible and realistic alternatives, and how they should go about achieving the goals they set up for themselves.

We all know that there is a lack of funding. In my opinion governments in all countries must make higher education a priority area in their disability policies. I think we have come past the problem of basic education in most of our countries as disabled children in the EU-countries go to school, at least a large majority of them do. That is not the case in the rest of the world. However, in higher education we lack real plans of action by the governments to support and build up this area further.

It is easy to make a list of different obstacles and you may object that it's a very depressing approach! But I think we have to make it very clear to ourselves where we stand and we have to face the actual obstacles. The first step is to change expectations, both among disabled people themselves and among advisors within higher education. I also think it is very important to support good examples. I know that in all European countries there are disabled students who graduate and it's important to see how they have succeeded and how they have achieved what they set out to do. We should point to them as good examples in order to break down the barriers called lack of confidence and low expectations. It's very important to take every possible opportunity to show these good examples. There is quite simply so much to be done: attitudes, physical accessibility, support services, finding good examples and informing about them, the development of guidance systems, etc.

I know that you are involved in all these matters. My purpose by saying what I say now is to stress



the importance of these issues and also to underline that government support is greatly needed. One very important feature of the standard rules is that disability issues and related support measures should not be considered *outside* the general system. They are *part* of it, and must remain a natural part of it. It's important that when you open up higher education for disabled people, it should not be regarded as a task that is segregated from the general administration.

### Surprise

There is one thing that we disabled people have as an asset in our struggle and that is that we can very often take people by surprise. The reason is low expectations and we can always, or very often, do things that people do not believe that we can do. I think that shows how this battle must be fought. Disabled people have to be in the forefront themselves. Where there is an obstacle that has not been removed, we have to do our utmost to remove it. In this way, we as individuals and also within our organisations, will be able to open up society step by step. Do not believe that there is a final goal. There will always be new challenges as the society we live in is not static. It is changing all the time and in that process the dimension of disability has to be present. Disabled people have to be very active and alert to make sure that their special needs are considered in the same way as other people's needs.

There is a Swedish lady, Helga Henschen, who is a poet and rather old now. I brought one of her poems that I sometimes quote. It's wonderful, especially in this context, because it talks about breaking new ground and about not being stuck by other people's low expectations. The translation into English is mine.



*"When I was just about to sing,  
people said oh no, you can't sing.  
When I was just about to fly,  
people said no, you can't fly.  
Now I have stopped listening to bores,  
because how should they,  
who have never been just about to,  
understand that birds with cut wings  
still have wings."*



# Equal Opportunities in a Conflicted Society<sup>1</sup>

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## Summary

This paper outlines the work of the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Group founded by the University of Ulster to monitor first year cohorts of enrolled students since 1997 and to examine the policy and practice implications for our academic courses and support services. Conducted by a research team, the annual feedback to the Monitoring Group offers an analysis of various permutations of student profiles, including gender, age, religious affiliation, disability and course choice.

The paper examines the relationship between the data collected relating to the 1997 student entry cohort and the formulation of corporate strategy leading to allocation of resources. Two significant features emerge: firstly the proportion of indigenous Catholic students attending the University now surpasses the Protestant population; and secondly female students are in the majority across all four campuses of the University. Furthermore, although the representation of students from Social Classes III to V is higher than the United Kingdom average, participation by students from social class V background is not increasing. It is also evident in some respects that female students are not making in-roads into traditionally male domains, such as engineering although they now outnumber males in the overall population. In the paper the implications for future provision of guidance services are discussed, in the light of widened participation.

A new policy "Managing Diversity in the Learning Environment" is now being implemented and the challenges this poses are illustrated. In addition a new educational experiment is described which the University is undertaking with a major

Institute of Further & Higher Education in Belfast to create an "educational village". This village will afford much greater opportunity to the multiply disadvantaged areas of North and West Belfast to participate in third level education, with an emphasis of transferability between levels of study and community participation in the planning of the campus.

## The United Kingdom Context

During the last three years the Dearing Report and various UK Government reports have emphasized the importance of widening access and extending educational opportunity. As a tangible gesture, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and Wales (HEFCE) has made available funding to the universities for "widening participation". The same criteria for awarding of grants are being applied by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI).

These include: projects that have clear definitions of students from disadvantaged backgrounds; evidence that universities not only have equal opportunities policies but also effective procedures and monitoring systems; it is also expected that emerging data will be evaluated leading to development of appropriate institutional policies and review of existing practices.

## The Northern Ireland Context

In 1997/98, the Age Specific Index for Northern Ireland was 45.5% compared with 33.3% in Britain.

However 40% of qualified applicants for third level education have been leaving Northern Ireland partly because of the under-supply of higher education places within the region. Many high achievers and more recently modest 'A' Level students have been going to England and Scotland. This diaspora has consisted of:



- “determined leavers”; those students who have made a determined choice to leave Northern Ireland;
- “reluctant leavers”; those students who could not find a course of their first choice at home, or who did not have the grades to win a place in the two Northern Irish Universities: Queen’s University Belfast and the University of Ulster.

The recent introduction of assessed contributions towards tuition fees and replacement of the grant system with a loan scheme may lead to an increasing proportion of “reluctant stayers” in Northern Ireland who feel they cannot afford to depart the shores for their third level education.

By 1997/98, 57.8% of full-time undergraduates in Northern Ireland were female as were 53.9% of postgraduates. However, in spite of concerted marketing efforts, women still make up a low percentage in engineering and technology courses. In comparison with most British universities there are relatively more students from Social Classes III M - V in the University of Ulster. However there is no substantial difference in the ratio of Social Class V entrants between University of Ulster and Britain. In general nearly half of Social Class I leavers with high grades at ‘A’ Level migrate out of Northern Ireland for their university studies.

Because of policy decisions at UK national level, there are no official statistics on religious characteristics of higher education student participation in Northern Ireland. Notwithstanding by 1991, surveys (eg ESRC, DENI) indicated that Catholics represented approximately 50% of the higher education student population in Northern Ireland. Furthermore Catholics were likely to come from lower Social Classes than were Protestants. Reciprocally Protestants were more likely to leave Northern Ireland to pursue their studies. At the same time it has emerged significantly that working class male Protestants are most under-represented in first degree programmes in the context of the total population.

Parallel to the political advocacy of widening participation, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights advocated in 1994 that greater access should be afforded to students with disability in Northern Ireland. Subsequently the introduction of more detailed UCAS admissions forms and Equal Opportunities monitoring forms made it more

feasible to quantify the changes more accurately in relation to access for students with disabilities.

Another impact arising from the changes in the UK student funding is the sharp decline in entrants from the Republic of Ireland into both northern universities. Rates have dropped from 17% in 1994-5 to 10% in 1997-98 and it looks as if the sharp decline will continue. Of these Republic of Ireland entrants to Northern Ireland in 1998, just over 50% were from non-manual social backgrounds.

It would also appear that, in apparent contradiction to the Government commitment to widening participation, there is some evidence of a decline in applications from mature students because of the changes in student finance arrangements. In a region like Northern Ireland with a lower average wage rate than the rest of the United Kingdom, and a relatively high unemployment rate, the prospect of incurring a debt of approximately £12,000 over three years even if there is a nil assessment to tuition fees, must be a daunting prospect to mature students with wider responsibilities.

### **Equal Opportunities Monitoring in Northern Ireland**

Until recent years in Northern Ireland, public policy in relation to equal opportunities had been primarily located in the labour market. Initially the focus was on religion and gender and this later extended to ethnicity and disability. An important signpost in relation to student access to education came in January 1994 with the introduction of Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment Guidelines (PAFT).

During 1996/97 the University of Ulster decided to monitor first year students in terms of access, progress and outcome. The Centre for Research in Higher Education began the analysis of the 1997/98 intake reporting its findings to the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Group and the Academic Policy Committee. The Monitoring Group includes in its membership the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs), the Academic Registrar, the Director of Student Affairs and the Students’ Union President. Its terms of reference are:

- To consider monitoring reports from the Centre for Research on Higher Education on equal



opportunities matters relating to the recruitment, admission and progression of students.

- To forward an annual report to Academic Policy Committee and to Senate highlighting any trends or issues which might impact on the University's policy on equality of opportunity. To indicate action or proposals to address these issues.

### **Methodology and Analysis**

Students registering for the first time at the University of Ulster are now asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. The research team also collates statistics gathered for the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and a specialized SPSS file has been created. Stage one of the process examines the student entrance population in total for an equality of opportunity categories. In stage two the interactions between categories for the total population are examined. Then stage three distinguishes between part-time/full-time and undergraduates/postgraduate levels of entry. Qualifications of entrants are analysed in stage four. And there is also a section analysing circumstances existing in the four campuses and in the Faculties throughout the University.

### **1997/98 Entry Profile Examples**

The following statistics present a significant snapshot of the profile and ethos of the University of Ulster:

- 22.9% of entrants are over 25 years old;
- 10% are aged 37 or over;
- 58.4% are female;
- 6.9% (548 students) record themselves as having disabilities;
- 98.5% are "white";
- 39.3% of full-time students are from manual social class backgrounds but Class V entrants are under-represented (UCAS data on occupations used to define class);
- 56.1% of Northern Ireland students are recorded as Catholics, 39.9% as Protestants, 4% other, an additional 12.4% did not complete the question on religion.

### **Examples of Interaction of Religion and other Variables**

There are only small differences in age profiles and disabilities between religious groupings. However 66.9% of Protestants are from non-manual backgrounds compared with 45.5% of Catholics. At the same time there is virtually no difference in 'A' Level scores between Protestants and Catholics. With regard to campus populations there is considerable variation in the Northern Irish religious distribution - Catholics represent 81.7% at Magee College in Derry, 55.2% at Jordanstown, 52.1% at Coleraine, 48.2% at Belfast.

### **Faculty Issues**

In spite of various marketing efforts, courses in Engineering are overwhelmingly male. In contrast however Informatics (computing and related subjects) has an untraditionally high representation of females. All Faculties show less than 5% of entrants from Social Class V. With regard to religion the highest presentation of Northern Irish Catholics is in Humanities and the highest proportion of Protestants is in Science. The Faculties of Social Health Sciences and Education, and Business and Management, attract most part-time entrants. While 62.5% of the Northern Ireland students in full-time Business and Management courses are Catholic, 49.4% of Protestants undertake part-time study in the same Faculty.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The introduction of the monitoring exercise at University of Ulster has demonstrated that monitoring of religion has proved to be acceptable to the student population. Following analysis of the 1997/98 cohort, discussions are ensuing about the implications for marketing and recruitment, in order to attract groups which are poorly represented, either in courses or within campuses. Clearly admissions procedures and decisions can influence overall emerging patterns. With the increasing numbers of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) being offered, the weighting of such qualifications alongside traditional 'A' Levels is a key issue in the debate about widening participation. It is also demonstrable that part-time study is often used to top up qualifications; it does not as yet attract



unemployed people sufficiently.

A pilot research project is currently under consideration to be undertaken by two further education institutes and the University of Ulster to develop tailor-made part-time access courses which would be attractive to adults in disadvantaged areas with no tradition of third level education. As has already been stated, female participation is now in the majority in full-time University studies but some courses remain traditionally male dominated.

Because of the greatly increased political support in recent years, giant strides are now being made in relation to access for students with disabilities. The Universities monitoring exercise now makes it possible to quantify accurately the numbers and types of students with disabilities, and offers more accurate projections of future numbers for the purpose of planning and resource allocation.

On a broader plane, a new policy has been ratified by the Senate and the Council of the University of Ulster called "Managing Diversity in the Learning Environment". This policy exhorts all students, academic and administrative staff, indeed the whole University to promote an ethos in which diversity and cultural pluralism is celebrated. Whilst this policy has a broad focus incorporating the age, disability, gender, race, there is also a strong emphasis on the need for Northern Irish indigenous students to reflect on their own social and cultural origins, address issues arising from this reflection, and use their increased awareness as part of their broad personal development whilst at the University. This policy poses a great challenge particularly for teachers in that it aims to integrate consideration of cross-cultural issues into the learning process itself. The debate on how to achieve this by way of innovative teaching methods is just beginning.

A Standing Committee has been formed to promote the policy, and the reports from the Equal Opportunities Group will be made available to this Committee. Within its terms of reference, the Committee may make recommendations about future University recruitment and marketing policies, and set in train new on-campus activities which further the aims of the policy.

Of necessity the policy is accompanied by new rules and procedures to deal with cases of alleged harassment of students. These procedures contain definitions of unacceptable verbal and non-verbal behaviours. Each Faculty has now nominated a

Student Harassment Adviser on every campus in which it is organized, and these Advisers are undertaking specialist training to carry out their roles effectively.

### **Springvale Campus**

As part of the University's commitment to widening participation a new concept has been developed of an "educational village" - a partnership between the University, Belfast Institute of Further & Higher Education and the local communities of North and West Belfast. Funding for the new physical campus in the heart of urban working class of North and West Belfast has now been secured from a combination of sources including EU, Government, the International Fund for Ireland, contributions from the two institutions, and private donations. By 2002 it is intended that a main campus will be opened which will cater for 3,000 FTE students (1500 higher education, 1500 further education) who will be involved in a range of courses from foundation to postgraduate across a number of disciplines. In the heart of the educational village will be a community outreach centre that will act as a hub for community programmes. It is envisaged that there will be electronic cable linkage to living rooms, work places, schools and community centres. There will also be an applied research centre, concentrating on bio-engineering and multi-media products. Other futures will include teaching companies, incubator units for local industry and other joint industrial projects. Springvale has a Management Board including representatives from the three area partnerships in North and West Belfast. There is also a Springvale village council, created as a forum for discussion to enable community representative organizations to contribute to overall planning on an on-going basis. A new company, jointly owned by UU and BIFHE, will procure and manage the campus.

### **Overall Implications for Guidance Services**

The whole agenda for widening participation in Northern Ireland raises immense challenges for guidance services. Indeed many long-held traditional assumptions about delivery of guidance services have to be questioned and new innovative strategies adopted. For instance Northern Irish people from



Social Class V are still grossly under-represented in higher education. In collaboration with local community groups, providers of higher education need to find new ways of entering local communities and raising awareness within.

Research needs to be carried out on the actual ways of making further education and training more attractive to people who have no family tradition beyond second level schooling. Northern Ireland is a small region of 1.5 million people and increasingly guidance services must be seen as part of a regional collaborative network. In this network, university guidance services are but one dimension. There is always going to be a tension between the marketing of institutions and the need for impartial or disinterested guidance at an early stage of decision-making. Thus the role of local communities and autonomous guidance agencies cannot be underestimated. Once new adult learners have been recruited to tailor-made access courses, it is essential that appropriate guidance is provided within these courses to assist with integration and induction, and eventually transitional issues from further to higher education when appropriate. Not only do aspiring adult learners need to receive accurate and up-to-date information in order to make valid choices about their educational future, they also need the positive reinforcement of empathic educational guidance integrated in their access courses which enables them to develop appropriate learning skills and enhance their own self-esteem.

### **A New Framework**

A new framework called the "Northern Ireland Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme" (NICATS) is currently being introduced. This will enable first time part-time learners to accrue credits linked to a variety of forms of education and training in the community. Different levels of National Vocational Qualifications can constitute a progressive path towards entry into third level education. It is recognized however that admissions tutors need to reflect continually on the weighting that they give to entrance qualifications as the potential of an adult learner can be denied as a result of the attitude of an admissions tutor.

One of the other implications arising out of equal opportunities monitoring is the role of guidance in broadening people's horizons. A recent head count

during graduation at the University of Ulster bears this point out. The vast majority of Civil Engineering graduates are still male and this no doubt reflects gender stereotypes that reach back into the heartland of the secondary school system. In contrast degree courses like Estates Management now produce a majority of female graduates in what used to be predominantly a male domain, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of good marketing strategies and open-minded guidance.

The old cliché still rings true "Nothing succeeds like success". In this context guidance practitioners should make more use of senior mentor students and alumni of the university for peer support and role modelling. There can be nothing more reinforcing for a dyslexic student than meeting and listening to alumni graduates who have overcome similar difficulties to lead successful professional careers. A wheelchair user student can gain much motivation from being in the company of the significantly disabled graduate who has managed to break through attitudinal barriers in a particular profession. A male working class mature student with no tradition of higher education can gain so much self-confidence from being in a group with senior mentor mature students who demonstrate that "where there is a will there is a way". Female students at an early stage of their degree programmes, could benefit immensely from spending even a short period of work experience in a hitherto male dominated professional institution, organized by female graduate alumni who have been able to carve out a significant niche for women in their profession, be it Law, Engineering, Physics, etc.

In the past perhaps university guidance services have tended to focus principally on those student learners who have managed to reach the starting gate through traditional routes. Future policy is directed towards widening participation in ways that will promote social cohesion and strengthen the local economy within the region of Northern Ireland. We are in an age of stakeholders and partnerships. This being so university guidance services must adapt and show that they can be relevant in addressing these changes. If they succeed in keeping their role modern and relevant, they will be at the very heartland of exciting and challenging educational developments within Northern Ireland over the next decade.



## FOOTNOTE

1/ The full policies on "Promoting and Managing Diversity in the Learning Environment" and "Student Harassment" are at the following website address:  
[www.ulst.ac.uk/studaffairs/](http://www.ulst.ac.uk/studaffairs/)

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# Counselling in a Multicultural Environment – Today's Challenge

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## Why this workshop?

Nowadays, guidance and counselling within higher education involve several encounters with individuals representing different cultures.

Communication across cultures is not always an easy matter. The use of a common language in itself does not guarantee a successful communication. Misunderstandings and sometimes conflicts may occur. If your message does not reach the receiver you may feel frustrated; a strange or incomprehensible behaviour can be experienced as threatening.

Increased intercultural competence opens exiting possibilities. The goal is to be able to move smoothly in different environments and to adjust one's communication pattern to each particular individual or target group; in other words, to communicate more effectively, in a culturally more "appropriate" way.

## Aims of the workshop

Through the workshop at the Fedora event in Stockholm, I aimed to identify possible difficulties connected to intercultural encounters, to share experiences and to discuss concrete strategies for successful counselling in multicultural environments.

## A non-verbal communication exercise

Verbal communication, i.e. the written and spoken word, is one of the main tools for the counselling job. In the academic world, we are surrounded by texts, we stress logical reasoning and construct theories in order to understand reality.

This is the reason why this workshop started with just the opposite; an exercise based on non-verbal communication. Nobody was allowed to write or

speak. Participants could use all kinds of sounds and body language but they could not communicate with words.

The exercise itself (a game) is not going to be described here since the whole point of it is just to offer the workshop participants the possibility of *experiencing* a certain situation as well as the opportunity to observe their own reactions and their own strategies for solving problems.

After the exercise, time was devoted to debriefing. The participants shared experiences and discussed to which extent some patterns of thought that showed during the exercise apply in "real life".

## Definition of culture

Different disciplines have defined culture in several ways. The most appropriate definition for the purpose of this workshop is, according to my opinion, one that Geert Hofstede offers. He has defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another."

A clarifying example of culture understood as mental programming is the variations of physical and psychological space that are necessary to human beings. When two individuals interact they need some space between them in order to feel comfortable. The amount of space needed varies in different cultures although there are individual differences within each culture. Latin Americans and Arabs, for instance, stand closer when they talk to each other than Japanese or Swedish people do in similar situations.

Someone said that for the Swedes the appropriate distance for a comfortable interaction is 1.25 meters. For me, born and brought up in Chile, a distance of 1.25 meters is far too much for feeling comfortable in an interaction. If someone enters my office and starts a conversation standing 1.25 or 2 meters away from me, I spontaneously, and unconsciously, take a step forward to get closer. Otherwise, I don't feel



at ease. But what I do in the eyes of my visitor is to *invade* his or her space. My visitor's immediate reaction is then to take a step back in order to recover space. This, in turn, make me feel *rejected* so I *have to* take another step forward . . .

Although I am perfectly aware of the differences that exist between Latin Americans and Swedes regarding the necessary size of the physical and psychological space, and regardless the fact that I've lived in Sweden half of my life, I still keep making the same mistake: I get too close!

To me, this illustrates how our mental programming works. Culture is very subtle, often unconscious and mostly non-verbal. Culture is everything we take for granted in everyday life. We become aware of our culture and are able to verbalise it only after we are confronted with a different culture. 'Culture' for a human being is what water is for a fish. The fish doesn't know what water is until it's out of it .

Non-verbal communication patterns differ greatly between cultures. In some cultures you look into the other person's eyes while you talk, in other cultures you don't. If you look into the other person's eyes, the time you are expected to fix your eyes upon the other varies. It may also depend upon the particular situation, the other person's age, gender and rank. Verbal communication patterns vary as well. How fast we speak, which volume of voice we normally use, how we signal when it is our turn to speak, how often we interrupt, if we are expected to interrupt, etc.

## Intercultural Communication

In order to achieve a fruitful dialogue with a student, counsellors working in multicultural environments should try to:

- understand their own culturally conditioned communication pattern; verbal and non-verbal
- be aware of the fact that the student probably is used to a different kind of communication pattern and has different expectations regarding the interaction with the counsellor
- find out what characterises the student's communication pattern to be able to send the message in an appropriate "package".

## Prejudice

Prejudice is one of the most common and powerful obstacles for mutual understanding. Nobody is free from prejudice, but very few people are willing to acknowledge this fact.

The word prejudice comes from "pre-judge", i.e. to judge in advance, without trying to understand. The word is built-up in a similar way in several languages:

Spanish:	Prejuicio
Swedish:	Fördom
French:	Préjugé
German:	Vorurteil
Italian:	Pregiudizio
Finish:	Ennakkoluulo

## Assets and liabilities

Below I have listed attitudes and skills that stimulate successful intercultural communication in the first column and attitudes that can become serious obstacles in the right column.

Assets (+)	Liabilities (-)
Knowledge of one's own cultural values	Ethnocentrism
Sensitivity to cultural differences	Use of stereotypes
Flexibility, adaptability	Critical, judgmental attitude. Prejudice
Awareness of potential difficulties	Fear of foreigners and of the unknown
Respect for other peoples' points of view	Inability to cope with unfamiliar situations
Interactive listening skills	Rigid expectations
Previous intercultural experience	Lack of familiarity with other cultures

A counsellor working in a multicultural environment should aim at acquiring the qualities listed in the left column.



## Stereotypes

Stereotyping, i.e. placing people in different boxes and putting labels on them without seeing them as individuals, is another very ordinary obstacle for successful communication.

Stereotypes can be useful as an initial guide when you enter a new culture or when you meet a person with a certain cultural background, but stereotypes are never “true” and often biased. Applying stereotypes means that you do not take individual differences into consideration. In order to diminish the negative effects of stereotyping it is necessary to be open to all kinds of new input and to continuously revise one’s stereotypes in order to get closer to reality.

## Counselling across cultures

Counselling people from different cultural backgrounds requires special skills. Below, you will find some practical hints that can help you develop some of those skills.

### 1. Initial contact with the student

Keep in mind that the student can represent a culture either very similar or very different to the culture of your own. Try to figure out which is the case and adapt your communication pattern accordingly.

You may also meet different attitudes among students regarding their feelings towards the “host culture”. Some students have the following orientation:

*“I can change and adapt to the culture and customs of the host university/country. I become what they want me to be.”*

Other students have a totally different approach:

*“I am who I am and the host university/country has to accept me the way I am.”*

These different approaches require different kinds of support on the part of the counsellor. In many cases, a different pedagogy is needed.

### 2. Defining the problem from the student’s point of view

To be able to understand and define a certain problem from the student’s point of view, the

counsellor needs to “get into the student’s mind”

– to see the world through his or her eyes. How do you manage that? A good start is to check culture-related assumptions. You may, for example, begin by asking yourself: What does the student expect? What do the student’s parents expect? Who is supposed to make the decision(s)?

It always helps to bear in mind that students need lots of empathy, respect and understanding.

### 3. Broadening the student’s views

It may help the student and the outcome of the counselling situation, if you give your views on the situation, and explain your assumptions, your values: “At this university we would interpret this behaviour as ... “

The aim here is to help the student analyse the situation from a different cultural perspective than his/her own.

### 4. Defining goals/proposing solutions

It is important that you analyse various alternatives or strategies together with the student, and that you discuss the cultural consequences of each one. Remember to watch out for possible value conflicts (between family values and the values of fellow students, for instance).

## Intercultural Competence

Increased intercultural competence is a result of changes at the cognitive, emotional and practical level.

At the cognitive level, it is necessary to learn more about culture in general, about specific cultures as well as to become aware of one’s own “mental programming”.

At the emotional level, certain changes in attitude are required. An awareness of one’s prejudices, a continuous revision of one’s most common stereotypes and a closer contact with individuals from other cultures can stimulate the process of modifying our attitudes.

At the practical level, specific skills as the ability to read body language, the ability to break unfamiliar cultural codes, the capacity to adjust communication patterns, and the ability to get into another person’s mind need to be developed.



### What to do next?

The workshop was closed with the following suggestions:

- Acknowledge your prejudices and try to identify your most common stereotypes.
- Make an inventory of the values and assumptions you associate with the counselling situation.
- Explain to the students which rules apply in your office/institution.
- Ask why, how, in which way, in order to understand the student's "rules", i.e. to learn more about his or her specific culture.
- Try to see yourself through the student's eyes.
- Think twice before you judge an unknown behaviour.
- In delicate, "loaded" situations, keep strictly

to the facts and ask for the student's view.

- Enjoy travelling across cultures without leaving your office!

### Final comment

This workshop was designed as an interactive workshop from the beginning to the end. According to my opinion, to share experiences and to discuss these matters openly with colleagues from other countries is something counsellors definitely need to do to deal with the complexity inherent in multicultural environments.

\* Hofstede, G. (1991), *Cultures and Organisations. Software of the Mind*, London.



# Learner Managed Progression – Through Work & Study: The Contribution of Recording Achievement to Life-time Career Development

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with additional commentary from

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At the very first FEDORA Summer School at Montpelier in 1993, the concept of Recording and Reviewing Student Learning and Experience was discussed. Since Montpelier, in the UK, the concept and practice of recording achievement has accelerated and at Leeds we are considered to be one of the foremost universities in this area.

Within schools, the concept has broader European connotations; a recent publication by partners in the Education for Careers in the Union project uses evidence from development in project schools in Greece and The Netherlands as well as the UK, and the USA has been developing this approach for many years.

Recording Achievement has both summative purposes (a transcript of attainment which evidences more broadly, and in greater detail, the range of learning and skills the individual can demonstrate), and a formative process of personal development. This is the use of recording and reviewing – of academic attainment, work experience and life experience, for the purposes of reflection and evaluation to plan the next step in learning and work.

In the UK, this is becoming a life long process: our schools are developing Progress Files; our universities are exploring various forms of Recording Achievement, which are also to be known as Progress Files and an increasing number of professional bodies and management training schemes are making use of 'portfolios' for staff career development and review.

In 1997, the report of the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education, commonly known as the 'Dearing Report' made strong

recommendations that this process should be accelerated in higher education:

"We recommend that institutions of HE, over the medium term develop a Progress File. This File should consist of two elements:

- a transcript recording student achievement which should follow a common format devised by Institutions collectively through their representative bodies;
- a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development."

We would like to emphasize the two aspects of the recommendations: the transcript and the personal development process.

The University of Leeds received £200,000 for a two-year project that finishes Easter 2000:

"To develop a strategic model for achieving institutional policy and practices for recording achievement suitable for traditional research-based universities. The materials, methods and strategy will take account of the strong culture of departmental autonomy in such institutions, whilst recognising the need for a coherent and transparent approach for both students and employers."

In parallel with this, the University Student Office is developing an electronic Transcript to record student progress. For guidance workers the process of contributing to this transcript and the use made of the transcript is of paramount importance for decisions and transitions.

