



Career Learning
as a Success Factor
for Lifelong Learning

Facilitating Peer Groups on Career Learning



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Framework



EN



Facilitating Peer Groups on Career Learning

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Introduction

The project *Career Learning as a Success Factor for Lifelong Learning* aims to enable the further professionalization of teachers in VET. We strongly believe that they should have the right and the duty to keep their pedagogical skills and competencies up- to- date so that they can provide the best possible guidance to our youngsters.

In relation to guidance, this means that we should acknowledge that the guidance that is currently offered to pupils/students is often not professional enough to let them make the transition to the labour market in a smooth and effective manner. This means that teachers in the 21st century should be concerned about the fact that they have to stimulate pupils in developing a spirit of learnability and flexibility, based on a fundamental and structural awareness of the necessity of the concept of lifelong learning

Facilitating peer groups on career learning

We have no knowledge of the existence of any kind of peer group, facilitated by schools, on career learning. The most striking thing is that the students who participated in the student panel sessions of this project asked for it spontaneously.

During the student panel sessions, especially the ones in the Netherlands, students reported that they liked these panel sessions, especially the talking to each other, i.e. to peers, and that all the questions we posed were very relevant for all students. At the same time, the students stated that they themselves were not able to organise and execute these panel sessions. Therefore, we decided to develop, together with students and teachers/guides, a working method for these peer groups, the results of which can be found in this framework.

Chapter 1 provides options on how to facilitate peer groups, chapter 2 provides content on peer group discussions via questionnaires and topics, and chapter 3 gives ideas for all practical and organisational matters. Annexed are scientific research references and relevant literature.

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1. Facilitating Context

As mentioned in the introduction, the idea for facilitating peer groups stems from the student panel sessions that were held in the Netherlands. The students concluded that speaking with peers about their career was useful and fun. However, they also stated that school should facilitate this in some form because they felt themselves not (fully) capable or confident of doing this on their own.

Schools can choose from three facilitating contexts for peer groups on career:

1. As part of the curriculum;
2. Teacher/guide/expert driven;
3. Student driven. For instance via independent assignments for pupils.

The differences between these three contexts are not absolute. Depending on the situation, it will be a mixture of these three.

The partner group from the Career Learning project recommends schools to adopt the idea of peer groups in career learning and embed it in the curriculum, not necessarily as a subject in the schedule, but at least as a topic to be dealt with during their education.

Secondly, we advise schools to take the initiative in organizing the peer groups; in the discussions with the student panels, we found that students are not confident to initiate them on their own. Depending on their level of self-efficacy, the actual organizing of the peer group could be carried out by the students.

The discussions with the student panels in Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands gave a wide variety of choices on how the peer group could be organised, and these will be elaborated in the next two chapters on content and form.



2. Content for peer groups

We recommend schools use the content of our questionnaires on making choices, working/career identity and self-efficacy, not as a strict guideline, but as a source for debate and dialogue. These questionnaires were developed for and used by the student panels in Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands.

2.1 Questionnaire Choosing/Making choices

a. Choosing my education/career path makes me/made me ...

	Yes √	No X
Stressed: I think/thought that the task is too heavy, or that I can't do it		
Excited: I think/thought that I will be successful, I am curious, it's something new/fun		
Other (please explain)		

b. What motives for your choice of education/career path are/were important to you? (Please tick any that apply and give reasons).

	√	Why was this important to you?
Motives related to my future: (I was influenced by considerations about what I can do with this education, the labour market/job prospects)		
Motives related to my performance: (I was influenced by considerations about what I think I can cope with/be successful in, rather than what I like)		
Motives related to my interest in the content of the course/occupation: (I was influenced by my enjoyment of the area of study, the studying itself, being a student)		
Mixed motives:		



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(I was influenced by a number of factors, e.g. - this seems fun to me - my friends/parents do/did this too - the college is nearby)		
Other motives: (please describe)		

c. What are/were your feelings when choosing your course of study/career path?
(Please tick any that apply and comment).

	√	Comments
I feel/felt unsure of the content of the various choices and of what the alternatives are/were		
I feel/felt paralyzed by having too many choices		
I feel/felt unsure of what the consequences of my choices would be, unsure of what's going to happen		
I was worried about my own competence to make the right choices		
I had no problem at all in making my choices and so I didn't feel insecure at all		

d. While choosing your education/career path, did you ever feel ...

