

Workshop 4

Session's theme: Guidance and counseling

Paper number: 26

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Presenters' Organisation: Finland Futures Research Centre, University of Turku

Session's chair: To be announced later.

Session title: Connecting the dots - possible paths from first year to first job

Abstract:

In our workshop, we will present research findings from our multi-method project concerning educational choices and transitions from secondary to tertiary education in Finland. Competitive entrance examinations, opportunities to change majors, the frequent gap years and a system of secondary education where educational choice is not systematically reflected upon result in a wide variety in the backgrounds of first year students in higher education.

Our research paints a picture of youth engaged in attempting to connect the seemingly limitless opportunities offered by the educational system with the contemporary labour market that seems to offer few guarantees. We argue that accomplishing this connecting of dots between education and the labour market necessitates the development of a capacity to critically reflect on the values and meanings attached to choices and their consequences. Engagement in such reflection from the first year on should lead to more committed students motivated by a deeper understanding of the possibilities opened up by their educational choices.

In the workshop, we present a set of tools for personal futures orientation designed for and tested with secondary and tertiary education students in Finland. The focus is on the student perspective: the foundations of the motivation and aspirations regarding studies, roles in the student and academic community, and career are laid during the first year of studies.

In the workshop the participants test and reflect the collaborative visioning process which can be adopted and used from the first year onwards. The method used is a futures workshop, which is a central element in a personal futures process developed and tested for the university students. The purpose of a futures workshop is to enrich and widen participants' perspectives on alternative futures and the various possibilities within.