## The Transcript Element

The function of the current transcript is unclear to most academics, students and employers. At the moment in the UK you are most likely to come in



contact with a transcript when trying to make sense of an international student's prior learning and educational achievements. At Leeds the majority of students will make no use of it. The functions of the transcript are currently being hotly debated as the UK Higher Education system considers the issue of how students might reflect on their achievements.

A statement of achievement in exclusively academic terms may be of limited relevance outside HE. However as an element within the Progress File, the transcript could include new perspectives on learning for a wider audience arising out of the process of personal and academic development planning.

A useful indicator of the potential purpose and practical test of what might be usefully held on a transcript is to ask the question: **which of the following** information should appear on transcript?

- An ability to programme computers in C++
- Testimonial from an Insurance Company in Germany
- Education Secretary of the Students Union
- Parent of a Two Year Old
- Scored 29/30 in a presentation for "Geographers in the Workplace Module"
- Took part in ASDA (supermarket) Flying Start Programme (Shelf-Stacker)
- Student has kept a Learning Log
- Some Exam Marks
- Membership of the Staff/Student Committee
- A vocational certificate in "Applied German"
- Volunteered and ran a Charity Event
- Active member of a Political Party
- Active member of Anti Fox Hunting Group
- Work-placement log recorded that he/she "found it difficult to make decisions"
- Had to re-sit an exam in year 1
- Played the violin in the University Orchestra

In the UK particularly the class of degree is increasingly not enough. From an individual's perspective the previous question illustrates the potential value of a broader and richer form of transcript that reflects fully the skills and experience a graduate can offer. Clearly this kind of information requires the student to own the transcript and to make use of it as a personal tool rather than as a public document in order to:

- Make sense of their achievements.
- Select and articulate to others what they have to offer e.g. to admission tutors/employers.

An enhanced transcript has therefore the potential to offer a means by which the student can collect the broadest range of evidence they will need to draw upon, it can act as a summary of achievement indexing other, richer resources in which particular people may have a particular interest.

In 1998 Leeds developed a 'Taj Mahal model', with three columns and three levels, to express possible relationships between the transcript and other records arising from the process of Recording and Reviewing Achievement (R&RA).

It is envisaged that the model expressed as a web page would allow the first column, a traditional academic perspective, and the second column, a broader transferable skills based perspective, to be laid one on the other in order to provide an integrated view.

A student could make a claim; evidence it through a recording and reviewing process developed by a department and have the attainment recognised on the transcript.

What was traditionally: "A transcript of assessed academic attainments", becomes "A transcript of assessed attainments indexing evidence of other attainments".

Any assessed attainment, whether academic or skills based, could be included, and that the transcript could also refer to evidence of other attainments which have not been formally assessed. This evidence arising from recording and reviewing achievement would have the same status as a reference from a department.

This implies four types of entry on the transcript:

1. Attainments associated with credit and a mark counting toward classification;
2. Attainments associated with credit and a mark;
3. Attainments associated with credit;
4. Reference to other evidenced attainments.



## Summary

The failure of the modular transcript to fulfil its potential illustrates the limitations of any document or procedure which is developed 'top down' without taking proper account of the people who will use it, primarily students. The Taj Mahal model specifically allows for 'bottom up' developments by providing a framework within which the transcript, for example, can become useful by taking account of new forms of evidence of achievement.

## The Personal Development Planning Element (PDP)

It is important to be clear about the **purposes** of recording achievement for personal development planning; there is no point in collecting evidence and information without being clear how it might be used to progress learning or employability. Paul Jackson, University of Leeds and Norman Jackson, Quality Assurance Agency, have developed the following model of contributions to learning which recording and reviewing processes can offer:

- Support the learner
- Support the learning
- Support for off-campus learning
- Support for extra-curricular learning
- Preparation for employment/professional practice
- A means of demonstrating that broader expectations of high quality education experience are met.

The key to students owning this learning is by using the progress file as a tool for reflection and evaluation.

Anyone involved in learning and developmental processes, recognises the fundamental importance of reflection. Skills instruction and autonomous learning cannot come about without reflection. In the transfer of learning function – from teacher lead learning via shared guidance to a situation whereby the student leads the learning for themselves, reflection is an essential step.

Reflection means that students are given the opportunity to think about how they function in certain situations and how they can steer their own developmental process. Reflection can be described in various ways:

- You mirror what is expected of you – the educational objectives and compare this with what happened and what you learnt from it.
- You think about an activity e.g. what you are expected to learn, what you learnt, how you learnt, what you would do differently or better next time and what you need to learn next.
- Reflection is most effective when it concerns the results students have achieved in one or more specific tasks and on the basis of criteria that were established before hand.
- It depends on an autonomous thinking which makes it possible to link new elements in learning to each other and in this way provide information.

**Self-evaluation is an important part of reflection.**

Research shows that this shows a key role in safeguarding an upward learning cycle.

By involving students in the setting of evaluation criteria you create a negotiating situation with the staff's criteria on the one hand and the student's preference on the other, it is possible to arrive at a set of criteria, which the students perceive as being useful. Because the students are able to take part in the decision-making process relating to their own work and the amount of effort they are willing to put in increases. During negotiations the Lecturer can offer the student support in determining objectives which are specific, direct and somewhat more difficult: characteristics that contribute towards students making a bigger effort. This also offers the opportunity of influencing the students long term views on learning.

The specific successive steps in this phase:

1. The student brainstorms possible criteria.
2. Staff and students negotiate.
3. Students express the criteria they have agreed in their own language.
4. The tutor demonstrates with the aid of examples how the agreed criteria can be applied in various situations.
5. Students are given explicit opportunities to practise applying the evaluation criteria in various situations.
6. Students need to receive feedback so they understand the criteria even better.

This leads to action planning by students identifying



their strengths and weaknesses selecting objectives and recording objectives and action plans.

Before a start can be made with the actual reflection, students must learn to collect data themselves. In the case of careers education and guidance, this takes place in a form of a careers portfolio.

UK practice has shown that a range of tools are required if they are to be "fit for purpose". Therefore an individual might experience a plethora of documentation over a lifetime that is intended to support the process of recording and reviewing achievement.

For example the UK government is currently piloting a "Progress File" with schools, colleges and employers. Whilst in HE a variety of logs depending on the purpose are developing or developed within the HE experience. (Year Abroad Logs, Personal Tutoring Portfolios, Learning Logs, Sandwich Placement Logs, Career Learning Logs, Personal Development Logs, etc). On leaving University the graduate might then

encounter a range of review documents and recording at a professional level.

## Conclusion

Recording and reviewing achievement can help students to record milestones in their work and to reflect upon the most successful ways of achieving results. In a broader sense, reflecting in a profile can also help with career choices, applications and interviews, future career management and professional development.

Recording and reviewing achievement is an attempt to help individuals **amass information** to chart their own progress towards achieving their own objectives. It provides the **evidence** individuals can subsequently make use of and draw upon in articulating their achievements to others. The **processes** are, if not the UK **prescription**, of relevance to guidance workers and their clients in Higher Education throughout Europe.



# Y-a-t-il encore toujours des obstacles aux études pour les étudiants handicapés?

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Dans cet atelier de travail, une prospection a été faite des besoins spécifiques d'orientation des étudiants handicapés, lors de la transition des études secondaires à l'enseignement supérieur. L'accessibilité de l'enseignement supérieur dépend aussi bien du contenu des études (matières et processus) que du contexte social et psychologique. Un premier exercice a été fait concernant les besoins d'étudiants handicapés visuels et auditifs. Leurs problèmes actuels, des solutions et barrières ont été discutés. Cette exploration, élargie à d'autres handicaps, sera poursuivie à Edinbourg et pourra faire l'objet d'une nouvelle publication FEDORA.

## FEDORA Egalité des Chances fait le point

FEDORA Egalité des Chances pourra dès maintenant mieux définir son propre champ d'action. La fondation récente du Conseil européen de la Vie étudiante permettra en effet une meilleure répartition des tâches. Les responsables de la Vie étudiante s'occupent traditionnellement de l'amélioration des conditions de la vie des étudiants: logement, restauration, financements, encadrement social, juridique, médical, etc. Il nous semble donc évident qu'ils prennent en charge les besoins spécifiques de notre groupe cible dans ces différents domaines. Ceci permettra à FEDORA de mieux explorer et approfondir des sujets qui lui sont propres, notamment les domaines de l'orientation, de l'exploration des conditions préalables aux études, de l'insertion professionnelle.

## Importance d'une orientation adéquate

L'orientation aux études est particulièrement importante pour ce groupe d'étudiants car

l'expérience acquise au cours de l'enseignement secondaire ne leur permet généralement pas d'anticiper complètement les études supérieures et le style de vie qui s'y rattache. Une grande partie de ce nouveau monde leur est inconnue et pour y pénétrer, un accompagnement compétent<sup>1</sup> est requis. Nous tenons à souligner l'importance **d'un choix d'études adéquat**. Une fois celui-ci bien établi, il est toujours possible d'étudier l'encadrement et les accommodations nécessaires. Trop souvent encore, les étudiants choisissent une filière d'études dans laquelle d'autres étudiants ayant un même handicap ont réussi avant eux. D'autres encore choisissent un établissement, voire même une filière d'études, uniquement sur base des équipements disponibles. Il est évident que ceci constitue une chance bien mince de succès.

## Différents aspects doivent faire l'objet d'une investigation en profondeur

À l'instar de ce qui se fait avec les étudiants dits non handicapés, on discute avec l'étudiant handicapé de ses capacités personnelles, de ses intérêts et de ses motivations. Les traits de personnalité qui sont déterminants dans le choix de la poursuite des études doivent être étudiés de plus près. Pour notre public-cible, une plus grande dose de persévérance aura une valeur supplémentaire. Étudier avec un handicap n'est toujours pas chose évidente. L'affirmation de soi et le courage seront nécessaires tant dans les interactions avec les enseignants que dans celles avec les autres étudiants. Ces aptitudes pourront être aiguisées par la suite.

D'autres part, les étudiants handicapés ont besoin d'une assistance supplémentaire qui consiste dans l'exploration du **contenu des études** du point de vue de leur **accessibilité**. A cet effet il faut également parcourir tout l'éventail des études. Les orientations préférées feront l'objet d'un examen approfondi.

Dans ce processus, il est important de partir des **possibilités** et non des limites. Les limites ne seront



d'ailleurs bien nettes que lors de la prospection concrète du programme d'études choisi. En cas de doute, il faut s'adresser aux enseignants pour obtenir des détails concrets sur les implications pratiques de certaines études. *Par exemple*:

- Si la participation aux travaux de laboratoire paraît impossible à première vue, cela vaut quand même la peine de vérifier comment les activités dans un laboratoire se déroulent concrètement dans l'orientation choisie. Les exigences en matière de travaux pratiques varient en effet fortement d'un cours à l'autre. Ici on demandera de réaliser ces travaux de manière totalement autonome et personnelle, ailleurs on travaillera par deux, et dans certaines circonstances, il est même possible d'envisager de travailler à trois: deux étudiants qui font les expériences et un rapporteur. Ces différentes situations imposent évidemment aux étudiants des contraintes différentes.

Accessibilité en outre est une notion **interactive**: il ne s'agit pas de considérer la situation d'études comme une situation à laquelle l'étudiant handicapé doit seulement *s'adapter* (secrétaire, aides électroniques...). Souvent il sera nécessaire de faire preuve de flexibilité et d'un peu de créativité dans la didactique mise en œuvre. Ceci exige une réflexion de la part des chargés de cours sur **les contours et l'essentiel de leur matière**. Une maîtrise de la matière scientifique peut en effet être réalisée par différents chemins. En outre, cette approche est utile pour **tous** les étudiants et non seulement pour les étudiants handicapés. Les meilleurs résultats didactiques sont obtenus auprès d'enseignants dépourvus de tout préjugé à l'encontre des handicapés physiques, mais surtout auprès de ceux qui manifestent un intérêt individualisé pour leurs étudiants et qui disposent d'une bonne formation pédagogique. L'accessibilité à la matière d'études ne s'opère que par des interactions et des efforts communs de toutes les parties engagées dans le processus de formation.

Un autre problème peut se produire quand tous les éléments d'un curriculum d'études ne sont pas réalisables. Il faut alors voir dans quelle mesure des travaux de remplacement peuvent être donnés (par exemple, une revue bibliographique). Si ce n'est pas possible, le corps enseignant peut

réfléchir pour déterminer si ces éléments sont une partie essentielle dans le diplôme visé. Cette procédure n'est évidemment valable que pour des points bien déterminés du programme, des sous-éléments dans une direction de diplôme bien précise. Dans les pays où les études sont conçues de manière plus souple, ou dans les orientations qui ne donnent pas accès directement à une profession (éventuellement protégée), le problème que nous venons d'évoquer ne se pose même pas.

Une **connaissance approfondie du marché des aides techniques** est également nécessaire. Les personnes qui ignorent par exemple les possibilités et les limites des aides électroniques standard utilisées par les étudiants handicapés sensoriels pour suivre les cours, prendre des notes et étudier ne peuvent se faire une bonne idée de leur fonctionnement dans le cadre du cours. En fait, ces personnes ne peuvent donner aucun avis pédagogique valable à notre groupe d'étudiants.

Des points qui précèdent, il ressort d'emblée que la **préparation des études** commence dès la phase d'orientation. Les premiers contacts avec les enseignants ouvrent la voie.

### L'atelier de travail

L'atelier de travail (Université d'été, Stockholm 1999) traite de l'orientation aux études au niveau de la transition des études secondaires à l'enseignement supérieur. Les résultats d'études préalables<sup>2</sup> nous ont fourni un bon point de départ. Une nouvelle réflexion est entamée. Elle sera poursuivie l'année prochaine à Edinbourg et pourra résulter en une nouvelle publication FEDORA.

Pour faciliter la discussion, chacun des 22 participants reçoit une liste de sujets qui offre un aperçu du processus d'études. Trois aspects-clés et deux aspects contextuels sont élaborés:

#### Aspects-clés:

1. Information et matière d'études: accessibilité des données
2. Processus d'étude: l'étudiant travaille la matière
3. Examens et évaluations

#### Aspects contextuels:

- Aspects sociaux et intégration, cadre psychique
- Organisation dans le temps: cadre temporel



## Aspects-clés

### 1. Information et matière d'étude: accessibilité des données

#### A/ Information générale

1. Tableaux d'annonces et communications d'ordre pratique
2. Instructions concernant l'approche de la matière

#### B/ Cours

1. Exposés oraux
2. Matériel didactique supplémentaire:
  - a) photocopies
  - b) tableau: textes, schémas, dessins, graphiques, symboles
  - c) transparents de rétroprojecteurs
  - d) diapositives
  - e) vidéo et présentations sur ordinateur
3. Matière d'études imprimée:
  - a) les polycopiés (cours imprimés)
  - b) les manuels
4. Matière d'études sur ordinateur

#### C/ Bibliothèques

1. Catalogues
2. Organisation de l'acquisition des livres
3. Livres: version papier
4. Livres: version électronique

#### D/ Travaux en laboratoires et pratiques

1. Disposition du matériel
2. Microscopie

#### E/ Séminaires (B & C)

### 2. Processus d'étude: l'étudiant travaille la matière

#### A/ Prise de note ( + structuration)

#### B/ Travail sur les textes écrits ou imprimés:

1. Lecture diagonale
2. Structuration
3. Rédiger des schémas

#### C/ Travaux en laboratoires et pratiques

1. Manipulation du matériel
2. Lecture de résultats
3. Emploi d'ordinateurs

#### D/ Travaux en bibliothèque

1. Recherche de livres
2. Recherche d'articles, de textes
3. Lecture diagonale de textes

#### E/ Séminaires (cf 2D, A & B)

1. Discussions en groupe:
  - a) communications verbales
  - b) communications non-verbales

#### 2. Le compte-rendu

#### F/ Stages

### 3. Examens et évaluations

#### A/ Questions posées

##### 1. à haute voix

##### 2. par écrit

#### B/ Formes

##### 1. oraux:

###### a) individuel

###### b) discussion en groupe

##### 2. par écrit:

###### a) questions ouvertes

###### b) choix multiples

###### c) sur ordinateur

#### C/ Disponibilité de temps

#### D/ Etalement dans le temps

#### E/ Locaux

## Aspects contextuels; analyse

L'analyse se fait par handicap (visuel, auditif, dyslexie, physique et maladies chroniques).

Prenant toujours en considération les aspects contextuels, les participants sont priés d'énumérer les aides électroniques et personnelles pour surmonter le handicap, de mentionner ensuite les solutions et les problèmes non résolus pour chaque item des aspects-clés.

De la discussion résulte une première vue d'ensemble des problèmes résolus et non résolus des étudiants ayant un handicap visuel ou auditif.

## Handicap visuel: les étudiants mal-voyants

### 1. Accessibilité des données

A/ Information générale: tous messages et toutes matières offerts par voie imprimée doivent être transformés en paroles ou en texte agrandi.

B/ Cours: tout matériel d'étude doit être transformé sous une forme accessible: texte agrandi ou cassettes audio; tout cela doit également être prévu en temps utile. Ces étudiants ont besoin d'une loupe-tv pour la lecture directe de textes imprimés ou écrits, des logiciels d'agrandissement et des ordinateurs avec sorties orales pour la lecture des textes électroniques. Les schémas, dessins, graphiques, symboles doivent souvent être agrandis.

C/ Bibliothèques: des catalogues électroniques et



des textes en version électronique peuvent être lus par l'intermédiaire d'un logiciel d'agrandissement ou par sortie orale de l'ordinateur. La loupe-tv est nécessaire pour toute lecture de texte imprimé. Une assistance est nécessaire pour l'acquisition des livres.

- D/ Laboratoires et pratiques: des dispositions peuvent être adaptées dans certains cas.

## 2. Travailler la matière

- A/ La prise de note peut poser des problèmes. Dans ce cas l'aide d'un secrétaire est nécessaire, parfois même des notes d'autres étudiants seront photocopiées. La lecture se fait par l'inter-médiaire d'une loupe-tv. Ces étudiants demandent souvent une assistance pour la lecture rapide dans les livres et les articles.
- B/ Lecture diagonale, structuration et schémas sont très souvent difficiles à lire et à rédiger.
- C/ Laboratoires: les travaux doivent être évalués cas par cas.
- D/ Bibliothèques: une assistance est nécessaire pour l'acquisition des livres et pour la sélection même du texte à lire. La lecture diagonale reste très difficile.
- E/ Séminaires: les communications non-verbales ne sont parfois pas captées.
- F/ Prospection des stages et accompagnement spécialisé sont nécessaires.

## 3. Examens

- A/ Les questions par écrit doivent être transformées en version agrandie ou être lues à haute voix; ou présentées en version électronique, lisible par l'intermédiaire d'un logiciel agrandissant.
- B/ L'utilisation des aides électroniques (loupe-tv, logiciel d'agrandissement) doit être admise. Les questions choix multiples peuvent poser des problèmes en matière de format de réponses.
- C/ Il peut être nécessaire d'allonger la durée d'un examen ou de faire appel à un secrétaire pour retranscrire les réponses dictées par l'étudiant.
- D/ L'étalement des examens dans le temps est parfois nécessaire: le rythme de lecture est souvent beaucoup plus lent que celui d'un étudiant à vue normale.

## Les étudiants non-voyants

### 1. Accessibilité des données

- A/ Information générale: tous messages et toutes matières offerts par voie imprimée doivent être communiqués verbalement ou transcrits en braille.
- B/ Cours: tout matériel d'étude doit être transformé sous une forme accessible non-visuelle, soit en braille, soit sous forme de cassettes audio. Tout cela doit également être prévu en temps utile. Ces étudiants ont besoin de toutes sortes d'aides: un scanner, un ordinateur avec lignes braille, des cassettes audio, des ordinateurs avec sorties orales etc. Ils demandent souvent une assistance pour la lecture rapide des livres et des articles. Les schémas, dessins, graphiques, symboles exigent toujours une conversion.
- C/ Bibliothèques: nécessité de catalogues électroniques. Une assistance est nécessaire pour l'acquisition des livres. Les versions papiers doivent être transformées (braille, audio). Les versions électroniques sont directement accessibles.
- D/ Laboratoires et pratiques: jusqu'à maintenant il n'y a pas de solutions pour le travail autonome.

### 2. Travailler la matière

- A/ En général, la prise de note ne pose pas de problèmes: un appareil adapté permet à l'étudiant de prendre note en braille avec une efficacité comparable à celle d'un étudiant voyant.
- B/ Lecture diagonale impossible en braille (cf. 1.C); structuration assez difficile en braille.
- C/ Laboratoires: travail autonome très difficile (dangereux).
- D/ Bibliothèques: la lecture de catalogues est possible par ordinateur avec ligne braille. Une assistance est nécessaire pour l'acquisition des livres, pour la sélection même de la lecture et pour une lecture rapide des livres et des articles. Une version papier doit être transformée. Une version électronique est directement accessible. Problème: *il leur est impossible de lire en diagonale*. Il existe cependant un savoir-faire scientifique pour transformer les livres en version électronique de manière à les rendre rapidement consultables, mais une large



implantation de ce genre de système se fait encore attendre.

- E/ Séminaires: les communications non-verbales ne sont pas captées.
- F/ Prospection des stages et accompagnement spécialisé sont nécessaires.

### 3. Examens

- A/ Les questions par écrit doivent être transformées en braille ou être lues à haute voix.
- B/ L'utilisation des aides électroniques doit être admise. Questions choix multiples sont lisibles en braille mais le format de réponse doit être adapté.
- C/ Il peut être nécessaire d'allonger la durée d'un examen ou de faire appel à un secrétaire pour retranscrire les réponses dictées par l'étudiant.

## Handicap auditif

### Les étudiants mal-entendants et sourds

#### 1. Accessibilité des données

- A/ Information générale: contrôler que toute information ou communication offerte par voie verbale a été saisie par l'étudiant en question. Offrir des versions par écrit.
- B/ Cours: toute matière verbale, tous les commentaires sont très difficilement accessibles. Lorsqu'un bon appareillage est mis au point, la qualité de la communication augmente. Cela exige encore toujours un contrôle. Tout commentaire oral pose des problèmes. L'étudiant peut engager un traducteur en langue de signes. Celui-ci doit avoir une grande expérience: bien connaître les concepts spécifiques de la matière et ... être disponible (!). Lorsque l'étudiant travaille avec un secrétaire ou lorsqu'il emploie des photocopies, il doit être conscient du fait qu'il s'agit d'une seconde version. Il n'a pas capté le message original.

#### 2. Travailler la matière

- A/ Même avec un bon appareil, la prise de note peut rester assez difficile puisqu'une bonne compréhension exige souvent que l'on regarde l'interlocuteur. La traduction en langue de signes exige une très grande concentration. Un secrétaire ou des photocopies offrent

toujours *une seconde version (cf. supra)*! Ce problème pourrait être résolu par des systèmes de « speech-recognition ». On attend avec impatience le développement de ceux-ci.

- C/ Laboratoires: les signaux émis par son sont difficiles à capter.
- E/ Séminaires: les communications en groupe sont extrêmement difficile à suivre. Un traducteur en langue de signes peut être indispensable.
- F/ Prospection des stages et accompagnement spécialisé sont nécessaires.

### 3. Examens

- A/ Toute communication orale peut causer des problèmes. Présenter les questions de préférence par écrit.
- B/ La discussion en groupe est inutilisable.

## Clôture

Les participants à l'atelier de travail mettent l'accent sur l'importance d'une intégration sociale de l'étudiant. Ceci peut nécessiter une introduction dans le corps des enseignants aussi bien que dans le groupe des autres étudiants. Un handicap invisible risque d'être refoulé, caché. Beaucoup d'étudiants ont du mal à reconnaître ce genre d'handicap. Ils doivent être stimulés à manifester leur problème et à demander du support.

La décision est prise de poursuivre ce travail en préparation du congrès FEDORA en 2000 à Edinbourg.

## NOTES

1/ Un nombre d'idées clés sont développées d'une façon plus détaillée dans

Van Acker, M, (1999), Développements en matière d'inclusion et d'enseignement de personnes handicapées. OECD, Grenoble (article non-publié)

2/ K.U.Leuven-HELIOS-FEDORA (1995), *Etudier à l'étranger 1. Liste de besoins pour étudiants handicapés* K.U.Leuven-HELIOS-FEDORA (1995), *Etudier à l'étranger 2. Guide Européen pour étudiants handicapés*





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# Entering Higher Education: Older Students' Constructions of Self as Learners – What Are the Issues for Counsellors?

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## Introduction

I will begin with focusing on the first phase of a longitudinal study of older students (conducted over a four year period), who were predominantly female, and their narratives of struggle and reward in constructing new roles for themselves as learners, and the conflict that this often seemed to provoke. In spite of the considerable increase in the number of older students entering higher education (that is those over the age of twenty-one), the current situation does not appear to have changed much since the study of Osborne et als. (1984), which demonstrates that research on older students in the United Kingdom generally involves those who are white and middle class. The study discussed here is one attempt to redress this imbalance.

I start by outlining my personal interest in this area, and then make a case for examining the qualitative experiences of this student group before briefly describing my sample. In the context of preparing for and entering higher education as older students, the themes associated with time, especially the concept of the 'right time', shall be explored. Concepts such as self-worth, esteem and confidence, not necessarily restricted to one chronological period, are highlighted when confronted with the challenge posed by the institution, often seen as an important validator to the individual. I conclude with some suggestions as to how this may become a nurturing environment, one which recognises diversity of culture and background. I would then like to open up the discussion around what are the issues for counsellors and how might these be met?

## Background to my study

Access to higher education courses flourished during the late 1980's in the United Kingdom, so that by 1990 more than 500 further education colleges had become experienced in catering for this minority group (Melling and Stanton, 1990). Access courses aim to equip their students with the confidence, study skills and techniques to enter higher education with the same degree of credibility and success as those students who enter by traditional routes.

My interest in the area of older students entering higher education stems from having designed and implemented such a course over a three-year period. The recruitment philosophy was to target individuals not well represented in higher education.

Through working closely with those on the scheme, I was given intimate access to their narratives of the pain, excitement, struggles and rewards involved in constructing new roles for themselves as adult learners and how they attempted to resolve or accommodate the conflict that this often seemed to provoke. Some of these narratives resonated deeply with my own, earlier experiences and associated fragmented, somewhat negative sense of myself as a learner. Although I had moved on very considerably from a learning position similar to those I was tutoring, I knew how echoes from my own past could still come to haunt me. My commitment to carrying out research in this area is therefore bound up with my own past (dislocated from my working class roots by virtue of my education), my professional role as a teacher/lecturer and my former status as an older research student. As a feminist, it also reflects my political commitment to all those engaged in emancipatory struggles against oppression, although this, of course, is not without its own difficulties.



### **Traditional models of student learning**

What most models of student learning, largely originating from cognitive psychology, have failed to do is to take account of individual experiences of learning and to account for, or address intra- and inter-individual variations. Learning needs to be regarded as a holistic process, yet until recently, most of the literature about learning neither reflects the experiences of the individuals concerned, nor acknowledges that ideas cannot be separated from experience. Accessing life experiences involves using qualitative methods that operate within a phenomenographic 'new paradigm' or post-structuralist approach. Typically, interviews, diaries or focus groups have been used. However, where qualitative studies have been used, broadly speaking they can be summarised as being of one of two types. The first is aligned with a more realist, empirical view of the world (see Baxter-Magolda, 1992, Elsey, 1982). The second, which adopts a phenomenographic or experiential approach to student learning, can be viewed as resting on individualistic assumptions. Perry's work comes under this category (Perry, 1970, 1981), other examples are Entwistle and Marton (1994) and Morgan, Taylor and Gibbs (1982). Exceptions to this are Weil's study of undergraduate and post-graduate students (1988, 1989a, 1989b) and Edwards' study, 'Mature Women Students' (1993), both of which were important in helping me conceptualise my own study.