	Yes √	No X	Comments
"My whole future depends on it!"			
"I can't make choices at all!"			

e. How would you like to be helped in this regard?



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What could/should College do?

- f. Who did you talk to when making your choices about your education/career? (Please tick any that apply and say what you talked about).

	√	5.2	What did you talk about?
Friends/peers			
Professionals (someone who works in the field/vocation of your choice)			
Guidance staff in school/college			
Other (please say who)			

- g. What was important in these conversations?

- h. What was missing in these conversations?

- i. Do you think you can make a wrong choice when choosing your education/ career?

Yes √	No X	Not sure ?	Comments

- j. What do you think are the possible consequences of making a wrong choice?

2.2 Questionnaire: Working identity/career identity

- a. Please describe what work means for your life and in your life.
- b. Is it important that you do/mean something for others in your work?
- c. Please describe your future job.
- d. How would you like to be helped in this regard?
What could/should College do?
- e. Have you explored labour market opportunities?
- f. Do you think it is important to explore labour market opportunities?



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g. Do you think it is important to ...

	Yes √	No X	Why/Why not?
Start doing new things?			
Interact with people you didn't know before?			
Reinterpret your life stories through the lens of emerging possibilities			

h. Which statement best sums up your attitude?

A It's better to start doing things and then reflect on your actions

B It's better to think things through before taking any action

2.3 Questionnaire: Self-efficacy

a. What are your dreams with regard to your education?

b. How likely do you think it is that your educational dreams will come true?

	√
Very likely	
Quite likely	
Unlikely	
Very unlikely	

c. What are your dreams with regard to your future career?

d. How likely do you think it is that your career dreams will come true?

	√
Very likely	
Quite likely	
Unlikely	
Very unlikely	

e. How would you like to be helped to achieve your education and career dreams?

What could/should College do?

f. In striving to achieve your goals, to what extent are these statements true for you?

(Please rate their importance for you on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being unimportant, 5 being very important.)



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	Please circle your response				
It's important to me to feel that I've mastered something, to experience success	1	2	3	4	5
When I observe others succeeding or doing something well, it makes me want to do the same: if they can do it, so can I!	1	2	3	4	5
I'm influenced by what people tell me: positive feedback encourages me; negative comments discourage me	1	2	3	4	5
I'm affected by how I feel, physically and emotionally (I'm boosted by a positive mood, undermined by a negative one)	1	2	3	4	5

- g. Which statement best describes you?
- A I like to be told I'm good at something
 - B I like to be told I've worked hard at something



2.4 Topics

The student panels in Austria made a list of possible topics that could be used for peer group discussions.

Student Panel 1

Success
Competencies
Job expectations
Qualifications
Employer
Profession
Family
Interests
Talents
Strengths
Job profile
Promotion opportunities
Education
Meaning
Prestige
Reputation
Existence
Security
Dream profession
Vision of the future
Period abroad
Job requirements
Team
Income

Student Panel 2

Leisure time
Education
Profession
Job abroad
Parents
Expectations
Social life
Decision discovery
Joy
Satisfaction
Fulfilment
Profession
Money
Income
Goal
Vision
Working conditions
Job perspectives
Opportunities
Future
Uncertainty
Flexibility
Creativity
Lifelong learning
Fit for work
Burnout
Job search
Internship abroad
Talents
Job opportunities

Student Panel 3

Ambition
Power
Networks
Contacts
Harassment
Company climate
Teamwork
Internships
Professional experience
Change
Fun
Job requirements
Luck
Career
Boss
Work
Decision discovery
Support
Examples
Security
Uncertainty
Job opportunities
Stress
Future
Family
Reputation
Wages
Self-actualization



3. Format

In a special questionnaire created by the Dutch student panel and teacher panel, we made an inventory of the different types of peer groups (school-driven, student-driven, teacher-driven), ways to organise, group composition etc. These questionnaires were discussed by the student panels in Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. We sometimes found very different opinions in these three countries, so the situational context is important in making the right choices here. One item was important for all: students need to feel safe when participating in peer groups. The conditions for feeling safe differ between countries.

The responses from the three different countries/panels are recorded in the overview below.

