

TOWARDS ACCESSIBLE HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAREER GUIDANCE

Sari Pohjola

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TOWARDS ACCESSIBLE HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAREER GUIDANCE

What we learned in the project
Competence is the Key

Sari Pohjola 18.10.2018

Supporting Foundation for Children and Youth with Disabilities (Vamlas)

Helsinki, Finland

www.vamlas.fi

Shortly about Vamlas

- Vamlas: Supporting Foundation for children and youth with disabilities, founded in 1889
- Specialized in disability services, rehabilitation, employment and education
- Our goals:
 - Right to accessibility and inclusion
 - Right to paid work
 - Right to independent life and free choices
- Central office & development unit
- Housing service for students with disabilities

Development work

- Projects:
 - **Employment projects:** focus on employers / business networks / job creation
 - **Family projects:** focus on preventive action and inclusion of families with disabled children
- Advocacy work
- Supporting research
- Training of professionals (ie. in job carving)
- Networking with NGO's and families



Other activities

- Scholarships and stipends
- Events for families, professionals, young people
- Summer camps



Inclusive housing service for students

- 21 flats in a regular students residence
- Residents furnish their own flats, cook their food etc.
- Vamlas staff provides help 24/7





Euroopan unioni
Euroopan sosiaalirahasto

Vipuvoimaa

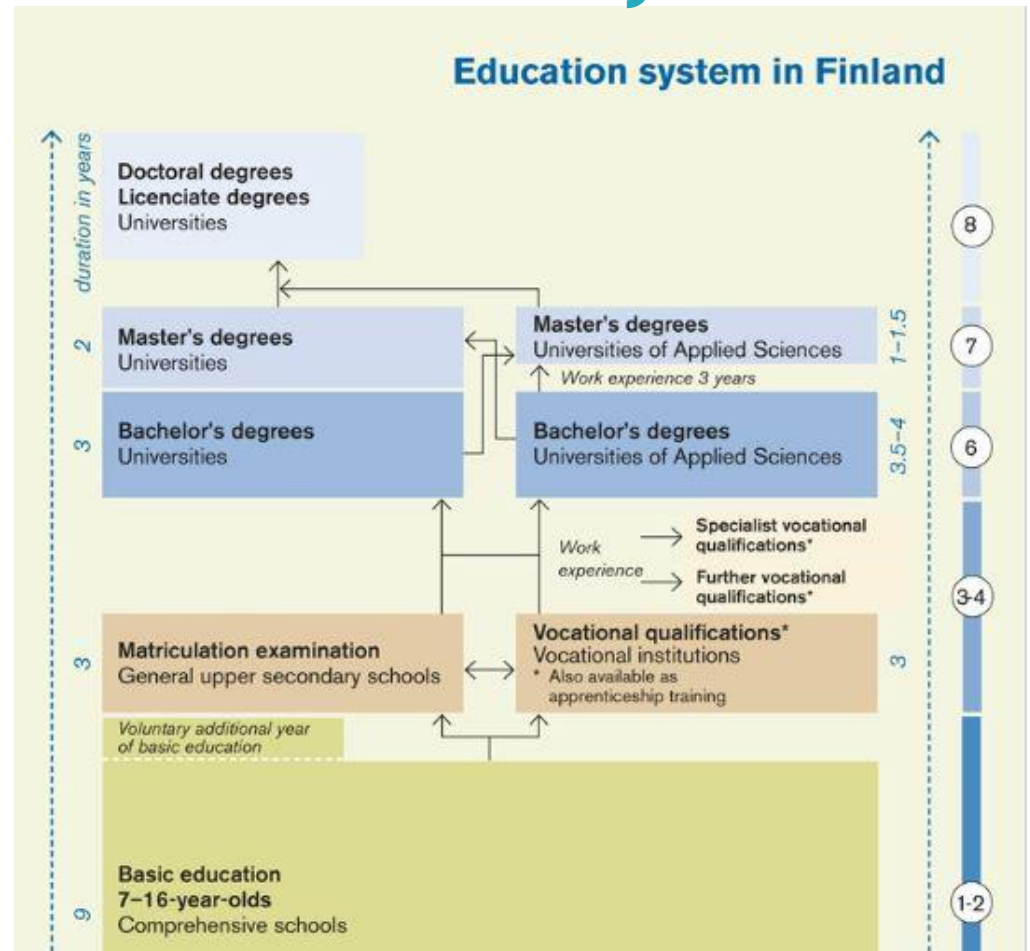
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2014–2020

PROJECT “COMPETENCE IS THE KEY” (ORA)

HAMK
HÄMEEN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
HÄME UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

The Finnish higher education system

- 14 Universities
 - Scientific research
- 25 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS)
 - Respond to labour market needs and conduct R&D which promotes regional development



Brochure on education system:
https://www.oph.fi/download/146428_Finnish_Education_in_a_Nutshell.pdf

Source: <https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/valintojen-tuki/finnish-education-system/>

Background of the ORA-project

- Hardly any common projects among disability organisations & universities
- Higher education increases employment opportunities for people with disabilities, BUT...
- Students with disabilities have difficulty finding traineeship placements & jobs
- HAMK University of Applied Sciences had interest in developing accessibility and guidance
- Survey among guidance counsellors at HAMK ->
 - More knowledge needed
 - 6% of students have special needs /disabilities