As a whole, this non-traditional group have offered varying reasons for wishing to enter higher education. Whilst many may have clear vocational aims, they may also have personal goals not shared by younger students. Marshall and Nicolson (1991) have summarised these as a desire to enhance self-confidence as well as to open up professional and intellectual opportunities. But it is important to stress here that older students are not a homogeneous group. For instance, Thacker and Novak (1991) found that women students, aged 35-44 wanted to gain a degree, achieve independence, acquire new skills and vocational achievement, whereas those aged 45-64 wanted an intellectual challenge.

Much of the debate on access to higher education focuses on identifying, preparing and admitting students, as if the functions and purposes of higher education are clear and the system presupposes an

unproblematic learning context for older adults and their needs (Tuckett, 1990). Given their diversity as a group, any consideration of adult students and their needs must therefore take into account a multiplicity of factors and not give credence to unsubstantiated simplistic or reductionist notions.

In general, approaches to adult learning and adult development are too descriptive, and they do not consider the many factors impinging on a student's life and the complex inter-relationship between them and the learning experience for that individual. Whilst there are some studies, such as Perry's, that are longitudinal, they generally do not include students who have entered higher education without standard qualifications, and who consider themselves as coming from, or belonging to, the working classes. In the case of those studies that have examined this older, non-traditional group, they are either not longitudinal nor are they conducted from a feminist standpoint within a social constructionist perspective. Exceptions to this are those by Weil and Edwards referred to above.

### **The current study and its research cycles**

Students were recruited for this longitudinal cyclical study through three institutions of higher education in the Greater London area. Employing a grounded analysis, it concerns 21 female and 4 male students, aged 22-55 at their point of entry into higher education, 18 of whom entered higher education via an Access to Higher Education course. The study is also unusual in that over half the group identified themselves as having come from a working class background. All but one of the participants were enrolled on social sciences, humanities and teacher training courses.

Initial life-story interviews were carried out close to the end of participants' first semester in higher education, with follow-up interviews taking place close to the end of the second year. The final cycle involved a focus group in the final year of participants' degree courses.

### **The path to becoming an older student and the notion of the 'right time'**

Many themes, identities and positions interweave to provide a complex picture of interrelated and overlapping processes and experiences associated



with an often gradual, tentative and painful sense of considering and negotiating a move towards further formal education.

*Ted: I used to, I used to look at, and think, well you know, I must start learning, but the thought of the long haul from nothing, because I had no qualifications, and I used to think, and then, oh, give it up, it'll take too long, and I've got to work.*

Here, a notion of lost time is indicated, and Ted was deterred from trying to acquire qualifications thinking it would take too long, presumably to study whilst working full-time. Whilst learning assumed a variety of meanings for those interviewed, a gradual dawning of a need to assume control, a desire to radically alter one's learning identity was often expressed. Discovery experiences, often related to issues of class, gender and race were frequently, but not always, expressed as increasing awareness, of gradually promoting a positive sense of self, a sense of empowerment. Such experiences were also related to the present:

*Kate: ... I suppose I brought my gender to college anyway, so I've probably noticed things that substantiate what I thought a bit more anyway. I'm still finding out more about it, ... and I've got all the opinions and views I had before, and still there, even stronger. They are just either supplemented in different ways, or supplemented more strongly by things going on.*

Occasionally, participants linked such experiences with their decision to enter higher education. Learning outside formal education, including the experience of child rearing, was viewed as being qualitatively and quantitatively different from formal learning, and was not positively related to self-achievement and success. Applying to higher education and gaining access to it were seen as very large obstacles to hopefully be overcome.

*Rachel: Oh I felt, oh my God, you know, I'm gonna have to do a very good interview here [laughs], and I was not, I felt absolutely sick I just felt oh my God, and I, I just felt it wasn't a very good interview, because, I*

*actually, I actually really wanted to do it. I thought, what am I gonna do now [if I don't get in], my whole life's gonna, you know, and um, and I kept saying to myself that this is where I really want to be... You know, but it was very important.*

This is but one example of many from my interviews where the stakes seemed to be very high, obtaining university entrance was seen as extremely important. Having made the decision to apply to higher education, there seemed to be no going back.

In anticipating and making the move to higher education, determination and commitment to succeed often seems to have been related to a desire to realise one's own intellectual potential, moreover to prove oneself to oneself. However, echoes from the past, relating to prior learning, were often voiced as interfering with the struggle to reach out for an altered learner identity.

*Enid: ... so as a result, certainly academically, it has spread to other aspects of my life, I've got a very low opinion of my capabilities, which is why, even now, I still sort of have a tendency to pinch myself that I'm actually on the law course.*

A gradual dawning of the need to assume control or responsibility for one's own learning and development was often expressed, sometimes through the use of extended metaphor.

*Carl: I really saw Access as my last chance, I had a feeling it could be a door (shut) new in my face again. Probably a door I was gradually closing on myself, rather than someone else. I needed to push and to motivate myself rather than expect or need someone else to do it for me.*

Here, there is a sense of time running out, from Carl's perspective, that if he did not walk through the Access gateway, he would not be able to have a fulfilling future. Inherent in this appears to be a fear of potential avenues or possibilities being closed off for Carl, with a recognition that he had a central role to play in whether or not this would be so. For some others who had also had negative experiences at school, it seems that they did not even dare



to consider the possibility of their entering higher education:

*Charlotte: It was really good for me to get going on a [Access] course like this, because I kind of don't know where I am in life... But I first thought you might not even want me. No, I mean, I had to come for an interview and things, and you think, well, you might even be turned down or something. I mean I have been kind of sitting at home for 20 years. I don't know, you have all these feelings, but I wasn't planning to go to the poly... It was way too difficult to my mind.*

This extract, and the one above from Ted's interview, convey something of how complicated and daunting even thinking of contemplating entering formal learning can be. With a multitude of contrasting feelings, it seems to be difficult to assemble them to describe them in the narrative. At the pre-Access stage, Charlotte did not seem to be able to, or to want to assume responsibility for her learning, and in the interview, she describes herself as having a very passive role, with my showing her the direction that she ought to perhaps follow. Her learning identity, so underdeveloped by a very restrictive childhood in which her family constantly made her aware that she was not as bright as her sister, had led her to believe that not only would higher education be too difficult for her, but that she might be refused entry onto the Access course for which she was being interviewed. Being a housewife for twenty years also seems to have contributed to her lack of confidence, highlighted by her talking about her children's attitude towards her:

*Charlotte: And I've told you that before, ... one of them actually told me, 'You haven't got brains, you can't do anything'. That's what they used to tell me.*

Gillian gives another impression of what the Access course had to offer:

*Estelle: Is there anything else about you, that you've not yet mentioned, that you remember as having changed during the Access course?*

*Gillian: I think I've got more confident. I can walk into a classroom now without getting the jitters... we've been taught to go the right way about higher education learning... Some of the others [on my course] wish they'd had more general experience... The Access course has got me over that fear [of using computers], and I'm saying, well I'd like to get on and do a bit of graphics on the computers. Um, I'm not frightened of doing essays now... I haven't got that fear now because I've already done it [write two and three thousand word essays]... A lot of things like that. Taking notes, I find it easy to take notes... I've gained a lot out of it.*

Gillian certainly was not alone in talking about getting a lot from an Access course. Lesley adds to this by explaining how the Access course was for her a test of her aptitude, again like an obstacle to be overcome, yet it did not quite succeed in preparing her for higher education:

*Estelle: What meaning did learning have for you then what did you see it [the Access course] as giving you?*

*Lesley: Um, well basically it was going to give me an entrance into Polytechnic. That's what I wanted. And also sort of confidence in my, in the fact that I could learn, achieve, something I had to get over. Or, setting myself a test almost. I wanted to try and see if I could pass, not the actual test or exam, just doing the Access course. That's how it seemed to me.*

Ann expressed similar sentiments, but relates her position in higher education by comparing herself to her 18 years old counterparts:

*Estelle: Could you have been better prepared for starting the present course?*

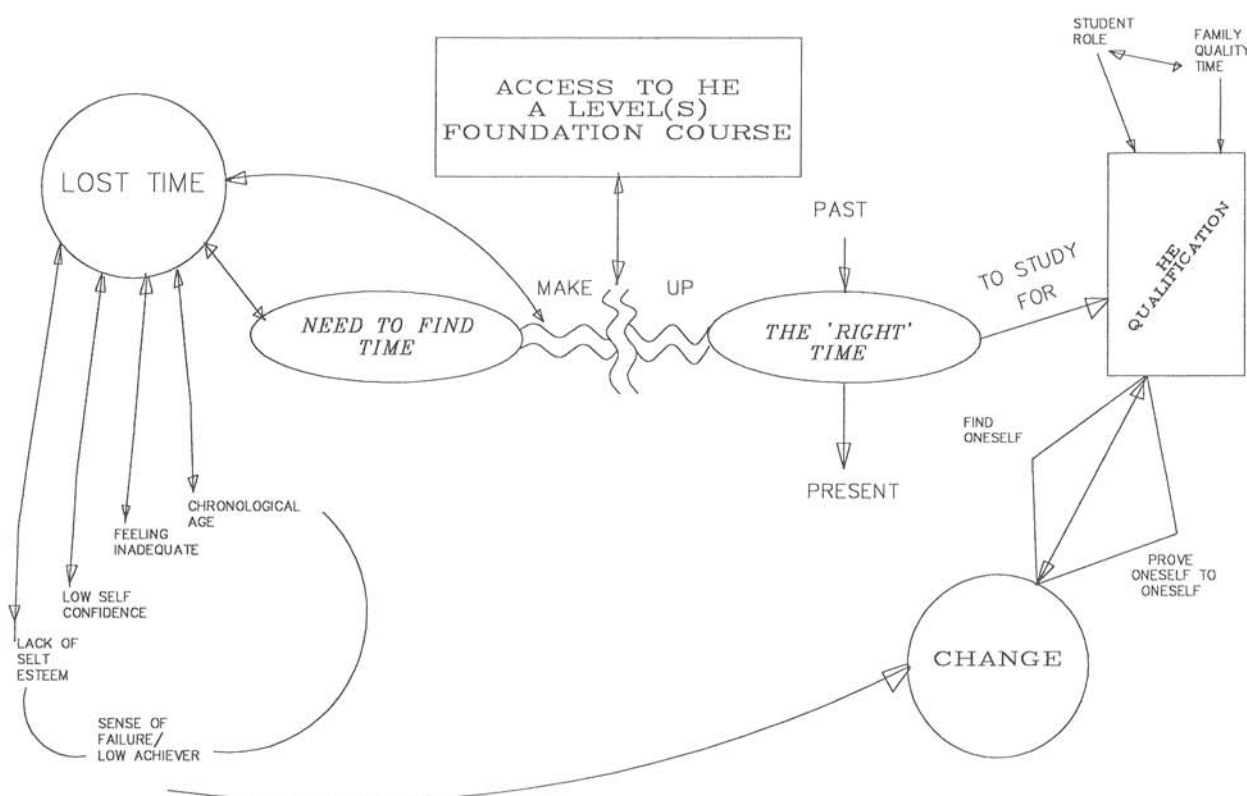
*Ann: No, I don't think so. I don't think there's any way because everybody sees it differently. I think what was done practically was OK. Academically, that brings us into the realm of not having the same qualifications as the 18-year olds. That can be, I found that can be a bit of a disadvantage, like particularly like with maths.*



Ann was the only student in my study who was on a science degree, and had found the transition into the level of higher education maths rather difficult. Whilst the Access course had offered a lot to those who had pursued one, Ann was not alone in expressing a sense of loss or inadequacy when comparing herself to school leavers, who were thought to have had consistency in their education. This quote by Ann is but one example of the implications of loss of chronological age in learning, when related to present circumstances, and relates very closely to the regret expressed above about not utilising compulsory education to the full.

to be related to a lack of self-esteem, low self-confidence and a need to prove oneself to oneself, that is, in such instances, it was only possible to partially make up the time. This seems to be why a number of students in my study compared themselves unfavourably with their 18-year old counterparts and felt such a strong need to now assume control over their lives. I have summarised this concept of time, especially of the 'right time' to obtain qualifications as a possible topology (see diagram below).

## NOTION OF THE 'TIME' TO OBTAIN QUALIFICATIONS: A POSSIBLE TYPOLOGY





## First impression of higher education and managing oneself

Eighteen of those I interviewed entered higher education via an Access course, although the small-scale supportive environment of such courses did not necessarily prepare individuals for induction into higher education, which was often expressed as impersonal and chaotic.

*Ann: ... It [the degree course] was pretty awful to begin with, but the start of the second semester wasn't so bad. With, er, just culture shock... I don't think any Access course can actually prepare you for that. I think you all have to go through it.*

Individuals gave a number of reasons for pursuing a degree course:

*Roxanne: ... Coming here is coming back to this subjectivity and objectivity. I wanna know about black people and my, that part of me, and I'm British born and if I don't learn it here and I don't find it, who's gonna teach me? Do you understand me, that's how I feel?*

Whilst Roxanne's reason as expressed above, is specific to her, what can be generalised from this to many of the other interviews, was that the decision to enter higher education was often linked to intrinsic goals, to a strong desire to find oneself, or to prove oneself to oneself, despite the hurdles. However, the two do seem to have different qualities:

*Sarah: I'm doing it for maybe emotionally selfish reasons... It's actually developing myself. And you get a degree at the end of it, fine, that's a bit of paper. But it's, it's actually just learning and coping with what's put in front of you.*

This is a very gendered connection, why should it be selfish to fulfil one's emotional needs? Sarah refers again in the interview to her putting herself first as selfish, to balance her need to feel in control with her family responsibilities:

*Sarah: I think, um, my goal is in control again, of work.... So anyway, it is really just*

*basically just trying to get myself, find myself enough time without doing damage to the family life. Um, to be selfish, and to be able to say, 'Look, I've got study to do, I've got to fit this in'.*

Here, her conflict is evident, Sarah is struggling to find enough time for her studies and her family, and the implication is that when she feels able to balance the two, she will be in control of her working life. A number of women in my study expressed this conflict, even if, as in Sarah's case, they had been in full-time employment prior to becoming a student. Studying requires finding time outside of ordinary working hours and is a major part of the transition into becoming a full-time student. This is in direct opposition to Nick's experience:

*Estelle: Do you see yourself as undergoing a process of change?*

*Nick: Yes, very much. I'm not sure whether it's a continuous thing, or whether I've actually done it... I'm not sure whether how much is actually coming from the uh, university, or how much has just come from me, ...I see you know, myself, family and, you know, the world at large in sort of slightly different terms than I used to... Um, but I see now my time with them [my family] as being far more important than that which I was, um doing, or providing previously... And by being at university, I've got a lot more time than I ever would've done in the normal course of events... Um, you know, I'm actually a lot more involved now.*

In contrast to Sarah, Nick found himself to have far more quality time with his family as a result of his becoming a student, and from his perspective, this was very much tied up with his having changed. He talked about taking his two children to and from school, pursuing interests with them, but made no reference to his position with regard to domestic work. For the female mother-students, although there were some alterations to child care arrangements, their domestic roles did not appear to have changed much, nor did they express that they felt they should.

Accounts of participants' positions at the time of



the interview varied considerably. Many indicated a high level of self-awareness and were fired with enthusiasm and determination to succeed:

*Liz: I mean I can see where all my problems with studying lie. I know they're there. And I know why they're there. I mean, OK I've intellectualised them. But I don't feel we can feel anything about them unless you do, and I know that I can't deal with all of that at once. I mean, it's got to be, bits of it have got to be put right in stages... Um, I've just got to break those things gradually and it's a long process, because to change, it does take a long time... I know it's possible and I'm going to do it. I am going to do it and that's that.*

It is worth noting from the quote from Liz's narrative given above that her sense of imbalance, of struggle was perhaps higher than most. Others did not report as high a level of determination to succeed, but like Liz above, articulated a sense of struggle, of being an outsider, as they had also experienced their positioning in compulsory education. Six reported having used the counselling service. At the follow-up interview, another three mentioned having used this as a resource.

All those I interviewed had experienced a mixture of anxiety, apprehension and excitement at commencing their higher education course, the induction period often being experienced as impersonal and chaotic. Many felt at a disadvantage to their younger counterparts:

*Grace: I was a bit nervous, yeah, 'cos of going, and I was going with all these 'A' Level students, you know, they were fresh and all that. Well I was panicking, I wasn't looking forward to September... at all. And I said, will I be able to cope?'*

Early integration appears to be strongly related to the quality of the interpersonal interface between students and staff.

However, when high anxiety was voiced during the interview about one's potential, this did not appear to have been markedly reduced by supportive tutoring and high grade attainment on the Access course.

*Estelle: Do you see anything as having changed in you, since finishing the Access course in June?*

*Andrea: Intellectually, I'm aware of my ability, but emotionally that doesn't matter... Apart from the fact that I felt I had gained confidence [on the Access course] and that now seems to have left me, not really. It's almost as if sort of all the same fears or similar fears that I've had at every most stages of my education are there, but in a sense they're bigger because this is a higher course, do you know what I mean?*

*Estelle: Mm, there's more at stake I suppose?*

*Andrea: Mm, yeah. What happens if I can't achieve this and, you know, these sort of exams.*

At this early stage, Andrea is expressing a need to regain control having lost it at the point of entering higher education, along with a high level of anxiety over exams some five months away. Previous support and positive feedback were not successful in enabling her to overcome the negative learner identity she was articulating. Whilst her expressed anxiety was higher than most, this example demonstrates how vulnerable learning identity can be, having acquired considerable self-confidence whilst on the Access course, this appears to be lost upon entering higher education. In other instances, where the interpersonal element between the institution and the individual was lacking support and encouragement from one's peers were crucial in gradually fostering a more positive learner identity.

All students, including those three who did not talk about lacking confidence (see above), considered themselves to be undergoing a period of transition. Often, an imbalance was implied:

*Liz: You know I have these real intense times. I mean, if I do some work, if I've worked really hard and really got hold of some concepts or other, I'm up here, and really high, and I drive everybody mad... I sometimes think, why am I doing this, this is so hard, this is such a struggle? And then, when you get through it, I am in such, I'm right at the top, it gives me more satisfaction than any relationship now. I'd rather have that.*



This is an extreme example from those I interviewed, but nevertheless, generalising to other narratives, it does indicate something of the difficulties encountered when accommodating higher education into one's life. On the one hand, there can be very significant gains to be had from studying, whilst on the other, certainly close to the start of a higher education course, it is a struggle to obtain these.

Other negative experiences were narrated in varying ways. The power of the institution and inequality of experience (and feeling oneself to be disadvantaged or discriminated against) were voiced by some in terms of gender, age, race or class.

*Lesley: They are VERY I find UNSYMPATHETIC towards anything to do with needs of the children. ... It's a question of, 'Well, you made the choice to come here, deal with the problems when they come, if you can't cope with it, then it's your problem' ... you just get, you hit a blank wall really.*

Thus, the experiences and skills of older students (interestingly, not on social science courses) were not necessarily seen as 'valuable assets' by the institution. In this example, being a mother student is seen as a considerable disadvantage, but one for which those representing the institution are not prepared to make any allowance. This last extract also indicates something of the complex positioning for a female student with a family, which was echoed throughout my interviews with mother-students. In several interviews, the role of student was not assimilated into one's lifestyle, with the inference that one can only be a 'real' student when not hampered by the responsibility assumed for carrying out housework, or attending to family needs.

### **Concluding remarks about the current study**

In the study represented here, the effects of the interaction of gender with other variables such as age and ethnic background are very complex and it has not been possible to make sweeping generalisations from such a small sample. However, it is not by chance that most of the older students entering higher education are female, and this is especially the case with those who enter via an

Access course. Interestingly, such individuals tend to opt for social science and humanities or arts subjects, perpetuating even further the stereotype of distribution found in their younger counterparts. This complies with Thomas' (1990) proposal that ideas about degree subjects and ideas about gender largely reinforce one another. Whilst a woman may theoretically be able to choose either typically masculine or typically feminine subjects, the effects of social pressures and the subtleties of social conditioning and constructions, including those associated with former schooling, may then become internalised and are likely to effect her choice. Higher education does not necessarily actively discriminate against women, yet it does seem to employ culturally available ideas in such a way that women may be marginalised and sometimes alienated. In this presentation, this is most obvious in the contrasting and pervasive gender difference between mother students and father students.

There are powerful pressures promulgating for change and wider access opportunities, but the powerful set of resistances operating have resulted in there being little evidence of a more comprehensive and open system of higher education (see Fulton and Ellwood, 1989). Yet, those represented in this study had not experienced difficulty in obtaining a place in higher education. Rather, the difficulties encountered were very much related to how they had felt about themselves as learners, and their associated feelings of self-worth, both prior to entry, and during their higher education course. For the women in my study, this often seemed to be an impediment to their progress, in the different ways that was construed by them.

### **Discussion – What are the issues for counsellors?**

There are clearly many consequences to be faced as a result of the overall increase in the student population, a number of which may be specific to the needs of older and other non-traditional students. In this context, there is a lot more that institutions of higher education can do to improve the situation for older students, particularly women students. For instance, more research is needed into the dynamics of staff-student interactions, alongside serious attention being paid to implementing creative induction programmes, as well as allocating resources to staff development to be aimed at



encouraging teaching staff to examine their attitude towards older female students, and how this relates to their teaching duties. In this context, how can the counselling services meet current and shifting needs?

If wider access to higher education is to be implemented successfully, it is crucial to listen closely to non-traditional students' accounts of the processes, boundaries and struggles involved in developing a positive sense of learner identity. While some disciplines obviously lend themselves more readily to this suggestion than others, inter-relating life experience with formal learning contexts could well be part of a process which would add richness to what should, after all, be part of an enabling, empowering experience.

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*Walking among the old burial grounds in Uppsala.  
Promenade parmi les vieilles tombes de la ville de  
Uppsala.*



# Aider des étudiants adultes: comment gérer une surcharge de rôles

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## Introduction

Environ 15% de la population estudiantine de la Vrije Universiteit Brussel sont des étudiants adultes qui combinent des programmes d'études à temps plein ou à mi-temps avec un emploi plein temps. Ce groupe d'étudiants, dont la moyenne d'âge se situe entre 30 et 31 ans, est composé:

- en majorité d'hommes (environ 65%),
- d'adultes mariés ou vivant en couple (entre 65 et 70%), mais le nombre de femmes mariées est nettement plus faible,
- d'adultes sans enfants. 30% des hommes et 15% des femmes seulement ont un enfant.

Il est clair que ce groupe diffère nettement de la population de référence adultes et de la population estudiantine traditionnelle. Ces étudiants ont beaucoup plus souvent que les autres adultes ajourné le développement d'une famille. Ce phénomène est sensiblement plus accentué parmi les femmes.

L'explication pour cette situation est à rechercher dans deux situations spécifiques propres à ces étudiants: la surcharge de rôles et l'asynchronisme dans le développement.

Ces étudiants doivent combiner au moins trois rôles importants qui dominent toute leur vie: le rôle professionnel, le rôle familial et celui d'étudiant. Il s'agit là de rôles qui sont très lourds, exigeants et pas toujours compatibles. Ceci mène à une situation de conflit entre ces trois rôles. Cette situation est encore plus aiguë dans le cas des étudiantes, parce que le rôle familial est plus exigeant que dans le cas des hommes.

L'environnement sociale (famille, amis) et le monde du travail ne sont pas toujours très sensibles aux problèmes liés à l'excès de rôles que ces

étudiants connaissent. Tandis que tout le monde attend d'un jeune lycéen qu'il considère son rôle d'étudiant comme le rôle le plus important, la société ne l'attend pas du tout des adultes. Au contraire, souvent, ces étudiants sont confrontés à des réactions négatives s'ils osent privilégier les études. Ceci est encore plus vrai dans le cas des étudiantes. Les femmes adultes qui commencent des études ne sont pas prises au sérieux. L'environnement soit considère – en particulier dans le milieu familial – leurs études comme un passe-temps qui ne doit pas avoir de priorité sur les autres rôles, soit voit – en particulier chez les employeurs et les collègues – ces études comme l'expression d'une ambition qui ne se justifie pas.

L'analyse de ces deux problèmes peut nous donner quelque idée des stratégies de support à mettre en œuvre dans ce groupe d'étudiants et des compétences requises chez les conseillers.

## Le conflit des rôles

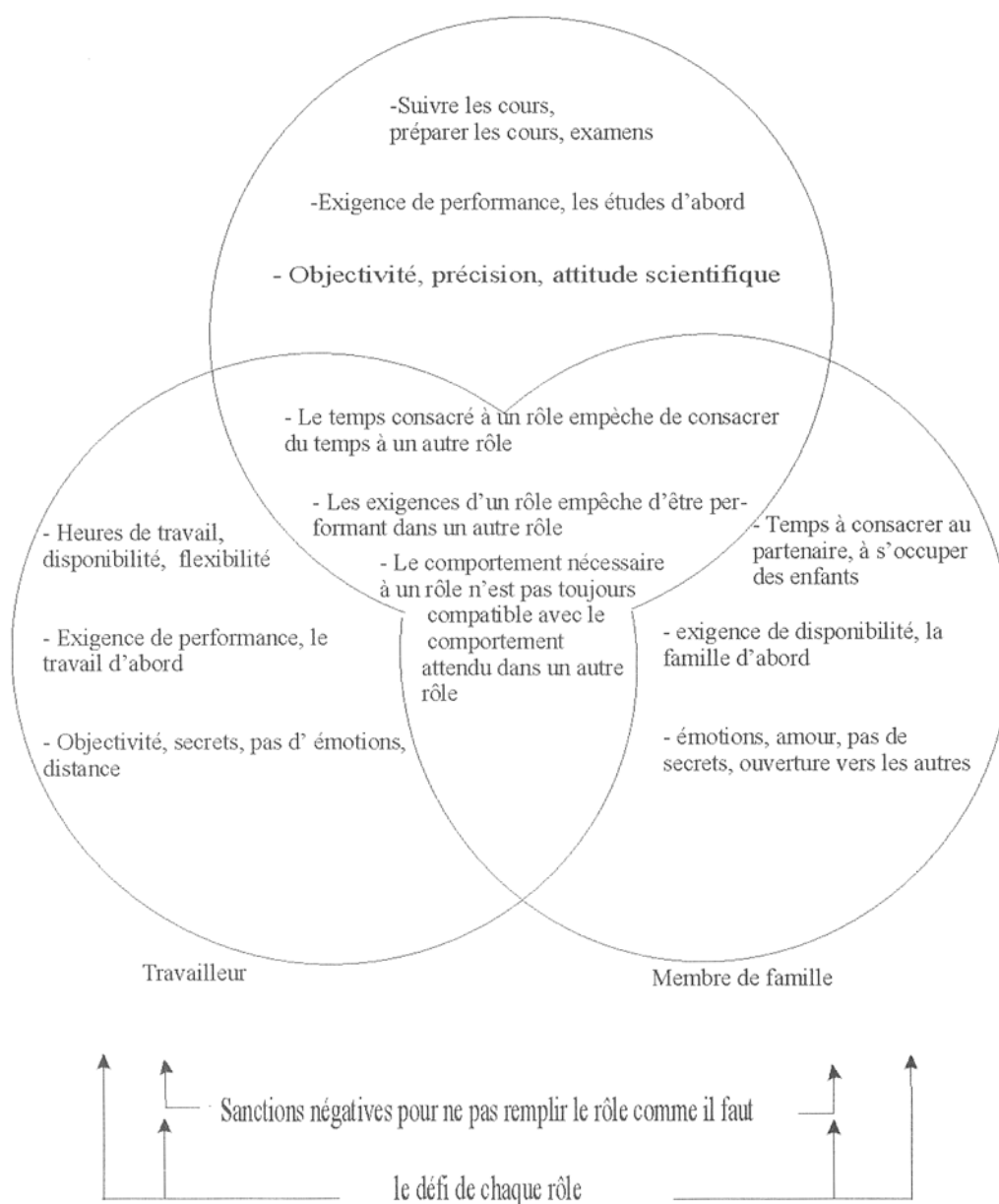
Un modèle sur les conflits de rôles a été développé par Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) dans le cadre du conflit qu'éprouvent les femmes au travail pour combiner les rôles d'employé et le rôle de membre d'une famille. Dans ce modèle, on distingue trois types de conflit (figure 1):

- conflit temporel: chaque rôle nécessite un certain temps qui n'est plus disponible pour un autre rôle;
- conflit lié aux exigences de rôles: les exigences de chaque rôle peuvent créer des tensions qui sont susceptibles d'influencer l'accomplissement de l'autre rôle;
- conflit de comportement: dans chaque rôle, un certain type (profil) de comportement est attendu. Ces types de comportement ne sont pas toujours compatibles.

