

Career Guidance in University Colleges in Denmark

**Understanding, organisation and practice in career guidance
in the UCs**

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Contents

Contents	2
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Project background, aims, and method	3
3. Guidance and the UC homepages	7
Main observations and development potential.....	7
4. Themes in the interview material.....	10
4.1. Organisation of the guidance	10
4.2. Organisation of the guidance and significance for the guidance tasks.....	17
4.3. The concept of guidance: Division into admission, completion and transition versus career guidance	18
4.4 Career guidance and the career concept	19
4.5 Guidance as function or profession	21
4.6 Guidance counsellors' professional competencies/educational backgrounds: Implications for understandings of guidance tasks	23
4.7 The guidance counsellor as a 'private practitioner' versus a 'collective practitioner' ...	24
4.8 The new age: New functions and tasks.....	26
4.9 'Them and us': The relationship between professional bachelor education and continuing education	29
4.10. Placement on campus: The significance of guidance strategy.....	29
4.11. Career learning potential in the development of educational organisation that points towards students' future career development.....	30
4.12. Reorganisation: A 'cultural project'	31
4.13. Collaboration between Regional Guidance Centres and UCs	31
5. Best and worst case scenarios	32
6. Examples of dilemmas in the interview material.....	33
7. Feedback and recommendations from workshop participants at Conference for Guidance Counsellors in Higher Education 2012	36
8. Networking event for educational and career guidance counsellors in the continuing education field at UCs	38
9. Summary and recommendations	40
10. References	42
11. Appendix 1.....	43
Interview guide for focus-group interviews.....	43

1. Introduction

The primary concern of the project described in this report has been gaining insight and explaining how (career) guidance is understood, organised and practised in the UCs.

We hope to provide a picture of the main differences in the organisation of guidance; themes in the understanding of (career) guidance; dilemmas in the guidance role; and best or worst case scenarios for education guidance counsellors in the UCs. The study is qualitative.

We would also like to contribute to further awareness of career guidance in the UCs – as well as contribute to the development and increased professionalism of career guidance.

Ultimately, the intention of this report is to provide a voice for guidance counsellors from different faculties and UCs, highlighting their understanding of what (good) guidance is, what challenges they face, and what they believe to be the best organisation of guidance. In order to ensure the best representation for participating guidance counsellors, we have chosen to quote extensively, including many different and informative citations from these guidance counsellors in section 4 of the report.

2. Project background, aims, and method

Background

The last twenty years have seen a focus on the increased professionalization of guidance, both nationally and internationally, accompanied by an increasing awareness of guidance as an essential part of lifelong learning. This increased focus and awareness has resulted in a series of resolutions and policy papers on lifelong guidance, including the following:

- EU Commission (2001): "The realisation of a European area of lifelong learning"¹
- Council of the European Union (15.5.2004): "Draft resolution (...) in lifelong guidance in Europe"²
- OECD and European Commission (2004): *Career Guidance: A Handbook for Policy Makers*– translated by Cirius/Euroguidance (translated to Danish in 2007 as *Uddannelses- og Erhvervsvejledning. En håndbog for beslutningstagere*)³
- Ronald G. Sultana (2007): "Europe and the Policy shift to Lifelong Guidance: Between Rhetoric and Reality"⁴

¹ Adult guidance is defined as "A series of activities whose aim is to help people make decisions about their life (in terms of education, vocational training and personally), and implement these decisions in life", p. 36, our emphasis.

² "In connection with lifelong learning, guidance covers a series of activities* that enable citizens, at any point in their lives, to identify their abilities, skills and interests, to make decisions regarding education, vocational training and employment, and to direct their individual life choices with consideration for learning, work and other circumstances where these skills and abilities are acquired and used"

*including information and advice, consultancy, skills evaluation, mentoring, advocacy and training in decision making and career planning", p. 2, our emphasis.

³ "A strong commitment to lifelong learning and an active employment policy requires OECD and EU member states to meet two fundamental challenges in building systems for lifelong guidance:

Moving away from a method that emphasises help for immediate employment and educational decisions, moving instead to a broader approach that develops the ability of citizens to manage their own careers, develop their skills in career planning and employment opportunities.

Find cost-effective ways to expand citizen access to education and vocational guidance throughout life". Our emphasis.

- EU 2008: Council Resolution on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies.
- “Lifelong Guidance Policies: Work in Progress. A report on the work of the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2008–10”⁵

It is both significant and noteworthy that over time a change has occurred from a guidance goal to provide help to citizens to make choices, to a guidance goal to develop individual/citizen “career management competencies” and “competencies in career planning”. The focus is on ‘career management competencies’.

Another context for the project is the projects and studies previously completed at VUE, including guidance in professional bachelor education⁶, career guidance for adults⁷, and on the effect of Diploma degree programme in Education and Vocational Guidance⁸. It is relevant to note the introduction of a module in Career Guidance for Adults in the Guidance Diploma degree programme.

A third context is the current relatively high unemployment rate among graduates in the professional fields, to which professional bachelor educations are specifically aimed; this should ideally lead to an increased focus on broader career guidance than that which is traditionally practiced in profession specific educations and in the UCs⁹.

A fourth context is connected to the above, namely the creation of career centres at some UCs, possibly inspired by career centres at vocational colleges and universities, or the centralisation of all guidance under one management.

⁴ “European prioritisation of lifelong counselling:

Recommendations for attention and action in the member states:

- Development of systems for lifelong counselling: consistent services that meet citizens’ needs for educational and vocational guidance throughout life.
- Expansion of citizen access to guidance when and where they need it
- Strengthening of systems and quality assurance
- Focus of counselling services with attention to developing citizen learning and career management competencies.
- Strengthening of structures for policy and systems development at national and regional level”.

⁵ ELGPN (est. 2007 by EU) - European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network’s definition of career managements skills in reports issued by the network from 2010 – where the skills for citizens to plan and manage their careers are defined as: “Career management Skills (CMS) are a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organize self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions”.

“The teaching of CMS can support citizens in managing non-linear career pathways, and in increasing their employability, thus promoting social equity and inclusion”.

Short report: Dr Raimo Vuorinen/Finnish Institute for Educational Research & Professor Anthony G. Watts/National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling, UK (Eds.) 2010, page 13

⁶ See “46 ideas for guidance in professional bachelor education”, the article “Adult career guidance”, VUE 2008, and www.vejledning.net

⁷ See “6 perspectives of guidance – conflict, understanding and practice”, VUE 2009, and www.vejledning.net

⁸ See the report “Diploma degree programmes in Education and Vocational Guidance – effects, issues and opportunities at the individual and organisational level”, by Buhl, Rita; Skovhus, Randi og Nordskov Nilsen, Lone (2011) at www.vejledning.net

⁹ The Economic Council of the Labour Movement: “Every third graduate moves directly into unemployment”, Report produced by the Economic Council of the Labour Movement, Senior Analyst Mie Dalskov Pihl, 21February 2012

Our working hypothesis for this project is that guidance in the UCs should be or develop towards being *career learning centres* that develop students' career development and career management competencies.

Project goals

The project goals have been:

- To investigate and describe the goals for career guidance at the UCs, including examples of how career guidance in the UCs is thought to contribute to the development of students' career management competencies.
- To describe and analyse the organisation and content of career guidance in the UCs.
- To provide recommendations for the organisation and content of career guidance in the UCs.

Survey questions

Based on the above mentioned goals, the following questions were formulated to be answered as part of the project investigation:

- What is understood by career guidance in the UCs?
- How do the UCs convey their goals for/content of career guidance through websites and strategy papers on guidance?
- How is career guidance organised in the UCs? What perception of career guidance is expressed in the chosen method of organisation? Does the organisation of guidance have significance for the understanding of the practice?
- Is there collaboration with the professional bodies/users and if so, how?
- Are users included in career guidance?
- Does career guidance utilise the fact that the UCs offer both professional bachelor programmes and continuing education programmes, and if so, how?
- What are the objectives and strategies behind the organisation of guidance in the careers centres, the place where this organisational choice has been made (or a centralised management of guidance)?
- What opportunities and benefits are there with organisation in the careers centre?
- What limitations and disadvantages are there with organisation in the careers centre?
- The students: How are the types of guidance required by students uncovered (form, content...)?
- What are the success factors that lie behind the choice of organisational form, and how are they evaluated with reference to the criteria?
- Career guidance after completed education – unemployed – cooperation with external partners (unemployment insurance funds, job centres...)?
- Guidance counsellors' educational background and competencies? Including: is guidance understood as a function or as a profession?

The survey questions formed the basis for the interview guide (see Appendix).

