



Youth Employability Competences

Supporting Motivation



Overview

Turku Vocational Institute is a multi-disciplinary provider of upper secondary level vocational education and training. They are the largest VET training centre in South-Western Finland and one of the largest in the country.

Most of the young people involved in the YEC youth advisory board are studying to eventually work in the care industry, some of them hoping to become nurses. Because of work experience commitments and young people moving on from the courses, there were a number of changes in the participants during the project. Because they were students there was often a lot of focus on how their studying prepared them for the world of work. They were keen to discuss the soft skills the project had identified as important to be success in work (professionalism, motivation, autonomy, wellness, job orientation and searching skills, communication and perceived and actual discrimination). They also identified that these skills were also important in either enabling or prevent them for attending and participating in the YEC project advisory boards. They felt that motivation was one the most important themes, because without it, it is much harder to make and keep commitments and to learn from the experience.

Effective Practice Approach

After discussion at a board meeting about ways to support motivation within the group the young people decided to focus on two things:

1. To give peer support to each other in relation to the project and also their studies. They felt that it was easier to open up to a peer than to others about their challenges relating to commitment and motivation, and that they felt more understood by their fellow board members.
2. To develop an activity that would give additional focus and direction within the group as well as supporting the members in developing their soft skills. To this end, members of the board developed a questionnaire asking what individuals generally felt motivated or demotivated them in life and particularly around their studies. They interviewed their fellow students using the questionnaire and at a later board meeting two of them presented the results and led a group discussion on the topic.

The young people also suggested that getting an extra student credit for taking part in the project and the advisory board would support their commitment. This was taken to the principal of the school who agreed it if their attendance was regular.



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Impact Results

Peer support and learning gave a number of positive results. The young people developed a number of soft skills including problem solving, working in teams and communication skills, as well as, as they had hoped, supporting their motivation. The board members fed back that they felt, through their discussions, that they understood and had better experienced the focus of the YEC project.

The process of creating a questionnaire, interviewing peers and analysing the results enabled development of a number of core competencies including professionalism, wellness, communication skills and analysis / reflection.

Themes

Young people often struggle with motivation and commitment. They are encouraged to do things in life that they haven't necessarily chosen or feel clear about why they are doing them. They often have not developed habits of discipline. The advisory board gave the students a chance to really reflect on issues around motivation and to start to understand and then practice ways that they could support themselves to stay motivated.

Peer support is a positive way to encourage this motivation. It can engender a sense of belonging and feeling connected and can be a positive experience for both the receiver and the supporter. In fact, a mutual two-way support allows people to experience both being resourceful and having something of value to offer, as well as practising asking for help, being realistic about where they are at and be proactive around their wellness needs. As students with common goals, empathy and camaraderie are developed.

