



DIMENSAAI

Diversity and MEntoring approaches to Support Active Ageing and Integration

Competences of a Diversity Counselor and of a Mentor

Helping hand for a mentoring processes
to support integration and active ageing



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Foreword



Unemployment? Shortage of skills, particularly in European health and social care sectors? Young people with disabilities and seniors who would like to work but need some support to integrate?

Solutions for such problems are necessary in many European countries. We present a helping hand in this context based on Diversity and mentoring.

Mentoring has been used in Europe for a long time. Mentor was the man Odysseus entrusted his kingdom to when he went to the Trojan wars. In classical Greece, young men often lived with more experienced elders to learn not simply knowledge but, in addition, skills and attitudes. Mentoring relationships were also evident in the Guilds of medieval Europe and the forms of apprenticeship that evolved from them. Mentoring is used in some countries as a promised way for (re-)entry into work life but is not used enough for people with disabilities and seniors. A suitable approach to mentoring in this context should be linked by an understanding of Diversity.

The Diversity concept was developed originally in America in the context of the civil rights movement emerging from Martin Luther King, but was soon broadly adopted by all kinds of bodies, initiatives and enterprises. Today, no major company or other initiative is without solid Diversity Management in the employment sector.

In this context, the objectives of the European project DIMENSAAI-Diversity and Mentoring approaches to Support Active Ageing and Integration (www.dimensaai.eu), are the transfer, adaptation and testing of a mentoring model from earlier projects VOCA 2 (<http://www.voca.net/>) and IBB2 (www.lebenshilfe-guv.at/ibb) from Germany and other countries, and the dissemination and use of Diversity approaches in order to improve participation in training and vocational education, and the employment particularly of seniors and people with disabilities in the health and social care sector.

The following guide, developed within DIMENSAAI, would like to provide people, who are interested in mentoring or diversity counseling, with the necessary background and knowledge regarding the required competences. The approach intended to be used in DIMENSAAI for integrating people with disabilities and seniors into work and the steps to apply it are explained by the two figures at the end of this guide.

We hope this guide will help the reader to be a Diversity counselor or a mentor, and to develop and implement a successful Diversity and mentoring approach.

Introduction

Diversity counseling (**DC**) and Mentoring (**MT**) are concepts that emerged within the field of human rights development under Martin Luther King in America around the middle of last century (Civil Rights Act 1964). Originally they aimed for equal rights issues, equity in human activities, access to human resources and participation in societal life.

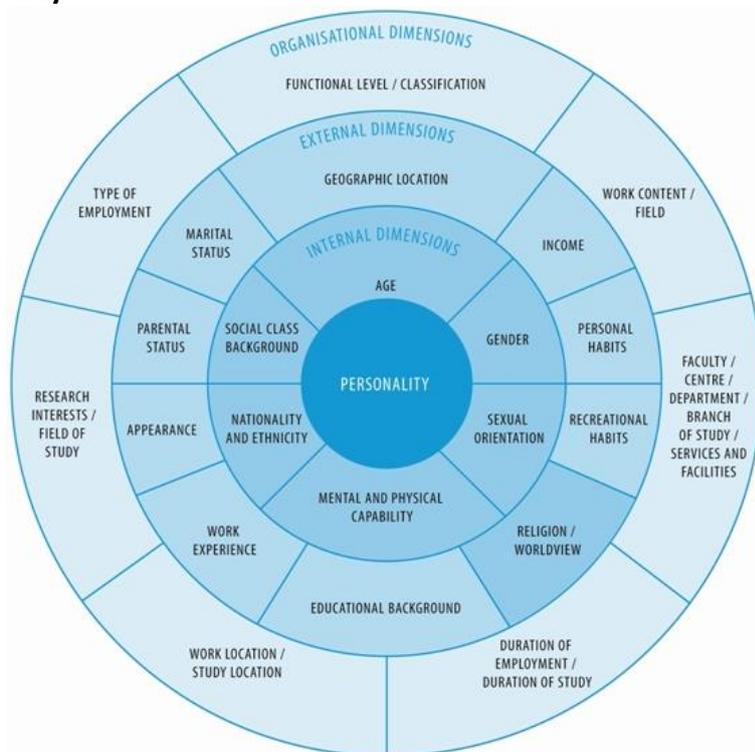
Some authors use the terms DC and MT synonymously. However, in this document they are regarded as different yet complementary conceptual approaches for human resources development, particularly on-the-job, and they are no longer restricted to dealing with special needs citizens.

