

Stakeholder forum in Finland

Introduction

The planning of the seminar started in June 2014, with contacting representatives for EASPD in Finland. The advice was to make an arrangement at TAMK in Tampere; where there is a further education program for vocational special needs teachers. Unfortunately, partly due to shifts in the staff in the Finnish part of EASPD, it took us several months to get in contact with the right persons to help us with the arrangement. But finally we got great support from KVPS and TAMK to find a date and make an agenda, and invitations were sent to more than 70 relevant and possible participants. We were also hoping that some of the students at the mentioned education programme would attend, but it turned out that these students were only part-time students, and therefore were unable to join the meeting.

The week before the stakeholder forum, we'd only got six registered participants. We then had to consult the project leader in Brussels, who made the decision to carry out the plans anyway. Luckily 12 persons showed up during the seminar, in addition to the three of us from Norwayⁱ.

Aims and objectives

The INVESTT project was presented nearly in the same way as at national seminar in Norway. The focus was on the Norwegian part of the project and some central experiences, both from the school's point of view and in a research perspective. This concluded in two main challenges in the Norwegian context:

- How to apply Universal Design in Vocational Education and Training to guide all students, with a wide range of abilities, towards success in the open labour market?
- How to help young persons with disabilities reach the same skill level as other students and improve their transition from school to the open labour market?

These two questions or main themes functioned very much as a common thread through the day. But of course we also had to present the Norwegian school system in short, with emphasis on the model of vocational education.

Additionally, for a comparative purpose, both we and the hosts had prepared a short introduction of the concept of inclusive education – in Finland and in Norway. These themes together made the day both informative and interesting for the Finnish participants as well as us from Norway.

Local partners

As mentioned above, staff at TAMK ⁱⁱ and at KVPS ⁱⁱⁱ helped us with the preparations and the organizing of the day. TAMK took care of the hosting; rooms and lunch, and invitations internal at TAMK and to cooperating universities. KVPS did the same in their organisation, and invited a young woman with intellectual disabilities and experiences concerning vocational training and transition to labour market.

Date and place

The stakeholder forum was held at TAMK in Tampere on the 22nd of April 2015, with a schedule from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Program

The program is shown in the invitations and the agenda. However, we must add that we due to the number of participants chose to use the themes and topics as guidance through the day. The agenda then served as a basis for more or less improvised discussions and joint reflections. In spite of the small number of participants, the seminar therefore turned out really successful.

The profile of the participants

The few participants represented a good range of stakeholders; students and staff at the school of vocational teacher training, staff and guest professor from another university in Finland, staff from KVPS, persons with disabilities, representative from local authority responsible for coordinating the different upper secondary schools for special needs education. Unfortunately not all of the participants are registered by name, because some of them only took part in some sections during the day.

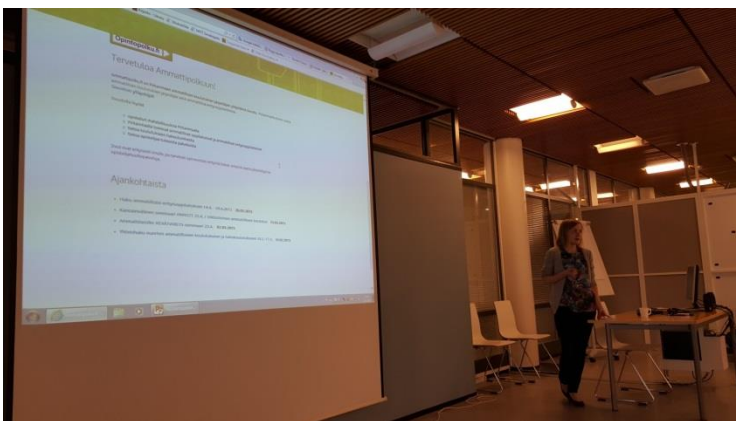
An overview of the needs of stakeholders

In the same way as at the national seminar, the diversity of stakeholders represented a diversity of needs and interests. We got the impression that the complexity in needs and interests very much could be compared with that in Norway, and that – in spite of differences in policy and context, the challenge concerning cooperation between actors and stakeholders in order to succeed in transition from school to labour market, in many ways seemed similar to the Norwegian challenges. But of course, a short visit like this stakeholder forum, could not give us a complete understanding of the situation in Finland.

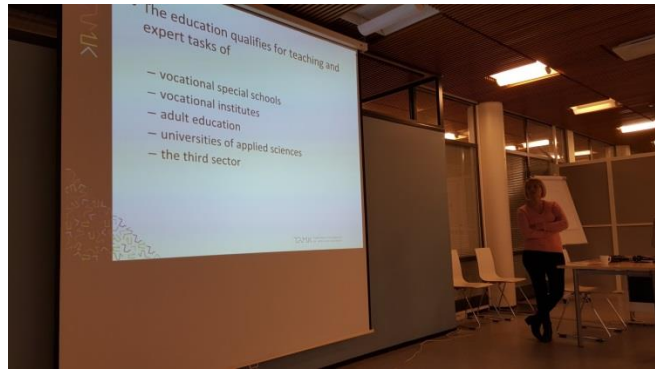
Pictures



The INVESTT-project, from the school's activities and experiences and from a research point of view.



Emma Salmi: Tampere Regional centre for coordinating vocational special needs education



Presentation of TAMK's teacher education for special needs in VET.



Transition from school to labour market; Experiences from a young woman's point of view.



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Dialog and contact establishing



End of seminar!

Annexes:

- List of participants
- Invitations
- Program
- Presentations

ⁱ Two representatives from Statped vest and one from Gand upper secondary school travelled to Tampere. We considered this necessary if we should be able to present the project in a proper way.

ⁱⁱ University of Applied Science in Tampere, School of Vocational Teacher Education

ⁱⁱⁱ The Service Foundation for People with an Intellectual Disability was founded by Inclusion Finland KVTL which is a non-governmental organization aiming to promote equal opportunities in society for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.