AT = Austria, BE = Belgium, NL = the Netherlands. Please note that a peer group session is referred to as a platform, which was the working title during the questionnaire sessions.

QUESTION	RESULTS/ OUTCOMES
<p>1. Should you pose open and/or closed questions to the students and why?</p>	<p>AT: Students prefer open questions. Open questions stimulate open minded thinking and reflecting on career related topics. Open questions allow a wide range of response options, and that makes the discussion alive and interesting.</p> <p>BE: Students prefer closed questions, because then they get a more structured dialogue. Closed questions can be useful to get the dialogue started.</p> <p>NL: No clear preference emerged from the discussions.</p>
<p>2. Should the group composition be homogeneous or heterogeneous, and in which areas/levels?</p>	<p>AT: Almost half of the students prefer the group composition be homogeneous, because they have a similar starting situation; they are familiar with each other; they talk more easily with peers on the same level; they feel free to say what they think; and they can better empathize with the position of the other. More than half of the students prefer the group composition to be heterogeneous as they expect to learn from participants of different ages, backgrounds and experiences. The participants could be older, experienced in university studies or professions, students from other schools, students from other countries.</p>



	<p>BE:</p> <p>In homogeneous groups, students speak the same language and can help each other distil information to the critical elements needed to make a decision. They are easy to contact when important decisions need to be made; they understand the goals and issues; and they have direct experience and so are seen as credible, unbiased and trusted sources of information. They also have specific local knowledge, and can, for example, make recommendations for trusted professional service providers or sources of assistance.</p> <p>Students are more likely to hear and internalize messages, and thus to change their attitudes and behaviours, if they believe the messenger is similar to them and faces the same concerns and pressures. Peer-to-peer learning provides locally relevant information when they need to make a decision about their own life.</p> <p>NL:</p> <p>In heterogeneous groups (mixed levels/ different sectors), you have a diverse group of people with varied interests. You learn more about other vocations and you can see what interests you. In homogeneous groups (same level/same sector), you will have common interests and you will be able to elaborate on certain vocations. You will be able to talk about continued education and about higher education.</p> <p>There was a preference for the levels to be separated. Level 1 and 2 should be in one group and level 3 and 4 in another. They believe this is best because there is a difference in thinking between these levels.</p> <p>The group should consist of about 12 people, which should then be split into two groups of about six people, or three groups of four, so that everyone will - and will not be afraid to - give their opinion.</p>
<p>3. Who should lead the discussion? Someone their own age or older, a peer or a coach? What should be their role?</p>	<p>AT:</p> <p>Most of the students say that someone of their own age should lead the discussion, or a slightly older student. They do not want their teachers to lead the discussion/platform. Some students would prefer an external coach (expert, professional). The discussion leader should: take care of</p>



	<p>fairness; ensure that all students are free to express their opinion; be able to provide positive inputs; be able to structure the discussion, to pose interesting questions, to comment on arguments, to sum up the results.</p> <p>BE: There should be a coach. The coach plays three basic roles: Thinking Partner, Objective Support and Accountability. It's easier to see another person more objectively than oneself and easier to identify a solution for another person than it is for oneself. It is difficult to know what to do when we find ourselves in the heat of a developmental opportunity. It is helpful having someone you can turn to for direction, especially when this person is someone who knows you well. The coach comes with a fresh point of view. S/he can see beyond the histories and can imagine many more possibilities and strategies. The coach is the one who is entrusted with the goals of the student, with the list of what the student really wants to accomplish. S/he is committed to helping the student and is on the student's side.</p> <p>NL: The discussion should be led by a teacher who is chosen by the students, by a teacher they trust. The teacher will begin with a brief introduction and get the conversation started. The students will then carry on with the discussion. The teacher will remain present and will maintain order, ensuring that the discussion stays on track. It is important that the teacher remains part of the discussion. It will benefit the discussion if the students get to choose the teacher, or it could be someone from outside/a stranger. In both of these instances, most students will find it easier to talk and share their opinions.</p>
<hr/> <p>4. How should the platform be organized? How should the participants be seated?</p>	<p>AT: The peer platform could, for example, be organized as part of a "school-project". The students want to have far-reaching participation: they wish to determine themselves the topic areas (formulating topics in small groups, voting). They want to determine themselves the leader of the discussion/peer platform (e.g. candidates are selected by means of casting votes), and they want to select the experts</p>