Si l'on applique ce modèle à la situation des étudiants adultes, on arrive à une situation plus



## Étudiant



complexe puisque trois rôles sont impliqués. La situation peut se modéliser de la façon suivante:

### Asynchronisme dans le développement

Les conflits entre les rôles doivent aussi être placés dans le cadre du développement de l'adulte. Dans ce développement, on attend une certaine progres-

sion à travers des grands stades (Levinson, 1978; 1996). Sekeran & Hall (1989) ont analysé dans une perspective développementale des couples où les deux partenaires font carrière. La société en général, mais aussi les individus eux-mêmes, attendent que ce développement se déroule suivant un schéma bien défini dans le temps. En réalité, le développement de la carrière et de la famille ne



suit pas toujours les schémas espérés. À partir de ce moment, l'individu, l'environnement social, l'environnement de l'emploi ou la société en général ont la perception de ce qu'on appelle un *asynchronisme* dans le développement. Même dans une société post-moderne, la plupart des gens sont encore porteurs de schémas intuitifs, même si ces schémas ne sont plus adaptés à la réalité actuelle.

Entrer dans une situation d'asynchronisme crée des réactions *internes* (émotions comme le stress, etc.) et *externes* (des réactions négatives de la part de l'environnement qui sont souvent liées aux conflits temporels et aux exigences comportementales).

Dans le cas des étudiants adultes, il y a deux aspects du développement qui jouent un rôle important: le développement de la carrière et le développement de la famille (couple et enfants).

### Quels sont ces asynchronismes?

Dans la carrière:

- Des capacités qui ne correspondent pas à l'emploi actuel. Cette discordance devient encore plus nette une fois qu'on a obtenu le diplôme d'études supérieures.
- Le développement de la profession exercée a pris souvent du retard à cause des études.
- Après l'obtention du diplôme, on fait partie d'une classe d'âge qui est en décalage avec les jeunes diplômés.

Dans la famille:

- Retard dans la fondation d'une famille (mariage et désir d'enfants ont souvent été ajournés).

Des asynchronismes peuvent se développer entre les partenaires eux-mêmes. Citons comme exemples:

- le fait que les partenaires peuvent arriver à un niveau de diplôme asynchrone;
- le fait pour un des partenaires de dépasser le niveau de l'autre. Cette situation constitue encore dans notre société actuelle un problème d'importance si la femme dépasse l'homme sur ce plan.

La situation d'asynchronisme n'est pas si exceptionnelle que cela. Finalement, tous les couples où

les deux partenaires font carrière sont inévitablement confrontés à une situation d'asynchronisme. Si ce n'est pas dans le cadre du développement familial, ce sera dans celui du développement de carrière.

### Conclusions

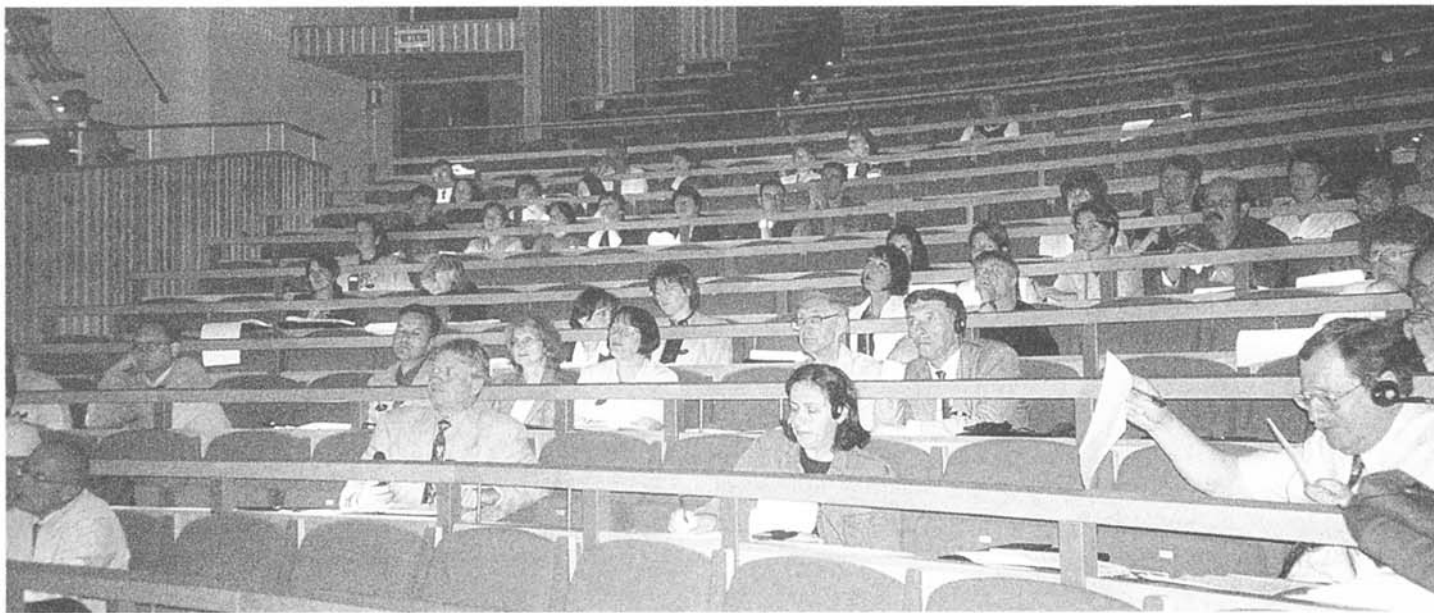
L'analyse de la situation des étudiants adultes et le cadre de référence théorique indiquent que dans la pratique de l'orientation et du counselling d'étudiants adultes, il est essentiel d'attacher une grande importance aux éléments suivants:

- aider ces étudiants à identifier leurs rôles et l'importance qu'ils y attachent. Ceci peut mener à une classification des rôles suivant l'importance;
- aider à identifier les conflits probables;
- aider à développer des stratégies de gestion de ces conflits;
- aider à faire comprendre que des problèmes d'asynchronisme vont se présenter et faire l'inventaire des asynchronismes probables;
- élaborer des stratégies pour faire face aux situations d'asynchronisme.

Le développement des projets de support de ce type exige de la part des conseillers des compétences spécifiques. Les conseillers doivent:

- avoir une bonne connaissance des systèmes de valeurs et des motivations de ce type d'étudiants;
- bien comprendre les modèles de développement des adultes, les concepts d'asynchronisme développemental et les problèmes liés à une surcharge de rôles;
- posséder une bonne connaissance des systèmes de support sociaux (réglementation légale sur les possibilités offertes de travail à horaire réduit, les systèmes de congés payés ou non-payés pour des raisons sociales, etc.), des services qui peuvent aider à alléger les exigences propres aux rôles familiaux (crèches, aide au pair, aide ménagère, etc.). Ceci en vue de développer des systèmes d'aide aux étudiants adultes pour une meilleure gestion de leurs conflits de rôles.





*L'amphithéâtre de l'Aula Magna.  
The Aula Magna auditorium.*

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# From Education to Employment:

## Enabling Disabled Students to Make the Transition to Work

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### Introduction

The purpose of this workshop was to demonstrate and discuss the **EmployAbility** package. This is on-line career management training for disabled students and graduates in the UK, Sweden and Greece, developed through a transnational pilot project co-ordinated by Coventry University<sup>1</sup>. The workshop also aimed to explore some of the issues that relate to, and impact on, the **EmployAbility** package.

### Principles and Training Needs

The project is concerned with the transition to employment of disabled graduates, and the preparation of disabled students for this transition. It responds to the fact that recent increases in the number of disabled people across Europe entering higher education are not reflected by equivalent numbers in professional-level employment.

Disabled job seekers are disadvantaged compared to their non-disabled peers; amongst other things, this can be due to lack of work experience, to employers' attitudes or misconceptions, and to problems caused by the need to constantly adapt to a changing job market.

The development of the **EmployAbility** package follows a number of key principles and responds to what the project team has identified as the needs of the package users in all three participating countries.

Although all students can benefit from career management training, training that specifically targets disabled people by focusing on particular issues and bringing together relevant resources is essential. This specificity can empower disabled users and help to redress some of the discrepancies

between disabled and non-disabled people in terms of career opportunities. It is also essential that training is available specifically for disabled graduates, as the experiences of people trying to access graduate-level employment are different from those accessing non-graduate work. There is increasing emphasis on the European job market; again, this creates particular training needs, and Pan-European training materials may be an appropriate way to cater for these.

User involvement has been a crucial element in the production of the **EmployAbility** package, and extensive piloting and consultation has ensured that the experiences, preferences and requirements of disabled students and graduates are incorporated. This includes needs in terms of website accessibility; efforts have been made, as far as funding has allowed, to make the website accessible to people with different disabilities. Provision includes: a non-framed version of the package; plain backgrounds; plain text; minimal images; *sans serif* fonts; short sections to minimise scrolling; clear structure and instructions to maximise ease of navigation.

The package has been designed in such a way as to allow flexible usage. Users can treat all the sections (see below) together or can concentrate on one, or some, if not all of them are relevant to them. Although designed to be used as open and distance learning material, parts of the package can also be used in a classroom/training situation.

### Research with Employers

Research was done with employers in the communication sector (including journalism, communication media, advertising, marketing, public relations, publishing, design, and cultural industries) in the UK, Greece and Sweden; this research primarily took the form of semi-structured telephone interviews, although some face-to-face interviews were also carried out. The findings were discussed with



relevant intermediaries concerned with disability and employment, in order to establish whether or not they concurred with the intermediaries' own experiences. This research informed the production of the EmployAbility package. Some of the research findings were as follows:

- There was a lack of experience of employing disabled people. The majority of employers did not have, nor had not had, any disabled employees; disabled *graduates* were particularly difficult to identify.
- There was a lack of knowledge amongst employers about legislation relating to the employment of disabled people; for example, in the UK many employers had heard of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) but few were aware of how it might impact on their own practices. There was a similar lack of knowledge about support, financial and otherwise, for both employers and disabled employees.
- Employers tended to focus on *extremes* of disability. For example, employers talked in terms of profound deafness and total blindness to the exclusion of people with some hearing or visual impairment. Similarly, for many employers disability entailed wheelchair use.
- There was a consistent focus on disability rather than ability.
- A significant number of employers emphasised that they would welcome a 'proactive' approach on behalf of disabled job seekers; in other words, they would like to be explicitly told both about a candidate's disability and abilities, as otherwise the lack of knowledge mentioned previously would be a barrier.
- Employers emphasised work experience as an indication of whether or not someone can do a job. If a candidate can show that they have already done something successfully an employer's misconceptions will be challenged. Obviously, this emphasis on work experience has ramifications for some disabled applicants.

There were differences between how employment systems operate in each country, as well as more general cultural and disability-related differences; however, in terms of the attitudes and barriers mentioned above findings were similar in all three countries.

## The EmployAbility Package<sup>2</sup>

There are three versions of **EmployAbility**: English, Greek and Swedish. Each version of the package has four sections, which can be used either individually or in conjunction with each other.

1. *Career Management*. Activities, information, Internet links and contacts designed to assist disabled people in recognising their skills and presenting them to potential employers, choosing an appropriate career, and negotiating job selection procedures. Particular attention is given to skills that disabled people might have developed as a result of their disability.
2. *Communication Industries*. Information about the nature of employment in the target sector, and advice about how to get into this area at professional levels. This section covers the benefits and challenges the sector might present to people with disabilities, and includes extensive links to related websites.
3. *European Mobility*. Issues associated with the European marketplace. Disabled people may have fewer opportunities for European mobility than their non-disabled peers; this section both aims to present work, study or training overseas as a viable option and to encourage people to respond to trends in the labour market by introducing a European element into their career without going to another country. As with the other sections, links to other relevant resources are included.
4. *Legislation, Benefits, Support & Advice*. Information for each country on employment rights, welfare benefits, financial and practical support available to disabled people, and sources of additional information and advice.

The UK versions of the four sections were demonstrated to workshop participants, as were the homepages of the Greek and Swedish versions. It can be seen that although the three versions do share a common framework they are very different, not only in terms of country-specific content, but also in terms of their style and physical design.



### Case Study One: Skills Audit

One of the main activities within the EmployAbility package is a 'tutorial' designed to enable users to recognise the full range of their skills and present them to an employer. Emphasis is placed on skills that have been developed in relation to the user's disability and which can counter lack of work experience and provide evidence of transferable skills.

At the beginning of the tutorial, users are invited to list all the skills that they think they have; these can be any skills at all, and no guidance is provided in order for users to complete this activity. Having completed this, there is material to read through in which different types of skills are presented; for each individual skill there are examples of ways in which it might have been developed, with reference to a range of disabilities. In addition, there is a breakdown of the skill in the language that an employer might use; this should provide guidance about how to phrase skills information in an application.

After having explored all the types of skills, users are given the opportunity to build up a detailed list of their own skills. First, they can explore one activity in terms of what they did and what the outcome was. Next, they can consider the skills that they used and developed in carrying out this activity. After this, they can build up lists of their skills according to different categories. Then, they can identify their strengths and weaknesses in terms of their skills profile. Finally, users are invited to review their skills by comparing their original list with the more extensive and sophisticated list that they now have. By the end of the tutorial, users should have something that they can refer to when making applications or putting a CV together. The need for redevelopment of this to be an ongoing process is stressed, as is the fact the skills auditing is an important skill in itself.

The self-identified skills, both before and after completing the tutorial, of one user were presented in the workshop. The user was a final-year UK student with a physical mobility impairment. The student's perceived skills and his 'evidence' for them, as catalogued prior to completing the EmployAbility tutorial, were:

- **Communication**

- Writing essays; writing to pen friends.*



*Second and third from left Amanda Crowfoot and Mike Adams*

- **Team Work**

- Summer camp.*

- **Organisation**

- Planning holiday with friends.*

- **Presentations**

- University presentations for economics course.*

It is interesting to note that these skills are all very general; no evidence of how a skill has been developed, or can be demonstrated, is related to the student's disability in any way. There is no evidence of any work experience and there is an emphasis on the student's degree course. The findings of the research with employers (summarised above) suggest that a skills profile of this type could, potentially, be problematic for this individual when seeking employment.

After completing the EmployAbility tutorial, the student's profile included the following skills and evidence:

- **Communication**

- Verbal: discussing personal assistance needs.*

- Written: correspondence about car adaptations.*

- **Negotiation**

- Agreeing finance for care package.*

- **Management**

- Managing helpers during the academic year.*

- **Assertiveness**

- Having to release one of helpers.*

- **Financial**

- Paying wages; dealing with tax and National Insurance.*

- **Listening**

- Helper needed to talk about personal problems.*

- **Problem Solving**

- Negotiation about lecture notes in advance; developing computer skills.*



This is not an exhaustive list of the skills catalogued; however, it can be seen that the profile of skills now includes many that are related to the student's disability. It can also be seen that there are work experience-related skills. Although the student does not have first-hand experience of being an employee, he *does* have first-hand experience of being an employer; few recent graduates have this type of employment experience. There is also evidence of other transferable skills that may be useful in securing graduate-level employment. Skills can be selected from the list as appropriate when applying for particular jobs.

### Case Study Two: European Mobility

The quotations below are taken from a case study, the full version of which appears on the EmployAbility website, written by a disabled student (now graduated) from the UK who spent one year in France; nine months of this was spent as an ERASMUS student, and three months was spent on work placement in a French company. The quotations illustrate some of the key points made in this section of the package, particularly in terms of the importance of thorough preparation and the potential benefits of a period overseas.

*"My course tutor got students who had already been there and they talked to us and told us about the places to go – that made a big difference."*

*"The advice that I'd give other people is to try to make a contact before you go away. It helps to have met them, like I did, and to have a telephone number, so you've got someone you can talk to and is willing to help."*

*"It's important to make sure that everyone's aware of your disability in advance."*

*"I just had the same problems which anyone faces, such as going shopping and not knowing the words. I had the problems of living in a different country and culture."*

*"I think that I'm more confident now."*

*"My stay in France was not always easy, but*

*it was certainly an excellent experience and I made friends with French and other foreign students from all over the world. I now have a much broader outlook as well as being fluent in French."*

### Cultural Adaptation

One of the key elements of the project that has resulted in the development of EmployAbility has been the cultural adaptation of material. The Swedish and Greek versions of the package are not simply translations of the UK version; rather, their content has been adapted to reflect the needs of users in each country. On an obvious level, this means that the practical information given is different in each country, but, the three versions also reflect more subtle differences, both of culture generally and of approaches to disability issues.

Differences have been identified between the three countries in terms of the support available for disabled students and job seekers, as well as in terms of recruitment practices. In Greece, the low number of disabled people in higher education has resulted in an additional section covering transition *into* higher education, as well as out of it. There are differences in the amount of information available to disabled students and graduates, with much more being available in the UK than in Greece or Sweden; methods of accessing information also differ.

In terms of European mobility, discrepancies between the UK and other European countries have been identified; in the UK, people tend to be less competent in foreign languages and less likely to travel overseas to study or work. Consequently, it has been necessary to promote the idea of European mobility more thoroughly in the UK version, and to present preparation issues from a slightly different perspective.

Although there are significant differences between the three versions of EmployAbility, much of the information is generic and relevant to users regardless of nationality; an example of this is the skills audit mentioned above. Parts of the site can be used by people not from the UK, Greece or Sweden; with cultural adaptation the package could be of even greater benefit to disabled students and graduates across Europe.



## Feedback

Discussion amongst workshop participants provided reinforcement for the idea that much of the package could be of use to people outside Greece and Sweden in its present form. Much positive feedback was received, both about the package as it was demonstrated and its potential for the future. In particular, the idea of disabled graduates capitalising on the skills that they have developed as a result of their disability was welcomed. The career advantages of European mobility, and the possibility of using mobility experiences as a way of countering employers' misconceptions, were also brought into the discussion.

The findings of research with employers in the UK, Greece and Sweden concurred with workshop participants' experiences. Although the focus of this research was European countries, where little equivalent work has been done, it was pointed out that related work has been completed in the US and that it might be useful to compare findings.

Some concerns about the accessibility of the site for people using screen reading software were raised. However, it was explained that the 'non frames' option would be available very soon.

We are extremely grateful for all feedback. As we are keen to ensure that any redevelopment of

the package reflects the needs and opinions of the target users and relevant professionals, we would very much welcome further comment, by way of the evaluation forms distributed at the workshop, through the feedback facility on the website, or to us directly.

## FOOTNOTES

1/ *Employment, Disability and Europe: the Emergence of New Labour Markets* is a three-year project under the European Commission LEONARDO DA VINCI programme. The Partner organisations are: Coventry University (UK); University of Karlstad (Sweden); University of the Aegean (Greece); Warwickshire Rural Enterprise Network (UK); Zographou Municipal Enterprise of Development (Greece); Skill (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, UK). In association with the National Co-ordinator for Students with Disabilities, Sweden.

2/ The EmployAbility package can be found on-line at [www.nrec.org.uk/employability](http://www.nrec.org.uk/employability). All three versions can be accessed from here. Paper-based summaries of each version are available; these support the on-line package by providing key information and detailing additional sources of support and advice.



*Up front Derek Child and Maria Gruvstad.*



# The Open University – Equality and Quality at a Distance

DEREK CHILD & RALPH KEATS

The Open University, U.K.

## Introduction

The Open University has pioneered a multimedia open learning system that has brought its courses within the reach of the entire adult population of the UK and indeed Western Europe. The OU way of study is an integrated mix of correspondence texts, radio and television programmes, audio and video cassettes, computing and computer mediated communication, residential schools, 'home kits' for practical work on Science and Technology courses, and teaching and counselling support delivered at a distance by 8000 teaching staff and at 300 study centres throughout the UK and Western Europe.

Anyone living in the UK or in any other European Union country aged 18 or over can apply for a place on an OU course. Most OU courses, including those in a BA and BSc degree programmes, do not require formal academic qualifications for entry. There is currently some 300 OU courses available leading to over 60 OU academic qualifications. Our current total student population is 160,000 of whom 6,400 (4%) are disabled.

About 150 disabled students in other EU countries were studying OU courses in 1999. Those with the most OU students were the Irish Republic (77), Holland (12), Germany (9), France (9), Belgium (8) and Spain (8). Sweden, alas, had only one.

## Open University Disabled Student Policy

Although it has long been an equal opportunities institution, the OU first adopted a formal Equal Opportunities Policy in 1990. This gave expression to an aim "to create the conditions whereby students and staff are treated solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of gender,

colour, ethnic or national origin, age, socio-economic background, disability, religious or political beliefs, family circumstances, sexual orientation or any other irrelevant distinction". The policy included participation targets for under-represented groups like women and those with low previous educational qualifications. Targets were not set for disabled students because they were not thought necessary at the time.

The University's current policy towards disabled students states that it will:

- provide personal advice and counselling for individual disabled enquirers, applicants and students;
- give explicit consideration to the accessibility of new courses to disabled students, both in relation to course design and to the approval of patterns of teaching and assessment;
- provide a range of direct support for disabled students;
- aim to negotiate barrier-free physical access to face-to-face teaching and student support opportunities at study centres and residential school sites;
- aim to provide training and development opportunities for all staff (including associate lecturers) to support the development of awareness and skills in meeting the needs of disabled students.

## Major National Developments

Disabled student provision in UK higher education is going through a period of radical change in respect of new Government policies and legislation. Key national developments include:

### The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

In spite of its shortcomings, the Act was instrumental in establishing a legislative basis for combating all forms of discrimination against disabled people. The Labour Government is committed to



strengthening its powers through the establishment of a National Disability Commission. Although education was specifically excluded from the scope of the 1995 Act, regulations have been tightened. For example, all UK universities are now required, as a condition of continued public funding, to publish every 3 years a Disability Statement setting out their policy, current services and future plans for disabled students.

### **The Report of the Dearing Committee 1997**

This set out an ambitious programme of major reforms in the UK higher education system. The Government accepted many of its key recommendations including a commitment to widening the participation of disadvantaged groups including disabled people.

### **New public funding policies for higher education institutions**

The various Government bodies which control the public funding of UK higher education institutions (including the OU) will be introducing new funding policies in the next two years which will include additional recurrent money specifically earmarked for disabled students in recognition of their extra support costs. Currently it is left to each institution to decide for itself how much of its public grant it allocates to disabled student provision. These new policies also include special initiative money for the development and dissemination of good practice across the sector and collaboration between institutions in disabled student services.

### **Promotion of a base-level or minimum level of provision**

Following a major study in 1998, the main UK higher education funding councils have issued a report to all universities recommending adoption of a minimum level of service provision for disabled students. The OU comfortably meets this 'base-level' definition. The general adoption of an agreed minimum level of support should make a major contribution to raising standards nationally and in time compliance may be linked to public funding.

### **Mandatory grants to individual part-time disabled students**

Full time disabled students have for a number of years received substantial grants through public

funds towards the extra costs of higher education arising from their disability. These grants have covered specialist equipment e.g. a computer with a synthetic speech output system and non-medical support e.g. sign language interpreter. It now seems likely that within the next twelve months these grants - known as Disabled Students' Allowances - will be extended to part-time disabled students in higher education. OU students will be major beneficiaries.

### **Quality assurance code of practice on disabled students**

A Government agency has recently published a Quality Assurance Code of Practice which all higher education institutions in the UK are expected to implement by Autumn 2000.

After years of inactivity and neglect, the external environment in the UK is now particularly conducive to the development of properly resourced, high quality services for disabled students in higher education.

### **Disability Statistics**

The OU's approach to the definition of disability and the information it collects on disabled students is essentially needs-based. We have moved away from the old discredited 'medical model' in which disproportionate effort was wasted on investigating and recording the medical circumstances of disabled students to one in which the emphasis is on identifying needs and doing our best to meet them with appropriate facilities and services.

However, the UK government insists on having statistics on disabled students by type of disability. So we have devised a disability classification system based on broad functional areas such as 'Sight', 'Hearing', 'Mobility' and 'Speech'. This information is collected at enrolment through our regional network and recorded on a corporate student database for internal and external use.

The following tables may be of interest.

Table 1 shows OU disabled students by disability type for the 1998 / 99 academic year. (Because many students have more than one disability, the total number of disability types shown in the table is greater than the total number of disabled students).



**Table 1: Disabled Students by Disability Type (1998/99)**

		%
Sight	876	5.8
Hearing	693	4.6
Mobility	3112	20.4
Manual skills	1671	11.0
Speech	234	1.5
Dyslexia	895	5.9
Mental health	1203	7.9
Personal care	303	2.0
Fatigue / pain	3729	24.5
Other	2510	16.5
<b>All</b>	<b>15226</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The largest group - those described as experiencing fatigue and pain (1 in 4 of all recorded disabilities) probably receive the fewest services (i.e. materials and equipment) but will get consideration in other ways such as being allocated a ground floor bedroom at a residential summer school or extra time to complete an assignment or examination. The size of the 'Other' category (16.5% of the total) suggests that our classification system might need refining.

**Table 2: Disabled Students by Academic Subject Area (1998/99)**

		%
Arts	1865	25.4
Business Studies	233	3.2
Education	394	5.4
Health and Social Welfare	597	8.1
Mathematics and Computing	1100	15.0
Modern Languages	257	3.5
Science	943	12.9
Social Sciences	1416	19.3
Technology	529	7.2
<b>All</b>	<b>7334</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most disabled students register for Arts and Social Science courses though there are reasonable numbers in Mathematics and Science. It would be interesting to compare these figures with other European universities.

**Table 3: Disabled Students by OU UK Region (1998/99)**

		%
London	725	11.4
South (Oxford)	619	9.7
South West (Bristol)	550	8.6
West Midlands (Birmingham)	462	7.2
East Midlands (Nottingham)	422	6.6
East Anglia (Cambridge)	789	12.4
Yorkshire (Leeds)	362	5.7
North West (Manchester)	534	8.4
North (Newcastle)	333	5.2
Wales (Cardiff)	316	5.0
Scotland (Edinburgh)	491	7.7
N. Ireland (Belfast)	205	3.2
South East (East Grinstead)	568	8.9

The towns in brackets are the OU regional administrative centres. East Anglia, London and the South have the largest OU disabled student populations.

