

EQUIPE PROJECT

Case study

Academic Training Based on Personal Study Plans

University of Lapland, Continuing Education Centre has organised courses for the academic unemployed who have come to study along their individual curricula. The course is called Academic Start to Career. The first course was organized 1992. This year 2003 we will start the 12th program. 60 % of students has get job after the course, mostly during their work placement.

Students /Year 2002

Women 9, Men 5
Age 27 - 47

In February 8 students started, in May 6 students
The amount of students depends on how much money there is left in budget.

Students, examples:

Master of Arts, just graduated in sociology, age 27, did not know what to do after studies

Teacher, just moved to Rovaniemi with her family, age 44, did not know employers or who to contact

Master of Science in Technology, had been an enterpriser, business /firm went bankrupt, age 47

Bachelor of International Relations, studied in London, just moved back to Finland and Rovaniemi, age 28

Forest Officer from Sweden, age 49

Master of Education, age 37, been housewife with children and wanted start to earn money again

Process

The students are chosen by the Employment office Rovaniemi
One employee of the Employment office and the University interview the candidates. Lapland Rural Business Centre pays the course all the costs.

Students start their studies in the small groups (6-12 persons).

First there is an Orientation period (about 3 weeks). During that period the group is together. The aim is to get to know each other and make activity and study plans.

- What would be useful to study for their future
- Study something new, new job in future

Discussions and peer tutoring is important part of the course. During the orientation we use computers, internet and collect data about new fields or themes, professions and study possibilities. We also make plans about practical training.

- plans how to get a practice job
- what it would be and which company

Action by their Individual plans and personal curricula takes 2-6 months. They have to make choices

a) only studying

b) only practical training

c) both

During that individual period we have meetings and see each other regularly. In those meetings students tell each other how it is going and give hints, share experiences.

They have also regular meetings with the councillor/tutor.

During the process and in the end of it students evaluate and estimate themselves together. Also tutor/councillor and other students give feedback. It is possible to change individual curriculum. It is however important that everyone has some kind of plan and curriculum.

We have written our own quality manual in the Continuing Education Centre. Each student estimate and write feedback about their experiences during the studies. We collect and analyse all the feedback we get.

Impacts

The Continuing Education Centre has studied the impacts of training and monitored the efforts of unemployed graduates to find work on the labour market in the 1990's.

We have identified the following priorities for the development of academic training based on personal study plans: enhancement of the bond between working life and education, better anticipation of the trends and changing needs of working life, and faster inclusion of these in educational programs, and the provision of contacts with working life during training programs. Feedback indicated that the students would have liked to visit places of work, to be taught by trainers from working life and university instructors familiar

with practice, and to be involved in joint projects between the University and local employers.

The unemployed graduates in the study "A Project for Life", (Peteri, 1997) thought that employment training should include a closer connection between working life and training. The work placements that formed part of that program gave students exposure to practical working life and provided new contacts that improved their employment opportunities. For many, the placement became a new route to employment. An examination of job application practices showed that finding work requires active effort on the part of applicants and the use of unofficial channels in looking for work (e.g., direct contacts with employers and social networks). As available positions tend to be less visible and public in times of high unemployment, it proved advantageous for the students to have "made a name" for themselves with an employer during their placement.

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