	<p>to invite (e.g. from a list of graduates or former students of the school). Some students would like to hold conferences with peers from other schools or other countries. Students could also imagine organizing a peer platform/discussion via social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter).</p> <p>Concerning the seating arrangement, students are open, but they prefer to be seated in a way that enables open communication. Depending on the situation, they can imagine discussing several topics in small sub-groups and presenting the small group results to the whole peer group.</p> <p>BE:</p> <p>To facilitate peer learning, we could choose from an array of possibilities:</p> <p>Buzz Groups: A large group of students is subdivided into smaller groups of 4–5 students to consider the issues surrounding a problem. After about 20 minutes of discussion, one member of each sub-group presents the findings of the sub-group to the whole group.</p> <p>Affinity Groups: Groups of 4–5 students are each assigned particular tasks to work on outside formal contact time. At the next formal meeting with the teacher, the sub-group, or a group representative, presents the sub-group’s findings to the whole tutorial group.</p> <p>Solution and Critic Groups: One sub-group is assigned a discussion topic for a tutorial and the other groups constitute ‘critics’ who observe, offer comments and evaluate the sub-group’s presentation.</p> <p>‘Teach-Write-Discuss’: At the end of a unit of instruction, students have to answer short questions and justify their answers. After working on the questions individually, students compare their answers with each other’s. A whole-class discussion subsequently examines the array of answers that still seem justifiable, and the reasons for their validity.</p> <p>Critique sessions, role-play, debates, case studies and integrated projects are other exciting and effective teaching strategies that stir students’ enthusiasm and encourage peer learning. Students thus have diverse opportunities to experience in a reasonably ‘safe’ and unconstrained context (while perhaps being evaluated by another group and/or the</p>
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<p>5. How long should a platform session last and when should it take place (morning, afternoon, evening)?</p>	<p>teacher), reactions to complex and 'real' problems they may face later in their careers.</p> <p>NL:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It should take place in a room that has several computers. Each computer should show a question/statement the student can answer/respond to. The students will navigate the room in pairs, formulating their responses to all the questions/statements. Afterwards, the questions and answers will be projected on a big screen. The students will then discuss this in the group.2. You could have each student fill in a questionnaire which and then discuss it in small groups which formulate conclusions to be discussed in the big group.3. You could have students give a presentation on how you envision your future, i.e. what you're going to do once you've finished your current education. The audience could then ask you questions, so that you elaborate further and get an even better picture of your future. <p>AT:</p> <p>Most students think that a platform session/discussion should last no more than 2 hours and should take place in the morning or in the early afternoon. Some students propose organizing discussions periodically, at regular intervals over the school year.</p> <p>BE:</p> <p>This strongly depends up on the group of youngsters and their activities in and outside the school.</p> <p>NL:</p> <p>A session should not take too long, two hours at most.</p> <p>Three sessions should be organised:</p> <p>The first session should take place at the start of the first year of VET because students will have formed a picture of their education and they can share this with other students. Students will most likely have some idea of what they would</p>
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	<p>like to do when they've finished their training.</p> <p>The second session should take place after the internship/work placement. Students will have an opinion about the internship and have a better idea of whether or not they like this vocational area and if they want to continue with it.</p> <p>The third session should take place at the end of the training. Students can check if they still want the same things and if they have reached their goals. They can also evaluate whether or not these sessions helped them in making choices, etc.</p>
<p>6. Should the platform session be formal or informal, loose or tight?</p>	<p>AT: Most students prefer clearly structured platform sessions with defined rules, which they want to determine themselves.</p> <p>BE: For peer learning to be effective, we must ensure that the entire group experiences 'positive interdependence', face-to-face interaction, group processing and individual and group accountability. 'Positive interdependence' emphasizes the importance and uniqueness of each group member's efforts. As students communicate with one another, they assume leadership roles, acquire conflict-management skills, and discuss and clarify concepts.</p> <p>NL: The teacher will remain present and will maintain order, ensuring that the discussion stays on track. It is important that the teacher remains part of the discussion.</p>
<p>7. Should the students participating all be from the same school or also from other schools?</p> <p>8. Should the platform be international, or perhaps have a special, international session?</p>	<p>AT: It depends on the topic. Topics concerning e.g. self-efficacy or self-identity should be discussed and reflected upon in small and homogeneous groups in a familiar atmosphere. Topics concerning e.g. work-exploration or educational paths could also be discussed with students from other schools.</p> <p>Topics concerning labour market and general career</p>