Survey methods

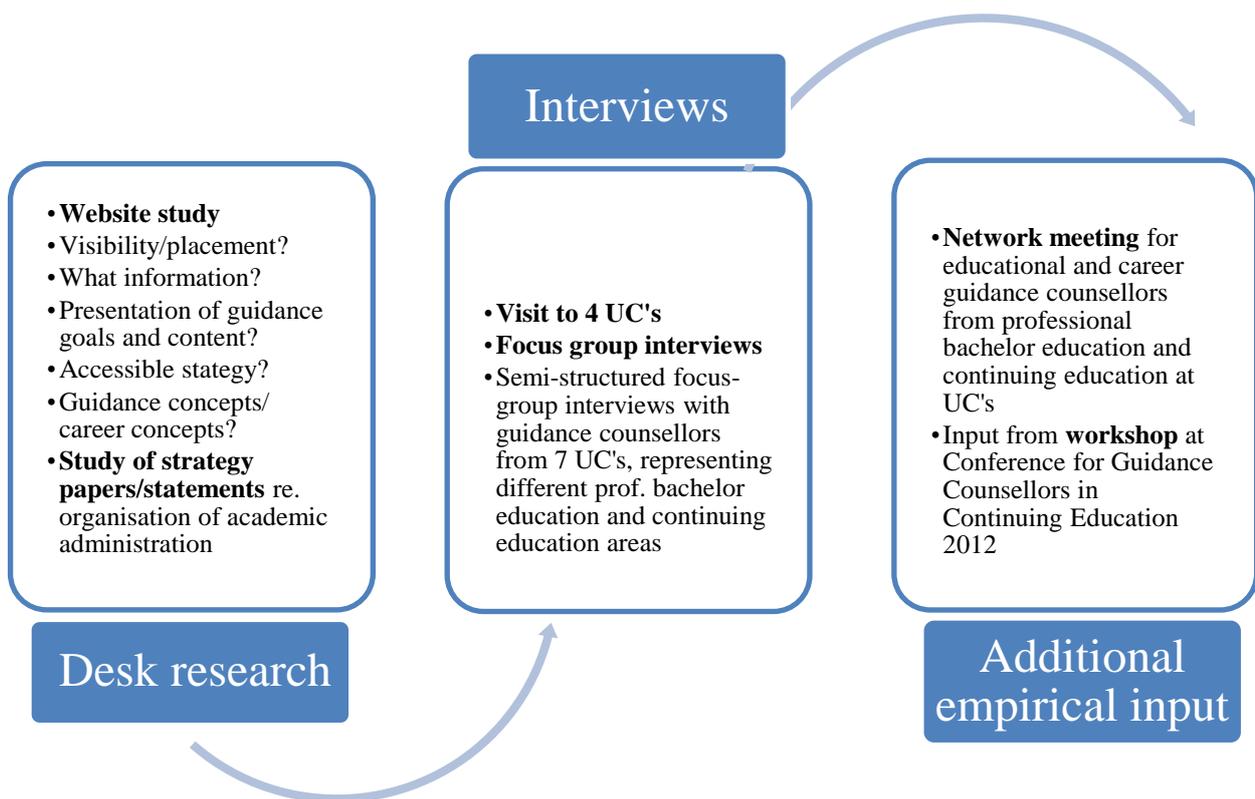
We have employed the following survey methods in the project:

- Initial study of the websites of the UCs in relation to guidance services. These studies have formed the basis for some of the questions used in the interview guide as well as provided the information to select and contact guidance counsellors for the focus-group interviews.
- Collecting and reading of the strategy descriptions of the UCs in relation to (career) guidance, where this information has been available.

- Semi-structured focus groups with guidance counsellors from the seven UCs. The guidance counsellors were selected following a search on UC websites in such a way that all subject areas in the UCs are represented. Between 1 and 4 guidance counsellors have participated from each UC. All interviews were sound recorded and subsequently transcribed.
- Analysis of the collected empirical data/data material: thematic analysis, partly in relation to the survey questions, and partly in relation to emerging themes, positions and dilemmas in the empirical material.

In connection with the project, a network day was held for educational and career guidance counsellors in continuing education in the UCs; a workshop for guidance counsellors working in continuing education was also held at the Conference for Guidance counsellors in Higher Education Annual 2012. The report includes responses from both events.

The empirical collection methods can be portrayed via the following model:



3. Guidance and the UC homepages

Main observations and development potential

Limited studies of the websites belonging to the UCs have been conducted, focussing on guidance visibility and information about the aims of guidance, guidance offered and the strategies of the UCs in the area of guidance. The approach has been to look at the main website of each UC followed by looking at selected educational programmes at each UC, encompassing different programmes to ensure a wide cross-section.

Visibility

In relation to the visibility of guidance, a significant difference has been observed: ranging from immediate visibility on the homepage of the UC website to a need to click 2-7 times within an individual educational section to find information about guidance. An example of immediate visibility is a study hotline link and telephone number placed on a UC website homepage. The following appears on clicking the link:

Career guidance at [xxUC] is here for you if you are choosing an education. Career guidance can help you with all the practical questions about entrance requirements and application – and maybe help you to decide which education to choose.

Following on from that, there is information on guidance in all subject areas with links to them (1+1 clicks).

At the other end of the spectrum are websites where information on guidance can only be found by going in under each individual educational programme, and which furthermore require several clicks before arriving at the relevant information (up to 7 clicks have been observed). In other words, information is not easily accessible in all cases, and it can require patience and search competencies to find the information

Purpose of guidance and guidance services

Similarly, there is significant variation in the information about the purpose of guidance and guidance services (including information about who the guidance counsellors are, their contact details etc.) at the individual UCs and for individual educational programmes. The variation concerns the different offers, the extent of the information given, and the opportunities for contacting guidance counsellors by either telephone or email. The differences are also apparent within the individual UCs; there is not necessarily a single uniform dissemination of guidance services, but rather information designed by the individual educational areas.

An example of detailed information on guidance services (after 4 clicks):

In Educational and Career Guidance we offer guidance to many types of students:

For prospective students we offer advice about:

programme content and structure

programme information and training/practice

book prices

learning environment and examinations

For existing students about:

student wellbeing
special leave (e.g. maternity leave)
exam anxiety
loneliness
exemptions and course credit enquiries
special educational assistance (for students with special needs)
planning your studies
group work
study competencies
For graduates about:
job opportunities
continuing education
how to apply for jobs and other career advice

In another example from one of the educational programmes, the guidance objectives are outlined for 'guide to completion', 'individual/personal guidance' and 'post-educational guidance':

Guide to completion:

The aim is to provide students with guidance and information on the conditions and opportunities open to them to enable them to complete their studies in the most appropriate manner.

Individual / personal guidance:

The aim is to be clear about the situation the student is in, in relation to their studies. Further, to provide the student with support to develop a plan of how best they can manage in the future.

Post-educational guidance:

The aim is to give student completing the education an overview of the opportunities within education and employment.

Guidance is delivered in the form of information meetings for final year students and according to individual needs.

On some websites, under individual programmes, there is information about guidance counsellor confidentiality or general information about ethics in guidance (in one case there was also information about the code of good guidance).

Availability

Information about career guidance counsellors ranges from those websites where, under information for individual programmes, only a single email address and telephone number for career guidance are specified, to those websites that provide not only photos but also email addresses and telephone numbers for individual career guidance counsellors. Sometimes there is also information about office hours.

The career concept

On some websites the term 'career' is used, and information provided, about career opportunities. This information is found under individual programmes, such as Radiography. Information is provided about employment, training, wages, and organisation. On many other websites the term is not used.

Goals and strategies for guidance on the websites

On searching the websites for the terms ‘guidance strategy’, ‘strategies for guidance’, or ‘strategy for career guidance’, no information is available (other than links to the diploma module Adult Career Guidance). No uniform strategies are offered for guidance on the websites of the UCs. Documents to this affect may be located within internal strategy papers or in development contracts, but they are not publically available.

Summary of the UC websites and development potential

As can be seen, the observations of the websites show extensive variation in visibility, information about the aims of guidance, guidance services, guidance counsellors, and use of terminology. The variation is large between the UCs and between individual subject areas in individual UCs.

This points towards the extensive potential for development in the field. Consideration can be given to how many clicks are deemed acceptable in accessing guidance services; if the development of a common layout is desirable; information categories; shared access; and whether feedback can be collected from students in the quality development of the guidance information.

In one of the interviews included in the overall study of career guidance in the UCs, a quality assessment was mentioned focussing on information on the website from a student perspective, although without feedback from actual students

But we also carry out quality assessment and development in other ways; we have sat down as a team and asked ourselves the question: if I were a student and read our website to find information about education programmes, different methods of being admitted to a programme etc., is the information good enough. [...] It was a starting place from which we could see that there were many holes and errors, and different practices at different locations or within different subject areas. So, we have adopted the role of students and asked: is it possible to find the information; are there guidelines; are there complaint procedures; are the legal rights of the student actually good enough?

It is also worth considering what opportunities online guidance or guidance via websites offer. The opportunities for online guidance are limited to email contact with a guidance counsellor, and only relatively little to chat, Facebook or SMS guidance; there is the potential to draw on the experiences of e-guidance, and experiences of individual universities could be involved in relation to taking into account competence requirements, opportunities and challenges.

4. Themes in the interview material

4.1. Organisation of the guidance

Through the study, three overall models have been found for the organisation of guidance in the University Colleges. These can be characterised through the following comparative table:

The decentralised organisational model	The combined organisational model	The centralised organisational model
No Centre Status	Centre Status	Centre Status
Decentralised guidance counsellors for each programme according to subject knowledge	Both decentralised and centralised guidance counsellors	'Generic' guidance counsellors (together covering all programmes) – subject specific guidance covered by lecturers
Reference to programme management	Reference to central management and, for decentralised guidance counsellors, to programme management	Reference to central management
No common strategy or goals for guidance at the UC	Common strategy and goals for the centre but not for guidance across the UC	Common strategy and goals for the UC
Decentralised agreement of tasks and roles	Centrally defined tasks and roles for the centre and for decentralised guidance counsellors, or decentralised agreement of tasks and roles for decentralised guidance counsellors	Centrally defined tasks and roles
Variable resource allocation	Centrally agreed resource allocation for the centre and local guidance	Shared resource allocation
Guidance counsellor network within each programme/ cross-campus or cross-disciplinary on a campus	Guidance counsellor network connecting the centralised and decentralised elements	The central guidance counsellor group cooperates with the various educational programmes

The decentralised organisation model

The decentralised organisation model is described as being characterised by a lack of common guidance strategies for the whole UC, whereas there can well be decentralised strategies and aims. It is also consistent that there is no knowledge of guidance organisation or colleagues in other parts of the UC:

*We have been successfully established as a central educational guidance service for diploma degree programmes, as well as for other programmes to a certain degree; however, it is primarily the diploma degree programmes that we deal with [...] So, I am employed as an education guidance counsellor and diploma coordinator. [...] In our case, I would say that it is entirely decentralised. [...] And when I talk about 'the central student guidance service' it is just because it is only in continuing education that we are working towards a dedicated central educational guidance service.
But basically we don't know what others do or write.*

In the decentralised organisation form, different forms of networking can be found; for example, in one subject area or on one campus. They can be stringently organised – to a greater or lesser degree – and are primarily geared towards experience exchange and possibly towards the development of creating common guidelines, codes and greater understanding of the guidance role:

...I am part of a network [within an educational branch of the UC] initiated approx. two years ago, where we began with some development funds, and we are now in a period of more solid organisation with one of the head consultants in charge; it isn't development funds anymore: the tempo has changed. We have developed from sitting amongst ourselves for the benefit of experience exchange and saying: "What do you do? Wonderful!" to a new situation where it is more about "where are we headed?" and "what is it we need to do?" It is much more goal orientated, as it should be when management are involved. But there is still a lot of experience exchange...