1. Diversity

Loden and Rosner (1991) have classified diversity in terms of more than 20 aspects and with regard to four main contexts or levels of classification:

1. personality and character,
2. inherent dimensions like age, gender etc.
3. external dimensions like family status, area of living, income etc. and
4. organizational dimensions like work place organization and process necessities etc..

Four layers of diversity



Source: Internal Dimensions and External Dimensions are adapted from Marilyn Lodem and Judy Rosener, Workforce America! (Business One Irwin, 1991)

Not surprisingly, and regardless of this very helpful classification framework, up to today, a unique definition of diversity is missing to describe comprehensively, analogies and differences within a special needs context (Thomas, T. & Robertshaw, D. (1999). *Achieving Employment Equity*.

A guide to effective strategy.

In light of this world-wide acknowledged fact, the German Society of Diversity Management (DGDM), has defined diversity as a mixture of a multitude of features present or not, alike or non-alike, differences in features, relations, behaviors, talents, experiences, emotional settings, health conditions, processes, functions, tasks, responsibilities, and static or dynamic dominant dimensions. In addition, personal features such as gender, age, skin color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, handicaps, and education or professional qualification and experience, have to be considered.

A counselor is a person who is involved in counseling. It refers to a person who is concerned with the profession of giving advice on various things such as academic matters, vocational issues and personal relationships. S/he is generally a professional and an expert in his/her subject discipline. There are different types of counselors such as those who specialize in Rehabilitation, Marriage and Family, School, Mental Health, Online, Legal matters, and finally, Diversity.

Counseling the individual employee is an option. A counselor's job, as the name suggests, is to counsel on his/her area of expertise. His/her job is known as counseling. Counselors help their clients to recognize their problems, analyze them fully, and assist them in facing problems and handling them effectively. Another option is that the counselor suggests to the counseled person that they might find a way to combine his/her interests with his/her desire to work with others, particularly with seniors and people with disabilities. After gaining a broad view of the clients' interests, the counselor can work with them to establish realistic career goals. This is particularly important for people with special needs. The counselor begins to assist her/him on her/his job search and/or in finding training in the required competences.

When counseling an organization/manager, there is no doubt that a Diversity counselor needs to be aware of the importance and complexity of the diversity within an organization in terms of the four main classifications detailed above, and to try to convince managers about the advantages in supporting people with disabilities and seniors to find a job. It should be clear to a counselor that working with diversity is about risk.

Diversity counselors should work with educators, mentors, and managers to meet the needs of different learners including those with special needs. Inconsistencies in the roles of practicing guidance counselors led education specialists to underline the emerging role of a counselor of people with special needs, particularly with respect to their career development. Counselors have to expose their students to several career development activities suited to their competences and disabilities in order to support them in choosing, accessing and progressing their occupations.

To meet the needs of their clients effectively, counselors must be competent in a range of different areas, depending on their specific tasks, as follows:

- **Career development counseling competencies:**
 - counseling techniques and theories related to the growth and development of human life
 - working with clients to establish goals, and identifying the methods to achieve those goals
 - assessing client's interests and personality, and interpreting that data into a career role
 - knowledge of the job market, and advice and tips about searching for a job
 - designing career programs that meet the needs of clients
 - adherence to career-counseling ethical codes, as provided by the National Board of Certified Counselors, National Career Development Association, and the American Counseling Association.

- **Diversity counseling and mentoring connections competencies:**
 - knowledge of different facets of Diversity and how to apply it
 - making connections with mentoring opportunities and coaching employees at career centers
 - developing programs that meet the needs of diverse populations, such as the people with additional needs, older persons, and migrants
 - monitoring other staff members or seeking supervision and recognizing limitations.

- **Counseling Research and Use of technology competencies:**
 - conducting research on effective career counseling methods
 - helping the client in the use of various computer-based systems for job searching.