**Table 4: Disabled Student Service Provision (1997/98)**

Tapes (in place of printed texts)	715
Transcripts of broadcasts and cassettes	730
Comb-bound materials	550
Personal radio aids	112
Interpreters etc.	37
Access Technology	59
PCs with WP software	49
Talking calculators	50
Text telephones	30
Hearing support at residential schools	27
Special format examination papers	491
Special format examination answers	708
Students requiring:	
– an assistant at summer school	204
– a special allocation at summer school (that is, for provision of appropriate facilities)	1110



## **Alternative Media Course Materials**

The alternative media course materials include:

- Audio cassette versions of printed course texts: the University has a 6 booth Audio Recording Centre at its Milton Keynes headquarters where academic and administrative texts are recorded by unpaid volunteer readers for the OU's 900 print disabled students who use the service. 150 courses are available on tape and each year the University sends out over 80,000 cassettes to students.
- Comb-bound printed course material: for students with weak arms or hands who find conventionally bound material difficult to use.
- Subtitled television programmes and videos: provided through an arrangement with the BBC.
- Printed transcripts of radio and television programmes and audio and video cassettes: for deaf students and those who are hard of hearing.
- Tactile versions of diagrams and other complex but essential graphical images from course texts: for blind students who cannot access the information they contain in any other way.
- Word, ASCII floppy disk or CD-ROM versions of printed course material: for students to access through Braille, synthetic speech or screen enlargement. You may also be interested to learn we have just introduced a new service that provides synchronised digital text and human voice audio versions of printed study material for print disabled students. This material is provided on CD-ROM with navigational software for locating names, pages, paragraphs or whole print items in the structured material. We call the new service ReadOut and have high hopes it will replace analogue tape in the next 5 years.

## **Equipment Loan Schemes**

We provide students with a wide range of equipment on extended free loan including radio hearing aid systems, text telephones, 'talking' programmable calculators, Typetalk (i.e. a voice and text telephone communication facility developed by British Telecom), APH cassette recorders and PCs and modems.

## **Access Technology Loan Scheme**

This scheme is unique in UK higher education. It is basically a service that provides comprehensive support for severely disabled students who need assistive technology to study with maximum independence. The scheme provides needs assessments, the free loan of general IT and a wide range of assistive technology, equipment installation in students' homes, and training and ongoing support. Examples of equipment provided include PCs, printers, voice recognition software, text magnification software, screen readers and synthesisers, enhanced keyboard software, scanners, OCR software and CCTVs. The scheme is run in partnership with a consortium of some 30 other UK colleges specialising in disability support known collectively as the National Federation of Access Centres (NFAC). It also receives financial support from the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB).

## **Communication Support Staff**

Deaf and hard of hearing students are provided with interpreters, lipspeakers, notetakers, and room loops at tutorials, day schools and residential schools.

## **Residential Preparatory Courses**

We run two residential weekend courses for visually impaired students and hard of hearing/deaf students at the start of each academic year to help new undergraduates prepare for their first year of OU study. Activities include needs analysis, training on basic study skills and strategies, equipment exhibitions and training for OU tutors who also attend.

## **Examinations and Assessment Facilities**

Facilities available to students for completion of written assignments, examinations and other forms of course assessment include alternative format question papers, submission of assignments on audio cassette, home-based examinations, rest breaks, extra time, amanuenses, alternative format examination answers (Braille, tape, disk) and examinations taken over more than one day.



### **Residential School Facilities**

Some 60 OU courses have residential schools of various types. As sites are leased from other academic institutions, physical accessibility for disabled students can vary considerably. However, the OU does its best to facilitate access to residential schools through a range of facilities which include personal assistants, wheelchair accessible teaching and residential accommodation, over 100 different types of study and domestic equipment and communication support for hard of hearing / deaf students.

### **Student and Tutor Support Materials**

We have developed a wide range of materials to support students with specific disabilities. There are resource materials, for example, which address the educational needs of students who are visually impaired, hard of hearing / deaf, dyslexic and who have mental health difficulties. These are designed for use by tutors as well as students.

### **Open University Students Association**

There is a very active Students Association which provides valuable support to disabled students in the form of financial assistance through an educational trust and volunteers who assist as readers, drivers and helpers at residential schools.

### **Quality Assurance**

For the most part, the OU's quality assurance procedures for disabled student services are reasonably effective. At institutional level, the Advisory Committee on Disabled Students monitors student registration, retention and course completion rates.

Academic units have to consult the Office for Students with Disabilities when proposing new courses to ensure that disabled student needs are taken into account in course design, development and presentation. However, they are not as yet obliged to make all their material and study activities accessible to disabled students as a condition of new course funding and approval, although this is our objective.

Most OU regions annually survey their disabled

students to check if the previous year's provision has been appropriate to their needs and of acceptable quality.

The Office for Students with Disabilities routinely uses feedback questionnaires for its main services that yield operational data that is then used to improve existing provision.

There is a Student Research Centre that carries out in-depth research into key institutional concerns. Four years ago, for example, it conducted a major investigation into mental health involving a large sample of students and tutors. The resulting data proved extremely useful in enabling the University to improve its provision in what was previously a neglected area.

Disabled student services have been an important area of enquiry for Government sponsored external quality reviews of academic subject areas. For example, there was a recent external quality audit of the OU's Psychology courses, which rated student support systems as 'Excellent'.

### **Future Challenges**

As we enter the new Millennium, we face many new challenges to the way in which we teach and support our disabled students. Some may be unique to the OU, but many will find echoes in other educational institutions. Our main concerns are likely to include the following:

#### **A changing external environment**

Government policies, new funding systems, competition between educational providers and shifting attitudes - particularly among disabled people themselves - will increase pressures on the OU and other institutions to be more client-centred and professional in their provision.

#### **Growth in student numbers**

The injection of significant extra public money to students and universities planned in the next 2 years will result in a major increase in the number of disabled students entering higher education. The proportion of OU students who are disabled is not particularly high (about 4% currently). This could well double in the next 2-3 years. It remains to be seen how the OU's teaching, production and logistical systems will cope with up to 12,000 disabled students.



### **More flexible study modes**

The OU is increasingly aware that it has to adapt to the needs of a changing market if it wishes to maintain its leading position in the sector.

Current initiatives include Access Courses for students with minimal previous study experience and more flexible presentation of OU BA and BSc courses.

### **Curriculum development**

The Office for Students with Disabilities and the EO Unit encourage academic faculties and schools to integrate disability access into new course design and development. We urge, cajole and implore, but cannot compel academic staff to comply. The result is that for some courses disability access needs are ignored, for others access is an expensive 'add-on' provided after a course has been running for at least one year. Fortunately, the services most students need are appropriate across a wide range of courses.

### **Effective exploitation of IT**

The OU has a Technology Strategy designed to keep it at the forefront of IT led innovations in course design, teaching and student support. Computer communication networks are routinely used by over 30,000 students on 50 courses for teaching, submission of electronic assignments, access to Multimedia and Internet facilities, student self-help groups - but in this explosion of new development not enough attention has been paid to the needs of disabled students and there is a lot we need to do.

### **Mainstream versus separate provision**

Finally our present organisational structure is a somewhat uneasy compromise between mainstream and separate models of provision, which makes planning and effective deployment of resources more difficult than they should be. We must resolve this issue if we are to provide quality services cost-effectively.



# Experiences for Job Search and Career Development – a Gender Perspective

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## Introduction

The workshop started with the presentation of one particular training model – named “Urakiri” – used in programmes run by the Learning and Research Services (LRS) Unit of the University of Oulu in Finland.

The University of Oulu has 13 000 students, five faculties and 30 degree programmes. As part of the student services, a special career guidance unit has been operating for some five years, financed by the Ministry of Education. This unit caters both to undergraduates and recent graduates at the university.

Career guidance has also been a part of further education programmes for unemployed graduates, organised by LRS – formerly known as the Continuing Education Centre – since 1978. While the focus was previously on specific vocational education programmes, the career aspect has grown in importance since the early 1990s and all programmes now include career guidance modules and support for effective job search activities. A number of programmes, moreover, have dealt exclusively with job search and career development issues. Most of these programmes are financed by the Ministry of Work more recently also with support from the Ministry of Education.

The Urakiri programme mentioned above is one of the activities within the Synergy project, an umbrella programme for unemployed academic job-seekers introduced in 1997. This programme is maintained by ESF funds, with additional funding from the City of Oulu. The Urakiri programme represents a new model in which flexibility and individualisation are the mainstay of planning. The first programme lasted nine (9) months, the second only four (4) months; both programmes took place in 1999.

## Urakiri – a programme to kick-start your career

Urakiri is an activity programme designed to support unemployed graduates in their career planning and job search. Specifically, it seeks to combine the benefits of guidance in these two areas with flexible training options to develop new professional skills and/or experience. The programme consists of both group and individual activities, including plenary sessions, group training, small-group assignments, individual job search activities, individual project work, trainee-ships, and participation in training offered by other providers.

Tools used for guidance are face-to-face consultation and a web-based learning environment developed at LRS (for more information on the TELSI Pro environment, see <http://oyt.oulu.fi/telsi-info>). TELSI offers tools for documentation and joint document creation as well as an internal mail facility. The participants also maintain their learning logs on the web, so that tutors can give immediate feedback and support when needed.

In the Urakiri programme, the basic tool used by each participant is a career-planning work-book that helps participants to analyse a) their professional and personal starting-point, b) the situation in the job market, and c) their strategies for professional and career development. On the basis of the analysis generated by the workbook, individual needs in terms of training and professional experience are identified and ways sought to meet these needs.

Most of the Urakiri participants are women: in the first programme, 14 of the 15 participants were women. The group activities seem to be of particular relevance to female participants. According to feedback from participants, both the experience of co-operation and the feedback received within the group seem to play an important role in the programme. The group activities offered a chance to share, to give and get support,



to challenge and be challenged. They also provided an environment for the acquisition of new skills. Especially young mothers after their maternity leave, people new to the Oulu region – whether Finns or foreigners – and women active in predominantly male professions benefited from the new information, new perspectives and new points of view – both theoretical and experience-based – provided by tutors and other participants of the course.

Another factor affecting women in particular is personal scheduling. In many cases, a programme running over several months challenges them to rethink and reorganise their life. Time has to be found to enter fully into job search activities, starting with self-examination and reflection, and going on to concrete planning, active networking and the writing of applications. Participants have to learn to value themselves and their needs in order to find the necessary time by reorganising family routines. Especially for young mothers, this seems to be a major challenge. Does the family tradition value a mother working outside the home? Does the husband see the importance of an active job search? What kind of child-care is available, either from the social services or the family's private network?

### **The gender perspective in career development and job search**

In the workshop, a mind-map detailing the key aspects of career development and job search was handed out to participants as the basis for small group discussion on experiences with different client groups. Participants were asked to consider if they had observed any gender-based differences concerning needs and/or ways of operating in career guidance processes. To provide a framework for discussion, guidance work was placed in the context of wider socio-economic systems, under the following headings:

1. personality
2. education
3. phase of life/life-cycle
4. job market
5. working life.

Basic questions from a gender perspective could be the following:

- Do the “systems and processes” mentioned above afford similar conditions and opportunities to every individual in terms of career self-management?
- Are there structural – overt or covert – differences in terms of conditions and opportunities?

If so, are both partners in a guidance situation aware of the general “phenomena and rules” which might be relevant also to their own specific case?

A review of articles from scientific magazines suggests the following aspects should be considered:

#### **Personality**

What kind of cultural conditioning has affected your life? Have there been family expectations for your life and career? What are the experiences on which your self-image and self-confidence rests? What kind of values and motivational anchors have you developed in your life? What were/are your expectations – which are your career anchors?

Has your personal growth rested more on individual or on gender-based values? Have your ideas, goals and talents found expression in your personal choices?

#### **Education**

How and why did you choose this subject or this course of study? Does this education confer professional status or is it more along the lines of a general diploma or knowledge? What opportunities/options do you see for exploiting your education? What are your strengths? Does your educational background render “respect” and a good professional network?

Are there any weaknesses, such as a lack of self-marketing skills?

Beyond these basic questions – is there another level? Does the culture of the profession/field/sector in question rest on gender-based values? Is either of the genders over-represented? Are there signs of differential career development for men and women?



### **Phase of life / lifecycle**

What career support do you get from your family/ significant others in your life? Is there any support for new choices and opportunities? What limitations are there? What are the conditions that you create in your mind – consciously or unconsciously – and what are the real conditions? Are you aware of the mental models you use; have you shaped them yourself or are they someone else's?

### **Job market**

What is the job market like in your environment? What about non-traditional forms of employment? What do you know about part-time work, flexible working hours, project work, self-employment? What are the opportunities and threats in the job market for you now? What kind of tasks and challenges are career (core) staff in your field dealing with?

How does the “non-traditional” job market affect women and men? What are the differences in your local environment and in your profession?

### **Work life / Work style**

Flexibility, expectations, networks, teams, salary, work values, entrepreneurship, development possibilities all need to be considered. Organisations differ in many ways, and a lot of work is required to find a work environment where individual and organisational needs meet.

What are the explicit and implicit rules in this field and in this specific organisation? Who gets most opportunities for development and promotion? Who is most valued and who gets paid the most?

### **Awareness helps the process**

It is one of the goals of career guidance to enhance awareness of differences in opportunities and options: to help participants develop a more realistic point of view and a way of coming to terms with possibly painful experiences. A heightened awareness thus forms the basis for self-management and individual career management. This also includes awareness of a gender perspective on education, personality, lifecycle, job-market and work-life.

### **Workshop discussion – a selection of issues raised**

#### **The glass ceiling**

This was generally held to exist in most European

Countries. There seems to be a point when the career advancement of female academics comes to a halt or runs into difficulties. In Finland, the statistics show that this usually occurs after the completion of the doctoral thesis and conferring of the Ph.D. degree. Tools to prevent and/or minimise the risk might be active, conscious, goal-oriented networking during university studies, combined with mentoring in the workplace.

### **Written applications**

As one participant reported, gender-based differences may be observed in the paper selection of candidates: when new staff was recruited in the participant's organisation, the 10 top-ranked applications were all written by female candidates, although both men and women had applied for the position.

### **Attitude and starting point**

Women seem to perceive a greater need for guidance. Similar experiences of this phenomenon were reported by participants from the Netherlands and Greece. Overall, the attitude of men and women seems to be different; while male clients ask: “What can you do for me?”, women more often start by asking: “I'm not sure, could we talk about...?”

This has also been the experience of the staff at the career services unit in Oulu. When asked: “Is there a difference in your work depending on the sex of the client?”, the answers were mixed.

An experienced male counsellor put it this way: “Guidance is in the first place always a personal/ individual encounter. The first step is usually to ask, ‘What is your question? Why did you come to the career guidance unit?’ In my opinion this is where the gender differences come in. Women start more often by talking about their life in a holistic way: family-work-children. If the career hasn't always gone as expected, women may give their gender as a possible explanation – ‘maybe that was why I wasn't successful / why I wasn't selected’. Men seem to be more focused in their career questions. On the other hand, failures seem to cause deeper crises for male students/graduates, undermining their self-confidence. In my experience men, especially older (30+), also seem to find it more difficult to talk about themselves or take in personal feedback. And whereas most women seem to be quite flexible about trying something new, with an attitude of



'Why not - I've nothing to loose', men need more pushing and a more forceful approach."

A younger female career adviser responded quite differently: "Why ask about differences? Girls are girls, and boys are boys, they're different, of course, but what matters is their individual situation!"

One point of agreement arising from the discussion was the influence of age on gender issues. While there seemed to be obvious gender-based differences, these seem to become less pronounced in the younger generation.

### **Is it all only communication?**

As stated above, most of the participants of the career guidance programmes run by the Learning and Research Services unit at Oulu University are women. Why is that? Statistically, there is more male unemployment in the Oulu area.

During the Fedora Summer University a new angle on this phenomenon emerged. As a colleague from France explained: "At one particular university, one of the courses had mainly female partici-

pants. The teachers where concerned about this phenomenon. During next term the title and information material about the course where changed to a more performance-oriented and slightly more aggressive style. As a result, a better balance between the sexes was achieved, although the content was unchanged."

### **Summary**

How far can and should we be aware of a gender perspective in our everyday communication, in general, and in guidance transactions in particular? In mentoring, it is taken as a fact that women and men differ in their ways of thinking and speaking, in problem-solving and in decision-making, as well as in their way of organising and getting organised. No one in a counselling situation is immune to the effects of traditional stereotypes. A lot of awareness raising and practical experience is needed to better understand the role and behaviour patterns of the opposite gender. How do guidance professionals respond to this challenge?



# Counselling Interventions for the Development of Personal Transferable Skills

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## Introduction

This workshop focussed on how we, as counsellors, may be able to help students build the Personal Transferable Skills which graduate employers have identified as being needed in the workplace.

In order to examine the topic, the workshop was organised on practical lines and involved interaction of participants in identifying: 'What do we do?' and 'How do we do it?'

In three separate sections the workshop sought to tackle the following issues.

## Counselling Interventions

### Future Models

Firstly, the need to focus on future models of counselling. This included the development of self-awareness and empowerment, the acceptance and preparation for uncertainty and ambiguity together with the benefits of a partnership approach. It was suggested that current models for counselling may have moved from the authoritarian models of the past to person-centred Rogerian models currently in vogue. Some reservations were expressed that some modern counselling may be sedative rather than stimulating and may not utilize maximally the resources of learner, educator and 'what is known' in order to equip the learner in a rapidly changing environment. A further observation was that the growth of the person necessarily involves socialization and the development of interpersonal competencies. Rapid changes in technology requires that 'learning to learn' is necessary if the learner is to adapt to change and utilize developments maximally.

In taking this hard look at counselling, the group noted the need to question our assumptions at what

we do, how we do it and why we do it. How do we then reconstruct a theoretical framework to underpin our work? This may help us to again define the purposes of our counselling interventions; also how to achieve the desired outcomes and the appropriate counselling interventions.

### What skills are sought?

Secondly, the workshop sought to identify what skills are sought. What are the personal transferable skills that are being sought, that are being developed, that ought to be developed and the, by now, standard formulation of communications skills (both verbal and written), and the team-working and problem solving skills (including numeracy and information technology skills)? The managing/organizing skills was added by the group. Among the additions were the important attributes of self-reliance, adaptability/flexibility and 'choosing' competencies. A reading list on this topic was supplied to the participants (see below).

### Staff Appraisal

The third section of the workshop discussed the method of delivery of educational interventions designed to develop these skills. While counselling interventions of a one-to-one or small group type have been the norm, it was noted that some careers education programmes are now integrated within the academic framework and content of coursework with accreditation involved, in some instances. In other cases, the interventions were of a more informal, elective basis. It was stressed, however, that the interventions must be of high quality; must 'add value', and must be stimulating. The group went on to explore other ways in which these competencies may be developed. In addition to counselling interventions, it was felt that much could be learned and 'value added' from the area of **Staff Appraisal**. While the older version of performance review was considered, it was felt that 'future oriented staff-appraisal' approaches had much to



recommend them. They would involve a focus on future goals and keeping a record of achievement of these goals.

### **Mentoring**

Some examples of Mentoring were also discussed. Some organizations have a 'mentor scheme' for their new graduate recruits. This effectively means that the graduate has a non-threatening relationship with an experienced person assigned as 'mentor'. This is in-addition to the normal line management structure and established training and induction scheme. In this area, the use of Alumni Networks is seen as a fruitful area for the development of mentors for university students.

### **Work Experience**

The benefits of work experience for undergraduates were explored. It was noted that in some instances, there is now a structured 'one year' relevant work experience built into undergraduate programmes. In other cases, such as the older universities, the merits of unstructured summer vacation placements, such as those arranged internationally by AIESEC and IAESTE, were mentioned. The issue of relevant work experience as a requirement in future courses was raised and considered.

Some of the foregoing suggestions were seen as very useful in shaking off any complacency that may naturally develop in coursework over the years. They may help professionals, especially counsellors, to share in the excitement of exploring a new and, for most European countries, a much better world.

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# Guidance and Counselling in Relation to Socio-economically Deprived Students

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## 1. The basic idea of the workshop

The student body is gradually becoming more multicultural and heterogeneous. Appropriate guidance and counselling must, therefore, concentrate on the biography of each individual student. Social deprivation is one of the factors that give rise to heterogeneity of a particular kind. Thus it is important that the ability to deal with social differences in the background and status of students should be reinforced within the general scope of guidance and counselling.

In the 60s and 70s social differences among students was a topic for open discussion at the universities. The opening of universities to those classes that had rarely been represented there was expressly supported. It seems nowadays that efforts to achieve a balance are decreasing. Within the widespread expansion of universities in Europe the topic of deprived students is in danger of being neglected again.

In the 90s, disregarding social and economic inequality may have particularly negative consequences, as important changes and developments are affecting universities at the moment. University fees are likely to be raised in some countries and students are confronted with a constantly rising pressure to work effectively. It is, then, important to focus on questions like "How can students of all classes and social status be integrated?" and "Will everybody be able to cope with the pressure and to adapt?"

The workshop consisted of two theoretical and two interactive parts. I first commented on general social and economic conditions among students in Europe, using the German student body as an example for European countries as a whole. After the presentation of the relevant facts and figures,

participants were asked to discuss the situation of students in various countries. Some key concepts for adequate professional guidance and counselling of socio-economically deprived students were introduced. These concepts took into account aspects of the academic environment as well as personal factors of the students concerned. In the final discussion participants evaluated the concepts that had been presented and exchanged experiences on the matter.

## 2. Accounts of social and economic conditions among students in Europe

### 2.1 Social conditions

#### 2.1.1 The social composition of the student body

A steady increase in student numbers in all European countries in recent years has led to the establishment of a more heterogeneous student body. Data on the German student body indicate that the social composition is mainly determined by students with a very high, high or average social status. Students with a low social status are in a minority: out of 100 children from a working-class background only 12 will enter university, whereas more than 70 out of 100 children with an average, high or very high social status will do so.

#### 2.1.2 Educational background

In all European countries, it seems, the educational pattern is self-recruiting. Students whose parents graduated from university will enter university more easily than those whose parents' education ended at the secondary level or below.

#### 2.1.3 Social status

In addition to a student's educational background, social status is likely to influence the educational career in terms of choice of studies. According to a German research, the question of studying medicine rather than engineering, for example, clearly depends on social status. Far more students with



a lower social status will study engineering than medicine, law, economics or languages and the humanities.

#### **2.1.4 Influence on levels of education**

Education depends on social structure, socialisation, motivation and selection within the educational system.

### **2.2 Economic conditions**

#### **2.2.1 Monthly income for students**

Facts available on the monthly income of German students prove the existence of an unbridgeable gap: the general monthly income varies from 600 DM to 2000 DM. As for Germany, one has to make a distinction between students in the old and new states of the federation: average income is 1300 DM for students in the old and 1030 DM for those in the new states (new states = former German Democratic Republic).

#### **2.2.2 Composition of monthly income**

The income of most students consists for the most part of financial support from parents and money from jobs or maintenance grants. Less frequently, savings, financial support from relatives/acquaintances, orphan's allowance, financial support from a partner, scholarships or loans contribute to the monthly income.

### **3. Concepts for adequate professional guidance and counselling**

#### **3.1 Diagnostic factors**

##### **3.1.1 Key role of the academic environment**

It is important to keep in mind that students manage more or less successfully to adapt to an academic environment. Feelings of deprivation may be related to the willingness of accepting a different financial and social situation. Furthermore, integration into academic culture may alienate students from their personal background: some students may feel like foreigners having to adapt to a different culture.

##### **3.1.2 Personal factors**

Apart from integrating into new surroundings and accepting a different social and financial status, students frequently have to deal with developmental tasks. A consideration of the personal situation is inevitable if a student is struggling with issues of

academic competence and achievement or showing signs of homesickness and identity problems. It is important that the counsellor should detect and articulate these aspects in order to provide a way of balancing problems and avoiding stress.

##### **3.1.3 Feelings of deprivation**

Feelings of deprivation may lead to certain actions and states of mind. When analysing possible motives for these actions, the interplay of cognition, emotion and action should be taken into account. Feelings of injustice, rejection, rage, envy, despair and persecution anxiety on one hand, and cognitive structures like the perception of personal needs and hostile conditions or the experience of poverty on the other hand, may result in behaviour that leads to deprivation in terms of social contact and academic success.

#### **3.2 Counselling concepts**

From the data presented in the paper, basic concepts for the guidance and counselling of socio-economically deprived students were drawn. For the student counsellor it is first of all important to determine the direction of a) interventions and b) objectives. Both focus on activating the power of the student.

##### **3.2.1 Interventions**

A precondition for understanding involved psychodynamics is to provide a secure base that allows the expression of emotions and cognitions.

Secondly, it is important to acknowledge the biographical back-ground of a student by identifying and reconstructing personal resources. The awareness of cultural differences may play an important role in this context. The student might need to be encouraged in admitting difficulties in controlling existing conditions in order to allow the establishing of coping strategies. Provision of knowledge about funding arrangements may turn out to be an indispensable part of the counselling process.

##### **3.2.2 Objectives**

Financial and social hardship affects success in integrating into the academic environment. It is therefore important to mobilise a student's ability to effect changes appropriate to their own needs. These might include:



- becoming more effective in personal nurturing and care,
- the process of learning how to enhance toleration levels,
- understanding the temporary nature of hardship,
- enhancing coping strategies,
- enhancing perceived self-efficacy and the strengthening sense of personal agency,
- enhancing self-regulation of motivation (e.g. using inner resources developed in earlier life experiences or dissolving dependencies).

## 4. Results of the workshop

### 4.1 Group discussions

The concept of the workshop was based on the idea of pooling knowledge in order to generate interesting ideas. Introducing facts and theories within the workshop turned out to be helpful in achieving a common basis of discussion. Authentic examples of students who feel socially and financially deprived enabled participants to focus on students' emotional conditions.

The workshop focused on work with socio-economically deprived students with special reference to their biography. In small groups participants discussed the financial and social condition of students in different countries. Emphasis was put on the question of equal opportunities for students from all backgrounds, the management of living expenses, the importance of social status and the kind of financial support provided by the state. The following results were presented to the group:

#### 4.1.1 Shift from class to ethnic structures

One group pointed out that the division of society into different classes has become more complex. Whereas in the 70s the aim of political movements was to create equal opportunities for *social* classes, improving existing conditions (in the field of higher education) in the 90s, we will have to take into account the presence of *ethnic minorities* in addition to previously existing social classes.

#### 4.1.2 Selection

Another group stressed the variations in the degree of selection that has been established during the last two decades. Crude differences between various schools are noticeable. This becomes obvious e.g. in the field of subjects students can choose: there

is a subtle influence on the choice and number of subjects.

Political decisions have led to an increase in the number of higher education institutions and their subsequent change of status. Subtle differences have to be acknowledged among institutions as well.

### 4.1.3 Loans

Furthermore, the group stressed the impact of loans. Within the issue of funding, loans have become far more important than grants. Funding might lead to social aspirations and future income prospects.

Participation within the institution depends on funding, social aspirations and income prospects. If income is below an adequate level, participation might not take place. In this sense the matter is connected with contradictory political issues. Thus overall economic development shows that there is an increasing need for students to participate on a high level within their academic environment in order to develop skills which will help them master the competitiveness of the future job market. But for a large number of students economic problems and growing competitiveness deprive them of the possibility to participate.

## 4.2 Discussion of paper

Towards the end of the workshop, all participants were asked to discuss the counselling and guidance methods presented earlier and derived from the data on social and financial deprivation.

### 4.2.1 Two case studies

One group presented two authentic cases where some of the methods mentioned earlier had already been used.

In one case, a girl could not cope with academic demands for financial and personal reasons. The problem was approached through limiting and confining the academic task, providing skills to cope with the present situation and setting deadlines. Here, the counsellor focussed on the issue of "empowerment".

In another case, a male student needed help because he had chosen the wrong course. Realising this, he did not study regularly and lost his grant. He was afraid of telling his father because he feared he would disappoint him. Thanks to the counselling sessions the student was gradually willing to talk to his father and change his course.



Psychological growth was achieved by establishing an identity status and restructuring a personal relationship.

#### 4.2.2 Methodological premises

The other group underlined that it is important for the counsellor to consider possible tensions that might arise between the objectives of the university and her/his own objectives. This could affect questions of values, selection, motivation, and responsibility.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that in a way socio-economically deprived students don't need special consideration. The biography of a student should be part of every counselling process.