The same guidance counsellor who mentioned networking and cooperation is not in doubt, however, that guidance in the UC can be characterised as a wholly decentralised organisation:

I'm thinking that what I do is very decentralised [...] Actually, we do it differently within different educational programmes, and the guidance is built up along the way at our institution generally. We didn't have that before; so, I see it as very decentralised despite having all those meetings: we decide for ourselves ... together.

Another guidance counsellor gives information about totally different organisation and tasks in guidance in the different educational programmes in the UC:

... In general we are educational guidance counsellors; that's what we call it in our programme area. Two of us are general educational guidance counsellors, and then there are the subject specific guidance counsellors who are lecturers [...] We deal with recruitment, admissions, guidance to help make educational choices, and completion of study. We deal with the 'softer' things; we don't deal with subject

specific issues at all – not even in the area of educational choice guidance. [...] In the faculty of health, they have a central educational guidance counsellor who deals with some of the ‘soft’ topics in relation to admissions and completion, as well as having fulltime educational guidance counsellors in, for example, nursing and other health related educations, who deal with both admission and completion. In the pedagogical educations it is a little different... [...] We are very centralised in relation to everything connected to educational guidance as long as it isn’t subject specific. However, not in relation to the UC; it is very decentralised.

It is worth noting that guidance in the above citation is referred to as ‘very centralised’, while at the same time it is pointed out that guidance in the UC as a whole is wholly decentralised. It is not possible to gauge to what extent this might be due to the guidance counsellors assigning more worth to centralised organised guidance than decentralised organisation.

Besides the characteristic traits in the decentralised organisation form (such as the existence of decentralised and different organisational forms – which are historically and educationally related; that the guidance counsellors in the educational programmes relate to the programmes’ subject knowledge; and that within the local context there are differing forms of guidance networks), the interviews also reveal that there are differences in resource allocation for guidance in the UC, and employees refer to heads/educational managers within their own educational programmes. There is also no common strategy for guidance that covers the whole UC.

The combined organisational model

The combined organisational model is characterised by the existence of a management initiated central formation that is assigned coordinating, initiating, integral and competence development tasks while decentralised guidance counsellors are also part of the system, attached to the centre in a network organisation. The management initiative can have a background in the UC development contract or in an overall UC strategy in relation to tackling student drop-out rates:

A year ago we established, within the organisation, what we term [centre title ...] it's a consequence or follow-up of the development contract in relation to student retention. And there should be unification in relation to guidance in the different educational programmes in the UC [...] You could call it an umbrella over the guidance, intended to integrate guidance initiatives agreed upon by management decisions. That is our task: to ensure that there is a minimum element of guidance in the respective education programmes which are relatively similar [...] we have achieved a lot. We have described very much, and we have established an education guidance counsellor network. We had one earlier, but now there’s a more solid foundation in the organisation, so that the things we agree on in the centre, together with the guidance counsellor network, becomes visible in the actual programmes...

In the combined organisational model there is a clear management defined strategy and goal behind the centre formation:

However, management has chosen to operationalise the wording of the action plan to fit in with concrete initiatives, with deadlines and distribution of responsibilities. And there is no doubt that we are designed to initiate, manage, evaluate and develop that entire part of the development contract.

One of the tasks of the central centre, to integrate or harmonise guidance across the UC, mirrors the overall goal to create a more uniform guidance within the UC. It is described as a task that will take time:

There have been very different practices in the individual educational programmes. In some places there have been educational guidance counsellors in the programme, in others the guidance has been sparser, and in some areas there has been an extremely large amount of educational guidance. We have become integrated in the sense that there are now educational guidance counsellors for each educational programme, while the hours worked by each guidance counsellor have been dependant on which area they work in; students now have the same guidance services regardless of which programme they are in. And we are certainly not finished with what we have started. We have existed for a year now ... It is a process.

In addition, the centre in the combined organisational model can have tasks in relation to the quality assurance of guidance and to conduct investigations into drop-out rates and other relevant educational issues, in this way functioning as a (guidance) knowledge bank for management:

... we are employed in three areas. We are hired to quality assess and develop the quality of study supportive initiatives; we are also budgeted under the heading of study support expenses, and I really thought it was an odd way to characterise us even if it does make some sense; after all, we do go in and see what procedures and information are to be found, what regulations there are, and double check that we are up-to-date with legislation etc. So we do actually go in and assess many of these study supportive guidelines, manuals, whatever and check if there is anything missing. And of course we don't do this alone. We work together with the heads of education, local education guidance counsellors, and admissions, and with communication. This is why we feel that we have become a very central function with many varying roles; we have become a sort of knowledge bank; we are also employed to develop and research primarily in relation to the problem with students dropping out as well as other issues relevant for the students.

In the combined organisational model references are also different; employees in the centre and the decentralised guidance counsellors refer to different management levels, which gives rise to challenges in relation to the management competencies of the centre:

...we refer to the head of our education. However, the guidance counsellors are employed locally as lecturers and refer in employment matters to their head of education. This is a new construction, which creates certain challenges [...] So there are some things we need to sort out in terms of organisation.

It has also been articulated that it can be a challenge to have both tasks of quality development for guidance and competence development for the guidance counsellors while not having been given

management authority over guidance counsellors. This means that the central centre has to act as a motor for the development of guidance in the decentralised area of guidance:

And then we do the opposite [of centralisation] by establishing our guidance counsellor network, because sometimes we are standing beside the organisation and have to enforce something that we in reality have no management authority to enforce. But the fact that we have strengthened our guidance counsellor network makes us feel we can influence the organisation and this is a goal we are working towards. [...] Everything that we write is, of course, to enforce the development contract, but it is essential that all of our colleagues are in agreement.

A combined organisational model can also be a centre foundation, which is both bottom-up and top-down initiated; in other words, a prior agreement of development work amongst guidance counsellors across the UC, based on which management have decided to establish a centre foundation. It is described in this way:

...I have actually worked with career guidance since the implementation project (2009/2010), where I was part of a group from across the organisation; educational guidance counsellors worked together to discuss how career guidance could be organised in the UC. The outcome was a decision-making document and management decided that this should be qualified, which has resulted in a new project description [...] The idea behind this career centre is that it should be physically located here, and that there should be various employees here: one from professional bachelor education, and one from continuing education and practice development. It should have a physical location, the career centre, but there should also be a virtual element...

...it started as a bottom-up project, where we sat and worked with some projects that we [education guidance counsellors] thought were interesting. I think that has had a big impact [...] And actually, the majority of the recommendations the educational guidance counsellors arrived at over the two year period of this project were given the green light by management; this has also had a big impact. We have worked a lot from the bottom-up.

Regarding the purpose of or strategy behind the combined model, the following was said:

...that is, after all, our purpose: to hold on to the students or get them through their education.

Within this form of combined model, guidance counsellors' reference to management is different; in the central part of the organisation there is a coordinating and competence development role in relation to the decentralised guidance:

Educational guidance counsellors refer either to their head of education or perhaps to a rector if there is a rector for that area. We are, therefore, employed in a

decentralised fashion. [...] But there is a central organisation, too, where I sit as the coordinating educational guidance counsellor working with, among other things, competence development of education guidance counsellors in these career centres.

Decentralised guidance within the individual educational programmes is described in the combined model as a prerequisite for the collective guidance effort:

But internally, it is very much the lecturers. It is something we have discussed extensively in our organisation: they are, after all, 'the gatekeepers'. We have so many students in our programme and I don't teach much; so, we rely on the lecturers to be aware of anyone who might seem unhappy or who displays signs of not coping.

The combined organisational model is characterised by the existence of a management initiated central guidance authority, a centre, and also by decentralised areas of guidance connected to the education programmes. The central part has management defined tasks, which include specific tasks that originate in development contracts, and tasks concerning the development of areas in the decentralised areas of guidance in the UC. These development areas can cover competence development for guidance counsellors, strategy follow-up and quality development of guidance (including evaluation tasks and drop-out studies). There is a formulated strategy for the central element of guidance. The central part – the centre – and the decentralised part of guidance have different management references.

The centralised organisational model

In the centralised organisational model, the organisation has been changed from the wholly decentralised to the wholly centralised with fulltime employed guidance counsellors who are located organisationally speaking in the college administration and referring to college management. The guidance counsellors in the centre cover all educational programmes:

*Previously, our educational guidance counsellors were organised in subject specific areas ... some were fulltime guidance counsellors, while others were part time guidance counsellors and lecturers for the rest of their hours. [...] Then two changes were made: the entire Education Service, which educational guidance is part of, was reorganised from the first of January into a new organisation called, in Danish, *Koncernadministration*, together with our IT, HR, reception, finance and other departments [...] so we are now organisationally placed in the new *Koncernadministration*. From the first of August 2012 all educational guidance counsellors will be permanent fulltime guidance counsellors so that everyone will cover more than one educational programme and cover the 9-10 thousand professional bachelor students we have spread out across the six-seven physical addresses round about...*

Guidance availability for students is organised in the centralised model:

It is available at all the locations where we offer programmes. It isn't available at all locations Monday to Friday 8-4 [...] but all the addresses have a presence. But we do

otherwise try to be available: you can call, write, chat or go on Facebook to find your guidance counsellor rather than there necessarily being someone who sits in an office from 8-4 with an open-door policy at each location.

The reason for the centralisation is partly a professionalization strategy and partly a strategy for improved and more uniform coverage of the guidance task:

... The entire organisational change it to make progress. It is a step in professionalising educational guidance. All educational guidance counsellors are in the process – or about to start the process – of further education [...] Through organisational change we have also ensured that there are two guidance counsellors for each educational programme, so that if someone is sick it is still possible to access guidance services. Through organisational change we have attempted to address some of the issues there were around part time guidance counsellors.