Quelle: Lebenshilfe e.V. Graz

2. Mentoring

Mentoring (MT) is commonly used to describe a guided informal and formal learning process in which an existing member of staff (internal mentoring) guides a newcomer or a group of less-experienced people in a task, to develop professional skills, attitudes and competencies that are beneficial to the specific workplace.



MT is a complex process involving not just guidance and suggestions, but also the development of autonomous skills, judgments, personal and professional mastery, expertise, trust and the development of self-confidence over time. In recent years there has been much debate about the difference between mentoring, coaching, counseling and the links that exist between them.

Mentoring, according to Nigro, is characterized by a more informal and open-ended relationship than that associated with coaching and counseling (<http://www.netplaces.com/coaching-mentoring/mentoring-101/the-difference-coaching-versus-mentoring.htm>).



In the Voca2 (<http://www.vo-ca.net/>) and IBB2 (www.lebenshilfe-guv.at/ibb) approaches, the role of a mentor should include:

- building a positive outcome themed relationship between all involved parties setting objectives/action plans, and facilitating change
- recognizing success
- empowering/encouraging/motivating people with special needs
- formulating expectations for all involved
- record-keeping to monitor the mentoring process.

Mentoring is particularly important for people with special needs to support them in the use of their resources (knowledge, skills, and aptitudes) and to integrate them socially into the society of work. MT can be established for a number of reasons.

MT has traditionally been informal and self-selected. The nature of MT is “friendly”, and “colle-giate”. MT also has to operate within professional and ethical frameworks. It should remain voluntary and subject to mutual agreement. MT is not just about solving problems. However, problems often underlie a decision to seek mentoring.

Mentoring benefits the organization by providing a quick introduction of the mentee into the formal and informal company structures and demands, and the dissemination of technical and/or internal knowledge, while enhancing the social competence of both mentee and the mentor.

Mentees have the opportunity:

- to meet with a trusted person who will enable their entry into the workplace quickly and help them to cope with initial problems,
- to discuss and resolve emerging and genuine job-related problems regarding individual’s needs,
- to learn how to set realistic goals and achieve them,
- to enhance their skills and consequently their future career opportunities and prospects,
- to build relationships and interactions to enable them to them to secure, maintain and advance in the job by choosing a way that corresponds to the work routines and social actions of other employees,
- to receive and lend natural support and be linked to existing social supports in the work environment.



Source: Lebenshilfe e.V. Graz

Mentors can profit by receiving training that is designed to enhance their leading and counseling skills, to develop their role within the organization (internal mentoring), and by taking the opportunity to share their professional experiences with others using a Web-based network system for mutual support.

There are many forms of mentoring, e.g. informal mentoring, formal mentoring, cross-mentoring, team mentoring, and e-mentoring. A combination of these different forms is often used in organizations.

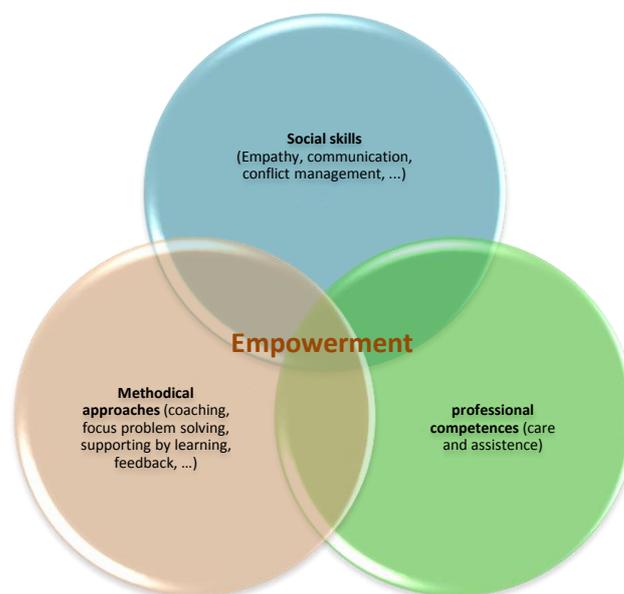
Formal mentoring occurs when an employee is assigned a mentor on joining the company or on taking up a new role. The main objective is to help the new employee to become more proficient in their role and to provide guidance and support in their induction into the company. Individuals are matched with their mentors based on their role, gender, background and skills. That their roles are often predefined may have a negative impact on the flexibility of the mentor/mentee relationship and the success of the mentoring process. E-learning and web-based systems can prove most suitable for formal mentoring arrangements.