<p>9. How do you create a sense of security, what atmosphere are you looking for (see also 6)?</p> <p>10. How do you stimulate students to participate/join, what incentive do they need?</p>	<p>management competences, living and working in Europe, international study-programmes, etc, could/should be discussed in international sessions.</p> <p>BE: No clear opinions emerged from the discussions.</p> <p>NL: No clear opinions emerged from the discussions.</p> <hr/> <p>AT: Students do not want to be forced to participate actively in the discussion, they want to decide independently. The role of the teachers should only be a supportive one.</p> <p>Students are stimulated to participate if they feel affected by the topics; if the invited experts are competent and interesting; if the sessions take place in an atmosphere of security; and if they perceive that participation will benefit them in terms of their career learning competences and their educational and vocational decisions.</p> <p>It is important to remember that students are motivated at the emotional level. Students want to have fun in their discussions with peers, experts and students from other schools or countries.</p> <p>BE: The following 8 factors will contribute to a sense of security:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Mutual agreement2. A commitment to dialogue3. Encouragement of self-reflection4. Awareness of the peer's potential5. Sensitive questioning6. Awareness and empathy7. Positive listening8. Celebration of successes <p>Peer-to-peer learning involves students sharing their</p>
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<hr/> <p>11. What are the preconditions for such a platform?</p>	<p>knowledge and experience with one another. It can happen through existing social networks or facilitated peer learning opportunities. Peer-to-peer learning: spreads information through formal or informal social networks; involves two-way (or more) communication; recognizes that every participant can be a teacher and a learner; and is community and participant driven.</p> <p>NL: The discussion should be led by a teacher who is chosen by the students. This way they can pick a teacher they trust. Another option would be for the discussion to be led by someone from outside/a stranger. In both of these instances, most students will find it easier to talk and share their opinions. The size of the group should be small, about five to eight people at most. There are many people who find it difficult to give their opinion in a large group.</p> <p>The incentive to participate should be a certificate, and it will be nice if it is combined with lunch.</p> <p>Students will learn how to reflect on their future, and they will learn more about other vocations and opinions. Students will learn from each other.</p> <p>Students can be encouraged to participate by providing some sort of compensation/reward. Sessions should take place during schools hours and should be combined with lunch or snacks.</p> <p>It helps students to develop: students learn more about what they want and gain a clearer picture of who they are.</p> <hr/> <p>AT: The preconditions most frequently mentioned by the students are: mutual agreement; a commitment to dialogue; sensitive questioning; awareness and empathy; atmosphere of security; and positive listening.</p> <p>The peer discussion/platform session should be an open process within which - by means of reflecting and communicating with one another - the students clarify their own live-concepts, their work-identity and their perspectives, and acquire career managementcompetences.</p>
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<hr/> <p>12. What themes could be used for the platform?</p>	<p>BE:</p> <p>For peer learning to be effective, we must ensure that the entire group experiences ‘positive interdependence’, face-to-face interaction, group processing, and individual and group accountability. ‘Positive interdependence’ emphasizes the importance and uniqueness of each group member’s efforts while important cognitive activities and interpersonal dynamics are quietly at work. As students communicate with one another, they inevitably assume leadership roles, acquire conflict management skills, discuss and clarify concepts, and unravel the complexities of human relationships within a given context. This process enhances their learning outcomes. Thus, students’ learning extends far beyond the written word and even the given task.</p> <p>However, peer learning may encourage the presence of ‘freeloaders’—team members who fail to fulfil their team responsibilities but are awarded for assignments or presentations the same (high) grade as their more responsible team-mates. Freeloading may be minimized by using peer ratings to assess individual performance of team members, or conducting a ‘post-test’. There will then be two levels of accountability: the individual and the group.</p> <p>NL:</p> <p>The sessions should take no more than two hours.</p> <p>It will benefit the discussion if the students get to choose the teacher, or it could be someone from outside/a stranger. In both instances, most students will find it easier to talk and share their opinions.</p> <p>The last session should focus on a check if you are still on track and whether or not you have reached your goals. Students can also evaluate the extent to which the sessions have helped them to make choices, etc.</p> <hr/> <p>AT:</p> <p>Dialogue with professionals (role-models); how to become successful; educational and vocational paths; professions and occupational requirements; studying and working abroad; experiences of older students; future visions and</p>
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	<p>professional goals; what I want to achieve in my life; job opportunities and prospects; the meaning of work-leisure-family; how important are working conditions; earning money/doing something meaningful; career changes/new challenges; career success/ job insecurity; what makes me happy at work.</p> <p>BE: Think about your year's "course." What are the big, overarching goals for you?</p> <p>NL: The theme in the first session should be focused on the future, as they have to make a choice. The second session should be retrospective and give room to discuss anything that needs clarification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-how students envision their development.- how they feel about it.- what they would like to do after their training/schooling ends and how they picture it. <p>Or: The first session should focus on answering questions. The second session should provide more depth and then we hope that students will share their opinions and issues/questions more fully. The third session should be a group session, but everyone will focus on their own situation and look back and ahead.</p>
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ANNEX 1