Guidance counsellors in the centralised model highlight the necessity for this organisational model that the guidance counsellors are dedicated to the role; also highlighted are the challenges in the organisation, especially in the transition phase from decentralised to centralised organisation:

... I think it means a lot that everyone is dedicated to educational guidance. The educational guidance counsellors that are here now applied for the job, were successful and entered into the role with enthusiasm because it was something they wanted to do; they are excited to engage with the new programmes and also nervous perhaps about working with Facebook, new programmes, new rotas and timetables, issues about where to sit etc. There are a lot of structural and technical issues. But the dedication means a lot...

The organisation in a central guidance centre is described as a management decision forming part of an overall strategy for the UC – a top-down initiated organisation following input from educational guidance counsellors. Management support and attention are important prerequisites to successfully meet the challenges of transition:

... the current organisation of career guidance came from the top; of course, it also came from the bottom with some input to the changes, but it was a management decision and it doesn't take much imagination to guess that there were ... it can be a difficult process when you have to reconvert job roles. [...] But it came from above as a decision; you could say it means we have the attention of our rector.

The centralised organisational model is, therefore, characterised by all guidance being concentrated in one guidance centre where the guidance counsellors work together to cover all the guidance services in the UC; there is one strategy for guidance connected to the overall goals and strategy of the UC, and the guidance counsellors refer to the central administration in the UC. Subject specific guidance is undertaken by lecturers in the programmes, and the centralised guidance counsellors cooperate with them.

4.2. Organisation of the guidance and significance for the guidance tasks

In the *centralised* organisation, guidance counsellors perform (in the centre) the guidance tasks described as part of the strategy for the new organisation:

[The strategy] was actually formulated a couple of years ago, and that is the one we have followed. That was what led to the organisational change, among other things. [...] There are definitely certain parts of it that would be good for career guidance to act on.

Then mention is made of the tasks carried out by guidance counsellors in the centre: Various support functions, completion guidance, introductory and transition guidance [*“as it was called at that time”*], group process guidance, regular group guidance, more impartial advice for those groups requiring that, teaching study techniques, analytic reading and learning styles, exam training, guidance on Facebook, the establishment of psychological guidance, and career events.

Over and above these, there are tasks in relation to developing documentation of career guidance and developing career guidance itself.

In the *combined* organisational model, organisational changes result in the following change to work in relation to the centre:

It has moved the work function. Before, I had them all [...] those that came in, those that were in, and those on the way out. Now, in the centre, we have those on the way in and those on the way out in relation to career guidance. And then we have a sort of consultant function for those in the building, but they are assigned to a local careers guidance counsellor. So, we do provide guidance, but the focus is different [...] than before.

The change is responsible for a growing clarification of what the core service of guidance is or should be, and what tasks should be performed by whom. One consequence of this is that what in Denmark is referred to as the ‘career guidance culture’ is being debated:

...what is education administration and what is career guidance? These are issues we are currently dealing with: should a career guidance counsellor have SIS access (education information system)? [...] If educational plans have changed after a leave of absence, is it an administrative or a guidance counsellor issue? This sort of questions pop up all the time, which is a good thing as it is perhaps the foundation that will enable us to begin to talk our way to developing a mutual understanding of what the cornerstones of career guidance actually are. However, we are dealing with years of practice, privilege, and self-understanding [...] but it is really exciting because this way we can work with the career guidance culture. Or career guidance counsellors’ guidance culture.

Another consequence of changes to the combined organisational model in a UC is a centralisation of the initial stage of admission guidance:

...a new entry we have made across the whole UC for admission guidance. Something known as an “study hotline”, in which four people have been trained. Educational administration staff dominate, but one is also a career guidance counsellor; they sit with all the questions from potential applicants; we have already handled more than a thousand telephone calls alone since our launch in February. It is also something that helps to alleviate guidance counsellors from interruptions...

4.3. The concept of guidance: Division into admission, completion and transition versus career guidance

The project was also interested in finding out how guidance counsellors in the University Colleges designate the guidance tasks; it has become apparent that a traditional three-way division is still in operation: entry, completion and transition guidance. There is also a hesitation or ambiguity in relation to the use of the term career guidance from across all the interview material from the UCs:

...we work with both admission and completion guidance. We also provide study support, for example, to those courses and activities that form part of our educational guidance. But career guidance [...] sometimes when I am talking with potential applicants it is quite obviously a form of career guidance. However, the element that is most career guidance will take place when they are sent to a subject specific colleague with specific questions...

Others say:

... ‘career guidance’? I don’t think it is a term we use here in that way.

... I keep thinking in terms of admission, completion, transition, and individual and group guidance; it may just well be this is what you call retention and something else.

The term career guidance – when it is considered in the interviews – is in most cases connected to the idea of student considerations about work, life and options on completing their education:

... when I think “educational guidance”, I think about the period from when you first meet them, perhaps as an applicant at one of our open house information meetings; so we have already begun to get to know them there, and this continues throughout their studies where we advise them in how to complete their studies if they have issues with exams or other issues. But at some point they start asking: “What now? What should I do when I am finished?” while others might ask “what sort of jobs can I get?” which is something they learn more about when they do placements; however, they can also ask: “What other programmes can I take? What master’s programmes can I gain admission to?” [...] and that is when we are in a career guidance scenario, because they need their plans for the future to fit in with the education they are taking. So, for me, the differentiation comes when they start asking: “What about when I have finished?”

A final example again demonstrates that the term career guidance is normally not applied, while changes in the professional and work environment that the students will meet are incorporated within both teaching and guidance:

...it isn't something that we just come out and say, that nowadays we have career guidance. We do things similarly to you, inviting representatives in from professional bodies etc. and we are attentive to making sure that what we offer, in terms of education, needs to constantly change in line with the changing nature of the workplace, and it changes very much indeed. [...] We try to be very aware of this fact, especially in our cooperation with various professional bodies. We talk with the students about their expectations and where they see opportunities, because it is very clear that these things are changing now.

It is consistently clear in the interview material that career guidance and career as terms are neither used nor defined consequentially – the interviewees seem uncertain and use the terms mainly in connection with admission and completion guidance. There are, however, many instances of career guidance being used and recognised as a term that can encompass guidance activities directed towards students' work and study lives on completion of their professional bachelor education.

4.4 Career guidance and the career concept

In continuation of, and connection with, the above, the project was interested in finding out how the career concept is perceived, when the interviewed guidance counsellors were asked about their understanding of career guidance.

Some guidance counsellors mentioned an increasing pressure from the students, who from the beginning of their studies want to become aware of future job or continuing education perspectives. This calls for – hesitant – career guidance:

It is as you say – those people want to know straight away how to move on. Before they have even been admitted into an education, they require knowledge about the next step, what jobs they can get, and what their opportunities are in continuing education. So it is almost an inherent part of the initial contact.

The incentive to bring the career guidance concept into play sometimes comes from the management – as in this example forming part of a retaining strategy:

Surely, we have received ... how can I put it ... quite a few statements from the management at the various educational programmes. So, you can say that we had some discussions here, where we reached the conclusion that we have to look at it all as one long career, and that in fact career guidance is also a retaining strategy. That if anyone had doubts in regard to their education, we would help them gain clarity and try to see their opportunities when they had completed their education.

There are several different answers to how the students' education can be seen as a career, sometimes connected to career guidance being professionals in the field telling about other

opportunities than the one that the education aims at, and the dilemma in relation to ‘retaining’ people in that profession. This can be interpreted as an understanding of career as a ‘rise’:

We actually talked a lot about seeing the programmes as part of one long career from the moment we met the students, and most programmes are very focused on drawing professionals in at open house events to say: “I would like to tell you something really exciting: I started out as a nurse, but now I’m this or that”. [...] or getting people from the professional area, not only those who studied further. Because that is our constant dilemma: You want to make sure that there are people who stay in the profession – they can’t all take continuing education.

That career by some guidance counsellors is perceived as ‘rise’ or ‘leader potential’ – a vertical perception of career – also becomes apparent in this example:

...actually, I think more and more that there might not be opposition against it [the career concept], and we are actually very focussed on that in the programmes – also in terms of talking about career and nudging someone who might have the makings of a leader [...] we pick out the ones we think have some potential. So I guess we do it slightly concealed, but I don’t think there are any prejudices against calling something career guidance; I wouldn’t call it that, that requires a higher level of qualification.

The interview material also displays other possible understandings of the career concept: an understanding that covers the actual education and the students’ planning of it – meaning an understanding of career as a ‘path’ which everyone has – a horizontal understanding. Included in this are reflections over the students’ scepticism towards the career concept, or the perception of career as ‘something major’, a ‘rise’, which is opposite to the guidance counsellor’s perception:

...you might think: “How is my career as a student?” and you might – this is me making up stuff ... actually, if you started using it [...] the word career has – I don’t know if this is still the case – some kind of deterrent effect on the students, because career, gosh, that is something major, but it isn’t. So you could actually begin introducing it much earlier in the guidance, and say: “Your studies are a career. How are you going to plan it?”

Another guidance counsellor expressed a similar perception:

But we have chosen as a starting point to look at career counselling and career guidance, whatever term we use, adopting it as a very broad concept from the very first conversation with students [...] The aim is to expand career guidance to encompass “what is a career?”, “is a career to work towards becoming an MA of Law, or is it working towards a steady job, where I can feel secure as a single mother?” [...] That is, look at career in a very broad understanding and be available for students who don’t always know where to go.

Several guidance counsellors point to a vertical perception of career among students, where career is understood as ‘rise’ or something competitive – which is in opposition to many guidance counsellors’ more horizontal perception:

I get the impression that some students say: “I don’t want a career; I’m not a career person”. [...] there are clearly – how can I put it – different understandings of career, also among the students, and I think maybe there is more consensus among guidance counsellors to see life as one long career...