Informal mentoring occurs when the mentee and mentor 'find each other'. Most often the mentee seeks a mentor who has a particular set of skills, to sustain the relationship there is often 'chemistry' and it is a lifelong relationship.

Some of the advantages of informal mentoring relationships are the development of mutual trust, respect, a high degree of compatibility underpinning cooperation and flexibility between the partners. This kind of relationship carries the risk of ambiguity and tension when it becomes too intensive and may, in rare circumstances, apply to groups. The most used form of learning in this context is an informal one. Social networks support this type of mentoring.

Competences and skills of a mentor

In addition to a corresponding vocational qualification and field experience, the mentor should have special competences. The following picture gives an overview of the different fields of competences.



- **Social skills**

- Mentors need to be strongly focused, principled and able to develop **empathy** from the perspective of others. Social competences are of key importance for mentors (particularly showing interest, motivation, and awareness, verbal and non-verbal communication, aptitude, empathy and engagement skills). If a mentor has no special interest or motivation,

no empathy, aptitude or engagement for his/her mentees or for the job, no appropriate mentoring and job outcomes are possible.

- The mentor should have **conflict management** competences.

- **Methodical competences**

- There are skills that enable people to communicate verbally effectively with one another. Basic to all communication is **active listening** and overcoming barriers to communication (<http://www.problem-solving-techniques.com/Listening-Barriers.html>). Some key elements of active listening are to pay attention, show that you are listening, provide feedback, defer judgment, respond appropriately and to respect and understand the speaker. Barriers to communication can be overcome by minimizing stress factors and avoiding noise, visual and any other sensory distraction.
- The mentor and the mentee give **feedback** regarding his/her work and effectiveness. A mentor should encourage **reflective practice** to enable the mentee to learn from his/her own experience

- **Professional competence**

Any mentor must have also **professional COMPETENCES** under five main headings, with special reference to the area in which s/he becomes active. These include:

- Basic knowledge about own enterprise, workplace, including sheltered workplaces, and legislation affecting disabled people
- Success recognition
- Motivation, empowerment, considering family, services, and community.
- Mastery of routine work
- Developing a personal technique that makes it possible to deal with the everyday routine and non-routine

- **Empowerment – Promote people’s equality, diversity and rights**

A mentor should understand the principles of equal opportunity and demonstrate best practice. S/he should be aware of own values, beliefs and attitudes and seek to use these in a constructive manner principally, but not exclusively, in the interests of the mentee. S/he should maintain confidentiality unless required by duty or statute to do otherwise.

Self-development

A mentor must also be able to develop own and the mentee’s knowledge and practice across professional and organizational boundaries. S/he should understand the health and social care context relevant to the mentee and make realistic allowances for problems and issues (including the mentees attitudes, beliefs, learning style, motivation etc.) that might obstruct the application of best practice. S/he should talk and respond knowledgeably about the competing demands within the mentor’s everyday work, whilst understanding national and local health and social care priorities and how these are relevant to the mentee’s circumstances.