Characteristics of 15/16 year old boys and girls

The data in the text come from panels of students aged 18+. Discussions with experts in Poland recommended paying special attention to younger learners. Therefore, we wrote the following annex.

These youngsters have to achieve a kind of balance between already well known and experienced situations (e.g. family) and the handling of new ones (relationships and activities outside the family). They are especially characterised by:

- growing awareness of their own physical strength
- high interest in experimentation with their own body as well as with their environment
- strong interest in all kinds of things and substances that provide sensation and that “widen the mind”
- puberty and its typical characteristics
- desire to gain distance from the norms and habits of their parents
- peer group orientation

Children and peer group platforms

Duty and fun do not have to be contradictions. The young people want to do things which are useful as well as amusing. They want to apply their own ideas and to feel a sense of community. At the same time, it is important that they can experience success.

The peer-group

In the socialisation process, during the time of puberty, the peer-group increasingly replaces the parents. Whereas parents act as mediators for basic norms, peers have more influence in respect to behaviour patterns connected with daily practice.

Generally, whenever one tries to influence younger learners, one has to be aware of the greater significance of the peer-group compared with older youngsters. Talking to and guiding young people of this special age is not so much talking about individuals, as about talking about members of different subgroups.

All these subgroups function according to special group rules which can differ from each other. Knowing and understanding not only the different individuals of a group one is educating, but also the group rules, makes it easier for a teacher or guidance counsellor to establish rapport with the young people.

"Language"

Young people have a special kind of communication. They have their own "language" which has two principal and distinct functions:

- a) to separate themselves from the world of the adult and
- b) to distinguish one lifestyle group from the others.



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Communication-signals can be identified in the different forms of dress, music, tattoos, etc.

Different leisure time activities of boys and girls

Information about leisure time activities is an important starting point for all kinds of communication. When comparing the leisure time behaviour of boys and girls and of different subgroups, one can find many differences which have to be taken into consideration in framing the communication process. For example, girls do not have as much spare time as boys because of more household activities. Girls tend to read more and stay at home more than boys. Girls satisfy their need for physical activity by dancing or swimming in a closed environment, whereas boys can be found at places where they can display strength and power to a “broader public”. Moreover, they are regularly looking for feedback about their personal physical limits.

How to establish rapport with young people:

Know a little bit about their interests and problems, new lifestyle, fashion, mobility preferences (skating, scooters, inline-skating etc.)

As far as communication processes are concerned, within the context of peer platforms, young people should get the opportunity:

- to create and to test their own ideas under real-life conditions;
- to connect their activities to experiences of success and community;
- to experience fun and enjoyment.

Peer-group-platforms

In the context of training and education courses, young people’s experiences should reflect those they have when they are together with their peers during leisure time. This means that:

- selection, testing and integration of new behaviour patterns have to be possible. They should be allowed to “play” with new impressions.
- they should be allowed to show feelings of intimacy and togetherness, but also to demonstrate ability and power in order to protect their own interests in an acceptable way.