The guidance counsellors’ reflections on the career concept create a picture where the extremes are: a traditional career concept, where career is perceived horizontally as a ‘rise’; and a new career concept, where career is perceived horizontally as paths. However, this picture is – as the interviews show – going through development and discussions, both in the guidance counsellors’ own minds and in the professional discussions among them. The different understandings of the career concept transverse the organisational models for guidance.

The experience with students’ ideas about career described by the guidance counsellors, are interesting both in terms of the guidance counsellors’ interpretations and as a starting point for guidance counsellors’ choice of guidance activities.

4.5 Guidance as function or profession

A further aim of the study was to uncover whether guidance counsellors perceived guidance as a function of a profession; this interest is connected to the intention in the Guidance Reform 2003 and international bodies’ policy objectives for the professionalization of guidance and guidance counsellors (i.e. through education and competence development of guidance counsellors):

The answers to the question of whether the participants perceive themselves as having a function or a profession as guidance counsellor displays extensive variation: clear placement in either category, a mixture and shift from function to profession, or from subject knowledge to guidance knowledge:

It’s hard. Offhand, I would say it’s one of my functions.

I really don’t know what my profession is. I mean, I am educated as a historian.

It is a profession, maybe, I think.

I don’t really know. Perhaps a mixture of the two. But it probably should be a profession.

I experience my work as a profession, where I also experience that I have many people who help, who have it as a function: a part of their work. Where for me it is a profession, I think it is a function for others; for example, contact teachers with guidance functions...

I have thought about this before – which one it might be. Offhand, I am thinking function [...] but I also go out and teach and then I don't have my guidance counsellor hat on; you could say I am in both professions.

When I am giving guidance, I don't think of myself primarily as an occupational therapist; I don't think that because there is no certainty that they need occupational therapists...

...If someone asks me what I do, I would never dream of saying I'm a nurse, well not anymore, because I did for the first year; now I say I am an educational guidance counsellor.

Several people see the question about function or profession in relation to whether or not they have a guidance education or not, or whether they are fulltime or not.

I think I would say the same. I have a function out here, and I am also taking an education [...] so it is part of my future professional identity. I sign up to a profession in a way when I take the guidance diploma degree; if we move into a campus I would be a fulltime guidance counsellor and then I would say: "that's my profession".

I think it is partly my profession. It is what I use my professional life for, right? But I don't have an educational background in the area. I am aware that there is a guidance counsellor function but I don't have the subject specific education I would like to have to be exclusively in that function.

A guidance counsellor questioned to what extent other guidance counsellors viewed their subject knowledge as a prerequisite to be able to carry out guidance, with relation to guidance education – that guidance counsellors, through the guidance education, would change from function to profession, and to thinking about guidance as generic guidance:

Some have the point of view that they can only talk with those students who come through the door from their own education background. If, by chance, a pedagogue should turn up, and the employee is a physiotherapist, they wouldn't be able to offer guidance to them. That's a big barrier; we could have much more interdisciplinary cooperation if people had the training; you need the training to develop that understanding. Then they would be guidance counsellors rather than educational coordinators-education guidance counsellors: they would have another profession in reality. It is that profession they are lacking when I try to promote it. It is difficult to talk about it when they are present, because of the resistance: they feel disqualified.

It is also mentioned that even if it is still called a function, it has been significant for the role of guidance counsellor – in the direction of the role being termed a profession – that it is no longer temporary or a role on a rota shared between all lecturers:

Where we are it is viewed somewhat as a function. At least that's how it is articulated. You have a function as a guidance counsellor and that attracts a function supplement [...] At the same time, I think there has been a change during the years I have been in educational guidance; in the beginning the situation was that you might be a guidance

counsellor for a few years but then someone else would probably take over; now, however, it has been realised that you gain competencies that don't benefit from the hop-in-hop-out solution; it isn't appropriate. [...] And there are many who have been in that situation for years, because we have found out that even if we call it a function, in practice it is possibly more of a profession. But it is articulated as a function.

Many of those interviewed talk about an increasing degree of recognition for guidance from the organisation and their colleagues:

...it is spoken of as a function, but I also think it is an independent role. Educational guidance is a part of the organisation, not just something that fills it out. [...] But it is in the initial stages. You know, it is still under development.

...we've been speaking for years about how it isn't just a side-issue that goes together with something else; that it has been recognised as something that represents a fulltime job; this has enabled us to take the lead and say, yes, this is my profession. [...] it isn't something you necessarily start out training to do; it involves experience from many areas and requires a degree of confidentiality – silent knowledge; it borders on being something you cannot quite manage when you are too young...

The interview material indicates that there is significant variation in whether guidance is perceived to be a function or a profession, but also that there is a growing movement to regard it as a profession; this movement is connected partly to the perception of the significance of guidance education and partly to experience of the increased recognition of guidance within the organisation; it is also a movement that indicates a shift in professional identity: from a subject knowledge identity to a guidance knowledge identity.

4.6 Guidance counsellors' professional competencies/educational backgrounds: Implications for understandings of guidance tasks

As mentioned earlier in the section about guidance as function or profession, the guidance counsellors' professional competencies and educational backgrounds are important factors in the guidance tasks.

There are two general perceptions among the interviewees; one being that guidance counsellors' professional competency is a relevant basis for performing guidance tasks, e.g. an educational or professional background as a psychologist, social worker or occupational therapist – or elements of these. The following three statements exemplify this perception:

I'm an authorised psychologist, and of course that's the reason why my focus is where it is.

...regarding guidance method, I'm not a trained guidance counsellor. So this thing with applying guidance theory is not something I'm capable of. There is more philosophy in it, I find, than you'd ever be confronted with on the social worker education. [...] So method-wise I think that I often mirror what I see and hear [...] That is in fact the main thing I do in my work with them – showing them what I see...

...with my educational background, which is occupational therapy – which many people still don't know what is [...] I'd rather not do without it – or I think it's necessary – to have that professional background [regarding admission guidance] [...] I don't have a diploma or MA in guidance, but you could say [...] we are called occupational therapists, so we do have some experience in having conversations...

The second general perception expressed through the interviews is that a necessary prerequisite for performing the tasks as a guidance counsellor is an education in guidance, and consequently specific competencies, and a common terminology:

...it also requires specific competencies to be a career guidance counsellor, so we have written that those career guidance counsellors need some professional development and continuing education. I understand from the career guidance counsellors out at [xxx] that they have built upon their current educations in order to manage that specific function.

We don't have a common terminology, because we are so few who have the education [...] If I say constructivist guidance – or if I shouted it – only very few would know what it was and meant in practice, and therefore we can't talk about it. We would be able to, if we had a common language.

...I have no guidance counsellor education – I only have one professional development course – and neither does my colleague. So it's probably not a terribly professional terminology when we talk about it...

In continuation of this perception there is talk in interviews of qualifying the guidance counsellors through i.e. recognition of competencies and planning of competence validation programmes and diploma degree programmes. This in particular is the ambition in the UCs that have a centralised or combined organisation of guidance. One of them refers to the regulations for guidance counsellors' qualifications as an argument for the competence development initiatives. Work in this field includes descriptions of 'expert' and 'novice' levels for guidance counsellors, as well as plans for MA and diploma education levels for guidance counsellors in different functions.

One guidance counsellor expressed a third perception, which can be characterised in these words: All good guidance is created through experience:

You know, we are all really good guidance counsellors – after all, we all do it. It's an important part of the job.

4.7 The guidance counsellor as a 'private practitioner' versus a 'collective practitioner'

Different positions are apparent in the interview material concerning the execution and definition of the guidance task – the extent to which it is advantageous to define and execute the tasks alone, or whether it is more advantageous for this to be done as a team. We have juxtaposed these approaches under the terms 'private practitioner' and 'collective practitioner' to encourage debates such as those evident in the interviews, i.e. the desire to have personal authority to define.

Discussion regarding ‘private practitioner’ guidance:

... I experience it as very decentralised; even though we have these meetings, we make our own decisions ... in unison, if you like. And with the manager, of course. But in reality it is very much me together with the manager.

Within what I term completion guidance, which is the area I work with primarily, I am the one who runs things and can do it fairly undisturbed. That’s both good and bad, isn’t it? I think so because who says it is any good? I don’t know.

...so that’s how it is in the decentralised system. You tend to become, and perhaps wanting to be, slightly detached. Because then you have those opportunities to act, you know? So you end up being a little bit: “No, I’d rather decide this for myself because then I know it will work”.

These quotes express both the benefits of independent definition and execution of the task, and the inherent opportunities for action, but also an uncertainty in relation to being alone with the task and subsequently the assessment of performance.

Another term for ‘private practitioner’ guidance might be practice with special, personal guidance and treatment for shorter or longer periods, initiated and carried out by a supervisor with a psychotherapeutic background, and based on the guidance counsellor's strong commitment to this task.

At the other end of the scale, here termed ‘collective practitioner’, there is a particular emphasises on collective discussion as being advantageous and a prerequisite for professional guidance:

But what is also important, it that we can also share knowledge. [...] Now we are beginning to ask each other the question: “How would you respond to that?”, “How would you deal with this case?” We have already made a good start. And we have never had so much opportunity before to discuss things together; I see it as something that is very important in professional educational guidance: we need to have cooperation and we need to make the most of it.

At another UC, the change from an individual towards a more collective understanding of the guidance task is seen as a result of organisational change:

...last time we had the guidance counsellor network here, and we talked about how things had moved from a ‘me position’: “My education”, “my location”, not even “my education” in a broad sense, but just “my location”, “I come from” and so on. Now they still speak from that perspective, naturally, but also “us, the guidance counsellors in the UC”. There has been a big change in how our roles are understood, I think. Now it functions as a discussion and development forum rather than just information or clearing up uncertainties.

These two extremes can be seen in conjunction with the section on the organisational models for guidance in the UCs, as it is shown in the material that ‘private practitioner’ guidance especially is

seen in the decentralised model, while the ‘collective practitioner’ is seen particularly in the centralised and the combined organisational models.

4.8 The new age: New functions and tasks

The above section title refers to guidance counsellors who in the interview material talked about the new functions and tasks they have as a result of changes in their target groups, education policy changes, and organisational changes for guidance.