#### 4.3 Overall conclusions

The general conclusion was that all counselling methods are applicable. Nevertheless, it is necessary for counsellors to have adequate knowledge on the subtle influences of social contexts. It is important for counsellors to take adequate account of the complexity of a problem. Dealing with a complex situation might result in the consideration of aspects such as negative emotions, „core“ conditions, hidden associated meanings and the lack of self-validation.

Apart from discussing facts and counselling and guidance methods, participants stressed the importance of dealing with the topic of financial and social deprivation in public. The question of up-to-date research on the matter arose. Furthermore, participants showed interest in the availability and development of further concepts for guidance and counselling with regard to deprived students. A political dimension was achieved when participants discussed the reintroduction of the topic in a European context. It was agreed that FEDORA, too, should intensify activities concerned with social and financial deprivation.

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# Solving Problems or Building Relationships?

## Adequate Responses to a Culturally Diverse Student Clientele

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### Introduction

"Multicultural environment /intercultural skills", a sub-theme of FEDORA '99 Summer University on "The New Millennium – A skills challenge for higher education, the counselor's responsibility for facilitating equality and diversity in a European society".

Reading the theme, three key words caught my attention. '*Multicultural environment*' refers to foreign students studying at our universities, among whom we can observe differences in educational and cultural background. The expression could, however, also refer to a growing body of international teaching staff at our universities, who, equally, bring differences in educational and cultural backgrounds to our universities. In the latter situation it might be interesting for student counselors to examine the consequences and implications for the local students. In this presentation I will focus on the counseling of foreign students. 'Who are our students?' 'What are the cultural differences we can observe and what are the implications when interacting with these students?'

Second key word: *facilitating*. Facilitating primarily refers to an attitude or belief about how a professional counselor should work; the word 'facilitating' refers to a method. The underlying assumption of the concept 'facilitating' is, that it is the client, who is responsible for his or her own life. Solving a problem or change thus is, principally, the personal responsibility of the student. The role of the counselor is primarily one of guiding, giving feed back, reflecting on the behavior of the student and offering alternative options as solutions. 'Is this method suitable for all our clientele or should we

vary our work-method according to the student sitting in our office?' Many other intervention methods could be identified, such as for instance informing, referring, educating and training. Some of these methods might be more suitable for students with other cultural backgrounds than those of our local students.

The third key word I would like to highlight is *skills*. Skills refer to behavior only. For this reason I would prefer the use of the word 'competency'. The concept of competency includes the three essential layers in cross-cultural communication: the 'cognitive', the 'skills' and the 'affective' layer. This implies knowledge of other cultures and cross-cultural communication theory; skills already defined as the behavior repertoire, verbal and non-verbal, and the affective layer referring to our own attitudes, emotions and interest towards the other person. 'Are we afraid or curious to interact with a person from a different culture?' 'Open or defensive?' 'Why is this so?' Being aware of our own cultural backpack, our own values, attitudes and interests, our own defenses, might be even more important than knowing about the culture of the other. Our own cultural background determines, to a large extent, how we view the world around us. Awareness and understanding of our own cultural filter function is the first and essential step to understanding the other.

Why are these themes analyzed so meticulously? We are a multicultural group. Too often, it is automatically assumed that the other person understands what we are talking about when we use the same language. Differences can be found even in the way that we define our common profession. Words such as 'facilitating', 'equality' and 'diversity' represent deep-rooted cultural values that may, or may not, be understood in the same way by everyone.

In this presentation no definitions of basic concepts as 'culture', 'ethnicity', 'value orientations', 'perception' and 'attribution' will be provided. I am assuming that these concepts are already



familiar to you. However, I would like to share with you an original description of culture, expressing the real meaning of cultural differences.

*"To be is to be (Plato)  
To be is to do (Sartre)  
To be to be do (Sinatra)"*

### **A profile of a counselor advising international students<sup>1</sup>**

When analyzing the profile of an international student counselor it is useful to differentiate the actual role of the counselor, the 'what' and 'how', from the position of the counselor in the higher education institute.

The role of the counselor or advisor can be defined as that of the professional person in the higher education institute who gives general guidance to international students – with 'general' being underlined and indicating 'holistic' and 'all inclusive'. The underlying proposition is that, in advising foreign students, the priority should be to establish and maintain a relationship rather than concentrating solely on the task to be performed. This is especially important at the beginning of the foreign student's stay abroad.

As a broad generalization, one could state that with students from individualistic oriented societies a relationship can develop while doing the job; however, when working with students from more collectivist oriented societies a prior relationship needs to be developed before the actual counseling takes place.

It is preferable that the role of the foreign student counselor not be associated with teaching tasks. The double role, as teacher and advisor complicates the relationship with the student to such an extent that one can not truly create a helping relationship. The double role of evaluator and helper makes it difficult to establish a basis for trust. Although a truly professional person can separate the two roles and avoid the more personal discussions affecting the awarding of grades in a class, the student might not be sure that issues being dealt with in the counseling situation will not affect the final results during examination.

Neither should the student counselor take on the role of psychotherapist. The work of therapy

demands a level of specialization that is difficult to combine with the generalist approach necessary in counseling and advising international students. The student counselor is primarily involved in the academic and daily-life environment of international students, advising them in the areas, that cover the needs of the majority of international students.

When addressing the subject of counseling methods, the first relevant question to be asked is 'what does professionalism in this field signify?' 'Does our definition of professional help coincide with the expectations of the student?

' In some cultures the professional helper is the eldest, the most powerful or the assigned person. It is this person's obligation to solve the problem if someone less powerful requests help. And it is the duty of the one who seeks help to respect and obey the helper. The basis for this respect and obedience is not necessarily a consequence of the quality or the content of the help, but of the perceived position of the helper as being wiser, more powerful or traditionally the right person to turn to. Try to imagine the effect it would have on a helping relationship, if a counselor were to ask a foreign student from a culture viewing professional help in the way described above: «...and what, according to your own feelings and experience – would be the best solution in your case?» Such a remark, perfectly valid in a culture where each individual is responsible for his or her own life, might lead to great confusion for this foreign student. In the eyes of this particular foreign student such a counselor does not deserve the respect of the student, because he or she has apparently proven to be inexperienced, and neither knowledgeable nor powerful. Without being aware of it, this counselor has placed this student in a dilemma about how to react, since the counselor represents at least some kind of formal authority as well.

'Adequate responses to a culturally diverse student clientele' means that a competent intercultural counselor is aware of his or her own basic values with regard to the professional helping role, and how help should be conducted. The counselor is able to reflect on his or her own primary reactions to the culturally different student and to suspend these reactions, going beyond them in an effort to understand the student and his or her cultural background. My suggestion is that you should



forget your intuition in interpreting the student's behavior and requests. Only use this 'gut' feeling as an alarm bell to indicate that something is happening in the interaction, but do not interpret. First try to understand and analyze the relationship between you and the student from the cultural perspective of the student.

With regard to the position of the student counselor in the higher education institute, it is important to mention the function of power in the professional helping relationship. Power is not something a professional has but, rather, the client attributes it to him. The basis of this attribution can be different. In order to induce effective change in the behavior of the international student or even to have the student come to the counselor's office, the foreign student counselor needs to be perceived as having a personal power base by the student.

The student needs to have learned the assumption that 'the international student counselor is the person in the university to turn to when confronted by questions and problems, because the counselor is in a position to help'. In order to be effective as a mediator on behalf of the student, the foreign student advisor needs to have an external power base as well. The foreign student advisor should have an officially acknowledged position as a mediator on behalf of the international students within the university, and towards official institutions outside the university. These may involve authorities that deal with legal issues concerning foreigners, municipalities or governmental bodies.

To create the perception of a personal power base for students from more collectivist and/or high power distance cultures it is important that the counselor has a clear externally acknowledged power base. However an international student counselor is not omnipotent and it should be clear that this power is related to his/her particular function. One of the traps in foreign student advising is that the counselor overestimates his or her own power position also in an attempt to live up to the expectations of the international student.

The international student counselor cooperates closely with the academic faculty and other specialized staff. Preferably the counselor should be involved in elaborating policy and planning for international education and student affairs within the institution.

## **Approaches to cultural differences**

According to Edward T. Hall<sup>2</sup> «any culture is essentially a system for creating, sending, storing and processing information. A cultural system serves to make a social group function and is a response of human beings to survive and advance in the world. Cultures differ in their responses to basic human concerns.» Three approaches to cultural differences will be described to analyze and comment on an incident between a foreign student and his counselor.

### **Incident**

#### **Background information that is not known to the student counselor:**

A student from Ghana, has been informed that he has been expelled from the master's program because of his results. His fellowship will be ended and he has to return home within a month.

#### **Context information:**

One of the African students has been hanging around the international office for some time this past week. He sits reading in the waiting room and/or just stares at the opposite wall. He smiles at the secretary but does not give the impression of seeking contact or of wanting anything. The secretary starts to feel uneasy about this situation and informs the counselor. The student counselor advises the secretary to wait and see if the student takes an initiative in making an appointment.

Some days later, a Ghanaian student phones to make an appointment with the student counselor. He says it is urgent, and does not inform the counselor's secretary about the issue.

### **Incident:**

At the arranged time, the student does not show up at the counselor's office. Instead another Ghanaian student enters the counselor's office. He waits without sitting down and keeps his head lowered. The counselor gets up from his chair, walks up to the student, shakes his hand and invites the student to take a seat. The counselor talks a little to make the student feel more comfortable. Despite the efforts of the counselor, the student only responds with polite 'yes and no' answers. The counselor then decides to ask «Well, my friend, I am a little surprised to see you. Did you make an appointment?» The student looks briefly at the counselor,



averts his eyes again and answers that life at this university is very nice, that it has a very stimulating intellectual atmosphere. It is good there are so many international students, they help and support each other. Does the counselor perhaps have some recent information about his Ghanaian friend?

The counselor smiles at the student and says, with empathy, that he feels glad to hear that the student appreciates his stay at the university. No, he does not have any information and if he did he would not discuss it with him. The counselor explains that it is not possible to give information about his friend if he is not present and that he hopes the student concerned is doing all right. He advises the student to personally ask his friend to make an appointment, if there is something the counselor should be involved in.

### Analysis

In this incident a lot of messages are exchanged between the participants in the interaction. The way the information has been exchanged and processed is strongly culturally colored. Were the messages understood correctly by the participants and did they adequately respond to it?

To analyze this intercultural incident several approaches are possible, to mention three: a comparative approach, a cultural general approach and an approach through communicative styles. These approaches will be described in general terms and, secondly, applied to this intercultural incident.

One can use a comparative approach in which differences between two or more specific cultures are analyzed and compared concerning aspects of their value orientations towards basic human concerns. Value orientations cover the complete spectrum from the perception of the self, the family, society, human nature, nature including the supernatural. Hofstede<sup>3</sup> described value orientations as *'the software of the mind'*, our more or less automatic subconscious or largely unconscious information-processing system. In this incident we compare the Ghanaian and the counselor's culture concerning aspects of 'asking for and providing help', 'showing respect', 'attitude towards authority'. The value system underlies the manifest culture which we can observe in 'the sitting behavior of the student', in 'ways of handling conflict' or 'behavior towards a university official'.

Through this comparative approach one obtains in-depth information about specific cultures. The results of such comparative approaches can often be found in information guides on cultures; the so-called 'do's and don'ts guides'. These books offer general directions on which aspects of a culture one should pay attention to and can help prevent major mistakes. However, such information can easily lead to the impression that dealing with cultural differences is just a matter of calculus in communication. Stereotyping and discrimination could still occur and stop one from really seeing the individual sitting opposite you. From an intercultural perspective, a comparative approach would be useful for training people in very specific situations, for instance for business managers traveling to Brazil. When working with international students, this approach might prove useful in the case of large groups of students from a specific culture, or of a very specific problem with a student, or if the student counselor experiences resistance and irritation towards students from a specific culture.

Examples of a cultural general approach to communication are the works of Geert Hofstede and Edward T. Hall. Their work offers conceptual frames of reference within which cultural differences are categorized in general dimensions. Hofstede identified five dimensions in which cultures differ. For now I will only summarize two of these because of their relevance to the intercultural incident.

The first dimension is 'power distance' and refers to the extent to which less powerful persons in an organization or a culture expect and accept that power be equally divided. In countries where one finds high power distance, obedience and respect are important values and dependency on authority is acceptable and approved behavior. How does this apply to the student's and the counselor's behavior in the example? The behavior of the student, waiting to take a seat, averting his eyes, not taking the initiative in bringing up the actual topic of discussion, all these different kinds of behavior tend to refer to a high power distance type of culture. On the other hand, the behavior of the counselor, walking up to the student, inviting him to sit down, trying to make the student feel comfortable, calling him friend, all tend to refer to a low power distance culture. In low power distance cultures, equality is a core value and individual initiative, active



experimenting, independence, are the kinds of behavior that are generally rewarded. How do you think the behavior of the student affects the response of the counselor – and the other way round?

The second dimension Hofstede describes is «collectivism versus individualism». In more individualistic oriented societies the ties between individuals are loose; priority is given to the individual's own welfare or interest and that of the individual's closest family. The 'self' is perceived as 'I' or 'me'. Social control is exercised through the mechanism of guilt and is basically individual in nature. One can even lose one's own self-respect because of an uneasy conscience. Even if nobody else knows, one can feel guilty. In more collectivist oriented societies the priority lies with the welfare of the social group; safety in exchange for loyalty. The 'self' is defined in relation to a group. Shame is the social control mechanism, it is social in nature, and one is shamed or loses face only in front of another person or a group. Fraud is only fraud when it is discovered. To be represented by a friend in a counselor's office might be very acceptable in a collectivist country. In a more individualistic oriented culture this behavior simply trespasses against norms related to personal responsibility, accountability and privacy.

Edward T. Hall greatly contributed to awareness of the existence and the importance of non-verbal communication and its effects on a cross-cultural interaction. Based on Hall's work, I would like to mention three dimensions in which cultures differ; orientation towards time, personal space and the effect of context on meaning. All three of these dimensions belong to the tacitly acquired parts of culture not the consciously learned parts. An example of the extent to which cultures differ in their orientation towards time is to be found in the concepts of mono-chronic versus poly-chronic societies. In mono-chronic societies, time is perceived as linear, from past to present to future. Tasks are sequenced and one thing is done at a time. Schedules, agenda appointments and deadlines are common and preferred concepts. In more poly-chronic oriented societies time is perceived as circular. Many things can be done at the same time, and everything has its rightful place in time. Priority is given to 'being' instead of 'doing', to the relationship as compared to doing the job. A second aspect of

non-verbal communication in which cultures differ is in the concept of personal space. Personal space refers to the immediate space around a person and the culturally appropriate distance to be close to a person.

The third dimension Hall described relates to context. The 'low context- high context' dimension describes the extent to which the actual meaning of a message is conveyed mainly in words or conveyed by the context floating around. In 'low-context' cultures the information is largely explicitly stated, direct and to the point, in comparison to 'high context' cultures, where the information already is in the person and the communication pattern is more symbolic and circular. It is especially this last dimension, high context – low context orientation, which is prominently present in the case study. The behavior of the student hanging around the office is observed but not much meaning is attached to it, and it certainly does not elicit the adequate response. It was intended as a high context request for help. The student might have expected the counselor to know about his study problems, to call him into his office to discuss the issue and solve it. Both the secretary and the counselor might feel uneasy about the presence of the student in the waiting room. However, I can imagine a discussion, between the two of them, if there really was a problem the student wanted to talk about then he would take the initiative of making an appointment. Thereby defining the student's behavior within a low context frame. Furthermore, from this example, differences in perception of time between the student and the counselor might be concluded, based on the information exchange on the issue of making an appointment to see the student counselor.

The third way to look at cultural differences is through the concept of culturally preferred communicative styles. Barnlund's<sup>4</sup> definition of communicative style includes «the topics people prefer to discuss, their favorite forms of interaction and the depth of involvement they demand from each other». It also includes the preferred use of certain communication channels for conveying information; the extent to which people are tuned into the factual or to the emotional content of messages; and the use of specific vocabulary and metaphors.

The Intercultural Communication Institute<sup>5</sup> uses five pairs of complementary communication styles;



linear – circular, direct – indirect, attached – detached, intellectual confrontation – relational confrontation, procedural – personal.

The 'linear-circular' pair is related to Hall's low context – high context dimension, as is the 'direct – indirect' pair. The communication style used by both students in the example was very indirect as compared to the counselor who used a relatively direct approach. The 'attached' style can be described as a way of communicating in which all information is automatically attached or connected to the interest and position of the speaker. Often a lot of emotion is involved in this way of communicating, either expressive or defensive. In the complementary way of communicating the central focus of discussion is on the issue, not on the person and the information is mainly conveyed in a neutral or 'detached' way. In an 'intellectual confrontation' the preferred approach is to respond to, or to attack, an idea. This way of communicating may seem closely related to the detached and direct styles. However, one can be direct, as well, when the preference is to respond to the other person by picking up the inter-personal issues and feelings, described as the relational communication style.

Back to the example; although the friend of the student explains in an indirect circular way '*the person is in trouble*', the counselor responds to the explicit words in a direct, intellectual and confrontational way.

### How to tackle the challenges we face?

Solving problems or building relationships? Does our definition of professional help coincide with the expectations of the student? How to implement the intercultural dimension in counseling international students? Finally, to what extent does the context of the university influence our work?

The most basic and effective counseling attitudes and skills (see for instance Egan, 1975)<sup>6</sup> are related to treating the student in a human way and aim at building the relationship:

- being real, being yourself
- being concrete
- showing accurate empathic understanding
- paying attention
- showing respect.

These five basic skills underlie counseling techniques such as asking for clarification or using metaphors and stories, and counseling interventions such as teaching and training, facilitating, negotiating and advising on behalf of the international student, and referring. Again, as these are put into practice, culturally appropriate forms need to be taken into account. In some cultures a sign of paying attention is looking the speaker directly in the eyes, in other cultures this behavior can signify '*stop talking*', '*I want to comment*' or is experienced as disrespectful – remember the averted eyes of the student in the example. How would you feel if the student you are interacting with does not look you in the eyes?

Taking all these cultural differences into account, how is one able to stay 'real' as a counselor; do we need to become an intercultural 'yo-yo'? In my opinion the first basic attitude in counseling, 'being yourselves', 'being authentic', stands firm. However that attitude should be combined with openness to personal development, openness to learning and openness to different perspectives.

### Three tips

International students are a source of knowledge! Counselor and student can discuss how to tackle the specific issues that brought the international student to the office, in a way that is acceptable and accommodating for both. The setting up of a network of people who can provide cultural advice and who can help assess the behavior that is displayed around seeking and accepting advice may be another possible strategy.

Secondly, the student counselor regularly discusses his or her work and attitudes in a supervision relationship or through peer review. This can best be done through networks of colleagues who work in the same profession, although it is equally useful to discuss these issues with people in other professions. Relevant questions are: Am I doing my work as I should, am I doing things 'right'? Am I keeping up to date, in skills as well as in knowledge? Am I doing the 'right' things, do I set priorities in a way that best serve both the student clientele and the university?

Thirdly, it is important to be involved in some kind of regular reflection process with superiors in one's own institution, especially on the point of setting priorities. Too often, student counselors



tend to work in rather isolated situations in their university because of the specialty of their profession or the low numbers of international students. Keeping the institution committed to this dialogue requires continuous attention.

### Wrap up

*'Skills for working in a multi-cultural environment';*

The competent intercultural student counselor is not only aware and capable of handling cultural differences and has an open learning attitude, but - and often this is neglected -, is also firmly rooted in his or her own cultural university context. Build relationships with students, form or improve networks of colleagues, and strengthen your ties in the institution. These are the basic conditions for providing adequate responses to a culturally diverse student clientele.

### FOOTNOTES

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# Vocational Guidance and Career Development at the Career Center of Stockholm University

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## Individual counselling

The Career Center at Stockholm University offers information on the function and dynamics of the labour market. In our role as career counsellors, we highlight the importance of learning how to make proper career choices and we give structures for better career planning.

In the process of individual counselling we try to connect academic skills and competence to demands and expectations in the labour market. Furthermore, we try to widen the students' perspectives concerning the concepts of career and competence, in order to help the student grasp information on the practical tools he or she needs to succeed, in his/her own way, in the labour market.

To market one's professional and personal skills – one's total competence – is becoming more and more important, even for graduates. We therefore offer students help and feedback to write a good CV. Since the concepts of CV's and of career making are not fully known to all students we have a free reference library in our store on these subjects. The ideal is of course to meet students for individual counselling at decisive choice making moments in their studies, and to stimulate them to think in vocational terms, but reality shows that we are more often contacted for counselling at the final stage of their education.

## Seminars on vital subjects

To follow up and exemplify subjects, focused upon in the individual counselling, we organise seminars open to all students but often with a special theme or directed towards a certain group of students. They can be organised in the form of lectures or

interactive workshops, where we display a variety of issues vital to the students' future careers. In co-operation with partners in different network organisations we offer possibilities for students to experience trends and conditions in the labour market reality.

## Integration with educational guidance

Since the Career Center has the objective to get in contact with students at an early stage of their studies, it is very important to co-operate with the regular educational guidance at Stockholm University. We therefore liaise closely with representatives from the educational counselling office at the central level as well as with the educational counsellors at the different faculties and institutions of Stockholm University. One way of working together is to co-operate in guidance counselling, in the interest of an individual student or of a group of students.

## Co-operation with the Student Union

The Student Union is part of the regular network team of the Career Center and together we try to find new and more efficient ways to develop the variety of services for the students at Stockholm University.

An essential area of co-operation and development concerns the dissemination of information about the different activities at the Career Center. Recently we implemented a small size project called "Student Ambassadors", aiming to spread information on the different services we provide for an easier entrance into the future labour market. Five students are "employed" as ambassadors with the mission to market the services of the Career Center in general and to highlight different arrangements.

The Student Union at Stockholm University has separate student sections that arrange labour market



days annually for different groups of students at the university, and we are often involved in these events.

### **Increase employers' awareness**

The Career Center has a large number of external contacts with companies and enterprise-related network organisations, mainly with the employers who recruit on campus, of course. In these contacts we strive to increase the awareness of the competence and skills of the graduate students at Stockholm University, as the knowledge of the different specific programmes at Stockholm University in general is very limited amongst recruiting employers. We therefore try to spread the information about the skills and abilities that they can acquire from groups of students that are less known to them. This marketing can be very rewarding for recruiting employers and opens opportunities for students who are not traditionally in high demand in the labour market.

### **Career coaches**

We also try to develop a role as career coaches in the employment process. The graduating student often needs support and advice on how to behave in the first contact with recruiting employers. Since we maintain a very open and frank relationship with the employers who recruit on campus, we can help students to look at the process in a more objective way, and to prepare for the different situations ahead. As we look upon ourselves as "bridge-builders" between the academic world and the labour market, we have coined the expression "career brokers" to describe our role and function.

### **Linking to larger networks**

As part of a nation-wide employment office organisation, we can assist students on a nation-wide scale. We also have connections to international labour offices, as well as to a large number of other organisations and institutions concerned with labour market opportunities and regulations. As mentioned earlier we regard ourselves as "bridge-builders" between the academic world and the labour market and the importance of networking to developing the quality of our services cannot be exaggerated.

## **Two Experiences of Co-operation with Students and Enterprises – Focusing on the Transition to Working Life**

### **1. The Mentor-project**

An important step towards realising closer co-operation between the academic world and private companies, public services and organisations was the legislative change to the Swedish Higher Education Act of January 1997. A paragraph was included stating that universities have a responsibility to co-operate with the wider community. The Mentor-project is an example of how this can be done in practice. Mentoring can also help students get an overview of, and valuable insights into, their future profession.

The definition of mentor is "wise and trusted advisor". According to the Greek legend, Odysseus asked a friend called Mentor to tutor his son while he was away fighting in the Trojan War. A "mentee" is a disciple who is initiated in "the secret plan".

### **Background**

During the spring of 1997, students and teachers at the Department of Sociology and the personnel at the Career Center discussed the fact that many students in the Human Resource Programme lacked the job experience and/or the personal contacts that are considered necessary for a good start in the career. Everyone agreed that a mentor project would be an excellent idea, especially as these students do not have a practical training period within the frame of their educational programme.

### **Target group**

We decided that the composition of the target group should be third and fourth term students. In our opinion it is best when students have studied for a while and thus have theories to apply.

It was necessary to restrict the number of participants. A number of about 20 pairs was outlined as a realistically sized group to handle. Even though it is desirable to involve an increasing number of students in this kind of project, we decided that quality was a higher priority than quantity.

### **Selection**

All the students concerned (66) received a letter of invitation. To be admitted they had to write



an application and explain why they were interested in joining the project. 25 students applied. All applications were examined and all applicants interviewed. It was possible for the students to rank three companies as their most desired mentors, and we succeeded in meeting their requests. A number of 17 companies had shown interest in participating and in some cases the companies wanted more than one mentee. We started off with 22 placements.

The selecting procedure was rather simple. One student missed the application deadline and we decided to exclude two others by lot.

The mentors were highly qualified with approximately five years of experience as Human Resource Managers. The main reason to participate, as expressed by the mentors, was the important role they would play in passing on their knowledge, a knowledge that students cannot receive from higher education alone. Mentors were also eager to show the importance of contacts between working life and studies.

#### **Project organisation and realisation**

Our idea was to support an informal and spontaneous atmosphere where the mentee would feel free to ask the kind of questions that they would not "normally" ask their bosses. We also wanted to give the mentor and the mentee flexible conditions for finding their own solutions.

The project ran over a period of one academic year. We required that the pairs should meet regularly – at least once a month – for a minimum of ten appointments during a period that lasted from late September until the first week of June 98.

We visited all the enterprises during August and September to provide information about the project and to give the mentors opportunities to discuss their future role and function.

As mentioned before, we succeeded in making the placements even though we did not have time to do a complex matching procedure. But in real working life, your chances to choose colleagues are small as well; one has to learn to co-operate!

We encouraged the participants to make swift contact with us if problems occurred.

In September we arranged a "kick-off-session". The director of studies presented the study programme, and the rest of the time was free for mentors and mentees to discuss and plan their future appointments. During the kick-off meeting, we

realised that some of the pairs had already booked their first appointment beforehand!

#### **A first evaluation**

A first questionnaire was distributed to all participants as an initial follow up in January, with questions about how frequently they had met, how they had experienced the appointments, and the themes of the discussions they had had. At that time most pairs had met about five times. Comments:

*"Super. It has been possible for me to assimilate my academic studies in a more positive way than ever before. I feel more motivated, both for further studies and for working life."*

*"I think mentor projects should be implemented in the programmes."*

*"It is a positive experience to up-date yourself about studies in personnel management of today. I want to help my mentee how to apply theoretical studies in working life."*

*"Mentor activities can never compensate for practical experience, but it is a positive initiative and good for both students and enterprises."*

Students as well as mentors expressed a lack of time – they wanted to have more time available, but their total workload was tough!

#### **A second evaluation**

A second questionnaire was distributed in April as a final evaluation. By that time the pairs had met approximately 8-10 times, which was proof of great interest. This time we asked about the tangible advantages and the value of taking part in the project. We also asked about advice for future projects.

From the participants point of view it was important to agree about the purpose of each appointment beforehand, to prepare well for the meetings and to give the mentee the main responsibility for them.

The mentees found that one advantage was that they now had a contact person in their profession. All mentees also mentioned that they had got an



important insight in their field of interest. Others said that the mentor was an extremely positive part of their education and, from their point of view, a necessary complement to the theoretical studies.

### **Benefits from mentor-ship**

Both mentors and mentees are winners in mentor-ship projects! The mentee contributes academic competence to the company, and the mentor is probably going to reflect on his/her professional role with new eyes, following the dialogue with the mentee. From this point of view, mentor-ships can generate a process that will improve the skills of the mentor, which in the long term will influence his/her company.