Desirable characteristics of moderators and trainers in the context of facilitating peer platforms

As already mentioned, any person who is working with young people should, as a very first step, try to get as much information as possible about the very special group they are working with if they want to establish rapport and to be able to communicate. This will allow them to influence attitudes and behaviour in the wished-for sense.

Therefore the moderator/trainer should:

- be open-minded in discussions (no clichés)
- encourage the young people to discuss and to focus on listening
- support the self-confidence of the young people instead of attacking it (the “old” psychological rule that positive reinforcement is better than a negative one)



Facilitating Peer Groups on Career Learning

- help the young people to find their own problem solutions (trainer acts as moderator of discussions rather than the one who gives the rules)
- support their interest in taking responsibility (which clearly does exist, as our research has shown)

Being informed about current lifestyle characteristics of young people can help the trainer, moderator or guidance counsellor to establish rapport with youngsters and understand "their language". However s/he should not try to emulate them and thus run the risk of appearing ridiculous. Furthermore, the following characteristics should be attributed to a moderator or trainer (and trainers have to be trained, or train themselves, accordingly):

- competence
- life experience
- sobriety and common sense
- authentic interest in the young people
- ability to create a relaxed atmosphere



ANNEX 2

Peer Groups in the Context of Scientific Research

Scientific Articles

Meijers, F. & Wardekker, W. (2002). Career learning in a changing world: The role of emotions. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 24(3), 149-167

Savickas, E. et al (2009). Life designing: a paradigm for career construction in the 21st century. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 75(3), 239-250

Winters, A. et al (2012). The self in career learning: an evolving dialogue. In Hermans, H., & Gieser, T. (eds), *Handbook of Dialogical Self Theory*, ch.26. Cambridge, CUP

Scientific Research (Excerpt of Articles 1, 2, 3)

In post-modern society, young people are confronted by the large degree of uncertainty that results from rapidly changing social-cultural and social-economic relations. The acquisition of competence to construct an identity is a learning process that begins with uncertainty and the negative emotions that arise from such uncertainty.

Identity development based on life experiences can be understood as a learning process that starts with an experience which is coupled with positive emotion - e.g. opportunity for growth - or negative emotion - e.g. conflict, shortcoming, inability, or uncertainty. Identity learning is an intellectual and rational process in which emotions play a key role. In the identity learning process, cognitions and emotions are balanced gradually and in a dialogical way (Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2001).

Identity is not something that happens, but something that an individual constructs by social interaction; identifications with roles and values; reflection about experiences; and reinterpretation of the self and the situation. Information creates meaning for one's life when it is assimilated into one's life story.

Because of changing demands, young people nowadays can only make partial use of the experiences of previous generations. In spite of their insecurity, young people are able to independently construct an identity that differs from that of their parents. Research shows that the great majority of young people feel that they are the master of their own fate (Alsaker & Flammer, 1999), and they feel ready, willing and able to find their own identity in life.

Peer Groups in the Context of Scientific Research

Social interaction within peer groups involves students sharing their knowledge and their specific experience with one another. Their peer group situation allows young people to communicate, to reflect and to handle positive and negative emotions in a productive and creative way. In this context, emotions become a functional part of the identity learning process.



Facilitating Peer Groups on Career Learning

Peer groups provide a reliable and motivating environment in which students discuss different career related issues that are of interest to them, for example: future visions; professional goals; the meaning of work; educational and vocational paths; work exploration; career success; and changes and demands in the labour market. Students narrate their life stories and reflect upon their experiences and emotions. Receiving feedback from peers enables students to evaluate and adapt their own live-concepts.

In the dialogical process of peer group discussion and reflection, students become aware of their own interests, abilities, values and visions. Students learn to build up new views by considering their individual situation from multiple perspectives; to develop self-identity and work-identity; and to construct self-concepts. Social interaction with peers enhances the development of coping strategies, resilience, adaptability, networking, empowerment and self-efficacy - which are essential skills for coping with rapidly changing demands of modern labour market and unpredictable life challenges. Positive interdependence within peer groups stimulates students to create ideas about how to design their professional and private life.



ANNEX 3

Literature about peer coaching

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Brandt, R.S. (1987). On teachers coaching teachers: A conversation with Bruce Joyce. *Educational Leadership*, 44(5), 12-17

Busher, L. A. (1994). The effects of peer coaching on elementary school teachers. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 367 616)

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