Diversity competences

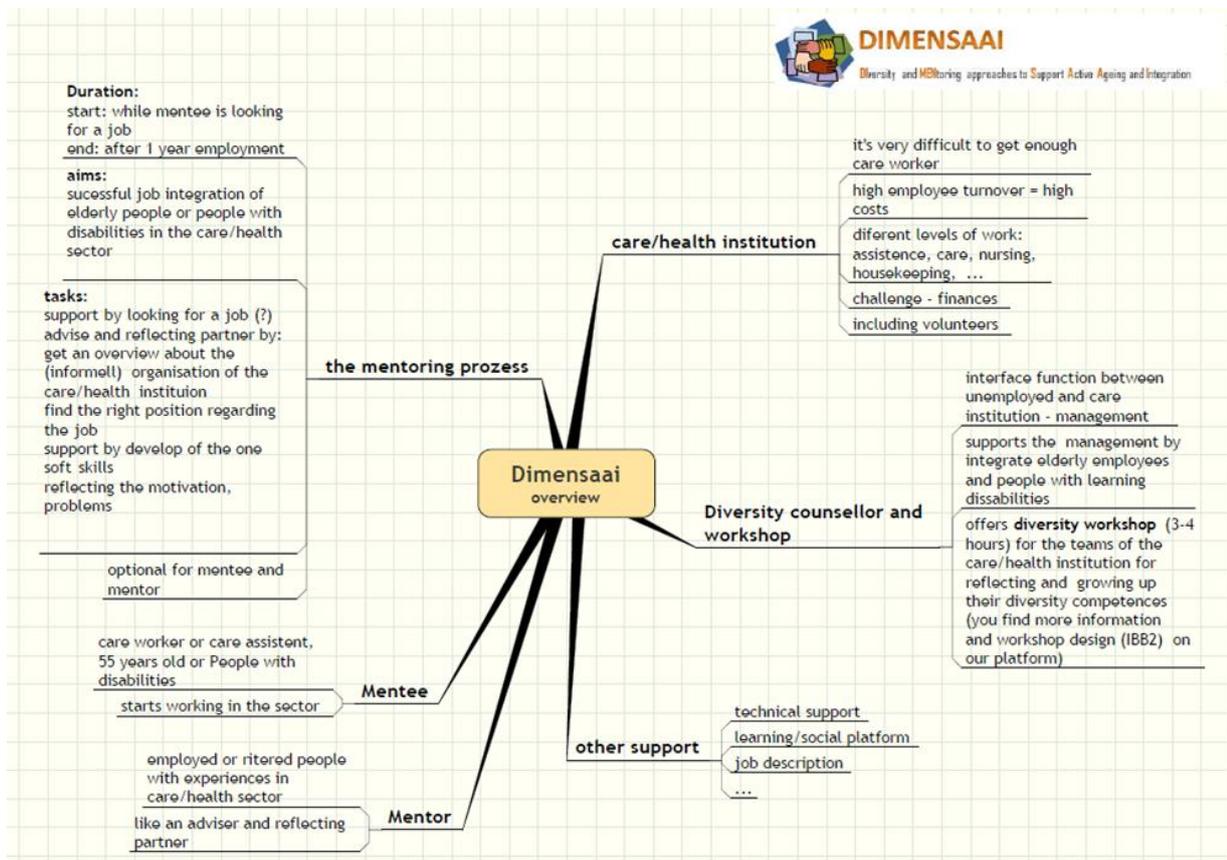
In Europe and elsewhere, due to internationalization, intercultural competence in social and employment settings has become more and more essential. This applies to working in an intercultural context in one's own country (e.g., in a multicultural workplace team, in organizations and policy developments) or abroad for national and foreign markets. Mastery of the respective multifaceted know-how and appropriate implementation is referred to as intercultural competence. Intercultural competences of mentors could be used for organizing learning sequences within cultural events with the active participation of people particularly with learning and communication difficulties.

