

Principles for Ethics in Educational and Vocational Guidance

Passed at the FUE Committee of Representatives meeting, Saturday 22 April 2006

“Principles for Ethics in Educational and Vocational Guidance”¹ were developed and published by the Danish association FUE, the Joint Council for Associations for Educational and Vocational Guidance².

The principles for ethics in educational and vocational guidance rest on a perception of educational and vocational guidance as a process of interplay between information, teaching, practical activities and individual conversations, which can form the basis for the citizen's choice of education programme and career path, as well as the related life conditions.

Educational and vocational guidance thus stretches from guidance activities aimed at children and young people to guidance services for adults – from guidance activities in primary and secondary school to guidance in relation to basic education, continued education, higher education as well as career guidance. Guidance can take place face-to-face or in the form of so-called ‘virtual’ and IT-guidance.

Lifelong learning is a key concept in the Knowledge Society, and lifelong guidance counselling is a natural and supportive contribution to this end.

Guidance always takes place within a context – under conditions and frameworks that often have an institutional context and with anchorage in politics and society. The context can represent objectives and interests on a societal level not always in accordance with the sphere of interest of the citizen. This schism represents one of the significant and classic fields of tension in guidance counselling and forms the fundamental background for the need for and necessity of having ethical principles for educational and vocational guidance.

The five principles for ethics in guidance are formulated on the basis of two basic conditions:

¹ In Danish: *Principper for Etik i Vejledningen*.

² Fællesrådet for foreninger af Uddannelses- og Erhvervsvejledning, www.fue.dk.

ETHICS AND THE GOOD LIFE

Ethics refer to efforts to “do good” and reflections regarding “the good life” together with and for others. The professional guidance practitioner is first and foremost committed by her regard to the citizen, and the ethics of the profession rest on the guidance practitioner being deeply committed in this regard. This is a necessary precondition for the individual’s confidence in the guidance practitioner and subsequently the practitioner’s ability to carry out her work. Promoting the welfare and life conditions of the individual is thus a fundamental value in educational and vocational guidance.

ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Educational and vocational guidance can be of decisive significance for a citizen’s opportunities and choices, hence the responsibility of the guidance practitioner is equally significant. It is therefore important that guidance practitioners are aware of the particular characteristics of the profession and the subsequent professional responsibility.

The guidance practitioner is thus responsible towards

- *the guidance-seeking citizen* – and must ensure that all information provided to the citizen is correct, factual, current and comprehensive;
- *her own sense of professionalism* – and must construct and develop her professionalism by adjusting and developing her guidance skills;
- *colleagues and managers* – and must develop and maintain her collaboration with colleagues and managers with the aim of promoting the best possible measures for educational and vocational guidance; and
- *legislators, authorities and organisations* – and must be active in the development of ethically grounded and relevant guidance measures in relation to the needs of citizens.

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RESPECT

All guidance services are based on a fundamental sense of respect for the citizen and recognition of the citizens right to self-determination. The guidance practitioner is to base her efforts upon the integrity, dignity and sovereignty of the citizen in relation to choices and decisions regarding education, career and life conditions. At the same time, the guidance practitioner must stimulate and challenge the citizen to reflect upon his opportunities and choices.

EQUALITY

In the course of the guidance process, the citizen must be met with recognition, equality and without prejudices related to gender, age, religion, disabilities, sexual orientation, ethnic background, social status and educational background. The guidance practitioner must recognise and respect this diversity.

INDEPENDENCE

Guidance services must attend to the interests of the citizen – and must be neutral and independent of political interests, institutional interests and other special interests. Guidance services will always take place within a context and will thus always depend on time, place, the relationship between the guidance practitioner and the citizen, the institutional context, and the social and societal conditions and opportunities. Complete neutrality and independence is therefore not possible; rather, they are values which the guidance practitioner must attempt to fulfil by being aware of the power- and context-relationships between the guidance practitioner and the citizen, and by having focus upon the interests and life conditions of the citizen.

OPENNESS

The context, framework and conditions under which the guidance process proceeds must be made clear to the citizen.

If the guidance practitioner has a particular obligation to pass on information, this must be made clear to the citizen.

In situations in which the guidance practitioner is serving in a function involving control and limitations to be placed on the citizen, this must be made clear to the citizen. For example, this could be the case if the guidance practitioner is employed by an institution and is responsible for screening and recruiting for education and training programmes or for labour market activation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Educational and vocational guidance must build on a mutual sense of trust and 'intimacy' between the citizen and the guidance practitioner. If the guidance practitioner must discuss the citizen's situation with other parties, this must only occur with the expressed permission of the citizen in question.

In instances in which the guidance practitioner is obligated to forward information to authorities in keeping with the relevant rules and legislation, the guidance practitioner must inform the citizen which information is forwarded. The guidance practitioner must only forward concrete information; not assessments regarding personal relations.