

IAEVG International Conference: Career Guidance for Social Justice, Prosperity and Sustainable Employment - Challenges for the 21st Century

Thematic Field 4: Theories for a Better Practice: New Scientific and Research Approaches in Career

Guidance and Counselling

Language: English Format: Poster Session

Better Late than Never - Completion of Studies in a Peer Group

Riitta Vihuri, M.Sc.
Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Abstract

According to a survey made in the spring 2011 for business administration and tourism students on extension time at Ikaalinen campus of Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK), the reasons most affecting the delay of studies were working, delay of thesis, lack of motivation, time management difficulties, and difficulties in realizing plans. In order to complete the studies, the respondents hoped for sufficient guidance and scheduling together with the counselling staff. They also wanted the school to keep in touch and show interest.

Based on the received results, TAMK established six peer groups for students on extension time. One of the groups was for the target group of the survey.

The peer group had six evening meetings at intervals of a couple of weeks in the autumn 2011. The emphasis was on peer support and discussion with students in the same situation. The covered themes included motivation, objectives and rewarding, scheduling, conception of oneself as a learner and personal strengths and weaknesses.

The peer group results were excellent. Approximately a third of the group graduated and some will graduate during the spring 2012. All in all, the group had positive effects on almost all the participants. Also students' experiences on the group were extremely positive. Students for example said that the group helped them to re-engage in the studies. They also commended the peer support, exchange of experiences and the good spirit of the group.

Extended Summary

Delayed studies are nowadays a significant problem in many fields of study in Finnish universities of applied sciences. This also applies to the Degree Programmes in Business Administration and Tourism at Ikaalinen campus of Tampere University of Applied Sciences (TAMK). The studies take on average 4.2 years, even if the normative duration of the studies is 3.5 years. This led to the idea of studying the business administration and tourism extension time students' views on what has delayed their studies and how to improve guidance and counselling in order to enable completion of studies. The research data was collected by means of a quantitative e-form survey made for the













IAEVG International Conference: Career Guidance for Social Justice, Prosperity and Sustainable Employment - Challenges for the 21st Century

business administration and tourism students on extension time in the spring 2011. The survey was sent to 83 business administration and tourism students on extension time and 29 of them responded.

When asking reasons for the delayed studies, the respondents mentioned working and delay of the thesis as the most significant ones followed by lack of motivation, time management difficulties, and difficulties in realizing plans. Similar reasons for delayed studies have been found in the Valtti-project survey made for university and university of applied sciences students (Liimatainen, Kaisto, Karhu, Martikkala, Andersen, Aikkola, Anttila, Keskinarkaus & Saari 2010, 12).

The respondents were also asked what measures would help the most when the studies are already delayed. Almost all the respondents hoped for sufficient guidance and scheduling together with the teacher tutor or student counsellor. They also wanted the school and teachers to be interested in the student, keep in touch, and support completion of the studies. The respondents also hoped for alternative ways to complete the studies.

Based on the received results and the results of other studies and projects (Campus Conexus, Valtti), TAMK established six peer groups for extension time students in the autumn 2011. One of the peer groups was for Ikaalinen campus business administration and tourism students on extension time. Information on the group was sent to 59 students by email and letter.

The peer group had six evening meetings at intervals of a couple of weeks in September-December 2011. A total of 25 students attended the group on a minimum of one occasion. On average 13 students attended each meeting. The emphasis was on peer support and discussion with students in the same situation. Each meeting also had a theme to discuss in pairs or groups with related assignments. The covered themes included barriers to study progress and related solutions, motivation, objectives and rewarding, scheduling, winning the difficulty of starting, conception of oneself as a learner, personal strengths and weaknesses and solution-focused self-development. Outside the group meetings, each participating student had a discussion with the student counsellor to make an individual plan on how to complete the studies..

The peer group results were excellent. Six of the students graduated in the autumn 2011 and two in January-February 2012. Six students are progressing well in their studies and will hopefully graduate during the spring or summer 2012. Four students progressed slightly but have still a lot to do before graduation. In all, the peer group had positive effects on a minimum of 19 students.

Also the students' experiences on the peer group were extremely positive. The students for example said that the group helped them to re-engage in the studies when they had almost lost their hope. In the group, the studies also became clearer, students felt their time management skills developed, and the group reminded of the studies regularly. They also commended the peer support, exchange of experiences and the good and encouraging spirit of the group.



SPONSORED BY THE











IAEVG International Conference: Career Guidance for Social Justice, Prosperity and Sustainable Employment - Challenges for the 21st Century

The students described their experiences on the group for example in the following way:

"The group helped me a lot and I even believe that without the group meetings I would have interrupted my studies this autumn, or next year at the latest.."

"An important thing given by the meetings was the peer support. I noticed that there are others in the same situation.."

"The peer group of extension time students was extremely important for me, I wouldn't have progressed in my studies otherwise. The group spirit was really good and encouraging, it gave new ideas and strength to carry on with the studies."

"When the letter came by mail asking about my willingness to participate in the group, I realized immediately that this was my last chance. I notified my willingness to participate and hoped for that this would help me to finish the rest of my studies. The meetings really helped, at least me personally. Now I have finished my bachelor's thesis and the seminar presentation is in four days. I am feeling great!"

REFERENCES

Campus Conexus – opiskelijan hyväksi. 2012. Research and development project 2009-2012. Administrator University of Tampere, School of Education. Read 22.2.2012. Available at www.campusconexus.fi/.

Liimatainen, J., Kaisto, J., Karhu, K., Martikkala, S., Andersen, M., Aikkola, R., Anttila, K., Keskinarkaus, P. & Saari, P. 2010. Viivästynyt? Minäkö? Opiskeljoiden näkemyksiä opintojen viivästymisestä, työelämästä sekä opiskelusta korkea-asteella. Publication of Valtti-project. University of Oulu.

Valtti – Valmis tutkinto työelämävalttina. National development project 2008–2011. Administrator University of Oulu. Read 22.2.2012. Available at www.valmistu.net/.



SPONSORED BY THE