3. The project DIMENSAAI

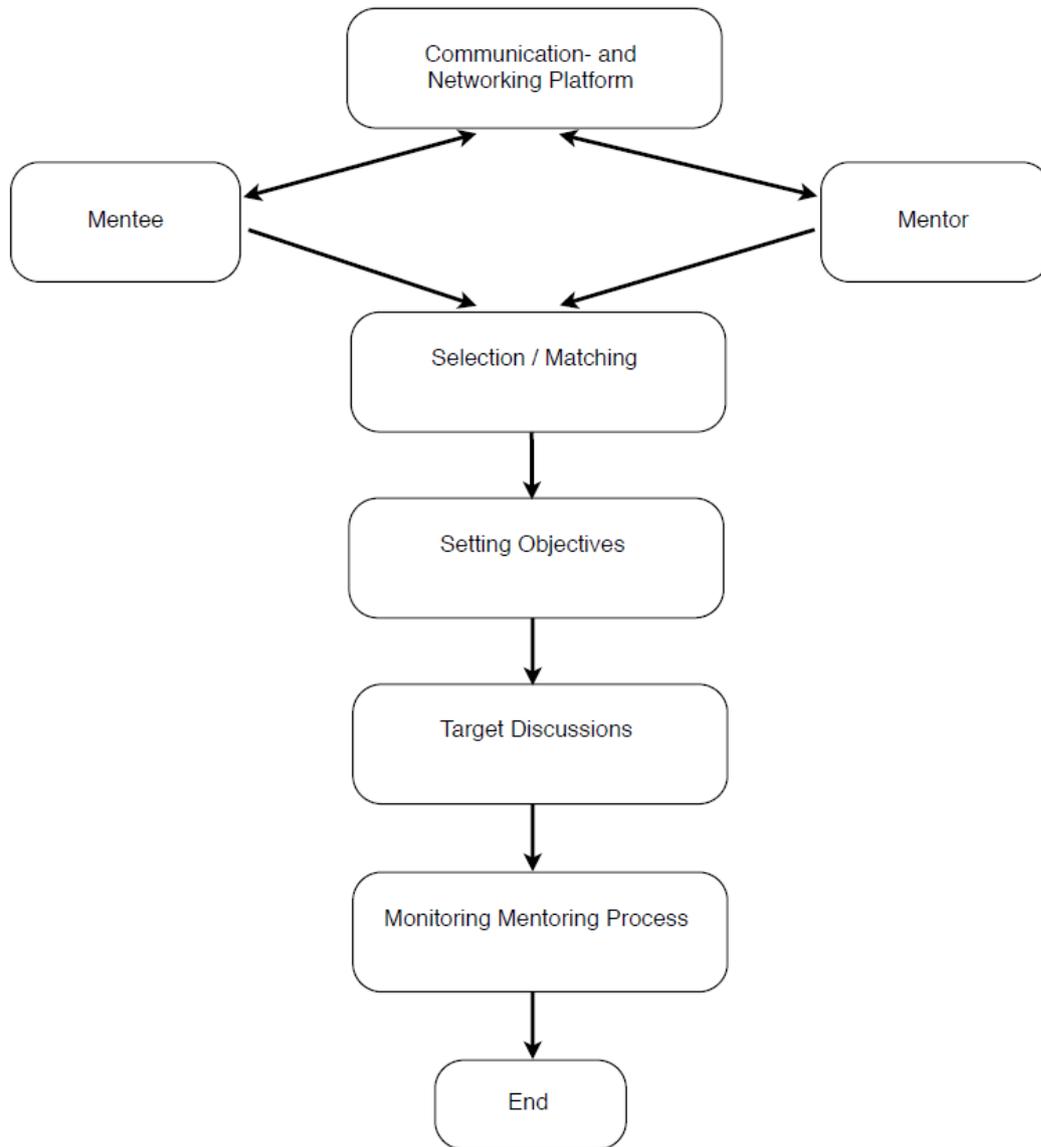


By transferring a mentoring model from former projects Voca2 (<http://www.vo-ca.net/>) and IBB2 (www.lebenshilfe-guv.at/ibb), to Germany and other countries, the European consortium wants to improve participation in training, job qualification and employment particularly for two target groups: Seniors and people with disabilities by the use of a diversity approach and mentoring training model focusing on the working places in the health and social care sectors.

The next picture illustrates an overview of the mentoring process within the DIMENSAAI project (www.dimensaai.eu) and the role of a mentor and diversity counselor:



A possible sequence in the mentoring process:



A selection process decides on the persons who will work as mentors. A suitable mentor will be looked at using a specially developed matching process. Together, the matched mentor and mentee agree on a date to meet and get to know each other, and exchange their wishes and expectations. They then plan a sequence of discussions that target, for example, the achievement of goals, frequency of meetings, and other problems. It is important that the mentor monitors the process by keeping short minutes of the meetings. In the event that cooperation between mentor and mentee is not possible, a new solution will be sought by the employer, mentee and other colleagues. A Social Network and a supporting Communication and Networking platform could improve the mentoring