While taking an active part in the mentor-project, the mentor automatically takes an important interest in the new generation of human resource managers. A satisfied mentee is also a good ambassador for the company.

### **Concluding remark**

This was an extremely successful project that fulfilled the expectations. All participants said that they would recommend this type of project to others.

This was a win-win situation and involved a valuable dialogue between the university, companies, public services and organisations.

### **Future**

The Career Center of today gives information, advice and motivation to students who wish to start their own mentor activities. So far, we have been contacted by students in Law, Human Resource and Psychology programmes concerning mentor-projects.

## **2. Students contribute academic competence to small and medium sized enterprises**

During 1998 the Career Center was involved in a project where students from Stockholm University and from the Royal Institute of Technology visited 200 small and medium sized enterprises in the region of Stockholm. The project was initiated by the Swedish Employers' Confederation and was a co-operative effort between the County Administration in Stockholm, Stockholm University Career Center, the Royal Institute of Technology and some other bodies.

### **Main goal**

The main goal was to inform and pass on academic competence to enterprises while offering occasions for students to learn to use marketing strategies when introducing themselves at the enterprises.

### **Background**

There is a growing interest among students for entrepreneurship and for small and medium sized enterprises. Among big and international companies, there is a long tradition of co-operation with universities and of how to recruit new graduates. It is even a survival strategy to compete with others in how to recruit, keep and improve skills. The idea was that when students visit enterprises that have minimal or no contact with the academic world, these enterprises would become aware of all the expertise available, in the shape of students and research students, for them to profit from.

### **Experiences from the visits**

The students were selected through interviews. The enterprises were selected from the register of enterprises from the Employers' Confederation.

Six pairs of students visited the enterprises. The students had different educational backgrounds, and each pair consisted of one student from Stockholm University and one student from the Royal Institute of Technology. They complemented each other while visiting, and they learned from the teamwork. The student-ambassadors were warmly welcomed both to visit the enterprises and to book appointments with the directors. The fact that they came from Stockholm University and from the Royal Institute of Technology opened all doors. The backup from the Employers' Confederation also inspired confidence. Most of the visits have resulted in follow-up contacts.

### **Brief summary**

Today, there is a growing interest and a positive attitude among small and medium sized enterprises to start a dialogue with the academic world. The high number of contacts in this project – 280 – clearly shows a big interest.

In this project students were offered a unique chance to get in touch with a wide range of enterprises and with their very often dynamic directors, and thus to learn what the enterprises may require and expect from them in the near future.



As the enterprises became aware of all the expertise within reach, the visits often led to concrete tasks being commissioned by the enterprises.

On one hand Stockholm University and the Royal Institute of Technology were explored, and on the other the university and the institute established a wider area of contacts in this sector than they had before. The university and the institute also acquired a better knowledge of the demands and skills that are asked for today.

#### **Experiences in general**

The project showed that:

- Students can be key persons in contacts with

small and medium sized enterprises.

- Face to face interaction is the most efficient way to start dialogues and co-operation between the academic world and the world of enterprises.
- Enterprises today ask for: competence in the fields of IT, environmental investigations, market analyses, etc. (and not so much for competence in the core activity) - areas that are in general neglected due to lack of time and competence.

The Student-ambassador project was run a second time during the spring and autumn terms 1999, and is to be continued.



# Psycho-dynamic Counselling of Young People with Disabilities and/or Chronic Illnesses

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## Introduction

In our activity as psycho-dynamic counsellors at the Naples University Counselling Centre for medical students, we counsel, among others, disabled young people. Some have physical disabilities and some emotional. Some were born with disabling conditions, some developed them later in life. Some know approximately how their condition will affect them throughout life, while others suffer great uncertainty.

During our activity with disabled students we found the following principles very useful – these are described in an interesting paper on counselling disabled people written by Julia Segal (1989):

1. People make efforts to distance themselves from a disability or illness in many different ways which can be usefully challenged.
2. During the counselling sessions, as well as in every day life, it is useful to remember that the use of language should reflect the fact that people with disabilities or illnesses are first and foremost people.
3. A disability or chronic illness affects the whole family and the wider social network, not just the individual.
4. The practical and emotional meaning of a disability is as important as the disability itself.
5. People with disabilities or chronic illnesses should be offered counselling which is as near to "normal" as possible.
6. Confronting reality in a skilled way is an essential ingredient of counselling, whatever the problem involved, as people often seem to have difficulty sorting out what they have lost, what they have to give up and what they may choose to keep.

The recurrence of some problems – related to the circumstances of our work – has focused our attention on the following issues:

- a) the structure of Self in these students;
- b) the inner motivations underlying their choice to study medicine;
- c) the role the counselling experience could play in these cases, and the meaning that the counselling might have for these students.

Growing older with a disability may lead to a new set of losses depending on the age and life stage of the individual. Each of these losses must be somehow acknowledged and incorporated into the automatic assumptions made by the individual and those around him/her. The pain that accompanies the awareness of each new loss caused by the disability may be avoided at times, but long-term avoidance causes social and emotional difficulties.

## The Service for Medical Students at Naples University

Before taking these problems into consideration we will briefly describe our activity. We offer, within a carefully defined setting, up to four 45 minute individual sessions, with the option of one or more follow-up sessions. The service is free, based on self-referral and available to all medical students. Therefore, the young people we see are personally motivated to seek psychological help when facing problems with the curriculum and with intra- and inter-personal relationships.

Generally students who need psychiatric help, such as the seriously depressed and suicidal, psychotics, and drug addicts, do not come to our Service. In those cases students refer themselves to, or are referred to, the Psychiatric Department within the Medical School, or to other centres organised by the National Health Service.

The staff consists of people with postgraduate



training in adult and child psychotherapy, and they work at the Service on a part-time basis.

The theoretical framework of the staff members is psychoanalytical (Adamo et al. 1990, Copley 1976, Hurry 1986, Novick 1977, Salzberger-Wittenberg 1977, Valerio P., Adamo S.M.G. 1995).

We aim to develop a relationship with the client to explore the problems and nurture the more mature side of the student's personality.

The aim of our intervention is to offer young people a place where there is someone ready to listen and to help them direct their adaptive resources. The sessions have a double purpose:

- to collect useful data in order to make an assessment and to evaluate the nature of the psychological problems underlying the client's concern;
- to offer the young person the experience – however brief it may be – of thinking at an emotional and intellectual level about his/her problems with the help of an expert.

This allows clients to come into closer contact with their concerns and helps them catch a glimpse of the possible origins of their anxieties and also get a better knowledge of the way they relate to their outer and inner world.

As far as the counsellor is concerned, he or she has the opportunity of providing clients with an experience of understanding and testing their ability to use a relationship with someone else to think about and/or get in touch with their emotions.

We have discussed the meaning and contents of our brief interventions, and particularly how to technically manage them, their limitations and potentialities (Giusti 1990, Adamo et al. 1990, Iacono et al. 1987, 1989). The technique of this intervention is based on some fundamental and specific aspects. We will dwell upon two of them:

- the experience of limitation;
- the use of interpretation of transference and counter-transference.

### **The experience of limitation**

As to the first issue, it should be pointed out that:

- a) On the one hand clients might be encouraged to go to the Service knowing that it is a short

and predetermined commitment, since they might be attracted by an engagement which is limited in time. Gianna Polacco Williams underlines that a predetermined duration can represent a sort of "safety guarantee" for many adolescents, especially for those who suffer from deep anxiety concerning the possibility of having to relate with another human being.

- b) The note of urgency introduced by the pre-set number of sessions can bring about greater emotional and intellectual commitment, from both the student and the counsellor, to carry out a task that both feel they are sharing.
- c) As to the problems this might entail, one should remember that the short intervention tends to boost both the expectations of magic results and the separation anxiety.

Work on these last two issues should therefore begin very soon, sometimes even during the first meeting, to avoid those feelings related to loss – which from a persecutory view is expressed as anger, deprivation and refusal, and from a depressive view as sorrow, pain or regret – causing problems in starting the dialogue, or jeopardising its course or its conclusion.

### **The use of interpretation of transference and counter-transference**

What has just been said introduces the second problem mentioned above concerning the use of interpretation of transference and counter-transference feelings that emerge during the sessions. This is a very important aspect that may help promote a deep understanding of the psychodynamic process in action.

Because of the short number of sessions, the use of interpretation of transference and counter-transference should differ from the one made during short-term or long-term psychotherapy. As a matter of fact, we try to avoid centring the helping relationship on transference dynamics or establishing a relationship with the client, based on regression or dependence.

It is useful to take these dynamics into account when there is a negative transference, which should be detected in order to overcome obstacles that might jeopardise the relationship or interrupt the session cycle.





*Fifth from left Paolo Valerio.*

When the counsellor perceives that clients project some aspects of their inner world on him/her, he or she can try to interpret this indirectly not in a centripetal direction, but rather in a centrifugal one. This means that the counsellor can make a comment linking what is happening “here and now” with the relationship which the client has with his/her external world and with some significant aspects of the client’s story, which have emerged during the sessions.

Therefore, the feelings that the client experiences towards the counsellor during the sessions will be used to help develop a greater awareness of the attitudes he/she tends to assume towards other people, and also to help develop an awareness of the nature of the relationship he/she tends to establish with his/her inner world.

If the client does not unconsciously resist the possibility of getting this kind of understanding, it will be possible to let him/her come to terms with his/her inner feelings and begin what Gianna Polacco Williams (1990) defines as “drawing a map” which the client will be able to follow some day, should there be a need to do so, when he/she is finally prepared to begin a journey within his/her inner world.

Any other kind of work is not very useful and

could provide a cognitive understanding of the conflict that does not involve feelings. Rather, it would offer people the opportunity to get a better image of themselves, without any real change in their experiences or in their internal world.

These are the cases for which a consultation basically has the purpose of preparing the client to start a longer psychotherapeutic experience, either in an individual or a group setting.

It is easy to see that this kind of work brings about great anxiety in the counsellor, due to the brief duration of the interventions and to the urgency and/or complexity of the problems presented. For this reason, as reported by other authors, it is necessary to create a favourable setting for the work which enables the counsellors to learn from it. Therefore, it is useful to set up a support system parallel to the activity of the Service, based on weekly meetings for all team members, during which a detailed discussion of all the cases takes place, in order to deal with all the problems raised by each individual client.

The aim of these meetings is to provide the workers with a space in which they can share with colleagues the problems faced, and to help detect possible counter-transference interference, so as to avoid these from interfering with the clinical work.



## **The Contribution of Psychoanalytic Theory in Comprehending the Consequences of Congenital or Acquired Diseases on the Structure of the Personality**

Several authors have described the implications that the condition of being disabled or having chronic illnesses may have on the psychic development, particularly as far as the integration of the Ego and the structure of the Self are concerned (Calef, 1959; Freud, 1952; Kavka, 1977; Lussier, 1980; Solnit and Stark, 1961; Winnicott, 1972).

Some psychoanalytically oriented contributions warn about resorting to mechanistic equations: that any damage at the level of the body necessarily implies corresponding damage at the level of Self. Both Winnicott (1972) and Lussier (1980) showed, for example, how their young, congenitally disabled patients revealed a fundamentally integral Self, developed thanks to acceptance and sufficient maternal idealisation. In these cases, the difficulties leading these persons to seek help were associated with their resistance to modifying their body image, strongly influenced by such primary idealisation, requiring them to undergo corrective or rehabilitative intervention. The same sort of problems are associated with the difficulties that deaf children encounter during the course of logopaedic therapy, when they confront themselves with the necessity of proceeding beyond non-verbal communications, which have been strongly developed within the mother-child relationship to verbal communicational skills.

Nonetheless, it is probably necessary to differentiate between mild congenital disabilities and acquired illnesses or congenital illnesses of a more serious nature. In the first case, the external reality is less distressful and this facilitates the working through of the maternal "narcissistic wounds" associated with the child's disability (Solnit and Stark, 1961). This allows the person to live with his/her condition as normally as possible during this developmental stage. In the second case, this process is dramatically conditioned and distorted by the traumatic impact of the disease (Solnit and Stark, 1961; Salzberger Wittenberg, 1977; ).

Several authors emphasise how the sudden manifestation of an illness may constitute a basis for atypical development, conditioning the integration processes of the ego, the capacity of symbolic representation and object relations (Calef, 1959; Kawka,

1977; Di Cagno, Massaglia, 1990). Therefore in those cases in which early disabilities continue into later life we would find that deviations, defects and arrested development are intimately interwoven with the disability itself and ensure, *inter alia*, that the Ego which the patient brings to the counsellor may be an abnormal one. Francis Dale (1986), referring to the conceptualisation of the "skin", formulated by Ester Bick (1968), shows how the presence of chronic, somatic damage, especially if acquired in early life, may cause a "second skin" structure having all the characteristics of a hard shell; for these patients emotional contact implies a terrible risk associated with coming out of the shell and remaining defenceless and exposed to attack.

Without analysing specific contributions we emphasise our attention on the establishment, under these conditions of very rigid defence mechanisms, which in a psycho-dynamic counselling setting, owing to the patient's resistance, may interfere with the counselling process. According to Yorke (1980) such connotations characterise those "coping" mechanisms which comprise all those measures by which people adapt, in the face of personal adversity of whatever kind, to the internal and external difficulties of everyday life. Through these dynamically unconscious processes people can learn to avoid focusing attention on particular cognitive or affective processes because doing so is associated with shame, guilt, sadness or anxiety, just as people can learn to avoid a stimulus associated with pain through negative reinforcement (Westen, 1998). They will include the adaptive exploitation of ego strengths as well as a number of defensive manoeuvres. The latter will have to fit or match pre-existing defences, though the balance of these may shift to accommodate, supplement, and strengthen the way of coping. The defence organisation may have had healthy or less healthy features, but these are the raw materials that are used in readjustment.

As emphasised by Yorke there are many examples of coping devices such as adaptive denial, shifts of identification, changes of sublimations, minor inhibitions of affect or drive expression and restrictions of ego activities, provided always that the price paid for the upkeep of such devices is not too great. Many of them are highly acceptable socially. The defensive measure by which passive trends are turned into active ones is a case in point; there are



many whose own need for care is met by caring for others. The range of such measures is enormous and covers almost everything from wishful thinking to straightforward courage (Yorke, 1980).

These types of structures and defence mechanisms, although differing according to each individual situation, were very often present in the young people we met, which presented us with the problem of how to deal effectively with these conditions within the context of the counselling relationship.

## Conclusion

Counselling students with disabilities, is work we find extremely useful both for the student and for the counsellor. There is so much which can be achieved in such a short time. Even four counselling sessions can sometimes uncover and remove difficulties that have prevented normal social interactions from taking place. The changes brought about in people's feelings about themselves and their consequent behaviour can be dramatic. In the process, with the help of group supervision aimed at detecting possible counter-transference interference, the counsellor learns and changes as well – and perhaps become better prepared for coping with a very difficult task.

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# Le conseil multiculturel dans les universités européennes: quelles compétences et quelles formations?

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La mobilité des étudiants universitaires dans l'Union européenne élargit désormais *de facto* la pratique du conseil et du conseil psychologique (en particulier, mais pas exclusivement, d'orientation) à une population multiculturelle. Cet état de fait, dont il est peu douteux qu'il ne fera que s'amplifier dans les prochaines années, rend à l'évidence nécessaire de porter son attention sur la façon de former les conseillers à la sensibilité interculturelle.

Or, deux difficultés apparaissent immédiatement.

La première concerne le concept même de sensibilité interculturelle dont dépend le *contenu* de la formation et la seconde tient à la méthodologie de la formation ou au *comment* former. Nous nous centrerons ici sur la première de ces deux questions.

## 1. Le concept de sensibilité multiculturelle

### 1.1 La critique de Ridley et al. (1994b)

Ridley et al. (1994b) constatent que même aux Etats-Unis où le conseil multiculturel a déjà une histoire on ne trouve guère de réponse claire dans la littérature spécialisée à des questions relatives à la "sensibilité culturelle" à son opérationnalisation ou à sa mesure. Faisant la revue critique de la littérature sur le conseil multiculturel, Ridley *et al.* (1994b) relèvent quatre zones d'obscurité qui limitent notre connaissance actuelle de la sensibilité interculturelle.

#### 1.1.1 Caractère fluctuant des définitions du concept de sensibilité interculturelle

Les auteurs utilisent de façon interchangeable les expressions suivantes: sensibilité culturelle, compétence interculturelle, expertise interculturelle, conscience culturelle.

#### 1.1.2 Description inadéquate des indicateurs de la sensibilité interculturelle

De l'examen de la littérature se dégagent des indicateurs de la sensibilité interculturelle qui peuvent se ranger sur un continuum à trois classes où l'on peut distinguer (a) des prérequis à un comportement interculturel, (b) des comportements interculturels, (c) des effets (sur le client) d'un comportement interculturel. Les variables qui composent ces trois classes sont respectivement, par exemple, (a) des habiletés cognitives, des attitudes, des émotions, des comportements de prise de conscience, des aptitudes perceptives appliquées à un donné interculturel, (b) la recherche d'informations interculturelles, l'expression de ses propres valeurs, le reflet des émotions du client culturellement chargées, (c) le niveau de satisfaction et de motivation du client.

Or, dans les travaux relatifs au premier groupe de variables, les auteurs ne fournissent la plupart du temps de leurs concepts que des définitions abstraites qui n'aident guère à la concrétisation d'une pratique de la sensibilité interculturelle; et bien peu fournissent des exemples concrets. Lorsqu'il est question d'indicateurs comportementaux, ils sont rarement décrits en compréhension.

Quant aux indicateurs de la troisième catégorie, ils sont en général tout simplement ignorés.

#### 1.1.3 Absence de fondements théoriques

Dans une revue de la littérature consacrée aux minorités ethniques et raciales, Ponterotto (1988) relève que, de 1976 à 1986, seulement 16 études sur 49 proposent des hypothèses de recherche en relation avec un modèle théorique. En général, les spécialistes estiment que la sensibilité interculturelle est essentielle au succès de la relation de conseil, mais ils ne s'expliquent guère sur les concepts théoriques sur lesquels ils s'appuient pour y parvenir, ni comment ils relient les constructs entre eux et à quels observables.



### 1.1.4 Limites des instruments de mesure de la compétence interculturelle

Certains instruments de mesure de la compétence interculturelle existent en langue anglaise parce qu'ils sont nés aux Etats-Unis (e.g. *Cross-Cultural Competency Inventory-Revised*, LaFramboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991; *Multicultural Counseling Inventory*, Sadowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). Tous ces instruments développent à des degrés divers les domaines majeurs de compétence interculturelle originellement proposés par Sue *et al.* (1982). Conscience chez le conseiller de, et sensibilité à, ses propres spécificités culturelles et canaux à travers lesquels ses propres valeurs et biais affectent le client; prise en considération de facteurs comme l'impact du système socio-politique sur des minorités culturelles; information sur des groupes culturels particuliers et capacité de mettre en oeuvre une large gamme de réponses verbales et non verbales appropriées aux besoins du client; acceptation aisée des différences existant entre lui-même et son client.

Néanmoins, Ridley *et al.* (1994b) estiment que dans ces outils le concept de «sensibilité culturelle» est confondu avec celui de «compétences interculturelles» dans le conseil.

## 2. Cadres théoriques dans lesquels s'articulent les concepts relevant de la problématique du CMC

Une distinction importante: *approche etic* = *universaliste* vs. *emic* = *culturellement spécifique*.

En psychologie du CMC, la perspective *etic* repose sur l'hypothèse qu'il est possible de développer des théories du conseil dont la cible est constituée des aspects universels de l'existence, ceux qui transcendent les variations culturelles. Le problème est le repérage de ces éléments universaux et l'impact de cette perspective sur la formation au CMC.

La caractérisation *emic* renvoie au sens strict aux idées, affects, attitudes, comportements culturellement spécifiques.

Les objectifs d'apprentissage sont dérivés à partir d'une conception particulariste des valeurs, des patterns de comportement etc. De ce point de vue, les objectifs d'apprentissage, de formation, sont spécifiques de la culture d'appartenance de l'apprenant et des clients potentiels.

L'*approche idiographique* (e.g. Scott & Borodovsky, 1990; Broonen, 1997b) consiste à chercher à réduire la possibilité d'imposer ses stéréotypes et préconceptions ethnocentriques relatifs à ce qu'est la «mauvaise adaptation» du client. Le conseiller concentre son action sur une compréhension du client en tant qu'il appartient comme personne à une culture déterminée (Scott & Borodovsky, 1990). Cette position n'empêche pas – on recommande même – une information parallèle sur les problèmes du CMC en général (racisme, identité ethnique, acculturation etc.), ni de considérer que certaines questions relèvent d'une approche universaliste.

## 3. Les apports de la psychologie sociale et de la psychologie interculturelle

### 3.1 Les travaux de Hofstede (1980).

### 3.2 Les études interculturelles font état d'une étroite imbrication entre les appartenances culturelles et les phénomènes psychologiques.

#### 3.2.1 La construction du soi ou l'opposition cultures de l'indépendance/cultures de l'interdépendance

(cf. Kitayama *et al.*, 1997; Fiske *et al.*, 1998).

Dans la culture américano-européenne, la personne en bonne santé psychologique est un être qui:

- est autonome, stable, «libre»;
- «possède» un ensemble de caractéristiques l'identifiant en termes de préférences, d'objectifs, de capacités;
- est orientée essentiellement vers la réalisation de soi;
- évalue l'existence en référence à la réalisation de ses objectifs;
- fait des choix indépendants, plus ou moins rationnels, dans la poursuite de ses objectifs;
- tient sous contrôle et est individuellement responsable de ses comportements personnels;
- regarde souvent ses relations interpersonnelles sous l'angle de la compétition et considère souvent les groupes composants de la société comme interférant avec ses objectifs personnels.

Bien entendu ces idéaux culturels ne sont pas pleinement partagés par chaque Américain (chaque Européen), mais ils sont enchâssés dans bien des pratiques, institutions et symboles publics.

En Asie de l'Est (Japon), la personne idéale:



- participe à un ensemble de relations interpersonnelles, de rôles de groupes qui sont perçus comme les sources fondamentales guidant ou contraignant l'action;
- est principalement orientée vers le fonctionnement harmonieux de ces entités sociales;
- tente naturellement de rencontrer les obligations et de se conformer aux normes;
- recherche le consensus;
- évalue son existence en référence aux besoins collectifs et à la contribution qu'elle peut offrir à la réalisation des buts collectifs;
- se considère comme un partenaire en interaction avec d'autres.

Une étude de Kitayama *et al.* (1997) met bien en évidence la tendance à l'auto-encensement (*self-enhancement*) chez des étudiants américains et à l'autocritique (*self-criticism*) chez des étudiants japonais.

Sur le plan psychique, le sentiment de bien-être psychique existe évidemment dans les deux cultures, mais il est lié à des variables culturelles différentes.

### 3.2.2 L'erreur fondamentale d'attribution

Ce biais de correspondance que constitue l'erreur fondamentale d'attribution (Ross, 1977) paraît bien plus fréquent dans les cultures de l'indépendance que dans celles de l'interdépendance. En effet, dans les premières, la perception de l'individu comme un être autonome favorise la survalorisation de ses traits de personnalité. Dans une société de type interdépendant, les personnes prennent en compte les forces collectives qui amènent au surgissement d'un événement (Zarate & Uleman, 1994, cités par Fiske *et al.*, 1998). En fait, un certain nombre d'études interculturelles montre qu'on aurait tort d'exagérer l'impact des différences culturelles sur le comportement.

Buss *et al.* (1990) mènent une recherche interculturelle de grande étendue visant à identifier les effets de la culture sur les caractéristiques que les gens préfèrent chez leurs compagnons (compagnes). Les données émanaient de 33 pays et touchaient plus de 9000 personnes. On a relevé que certaines qualités étaient positivement évaluées dans la totalité de l'échantillon international, par ex. attraction et amour mutuels, caractère digne de confiance,

stabilité émotionnelle, maturité. On trouve aussi une certaine unanimité pour l'appartenance à la même religion ou à la même orientation politique.

Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il n'y ait pas de variation interculturelle. La plus importante porte ici sur la virginité: très importante dans des pays comme la Chine, l'Inde et l'Indonésie, peu importante en Suède, Finlande et Norvège. Donc, dans le contexte d'un vaste ensemble de similarités panculturelles, on trouve des différences interculturelles.

A propos des standards d'attractivité physique, Langlois *et al.* (1990) relèvent que depuis Darwin, on admet généralement que les standards de beauté sont culturellement spécifiques. Or de nombreuses investigations ont, selon ces auteurs, remis cette hypothèse en question. Les jugements sur le caractère attractif de visages ethniquement distincts donnent lieu à des corrélations inter-évaluateurs, appartenant eux-mêmes à des groupes culturels ou raciaux différents, comprises entre .66 et .93. Donc certains traits du visage en tout cas sont perçus comme attractifs quelle que soit la provenance raciale ou culturelle du percevant.

Dans leurs travaux interculturels, Williams, Best et leurs collaborateurs<sup>1</sup> consacrent une étude (1990a) aux stéréotypes concernant les caractéristiques psychologiques associées différenciellement aux hommes et aux femmes. On observe un taux élevé de concordance entre les jugements émanant des différents échantillons de sujets: plus grande force et plus grande activité, dominance, autonomie, agression, exhibitionnisme (hommes) vs. humilité, déférence, aide à autrui, maternage (femmes).

Dans une recherche ultérieure (Williams & Best, 1990b), des étudiants universitaires de 14 pays différents sont invités à se décrire tels qu'ils sont et tels qu'ils voudraient être. Or les concepts de soi idéal sont, pour les hommes comme pour les femmes, plus masculins que leurs concepts de soi actuel.

Au vu de tous ces travaux, on obtient un tableau qui n'est pas simple à interpréter. Si l'on a bien identifié des différences psychologiques d'une culture à l'autre, surtout quand on considère des groupes très contrastés, il semble bien qu'existent aussi des universaux.

## 4. Une distinction éclairante: le psychique vs le mental (Duyckaerts, 1994)

Les différences culturelles font obstacle bien souvent



à une juste perception d'autrui. La psychologie sociale en particulier contribue à nous alerter p. ex. sur les biais proendogroupes et autres stéréotypes culturels. Ces biais, ces stéréotypes, en annihilant les différences dans l'exogroupe, renforcent la cohésion de l'endogroupe parfois jusqu'à la constitution d'une identité groupale mythique qui ne s'entretient que par l'extermination de l'autre.

Notre vie **psychique** est faite de pulsions, d'amour et de haine, d'envie et de gratitude, de colères et de réconciliations, bref elle est comme une « respiration » de notre vie interpersonnelle.

Plus précisément, nos expériences vécues, colorées positivement ou négativement, ont une double origine:

1. elles sont le fruit de notre vie interne;
2. elles sont faites des émois que notre rapport au monde suscite en nous.

Ainsi, pulsions, désirs, angoisse, sentiment d'impuissance, détresse, exaltation, jouissance, voilà le fonds de notre vie psychique. Or certains de ces affects, notamment ceux qui sont pénibles, s'ils restaient à l'état brut, engendreraient le chaos intérieur. Un **traitement** est nécessaire qui va rendre supportable l'insupportable. C'est là que commence le **mental**. Positivement, les expériences de plaisir sont traitées mentalement pour être fixées et reproduites. Celles qui relèvent de l'angoisse, de l'impuissance, de la détresse, sont traitées, pour devenir supportables, par une activité mentale incessante, en partie inconsciente. Du côté conscient ce sont les images, les mots, nos rêves et les scénarios que nous montons dans notre for intérieur.