New target groups

Guidance counsellors seem to make an analysis that suggests that because more people are engaging in more education, guidance counsellors meet an increasing number of students with many challenges in relation to choosing and completing their study, or who are ambitious and have extensive career plans right from the start.

One guidance counsellor said:

...we now recruit students in greater number from non-academic family backgrounds [...] possibly less aware of what it means to be a student and be in a cultural setting where they don't know what to do and can't ask mum or dad either...

And another guidance counsellor:

Previously, there were those who said they wanted to be a nurse, and when they had achieved that their ambition was to build up the confidence to consider becoming a health visitor. Today, however, there are those who from the outset say they want to be leaders and there is no taboo in saying that these days...

There are, therefore, challenges related to both more vulnerable and increasingly more confident students. The guidance counsellors discussed a large group of young people they described as ‘vulnerable’ and as a rapidly growing group:

...there are more vulnerable young people today than we have ever had before, and it is a development that has happened really quickly: very quickly indeed. We have an increasing number of special needs students in receipt of student support.

There are so many people with problems in their lives and who are willing to share their problems and be open about it [...] there are not the same taboo as there used to be...

These vulnerable young people are also describes as having extensive social problems, but with a desire to make a difference in relation to what they have personally experienced:

...they have been subjected to incest or have parents who drink. They want to go out and save the world. As many as 90 % of those who come say they want to go out and help others...

A particular issue is when guidance counsellors experience students' parents looking for guidance on behalf of their grown-up children or take part in the guidance.

...more and more parents are getting involved – parents and even grandparents. They come along and want to be part of it...

...we also see it at fairs, where mothers in particular [...] come and stand in front with the younger person standing behind them [...] it is very individual, but a lot of family involvement.

Overall, guidance counsellors expressed marked changes in the groups of students they meet in the course of their work, from the vulnerable to the very ambitious, all putting new demands on guidance.

Increased focus on evaluation, evidence, quality assurance and strategy

Another tendency described by guidance counsellors as a new challenge is an increased demand for evaluation and evidence, quality assurance and strategy for guidance. With an increased and different need for guidance also follows a need to be able to document what works. In connection with this there is a particular focus on drop-out rates. The guidance counsellors described the institution drop-out analysis as something they have to do, but that it is not put in the context of educational guidance. As a result there is much uncertainty about the connection between the effect of educational guidance and drop-out rates, which is described as something that is 'going in the right direction':

We have been working with the drop-out issue. Continually, in fact, just like everyone else. And the issue is moving in the right direction, but it isn't only educational guidance that has been working with drop-out issues; the entire UC has been involved.

When we try to articulate for ourselves and our management what effect we think we have, we can never document it. And we cannot say how it would be possible to document it either.

It is a challenge to develop quality control and evaluation forms that can document the effects of guidance, and that is an unfortunate situation, as it is through documentation that guidance is given legitimacy and recognition. In some UCs a decision has been taken to qualify the evaluation work with the involvement of a 'quality team'.

In one of the interviews there is a discussion of the necessity for guidance to formulate its own goals and strategies as there can be many interested parties engaged in the field. For example, the UC development contract is seen to control the UC strategy plan. The reasoning is that if the strategy and goals for guidance are formulated, then there is also a strategy to enable evaluation and subsequently to document the worth of guidance:

Yes, when we do it [formulate goals for guidance], we can begin to see how we can evaluate this. Otherwise it is a bit of a grey area – what is it we should evaluate?

At one UC the guidance counsellors have thought very pragmatically in relation to measuring effect:

The reason we chose [to investigate] visibility and accessibility was due to an effectiveness evaluation we carried out. Really, if educational guidance isn't both visible and accessible then it makes no difference if we are good or bad. It was the first thing we needed to ascertain.

Another focus was satisfaction surveys. One guidance counsellor said:

Of course, we always try to include what the student actually says when we speak about it. What is it they are unsatisfied with, what do they complain about, what do they praise us for, and what exactly do they mean when they say it has been a good discussion (and the opposite) [...] It isn't very systematic and we tend as people to have an aversion to using too many resources on over-evaluating.

Overall, there are many challenges when dealing with evaluation, quality assurance and strategy work in relation to educational guidance. As guidance counsellors from one UC put it when the issue was raised during an interview, *if you find the philosopher's stone, we'd like to hear about it.* It is normally not the area most guidance counsellors are concerned with in their job; however, there is an awareness of its importance in relation to recognition and legitimacy.

Online guidance

'The new age' also means new technology and more use of distance guidance. This is also seen as a special challenge. One guidance counsellor, used to having the guidance client physically present during the guidance session, and probably normally knowing the client beforehand, experienced the guidance task very differently when it almost exclusively takes place via telephone in the central part of the combined organisational model:

I have certainly learned something that has been a great challenge for me – to provide telephone guidance. I simply had to work in an altogether different way [...] than I would if I had a person in front of me. [...] I have found some questioning techniques that are different, because you simply cannot see what is happening over on the other side.

One of the challenges is that as the central telephone service increases accessibility, and at the same time the target group is changing and appears to have guidance needs in relation to psychological and social issues, guidance is being used in a different way. One guidance counsellor said:

I have asked myself with all the telephone conversations I can hear people having, am I working in a social centre or where am I?

These experiences give a lot to think about in relation to function and job roles. What are the limits of what can be termed educational guidance tasks, and how does the organisation ensure it has an influence on how guidance is approached and understood by its users?

4.9 ‘Them and us’: The relationship between professional bachelor education and continuing education

The interviews revealed many different perceptions of the cooperation between professional bachelor programmes and continuing education programmes. The University Colleges choose to organise the educational programmes very differently, which has consequences for how well institutions know each other, how much cooperation is possible, and the extent to which there is an idea of ‘them’ and ‘us’. One group discussed why it doesn’t necessarily make sense to work together or joint-organise guidance across professional bachelor education and continuing education areas:

We cannot compare with, “well, we need to have an interview 2-3 months after they have started”. We work with modules; it works in a totally different way. From an organisational point of view, it cannot just be adapted to our educational method.

At another institution there is discussion of the fact that because they are placed side-by-side, they come automatically to take advantage of each other across basic and continuing education areas, as well as referring to guidance counsellors in continuing education when appropriate to do so in relation to student careers development. One guidance counsellor stated:

Our cooperation is a little different because we physically share space with a continuing education department [...] we find it very accessible to draw on the competencies that are around [...] It means they can make a connection between professional bachelor education and continuing education. They can’t really avoid it, because they are in the same room.

At another institution, an idea emerges during the interview concerning a possible partnership between professional bachelor educational guidance and continuing educational guidance. As continuing education programmes offer a possible career development route for professional bachelor graduates, it makes very much sense to involve them within a career guidance strategy. The guidance counsellor said:

I think it could be fun if we could use continuing education departments to carry out career guidance; you know, further career guidance. They have a good overview of what the opportunities are for those, for example, with a professional bachelor degree in social work.

The cooperation is also about how, by utilising each other, it would be possible to navigate in the vast and changeable educational landscape and live up to student expectations of career guidance.

4.10. Placement on campus: The significance of guidance strategy

In many of the interviews there was discussion of having just moved to a campus or an imminent move. It is also clear that this has had, or is expected to have, importance for the organisation of career guidance. Some spoke of new opportunities for cross-disciplinary cooperation or across professional bachelor education and continuing education programmes as a result of a shared location. One guidance counsellor spoke about how guidance is centralised in continuing education

programmes as it is called ‘the central career guidance service’. The guidance counsellor believed that there might be an opportunity for that central space for guidance to become part of the career guidance environment on a new campus. This is not planned but seems a sensible move for the guidance counsellor in question.

At one UC they spoke about the fact that across some professional bachelor education programmes a ‘Learning Support Centre’ has been created, providing what they have termed ‘generic career guidance’:

Simply, we take it in turns to be on duty there; we are career guidance counsellors from the five health education areas in which we believe there are certain issues that are generic and therefore enable us to provide guidance regardless of the specific health education in question.

At another UC there is an inter-disciplinary campus meeting forum called the Guidance Counsellor Forum; it is a place where guidance counsellors meet regularly and discuss general issues that can lead to working with mutual guidance initiatives. The guidance counsellors still work in their individual subject areas on more specific topics.

One guidance counsellor, who was about to move to a campus, was certain that the ‘collective living’ environment of a campus will lead to more strategic thinking in relation to drawing on various strengths:

But I think that once you get to the campus you will have to formulate the strategies from the practice you have. I think there will be a lot of opportunity for that [...] because one way or other it has to make sense that we have all moved in together; we’ll have to draw on our common strengths.

There appears to be a perception that moving in or placement on a campus naturally appeals to and initiates new methods for creating guidance environments.

4.11. Career learning potential in the development of educational organisation that points towards students’ future career development

Some UCs mentioned specific development initiatives in the way of organising professional bachelor programmes in cooperation with recipient institutions/internship institutions, which has the effect that they constitute a form of career development or career learning for the students. One institution relayed how recruitment companies in the field of Nutrition and Health order surveys amongst the students as part of their programme. In other cases they ask students to prepare proposals for materials that need developed. This provides an opportunity to network with potential future workplaces; it also creates a learning arena different to the teaching and guidance environment at the education institution, which provides the basis for making more experienced career choices. At one institution, a specific project has been established to support this kind of cooperation.

At one UC they are working with a specific education differentiating project within the field of Nursing. A special track can be chosen intended to clarify and qualify in relation to specific career

aims or dreams. It is possible to be attached to a research or development project in practice and gain extra ECTS points for this part of their programme. In this way, academically orientated nursing students can get a taste of research:

[...] they need to be teamed up with a research nurse; so we need to go out and engage someone in practice who has the extra competencies that we don't deliver. We offer guidance but not research; therefore, if that is the area they want to investigate, they need to be attached to a research nurse.

Specific initiatives in the organisation of cooperation between the educational institution and the practical field provide a career learning space that educational and career guidance can be part of.

