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The national further education for companion teachers

Background

The goal of the Collaborative Intensity -project (2008-2011) is to produce a partnership model between higher education and working life. The general partnership model can be transferred and adapted into any collaboration between different parties. The project is opened nationwide for teachers in higher education through the further education for companion teachers (10 ECTS).

The partnership model is developed as an action research in the Espoo-Metropolia pilot. Involved in the pilot are two faculties of the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and the Hospital of Espoo and Recruiting Unit of Espoo City. The model is formed on the principles, structures and processes between partners. Through these the partners produce knowledge for one another and use each other's knowledge in a consulting and equal collaborative relationship.

The further education for teachers is directed towards teachers involved in R&D between educational and working life. The education serves as a method for distributing and implementing the partnership model. The aim here is to describe the principles, the structure, and the process of education.

Collaborative Intensity is a project partially funded by the European Social Fund, which is administered by the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. The executives of the project are the Metropolia University of Applied Sciences and the City of Espoo, which both also partially fund the project.

Methods

The principle for the further education is based on need to develop the relationship between higher education and working life. The developing work argues deeper understanding of partnership and collaboration and new attitude and skills to carry out the work of teachers.

The further education has plural knowledge-base. Collaboration in partnership is actualized in boarder-line between higher education and working life. The teachers in boarder-line need different kind of pedagogical expertise than teachers in classrooms. Teaching in collaboration in boarder-line is bound strongly into the context with physical, social and cultural bindings.

In the further education is concerned to the knowledge about principles, skills, methods, and instruments; 2. The competences needed in the future; and 3. The plots of good collaboration and supportive structures needed in partnership education in future. The results produced in the pilot through the action research is reflected and discussed in teacher education.

The schedule of education is connected to the processes of the pilot and the action research. The further education is occupied for the reflection and implementation for the project of Collaborative Intensity . This is an innovative and longitudinal way to spread the idea and results of the project. Only teachers from Universities of Applied Sciences were interested in the further education. The inclusion criterias were: collaborative relationship with working life and possibility to participate every contact sessions. Because of implementation process it was recommended that at least two teachers from each the University would be present. 15 teachers have participated the education regularly. The realization of the further education is structured from four different parts: 1. Close education (9 times); 2. Project work with working life, and 3. Individual and e-learning. The close education is carried out in two days intensive sessions in Helsinki. Teachers are supported also by 2-3 coaching meetings.

Results

Reflective, critical and argumentation based dialog has achieved an important pedagogical meaning. The dialogues have served also in building the collective understanding about companion teaching. Core principles of partnership such as for example respect and trust has become central for the further teaching program, too. Coaching meetings have been found supportive and needed for to clarify teachers thinking and individual challenges in their collaboration with working life. The process of develop partnership argues self-reflection. Continuing support during the education process has been found needed for to figure out and change traditional attitudes and roles of teachers. The further education has been found as the first real further education after qualification of teacher. The education has opened new viewpoints to companion teaching and collaboration with working life.

Conclusions

Teachers who are working in collaboration with working life need such a further education. The good further education enable peer support and it is serving a forum for to share ideas and experiences concerning collaboration with working life. The good further education is producing new knowledge and understanding about companion teaching.