MAKING THE LEARNING PROCESS VISIBLE FOR A VOCATIONAL STUDENT

Making the learning process visible is a central part of web-based guiding. This is done by planning the teaching beforehand and creating a general view of the process. This will help the student to understand how the studying proceeds. This might also be called a pledge: 'this is what we promise'.

A learning process proceeds in time and in stages; it is pre-planned and goal-directed. It is a longer goal-oriented teaching whole formed of several learning situations. Think of the learning process as a trip or a path, a whole formed of several stages; a walk from one place to another, or a road, an adventure or a game.

The learning process is formed on the basis of the goals in the curriculum. A vocational education curriculum is a mix of everything involved in learning: goals, content, results, evaluation, learning environments, timetables, the integration of the various subjects, and the different ways of acquiring knowledge and skills. They are usually described in a national curriculum, which is then implemented in practice in the schools.

Have you thought about the ways in which your students can grasp the content of the subject you are teaching? Do the students understand what will happen, and how they are supposed to be studying? Have you opened the curriculum in such a way that it will support the learning process? Is it enough to open up one part of the whole, or should you also highlight the connections and dependencies between the different subjects? Do the descriptions open up the collaboration between teachers that is required in a workplace?

Students will be better motivated and committed to their studies if they understand from the start what kind of learning must be acquired, and what the assignments and achievements should be. It is also important for the students to know what the environment for learning will be like, who you can learn with, and how much time should be reserved for studies. It would also be good if students knew how their decisions will affect their futures.

When planning the learning process, one should choose pedagogical models and supporting learning materials, learning assignments, digital applications and guiding methods best suited for the process. A pedagogical model is a loose frame within which the learning process is planned. The final execution will be through the activities of the students. You should always leave room in the process for individual learning paths and alternative solutions.

Students will construct their own learning processes while studying, and should document them at every stage.

Therefore you must make the learning process visible, so that the student can create his/her own learning strategy. A well-described individual learning process created with the student will help the student think about the way to proceed. The student can take responsibility for what he or she does, and think about the time required for the different stages. The students can plan their timetables so that they have enough time for independent study and for working with other students. One of the assignments is for the students to describe their previous knowledge in relation to their goals.

It is helpful to review the various means the students can use to illustrate their knowledge. In some assignments, a written format is part of the learning goals, but often some other method of illustration might be better, and may also reveal certain obstacles to learning. You should explain the various digital ways and means through which students can make their learning visible.

Poor study results or motivation, difficulty in selecting a training program, study interruptions or dropping out of school, etc., may be signs that the student doesn't know what is expected of him or her. Or, students may simply be unaware of the choices they need to make. It may also be that the students haven't understood how much time they should reserve to complete each of the assignments. Collaboration between teachers and a proper demonstration of the learning process can help prevent having learning processes that are too 'heavy' for an individual student.

In vocational education, the learning process will be constructed on the basis of the skills and knowledge requirements stated in the degree requirements. The starting point is that in all vocational education one must take into consideration all previously-acquired skills and concentrate on acquiring the missing skills and knowledge. The student should only study what he doesn't already know.

This is why a clear description of the learning process is very important for success in studies. The different parts of the degree must be opened up so that each student can build his or her own personal development plan.

Each part of the degree must have a clear plan which includes requirements for skills and knowledge. All this should be digital, presented in a way that is easy to understand. The parts must also include descriptions of the common part of the degree, such as communications and interactive skills, sciences, and social and working-life skills. Students must be able to grasp what the goals for learning are, what parts, assignments and credits the studies include, how the student's progress will be

monitored, and what the evaluation criteria are. Students should also understand how much time will be needed for the different parts. This will help them understand what they already know, and what they should be concentrating on next.

The study materials and assignments should be available and usable regardless of time and place. You should also agree on the digital tools to be used, and how results will be posted, documented and monitored. You should always give the students feedback on their progress, throughout their studies. The students can demonstrate their skills and knowledge by doing practical assignments in authentic work situations.

How do you listen to the student in the midst of all this?

Currently in vocational education, learners often say that their general picture of their studies is fragmented. The student should be able to build his own learning path. However, this requires a clear overview of the contents of the studies. A well-visualized learning process which highlights the connections between goals, credit acquisition and evaluation will help the students. An illustration and visualization of the learning process is helpful; it is equally important to consistently use common symbols and terms to avoid adding to the student's load the need to understand each different teacher's way of presenting material.

What are the challenges of a skills-based curriculum?

A skills-based curriculum brings with it all kinds of challenges. The curriculum is no longer a unique, linear construction. Instead the breadth and order of the studies, credit acquisition, etc., depend on the students' skills and knowledge. How clear is this to the students? How easy will it be for students to recognize the potential alternatives? Does the process include different learning materials and varying levels of assignments which can best support learners of various stages? Are there enough multimodal materials to make sure that all learners will have access to the study materials and assignments in forms that they can understand? Students need increasingly individual study solutions, alternative educational paths and opportunities to succeed based on their individual abilities. Digital means enable the contents of the common subjects in vocational education to be visually linked to different parts of the degree.

A digital, well-visualized general description will help students build their own paths, plan their own progress, and understand the level of their learning. Descriptions of the aims will enable each student to understand what he or she needs to study to achieve future goals. This general view will help the students create their individual paths, and acquire the skills and knowledge they need.