4.12. Reorganisation: A 'cultural project'

The project's empirical material (interview material, workshop feedback, website study, strategy papers) all points towards the reorganisation of education and career guidance as being a 'cultural project'. The different subject-specific cultures come through in the guidance that is offered in connection with the different education programmes. While there is talk of 'harmonisation', this represents a special challenge because resource allocation, for example, is very different between programmes.

At one UC, where a reorganisation of guidance is taking place, a guidance counsellor stated:

Generally, I think there is support and people try to implement the things we have agreed. But isn't that the way it is with all change? You meet resistance. In addition, we all have very different cultures across the various programmes. In relation to career guidance and also in relation to how people respond to something that has come from the top [...] then it really is a cultural project...

In the material from the workshop (see Section 7) there is a common feature with the recommendations delivered: reorganisation or organisation of career guidance has to be context-sensitive if it is to be a success. If there is a desire, for example, to centralise; the participants believed that some tasks within career guidance are suitable for centralisation while others simply are not.

4.13. Collaboration between Regional Guidance Centres and UCs

In the project's interview material and at the workshop held at the Conference for Guidance Counsellors in Higher Education 2012 the cooperation between UCs and the Regional Guidance Centres was discussed. There were significant differences as to whether the cooperation was experienced as existing or non-existing: as good or not so good. No opinion is given in the material about who might be responsible for the lack of or less than adequate cooperation; rather, there is agreement and awareness that increased cooperation could be for the good. One guidance counsellor expressed it like this:

I really try to think of the Regional Guidance Centre as a collaborator, but I don't really know where they are. They used to be the sort who came out and spoke with us

in our institutions, and so now I think, right, is it me who has to do something ... I think it is a collaboration that ought to be there because I could really use them in guidance in relation to postgraduate level students [...] But it could be an external partner that would be nice to have. A sort of motivator...

Other UCs report good collaboration, where Regional Guidance Centres and UCs cooperate at education fairs and where Regional Guidance Centres' staff visit UC and are informed about new educational initiatives from the departments. A career guidance counsellor who took part in the workshop at the annual Conference for Guidance Counsellors in higher education 2012 expressed the desire from the viewpoint of Regional Guidance Centres for a good collaborative environment with the UCs.

Overall, a desire can be located from both institutions to qualify the cooperation between UC and Regional Guidance Centres at those locations where it is lacking or only exists nominally. The initiative could come from both sides.

5. Best and worst case scenarios

As the interview guide makes clear (see Appendix), all interviews ended by asking the informants about their best case scenarios. How soaring the 'dream scenarios' were varied a lot. Some ended unintentionally as scenarios of terror. Some guidance counsellors felt that they were in the middle of great changes, which they hoped were best case scenarios. Others balked at the announced changes. One guidance counsellor facing centralisation worriedly said:

That's what I am most anxious to see; how much room will be given to ensuring that those we see do not just appear out of thin air but are actually people we have some form of relationship with: some form of decentralisation. However, this requires that we have a sense of belonging where we are located.

The same guidance counsellor expressed this ideally as a combination of cooperation between guidance counsellors, and that educational guidance can still be 'interwoven' with the individual educational programmes. Part of the fear is based on losing the connection to the education, if lecturing is no longer part of the job profile because guidance across disciplines becomes a fulltime job.

At one UC, where the implementation of extensive organisational change is already underway, there was hope that this change is an expression of the best case scenario. It is described as professionalization, with dedicated and engaged fulltime educational guidance counsellors who are innovative and enterprising; people who engage in knowledge sharing and have the ability to establish a guidance environment which is satisfying for students and, as a result, is sought out and utilised to its full potential.

One guidance counsellor simultaneously expressed the best case scenario and also that which threatens it:

I have a best case scenario; I have an ambition to develop a team of guidance counsellors who can think outside their own subject area [...] but I also have a desire

to remain [at the same geographical base]; so, personally I think all the geographical changes have been quite severe. I need a place to be; a geographical basis with a secure framework. I didn't realise how much that meant...

One guidance counsellor expressed concern for the central control of their guidance, and fears for the lack of contact with individual students if the management level do not have knowledge of the target audience and the specific problems students have in the different educational programmes.

One guidance counsellor expressed their best case scenario as being recognised for the work they do; to feel the necessary respect and support to make time and space for guidance. This includes having guidance colleagues to discuss and develop professional practices with.

6. Examples of dilemmas in the interview material

The dilemmas described in this section arose from the analysis of the interview material. There was no explicit questioning regarding dilemma experiences; however, in the analysis, dilemmas were evident in the interviewees' reflections on the remaining questions about their understanding and practice of guidance.

The categories of dilemmas described below are important for several reasons: firstly, dilemmas cannot be solved, but call for tough decisions; secondly, dilemmas that are not brought out into the open may stand in the way of change and development.

Attached to an educational versus fulltime guidance counsellor

Several guidance counsellors expressed concern with keeping abreast of the subject areas they are guidance counsellors for, in relation to the increased centralisation of guidance. This organisation changes the job profile, resulting in guidance counsellors becoming fulltime guidance counsellors and subsequently leaving teaching practice; this is viewed as a dilemma in relation to being able to provide informed guidance, which should be the purpose of reorganisation. One guidance counsellor said:

...it was mission impossible because they wanted to try to separate the daily learning environment and knowledge of the students [...] Confidentiality would be lost with these proposals...

We already encounter the problem that the more we try to turn our energies to the role of educational guidance counsellor and concentrate on that, the less time we have to engage with the educational programmes.

I don't think it is just a good thing. Well, yes, I can see that the professionalising part is good – that if I develop real guidance competencies base that would be a good thing. However, I actually see it as a very positive element for our students that they can come and talk with a career guidance counsellor who has actually led people up to the exams...

Several guidance counsellors have experienced being in a situation where they needed to make professional choices, having to choose between their subjects: between the profession related subject and the guidance. For some employees this is seen as a problematic challenge to their professional identity. The experience becomes one of having to choose a new career direction, and subsequently leaving something else behind, as it is difficult to maintain a feeling of engagement with a subject one no longer actively teaches.

Centralisation and harmonisation of guidance resources

In connection with reorganisation in the direction of centralisation, resource allocation for guidance has been centralised. According to some interviewees, the way in which guidance resources were previously allocated under a decentralised system differed widely. There was also discussion of the different needs for guidance within different study environments and groups. In connection with centralisation, guidance counsellors have experienced a harmonisation of resource allocation. For some, this has been a positive experience, while for others the opposite has been true. One guidance counsellor said:

...the local educational guidance has been founded on local financial resources. In other words, priorities have been made based on the desired extent of educational guidance. This means that while harmonisation can look very appealing, it is in effect a downward harmonisation.

At one institution, a situation was described where resources from the programmes have to be continually sourced for the common core work with educational guidance, which is seen as problematic when not possessing the necessary competencies to manage and distribute:

So I have no money and I have no competencies; I have no hours. Every time we do something it has to be taken from the professional bachelor programmes and the professional bachelor programmes have to contribute...

At another location, the discussion was about how the early stages of centralisation should pave the way for a common strategy and survival of career guidance. There is a fear that career guidance will be subjected to cutbacks, and that organisational changes could help to avoid that scenario. Centralisation is not viewed as a success but rather as a necessary process:

One has to view it as an organisational development and not as something that works well now.

This is a sensible solution just now; it is about ensuring that the guidance counsellor function survives rather than becoming the victim of cutbacks.

Increased expectations for the contribution of guidance to education policy objectives (dropout and retention), together with efficiency improvement

Some of those interviewed expressed that their guidance was at times controlled by education-political objectives concerning dropout and retention, giving them dual roles as both guidance counsellor and sanction enforcer. This is to some extent contrary to their ethics and professional

guidance viewpoint. Trust, security and space for the students' 'construction' are sometimes seen as threatened by the expectations of different parties to the guidance role. One guidance counsellor put it this way:

...you find yourself in a dual role both as sanctioner and empathiser. This can be very problematic if you are not right on the ball and say: "Now I am wearing this hat", as in, now I need to be the one who is strict and say: "This isn't okay", at the same time as also being able to say: "Well, what does this mean for you?"...

The central education policy objectives also have consequences in relation to specific demands to evaluation, and specific actions that might not have been prioritised otherwise. This happens through the special development contract between the ministry and professional education programmes. Some guidance counsellors believe that they will be the ones who have to take responsibility for achieving and initiating the evaluation and documentation of this. At times with the result that local managers experience undue interference, for example in how intro sessions are carried out in the individual programmes. One guidance counsellor said:

There is no doubt that the evaluation has created awareness at the level of individual subject areas about how to conduct intro sessions. And this also results in one of our current dilemmas. As we have mentioned before, suddenly some departmental heads are asking: "Why are you evaluating the intro session?" Well, it is because we have a development contract with the ministry, which determines that the local career guidance counsellor is part of the intro session...

Overall, the material shows that the reorganisation, professionalization, central education policy guidelines and increasing number of people with an invested interest in guidance are sometimes in conflict, which subsequently leaves the guidance counsellors with certain dilemmas. It goes without saying that these dilemmas present a special challenge, as the nature of the dilemma is that there is no immediate good choices to make.

7. Feedback and recommendations from workshop participants at Conference for Guidance Counsellors in Higher Education 2012

As is detailed in the methodology section of the project, a decision was taken to present the project as a workshop at the Conference for Guidance Counsellors in Higher Education, November 2012. The intention was twofold: firstly, to create awareness of the project among guidance counsellors in UCs and other institutions, secondly to incorporate the thoughts and ideas of participants in the empirical material.

The workshop was structured with an initial presentation of the project aims and methods. This was followed up by focussing especially on three types of organisation encountered in the interview study: decentralisation, centralisation and a combination of the two. Possible themes were then presented from the collected interview material (these were only preliminary themes due to the then early stage of the analysis process). Finally, the presentation was focussed on the perception of the guidance task by the interviewees.