Font aussi partie de cette activité mentale nos **pensées flottantes** (distinction espace réel/espace mental). Or ce flottement mental lui-même peut devenir désagréable quoiqu'il ne le soit pas en soi. Il devient désagréable quand surgissent des pensées désagréables pour toutes sortes de raisons. C'est alors que « nous nous coulons dans les créneaux culturels ». Et nous en retirons « le plaisir de la cohérence, victoire sur le morcellement intérieur, les satisfactions de la vie sociale, l'apaisement de la bonne conscience ».

Ceci amène à bien distinguer entre l'**identité psychique** et la **diversité mentale**. Tous nous expérimentons l'amour et la haine, la jalousie et l'envie, la solitude, la fragilité face à un monde qui

suit son cours sans qu'il ne s'inquiète de notre sort. Ces phénomènes caractérisant l'identité psychique sont du côté universaliste de la condition humaine. Ceci ne signifie évidemment pas qu'ils ne soient pas individuellement modulés ni, le cas échéant, culturellement<sup>2</sup>. Le traitement mental de ces affects varie, dans les contenus, d'un individu à l'autre, d'un groupe social à l'autre, d'une culture à l'autre. Ici, le caractère particulariste est sans doute plus massif, même s'il y a place pour des processus universalistes: le traitement mental s'opère de façon privilégiée par le truchement de la langue et tout homme parle une langue, mais c'est à travers une langue particulière, à travers des normes culturelles particulières etc.

Peut-être tenons-nous avec cette distinction (Duyckaerts, 1994) deux directions importantes de l'intervention en conseil multiculturel:

- sur le plan psychique universel, l'empathie paraît bien être la ressource de base dans la relation au client;
- sur le plan mental, l'universel est certes aussi présent, mais c'est surtout le culturel qui est convoqué. Et le concept de sensibilité culturelle prend toute sa signification.

## 5. Quels modèles de contenus de formation?

Cf. Sue et al. (1992), Ridley et al. (1994a), Reynolds (1995).

### 5.1 Éléments de base

- Un conseiller culturellement compétent cherche activement à devenir conscient de ses propres hypothèses, valeurs, biais, stéréotypes etc. à propos du comportement humain. Il a une compréhension de la façon dont sa propre conception du monde peut influencer sa relation avec un client qui appartient à un autre horizon culturel.
- Compréhension de la vision du monde du client culturellement différent. Ceci n'implique pas qu'il doive faire sienne cette conception du monde, mais qu'il doit l'accepter comme une autre perspective légitime.
- Développement d'une intervention appropriée en termes de techniques et de stratégies. Un conseiller culturellement compétent est quelqu'un qui est engagé dans un processus de développe-



ment actif ainsi que de pratique d'intervention appropriée et sensible dans son travail avec des clients culturellement différents.

## 5.2 Ces éléments seraient à développer simultanément au plan des:

- croyances, attitudes, affects;
- savoirs;
- savoir-faire spécifiques.

## 5.3 Thématiques apparaissant comme importantes du point de vue des contenus:

- Éléments de psychologie générale en insistant sur la formation à la perception et à la compréhension de la dynamique interpersonnelle *hic et nunc*.
- Connaissance des concepts du CMC.
- Formation à l'empathie (registre des affects et des émotions). Ce registre peut être défavorisé dans les programmes universitaires au profit du registre cognitif. Et comment former à cette attitude empathique?
- Acquérir une sensibilisation aux problèmes éthiques du CMC.
- Conscience de ses propres déterminants culturels: focalisation sur les filtres cognitifs et attitudeaux qui organisent la vision du monde de chacun.
- Capacité à critiquer les théories du conseil

existantes sur le plan culturel.

- Développement d'une orientation théorique propre individuelle, qui soit culturellement pertinente.
- Connaissance des caractéristiques normatives des groupes culturels de contact.
- Connaissance des différences interindividuelles dans les exogroupes culturels.

Voilà donc quelques éléments thématiques susceptibles d'entrer dans la composition d'un programme de formation. C'est au développement de tels contenus dont la liste n'est évidemment pas limitative que devront s'attacher les concepteurs d'un tel programme.

## NOTES

1/ Pour une présentation synthétique de leurs travaux en français, cf. Williams (1994).

2/ Il faut toutefois se garder de généraliser indûment: Levy (1973) montre que les Tahitiens n'ont pas de concepts distincts pour exprimer la tristesse, le sentiment de perte (de quelqu'un) ou le deuil. Ces émotions sont «hypocognized». Quand un proche meurt ou s'en va, ils se sentent malades et fatigués, mais incapables de dénommer clairement les sentiments ou le malaise qu'ils associent à la perte.

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# Equal Opportunities for Students with Different Degree Subjects?

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## Introduction

Western economies tend to be dominated by service industries and an increasing number of graduates find work in this sector of the economy. Employers, promotional literature and websites give out the message that "personal transferable skills are more important than degree course content". However, despite this message many employers still seem to believe that they are more likely to find these transferable skills in students from business related courses, although, naturally, the situation varies from country to country. This article presents some approaches to the issue in question, and offers some strategies on how to influence the perceptions of employers, graduates, teachers and career counselors. It also reflects the discussions that participants in the workshop had with one another.

## Different types of entry level positions

The majority of the entry level positions in the labour market bear no relation to the contents of a degree course. In their jobs, young graduates don't directly put to use what they learnt at university. Instead, they need to deal with other types of knowledge. Essentially, the main result of their academic learning is that they have proved that they are not unintelligent. Only a minority of the entry level positions have any relevance to the knowledge graduates acquired at university. In addition, this knowledge dates very quickly. The conclusion is that young professionals in all kinds of positions need to deal with a large amount of new information. They need skills to select the relevant and important parts of that information and to transform it into something useful for the situation in which they find themselves at that particular moment.

## Service industries

In service industries the personality of the professional is the determining factor for success. His or her degree course content has little influence on his or her performance.

During the last decades services have become more complex, a process that has caused an upgrading of jobs. Employers have recruited more graduates instead of applicants with a lower level of education, and high unemployment rates have encouraged this development.

In countries with fast growing service industries, such as the Netherlands, one would expect that the relevance of the degree course subject would diminish. In fact, until quite recently, Dutch employers used to select new employees in a traditional way, but nowadays this seems to be changing rapidly because of the very low unemployment rates. Recruiters can't afford to be so selective anymore.

## Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME)

In the United Kingdom the number of graduates who find a job in SME's has increased. As smaller firms tend to recruit students more conservatively, this development might change the general image of British employers as not being very interested in degree course content.

## Family background and relations

In Greece the degree course content is scarcely relevant at all in finding a job. The main factors are one's family background and the contacts with the employer or with influential employees at the prospective firm. This situation seems to prevail in all countries of Southern Europe but it is expected that this will change in the future and that employers in Southern European countries will replicate the recruiting practices in the countries of Northern and Western Europe.



### **Self-selectiveness in the choice of degree course content**

Of course, it is not only the labour market situation and recruiters who are responsible for the current practice. Self-confident students seem to choose business related studies more often, however unrealistic and unjustified their self-confidence might be. They then operate in an environment in which they develop the personal skills that are important for gaining jobs in the labour market. On the other hand students who have no idea about their future often avoid career questions. The consequences of this are worse if their teachers don't have contacts with or knowledge of the labour market outside the university. These students are pessimistic about their chances, which might become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Recruiters react to these patterns of self-selectiveness.

### **Strategies to influence the current practice**

This article has described some patterns, observable in different European countries, relating to different subjects studied and different types of entry level positions in the labour market. The word "pattern" does not imply that individual graduates or individual recruiters may not fall outside the "pattern".

Career counsellors need to influence these patterns with the aim of making students, teachers and employers act in a less stereotypical way! Without the intention of proposing a complete action plan, possible strategies might be:

- Strategies to influence students: teach them self-examination skills and how to broaden their minds. Teach them to explore the labour market beyond their degree subject. Arrange contacts with alumni who recently made untraditional transitions.
- Strategies to influence employers: give them information about degree course contents, the skills of students and examples of untraditional fits. Not many universities or faculties have written information for employers about degree course content! Stimulate employers to develop informative and participatory contacts with students, for example by offering internships, taking part in career guidance activities, or giving lectures.
- Strategies to influence teachers: show them how graduates make the transition to the labour market after university. Teach them to teach students how to make a connection between themselves, the academic course content and its value in the world outside the university.



# La formation des formateurs: expériences d'une collaboration avec l'Université d'Udine

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Il y a différents courants de pensée en Europe et en Italie qui vont se préciser dans le monde éducatif, qui est assurément très varié. Il y a, par exemple, ceux qui soutiennent que l'orientation doit être une activité pratiquée hors de l'école, dans des lieux et avec des opérateurs externes. Il y a aussi ceux qui concentrent leur attention sur l'activité scolaire comme liée à un processus d'orientation; cette conception implique une vision plus complexe de l'orientation. Elle comprend différents aspects de l'enseignement et elle s'intègre dans un rapport professeur/élève conforme au type éducatif-pédagogique. Ce type didactique correspond à une orientation formative. Si on reconnaît de la valeur à ce type, on prend en considération le progrès des résultats de la réflexion sur l'orientation, mais en même temps on pose des questions et des problématiques nouvelles pour ce qui concerne l'aspect opérationnel.

Dans le passé, on prévoyait le rôle d'un rapporteur responsable de l'orientation. Sa fonction était l'information, la communication et la relation avec les collègues, le proviseur et les étudiants à l'école et avec les autres instances éducatives présentes sur le territoire. Plus récemment, nous avons donné une grande importance au rôle du professeur-conseiller d'orientation et à l'orientation du parcours scolaire et extra-scolaire.

## Une loi récente en Italie

La loi n°. 59 du 15-03-95 lance un vrai défi au système éducatif italien. Cette loi accorde la responsabilité juridique aux établissements scolaires et l'autonomie didactique et administrative. Selon la définition de Piergiorgio Genovesi, autonomie signifie une responsabilité, une flexibilité plus grandes et la capacité de s'adapter aux nouvel-

les exigences de la société, c'est-à-dire une plus grande compréhension des besoins de chaque communauté, le respect de toutes les croyances et ethnies ainsi que l'abolition de tout monopole scolaire<sup>1</sup>. Si le système peut saisir et exploiter au mieux l'opportunité offerte par cette loi, il gagnera une nouvelle vigueur.

La perspective entrepreneuriale entre dans le système éducatif comme impulsion à l'utilisation optimale des ressources et à une gestion efficace. Il faut collaborer, faire participer tous les professeurs, comme le mot collégialité l'indique dans son étymologie

## Le professeur intermédiaire

Le taux d'abandon scolaire est considérable que ce soit dans l'enseignement secondaire ou à l'université, et il faut bien voir que l'évolution rapide de notre société exige une capacité à choisir, à réorganiser continuellement sa carrière et une faculté d'adaptation.

Au cours de la dernière rencontre, on a tracé les traits d'un «professeur intermédiaire», auquel on demande des compétences spécifiques: de bonnes capacités relationnelles, d'organisation et de communication avec les différentes instances éducatives du territoire. Mais comment faut-il former ces professeurs-conseillers d'orientation?

## Une formation continue

Les universités, les institutions destinées à la formation de haut niveau et les Instituts Régionaux de Recherche et d'Expérimentation (IRRAE) offrent, depuis quelques années, des programmes de formation à long terme ou des cours de perfectionnement post-lauream.

Ce nouveau modèle d'organisation exige une certaine articulation et une flexibilité entre les offres et les fonctions de formation. C'est dans ce contexte que les conseillers d'orientation devraient



servir de trait d'union entre l'institution éducative et le territoire dans un processus d'interaction/intégration. Ils devraient constituer un réseau de ressources en formations.

Les changements radicaux qui concernent l'école italienne attirent l'attention sur le problème de la formation des professeurs-conseillers d'orientation, une formation qui doit être continue.

Je voudrais à ce sujet relater mon expérience triennale de formation à l'université d'Udine en 1996. J'ai participé à un stage de recyclage sur l'orientation pour l'université. Ce stage avait pour but de former un groupe d'experts de gestion des systèmes scolaires dans le domaine de l'orientation, ainsi que de la production et de la diffusion des connaissances. Le but était également d'aider les professeurs, dans leurs activités d'orientation à l'école, à choisir des activités ensemble, adaptées aux réalités régionales.

En 1997 s'est tenu un stage qui avait pour but:

- d'étudier les activités d'orientation formative avec une collaboration entre des formateurs de l'école secondaire et de l'université;
- d'analyser les modalités de collaboration entre l'école et l'université pour orienter les lycéens;
- de souligner l'aspect formatif de l'orientation, la liaison entre l'école et l'université.

A l'organisation de ces stages ont participé des experts de la faculté de psychologie de l'université de Padoue, de Rome et du centre d'orientation de la région Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Des experts étrangers ont participé au congrès de clôture; nous avons comparé notre expérience et analysé les résultats des actions d'orientation sur différents plans: formatif, didactique, de gestion et des services.

Ce projet triennal a entraîné une collaboration entre l'enseignement secondaire et l'université que je propose comme modèle de formation des conseillers d'orientation, surtout parce qu'il est basé sur la comparaison des expériences, selon le schéma "théorie et usage".

### **La transition de l'enseignement secondaire à l'université: Un cursus flexible**

Le curriculum est une organisation stratégique de modalités visant à favoriser au mieux les études, c'est à dire la transmission, l'acquisition et l'élabo-

ration des connaissances. Ce terme latin signifie "tour" ou "course", c'est-à-dire "piste pour courir". En effet, le cursus est ce qui permet à l'individu d'avancer dans son parcours de formation, il trace un chemin à suivre.

Chaque système éducatif possède un cursus à travers lequel il se déroule et qui est une manifestation de l'internationalisation du système éducatif lui-même. Le cursus est nécessaire pour l'action formative, car il est constitué par des contenus qui sont choisis selon les circonstances et les exigences historiques.

Pour préparer un cursus, une "piste pour courir" au devant de la connaissance, il faut tenir compte:

- de la situation scolaire et extra-scolaire dès le début;
- des objectifs à atteindre;
- des contenus;
- des procédures didactiques et des instruments utilisés pour apprendre;
- de la mise au point d'un système de vérification et d'évaluation des objectifs atteints.

Ceci dit, nous comprenons l'importance de la détermination avec laquelle l'école affronte les changements culturels de sa communauté. Il est important d'élaborer un plan qui prévoit des cursus flexibles par rapport aux changements rapides et inexorables de notre société. Les innovations de l'école italienne, la réorganisation des cycles scolaires, la loi d'autonomie, qui accorde la responsabilité juridique et de gestion à chaque institution scolaire, prévoient qu'un tiers du cursus soit géré librement par l'école. L'étude des matières peut être divisée en formules et en modules. L'école est considérée comme une entité culturelle qui gère son action à travers le territoire avec les autres instances éducatives, en particulier avec l'université.

Le défi est de transformer la situation actuelle de l'Italie qui connaît le plus petit nombre de diplômés universitaires et le plus grand nombre de chômeurs par rapport aux autres pays de l'Union européenne. Une réforme importante est en cours en Italie. Elle a commencé par un décret présenté au Parlement. Cette réforme vise à plus de flexibilité. Il y aura une qualification des crédits, c'est-à-dire un calcul des activités de formation pour quantifier le travail d'un étudiant; il n'y aura donc pas uniquement des notes pour évaluer ce travail.



Cette offre de formation est nouvelle et en cours d'élaboration. L'objectif est une plus grande productivité. Les universités, qui proposeront aux étudiants des connaissances dans un temps défini et une formation utilisable sur le marché du travail, seront gagnantes. Les modalités et les contenus de la didactique vont changer, le rapport professeur/élève sera de plus grande proximité, les programmes plus courts et il y aura une utilisation plus importante de matériel électronique comme les ordinateurs. Ces nouveaux buts à atteindre doivent être partagés par toutes les institutions scolaires, car c'est l'unique moyen pour réduire l'échec et l'abandon scolaire ainsi que les problèmes de transition entre l'école secondaire et l'université.

### Comblar les distances

L'autonomie des établissements scolaires va donner la possibilité de combler les distances séparant, encore, l'enseignement secondaire de l'université. Les cursus flexibles vont donner naissance à une plus grande collaboration dans le domaine des contenus des différentes disciplines et de l'orientation, qui doit construire des parcours et des stratégies d'intervention afin d'unifier les différents degrés d'instruction. De l'école primaire à l'université, l'étudiant doit être guidé dans les phases de transition, pour apprendre à planifier son futur.

L'orientation est aussi une action éducative.

Réaliser un cursus flexible dans l'enseignement secondaire signifie trouver des stratégies d'enseignement susceptibles de faire acquérir des capacités et des outils permettant de continuer les études.

Il serait souhaitable qu'on crée une commission paritaire permanente pour l'élaboration de propositions méthodologiques des contenus à transmettre dans l'enseignement secondaire. Grâce à ces propositions, nous pourrions aménager des cursus flexibles dès la dernière année de l'enseignement secondaire. Tout ceci doit s'allier aux formes de collaboration qui existent déjà, avec l'aide des professeurs des lycées et des universités, soit au niveau de la préparation à l'université à travers des parcours spécifiques pour chaque faculté, soit au niveau de la préparation approfondie au baccalauréat.

### Conclusion

Si on veut exercer une action efficace d'orientation formative, une intégration des ressources est nécessaire.

#### NOTE

1/ Genovesi, (1998), *Dirigenza e figure di sistema nella scuola che cambia*, *Ricerche pedagogiche*, (p. 109), Parma.



## Discussion Table Ronde

*La Table Ronde s'est tenue la dernière matinée de L'Université d'Été sous la présidence de Margaret Dane, Vice-Présidente de FEDORA. Les orateurs étaient Jean-Marie Burnet et Lucia Berta, tous deux anciens Présidents de FEDORA, ainsi que Joachim Klaus, le Président actuel.*

JEAN-MARIE BURNET a soulevé des questions et des problèmes importants pour ceux qui sont engagés dans le conseil aux étudiants qui passent de l'enseignement secondaire à l'enseignement supérieur et au monde du travail. La préparation à ces transitions est souvent insuffisante et ne commence pas suffisamment tôt. Même s'ils ne manquent pas d'intelligence, les étudiants manquent souvent d'information et de conseils sur les choix qui s'offrent à eux ainsi que d'une aide leur permettant de prendre les bonnes décisions.

Dans le passé, les choix étaient plus clairs et souvent plus limités, tandis que l'aide venant des parents, des professeurs, de la famille et des amis était à la fois plus accessible et plus utile. La rapidité des changements implique que l'information liée à ces sources n'est peut-être plus exacte ou pertinente. De plus, les étudiants sont souvent peu disposés à utiliser les services d'orientation professionnelle et de conseil qui leur sont offerts, soit qu'ils manquent de temps, soit en raison d'une méconnaissance de l'existence de ces services ou d'un défaut de prise de conscience d'un besoin. Ceci représente un défi énorme pour les conseillers, que leur travail concerne la transition de l'enseignement secondaire vers l'enseignement supérieur ou le passage de l'enseignement au monde du travail accompagné d'une formation continue dispensée dans des institutions d'enseignement.

Les conseillers doivent s'assurer que leurs services sont accueillants et accessibles, de haute qualité, et répondent aux besoins et aux demandes de leurs clients.

LUCIA BERTA a posé la question de savoir comment les membres de FEDORA peuvent apprendre les uns des autres pour faire face à la grande proportion des abandons des étudiants dans l'enseignement universitaire, qui est en moyenne de 50% dans les pays européens. Tout en reconnaissant que les tendances varient considérablement d'un pays à l'autre, ce phénomène représente tout de même un gaspillage considérable pour les individus, pour les institutions universitaires et pour les économies des pays concernés.

L'oratrice a mentionné aussi les 20% de jeunes sans emploi en Europe tout en reconnaissant que les diplômés se trouvent, en général, mieux placés que ceux qui sont moins qualifiés.

FEDORA a un rôle important à jouer en aidant ses membres à apprendre ensemble, à travers des projets de recherche comme «Nouvelles Compétences pour un avenir différent» ou des manifestations comme cette université d'été ou encore les activités conjointes de ses groupes de travail. Nous devons adopter une approche holistique du conseil aux étudiants, qui combine l'orientation professionnelle et vocationnelle, l'orientation universitaire et l'accompagnement pédagogique, ainsi que le conseil personnel et psychologique. Cette approche requiert une bonne communication et de la compréhension entre les spécialistes, mais, peut-être de manière plus importante, une approche centrée sur l'étudiant lui-même.

Lucia a terminé son intervention en représentant que nous n'utilisons pas assez les connaissances des membres de FEDORA. La structure des groupes de travail renforce la compartimentalisation des membres dans les groupes spécialisés et donne moins la possibilité de développer un apprentissage interdisciplinaire. Certes il convient de développer ses connaissances et son expertise de spécialiste dans le contexte des activités des groupes de travail, mais il est aussi important d'améliorer la communication entre les divers groupes spécialisés et de tirer le plus grand avantage de la richesse



d'une approche plus interdisciplinaire dans le contexte de la formation continue.

JOACHIM KLAUS a continué sur le thème de la nécessité du changement à l'intérieur de FEDORA afin de répondre aux nouvelles tendances et questions: la globalisation, l'internationalisation combinée à la mobilité accrue dans les études et le travail, la formation continue combinée à l'emploi, la diversité croissante de la population étudiante et l'impact des technologies de l'information et de la communication. FEDORA doit adopter des approches et des méthodologies nouvelles pour améliorer ses communications internes et pour maximiser l'utilisation de ses ressources qui sont très limitées. C'est une organisation assez petite qui dépend beaucoup de ses membres actifs. Elle doit aussi améliorer son image de marque vis-à-vis des politiques et de ceux qui sont à la tête de l'enseignement universitaire.

Nos universités doivent aussi adapter leur enseignement en écho à ces réalités nouvelles. La formation continue implique que les étudiants vont entrer dans et sortir de l'enseignement à plusieurs reprises au cours de leur vie professionnelle et qu'ils adopteront des méthodes d'apprentissage différentes

à des moments différents pour s'adapter aux circonstances financières et autres. L'étude à mi-temps et à distance pose des défis nouveaux pour les professeurs et les conseillers sur le plan d'une offre de services accessible et adaptée à de nouveaux groupes d'étudiants. Quoique les technologies de l'information puissent nous assister dans ce travail en fournissant des services «virtuels» à chaque moment et en chaque endroit, elles ne résolvent pas tous les problèmes, et ne satisfont pas une demande temporaire d'aide et de conseil dans une relation de face à face. De plus les technologies de l'information ne peuvent pas contribuer beaucoup au développement des compétences, en particulier des compétences interpersonnelles qui sont si recherchées par les employeurs.

Ces contributions formelles ont été suivies de questions et de points de discussion de la part des participants.

Ce rapport est la version écrite d'un résumé oral des contributions présentées ci-dessus, fournie par Margaret Dane à la fin de la discussion, et est basée sur les notes qu'elle a prises pendant la séance.



*M Joachim Klaus, Président de FEDORA,  
et Mme Margaret Dane, Vice-Présidente.*



## Round Table Discussion

*The Round Table discussion was held on the final morning of the Summer University and was chaired by Margaret Dane, FEDORA Vice-President. Speakers included Jean-Marie Burnet and Lucia Berta, both former Presidents of FEDORA and Joachim Klaus, the current President.*

JEAN-MARIE BURNET raised important questions and issues for those involved in counselling students for the transition from school to further and higher education and into employment. Preparation for these transitions is often inadequate and does not start early enough. Though they are not lacking in intelligence, students often lack information and guidance about the options available to them and help with making the right decisions.

In the past, choices were clearer and often more limited while sources of help from parents, teachers, family and friends were both more accessible and more useful. The pace of change means that information from such sources may no longer be accurate or relevant. Furthermore, there is often a reluctance amongst students to use the professional guidance and counselling services available to them, whether through lack of time, lack of awareness or perceived lack of need. This poses a huge challenge to professional counsellors whether they are dealing with the transition from secondary to tertiary education or from education into employment and back into education.

Counsellors must ensure that their services are welcoming and accessible, of the highest quality and are responsive to the needs and demands of those who use them.

LUCIA BERTA addressed the issue of how FEDORA members can learn from each other in dealing with the high drop-out rates from higher education, with an average of 50% across Europe. While

recognising that patterns vary considerably within different countries, this still represents a huge waste, for the individuals concerned, for the higher education institutions and for the economies of the countries involved.

Lucia Berta also referred to the 20% unemployment rate amongst young people in Europe while recognising that graduates fare better than those who are less well educated.

FEDORA has an important role to play in helping its members to learn from each other whether through research projects like "New Skills for New Futures", from events like this Summer University and through the joint activities of its working groups. We need to adopt a holistic approach to student guidance, combining professional and vocational orientation, academic and educational guidance and personal and psychological counselling. This approach demands good communication and understanding between specialists, but even more importantly, it demands a student centred approach.

Lucia finished by arguing that we do not use the knowledge of FEDORA's members enough. The working group structure reinforces the compartmentalisation of members into specialist groups and allows less scope for interdisciplinary learning. While it is valuable to develop one's specialist knowledge and expertise within the context of working group activities and events, it is also important to improve communication between the various specialised groups and take greater advantage of the richness of knowledge of a more interdisciplinary approach within the context of lifelong learning.

JOACHIM KLAUS continued with the theme of the need for change within FEDORA to respond to new trends and issues: globalisation and internationalisation combined with increased mobility for study and work, lifelong learning combined with employment,



the increasing diversity of the student population and the impact of information and communication technologies. FEDORA needs to adopt new approaches and methodologies to improve both its internal communications and to maximise the use of very limited resources. It is a small organisation that relies very heavily on its active members. It also needs to raise its profile with politicians, policy-makers and leaders in the field of higher education.

Our higher education institutions too need to adapt their academic teaching to reflect these new realities. Lifelong learning means that students will come into and move out of education many times in their working lives and will adopt different learning methods at different times to meet their financial and other circumstances. Part-time and distance learning pose new challenges for academics and counsellors in making their services accessible

and relevant to new groups of learners. While IT can help with this by providing "virtual" services at any time and place, it does not solve all the problems or satisfy the demand for occasional face to face help and guidance. Nor can it contribute significantly to the development of skills, particularly interpersonal skills that are so sought after by employers.

These formal contributions were followed by a number of questions and discussion points from the floor.

This report is a written version of the verbal summary of the above contributions, given by Margaret Dane at the end of the discussion and is based on the notes taken by her during the session.



*From left to right Mrs Margaret Dane, FEDORA Vice-President, Mr Joachim Klaus, President of FEDORA, local organising committee: Mrs Tina Altonen Teljstedt, Ms Monica Svalfors and Ms Majken Wahsltröm.*





*FEDORA delegates celebrating the 10th anniversary, August 16 1999, during a boat trip to the unique Stockholm Archipelago.*





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The mission of FEDORA is to create opportunities for mutual understanding as well as presenting opportunities for a scientific and practical exchange in the field of guidance and counselling in the academic environment.

The FEDORA 5<sup>th</sup> Summer University took place in mid-August 1999 at Stockholm University. The following themes were focussed upon:

- Skills for working in a multicultural environment
- Skills for working with socio-economically deprived students
- Skills for working with students and graduates with disabilities
- Skills for working within the context of lifelong learning.

La mission de FEDORA est de créer les occasions permettant tout autant une meilleure compréhension mutuelle qu'un échange sur les plans scientifique et de la pratique dans le domaine de l'orientation et du conseil dans le champ de l'enseignement universitaire.

La 5<sup>e</sup> Université d'été FEDORA s'est tenue à la mi-août à l'Université de Stockholm. Le programme était centré sur les thèmes suivants:

- Compétences pour travailler dans un environnement multiculturel
- Compétences pour travailler avec des étudiants en situation socio-économique défavorisée
- Compétences pour travailler avec des étudiants handicapés en deuxième ou troisième cycle
- Compétences pour travailler dans le contexte de la formation tout au long de la vie.