On the basis of this presentation, the participants were requested to consider and discuss the following topics in groups:

1. What significance does organisation have for various understandings of guidance?
2. Do you view the development of CMS as part of the guidance task of the UCs?
"Career management competences (CMS) are a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organize self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions" (ELGPN - European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network).
3. A recommendation re the future organisation of guidance in the UCs

We asked the participants to produce a recommendation in continuation of the group discussions. These recommendations were as follows:

- 1) The organisation of guidance in UC should be such that it corresponds with the context. There is a big difference between organising educational guidance in the Danish metropolitan (capital) region and the peripheral regions of the country.
- 2) The quality of the guidance connected to students' study completion must be dependent on a decentralised (education/profession) organisation in the individual programmes
- 3) Educational guidance should be organisationally connected to the programmes but not the administration
- 4) Structure:
 - 'Cross-disciplinary functions' organised centrally

- Education/programme specific tasks organised locally
- 5) Educational guidance organised on the basis of investigations into of students' needs

These recommendations display a particular awareness of a context-sensitive organisation of guidance: partly in relation to the structural level, and partly in relation to the individual (the person seeking guidance).

The recommendations appear to be neither for nor against centralisation or decentralisation. However, the participants thought some things were more suited to centralisation than others. In particular, they would favour the administrative side of educational guidance centralised, as opposed to the educational side of guidance where decentralised organisation was recommended to ensure quality.

The recommendations witness a diversity of perceptions of both the guidance task and the term guidance itself.

8. Networking event for educational and career guidance counsellors in the continuing education field at UCs

An educational guidance counsellor team at a UC took the initiative in autumn 2012 to invite other educational and career guidance counsellors in continuing education from the UCs in Denmark to meet and exchange experiences. The idea was to share knowledge at the concrete level: *“How do you work, and what can we learn from each other”*; at the quality developmental level: *“How to evaluate and develop the quality of educational guidance in the continuing education field; what themes and issues are we concerned with?”*; and, at the education and career guidance professional level: *“How do we understand our role and professional task?”*

Having sought support at management level, the top management level took the initiative to ask the same management level in the various UCs if they would support such an initiative and indicate potential participants. With support from across all UCs, a network list was developed of in all 18 participants. Following this, the group were invited to the first network event with the following agenda:

- Short introduction to the initiative
- Presentation round
- ‘Pondering’: what themes might be interesting to work with today? What themes could be interesting to work with in the long term?
- Collecting, prioritising and putting themes in perspective
- Working with the chosen theme
- Organisation of future cooperation and networking

Participants’ presentation of organisation of guidance in of continuing education

For various reasons, the number of participants was reduced to 8; however, there was a significant indication of interest to attend future events from those who had been unable to participate. The participants presented their guidance organisation in the continuing education field, their background for guidance, and also those issues that concerned them most.

The emerging picture is one of great diversity in the organisation and in the job titles and educational background of the staff responsible for guidance roles. Forms of organisation range from decentralised to combined to centralised organisation. In those UCs adopting a decentralised organisation there appear to be changes underway, just as in some places organisational change has already taken place.

These changes relate partly to increased centralisation, but also to the changes that accompany a move to a campus. It would appear that those with guidance counsellor tasks are often not known as education or career guidance counsellors but rather as consultants or coordinators; nor do they tend to have a professional guidance educational background, relying instead on other professional backgrounds for their guidance practice, such as psychologist, coach etc. There are also examples of guidance counsellors with master’s level education in guidance.

(Possible) network exchange themes

The following suggestions were given for themes that might form the content of future network events:

- Guidance for unemployed
- Guidance for graduates who wish to continue in diploma degree programmes – how do we offer guidance for them?
- The requirement for 2 years of relevant work experience – is this in the official guidelines? Clarification of requirement
- 2 year rule and VPL (Validation of Prior Learning)
- Guidance in connection with VPL
- Credit – procedures, necessary documentation, is it possible to establish a common set of guidelines/guides, how to make it more professional?
- Networking in spite of the competition between the UCs
- Cross-disciplinary quality development
- Content and organisation of the guidance task – interface to other functions
- Career guidance – the term, perceptions etc.
- Professionalization – function or profession?

The suggestions were subsequently prioritised and developed into concrete suggestions:

- Credit – common guide/guidelines + 2 year rule + VPL
- Organisation, functional content, interface + professionalization
- Guidance for unemployed/graduates + career guidance

Cross-disciplinary quality development was formulated as *‘the overall purpose of the network’*.

Following this prioritising, the common theme of ‘perceptions of career guidance’ was discussed, based on the fact that guidance counsellors in continuing education in one UC have the title education and career guidance counsellor.

They reported on the four guidance counsellors’ work with common perceptions, and a jointly created code for guidance was handed out to the participants. This code is available on the UC’s website, with the intention to highlight both internally (in the institution) and externally (in relation to students and recruiters) what is understood in continuing education at the UC by good education and career guidance.

There is no formal strategy description for (career) guidance in continuing education in the represented UCs. There was consensus that it would improve quality and branding of guidance in continuing education if guidance counsellors had the title career guidance counsellor. There was also experience exchange regarding cooperation with professional bachelor education institutions/areas – in many cases this cooperation was lacking.

Finally, the organisation of future cooperation in the network was discussed, with a decision taken to hold two meetings a year alternating among the UCs. The participants wanted the meetings to take the form of a discussion with the organiser free to ask someone from the network to prepare material or a presentation/input.

The initiative and organisational support to establish a network shows a desire to qualify and professionalise educational guidance in continuing education in the UCs. The minutes from the first meeting also indicate a desire among guidance counsellors to draw on each other’s knowledge and

ideas to face head-on the many challenges ahead, such as managing VPL and guidance in connection with it, managing increasingly complex assessments of prior qualifications, meeting career guidance needs, guidance for unemployed including recently educated, and contributing to organisation of the ‘guidance institution’ within the educational institution.

9. Summary and recommendations

Positions in perceptions of the guidance task

Through this study, several different and general positions in the perceptions of the guidance task have appeared. The positions can be outlined in the following way:

Guidance in connection with education and career	↔	Guidance that transgresses education and career
Supporting education completion	↔	Supporting career learning
Decentralised negotiation of the guidance task	↔	Centralised negotiation of the guidance task
Be present for those who have personal problems – individual psychological perspective	↔	Facilitate learning processes, career orientation – collective sociological perspective

It is consistent in the interviews that guidance counsellors embrace their role and/or profession with no small amount of professional and emotional engagement, with reflective and reasoned positions in relation to perceptions of the guidance task. Therefore, this is not a value-based assessment of the positions; however, it is important to be aware of these positions in organisation and strategy development of guidance in the UCs.

Based on the interviews, the following can be generally concluded in relation to guidance in the UCs:

- When it is management who take the initiative in relation to guidance at a UC, there is an overall organisational development and common development of strategy
- Guidance counsellors offer better professional completion guidance when they are familiar with the programmes they offer guidance for
- Guidance education provides common understanding of guidance concepts and tasks
- Guidance education provides a common language
- The completely decentralised organization model does not promote cooperation and strategic development of guidance across programmes
- It makes good sense to centralise some guidance tasks (administrative tasks and general career guidance), while it makes less sense to centralise others (subject-specific guidance)

- There is an increasing awareness of career thinking and career guidance throughout the programme duration, and in professional bachelor education programmes.

These results can be included in initial discussions concerning the most appropriate organisation of guidance and how best to professionalise guidance. The study also reveals a hesitant but increasing focus on career thinking in professional bachelor educations, which can be an important indicator for the ‘retaining’/completion strategies of the UCs and in the positioning of professional bachelor education.

The hope is that the study and the results found within it can contribute to the formative considerations of future educational and career guidance at the UCs. The working hypothesis for this project was that guidance in the UCs should be or can develop to be a ‘career learning environment’ that supports the development of students’ career development and career management competencies. The interviews with guidance counsellors have revealed great potential for as well as current practice directed towards the competencies of those seeking guidance in regard to taking responsibility for their own career development. There is a growing awareness of career-education and development of career management competencies. In the area of profession-specific education, it can be said that the career learning environment is evident in the close connection with practice; therefore, there is an education-organisational foundation for the development of career guidance as a matter of learning in the UCs.

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11. Appendix 1

Interview guide for focus-group interviews

VUE-project: Career guidance in the UCs – understanding, organisation and practice in career centres and in guidance in connection with education in UC

Theme 1: *Understanding and organisation of (career) guidance*

- What do you understand by the term educational guidance?
- What do you understand by the term career guidance?
- How is your understanding and offer of guidance explicated?
- How is guidance organised at your UC/department? (Careers centre, decentralised guidance service, centralised management/management of guidance...)?
- What are the objectives and strategies behind your organisation of guidance?
- What significance does the organisation have for your understanding of guidance?
- Pros and cons of your organisation?

Theme 2: *Cooperation in connection with guidance*

- Who do you see as cooperation partners in connection with the guidance task (internally/externally)?
- Is there cooperation with the receiving professional institutions in connection with guidance – how?
- Is there cooperation between professional bachelor education and continuing education areas?

Theme 3: *Guidance practice and goals for guidance*

- How does guidance take place in practice? What methods are employed in guidance?
- What significance does the organisation of guidance have on your practice of guidance?
- Have purposes/aims for guidance been formulated centrally in the institution?
- Are students' guidance needs and goals investigated? If yes, how? If no, why not? In which way could such an investigation qualify guidance?
- Is guidance offered both before and after a programme? If yes, what form of guidance practice is utilised?
- If yes, does the guidance take place in collaboration with external parties (unemployment insurance funds, job centres, regional guidance centres, youth guidance centres, profession-specific institutions...)?
- How is guidance evaluated where you work?

Theme 4: *Educational background and competencies of guidance counsellors*

- Which professional groups undertake 1) education and 2) career guidance?
- How are they qualified for the task?
- What is your specific educational background in relation to the guidance task?
- What competence development initiatives take place in relation to the guidance task?
- Is guidance seen as a function or a 'profession'? (UC perception/personal perception).

Final: *What would the ideal be?*

What is your best case scenario for educational and career guidance (organisationally and practically)?