Students with disabilities in Finnish universities

- No records of students with disabilities
 - Special arrangements for studies -> some numbers
- 20% of university students report having disabilities, special needs or chronic illnesses, 7% more severe (OTUS Student Barometer survey 2016)
- Mental health issues are most common
 - Amount of students with diagnosed depression and anxiety disorders has almost tripled since 2000 (Student Health Survey 2016)
 - 8% report having ADD/ADHD, learning difficulty, autism
- Amount of students with special needs increases
 - > new skills are needed

ORA project goals and methods

1. Improve the students' career planning skills -> career workshops & individual guidance
2. Develop new guidance practises in HAMK -> review the guidance model
3. Increase the HAMK staff's competences in accessibility & recoqnising special needs -> staff training & seminars
4. Bring expertise of the disability organisations to the university -> training, "experience experts"
5. Increase the employers' readiness to offer traineeships and jobs for students with disabilities -> information sharing & career events

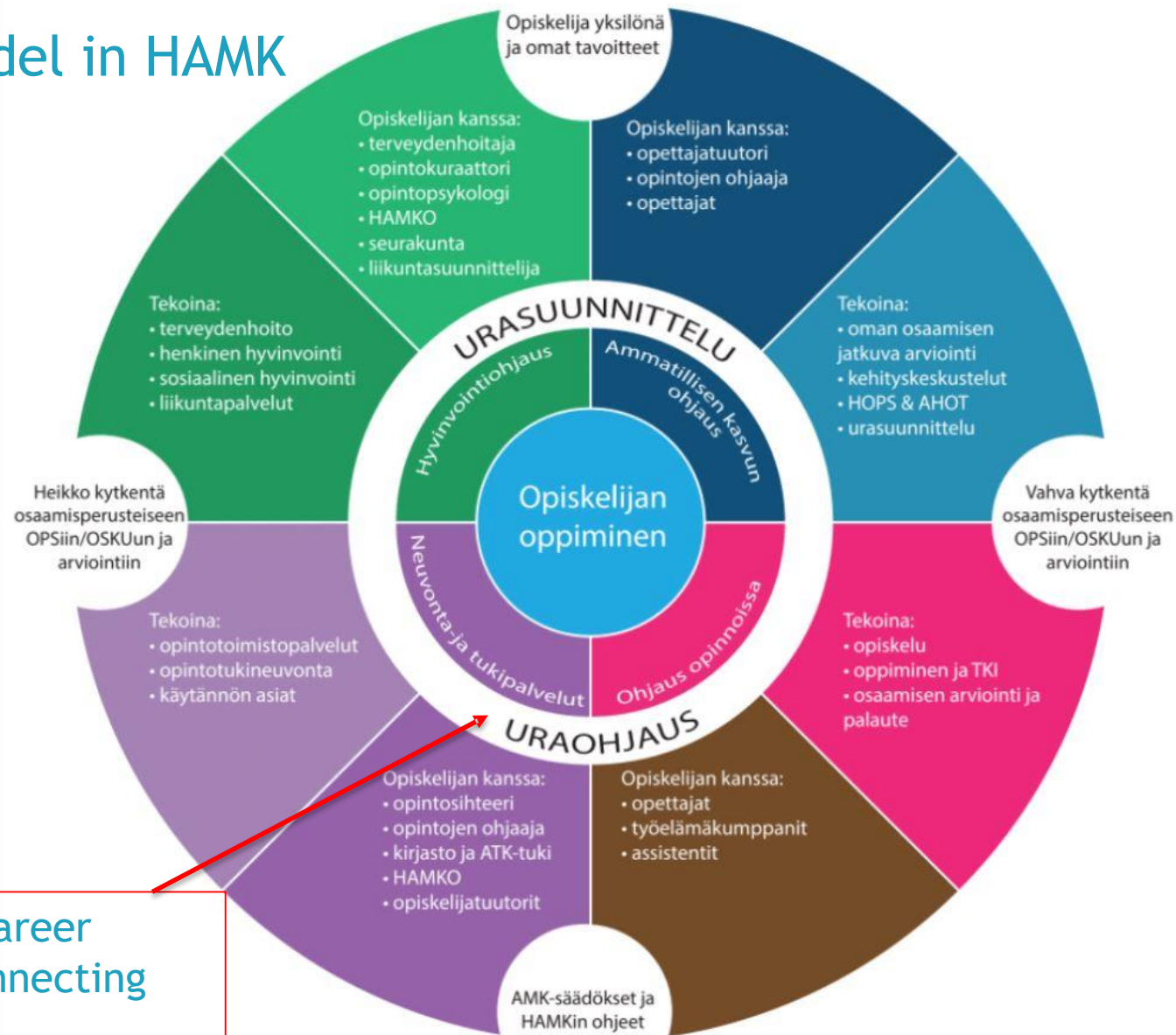
The guidance model in HAMK

4 main areas:

1. Guidance for personal well being
2. Guidance for professional growth
3. Study guidance
4. Advisory and support services

All teachers and staff provide guidance, not only guidance staff

Result of the project: Career guidance added as a connecting circle to the model



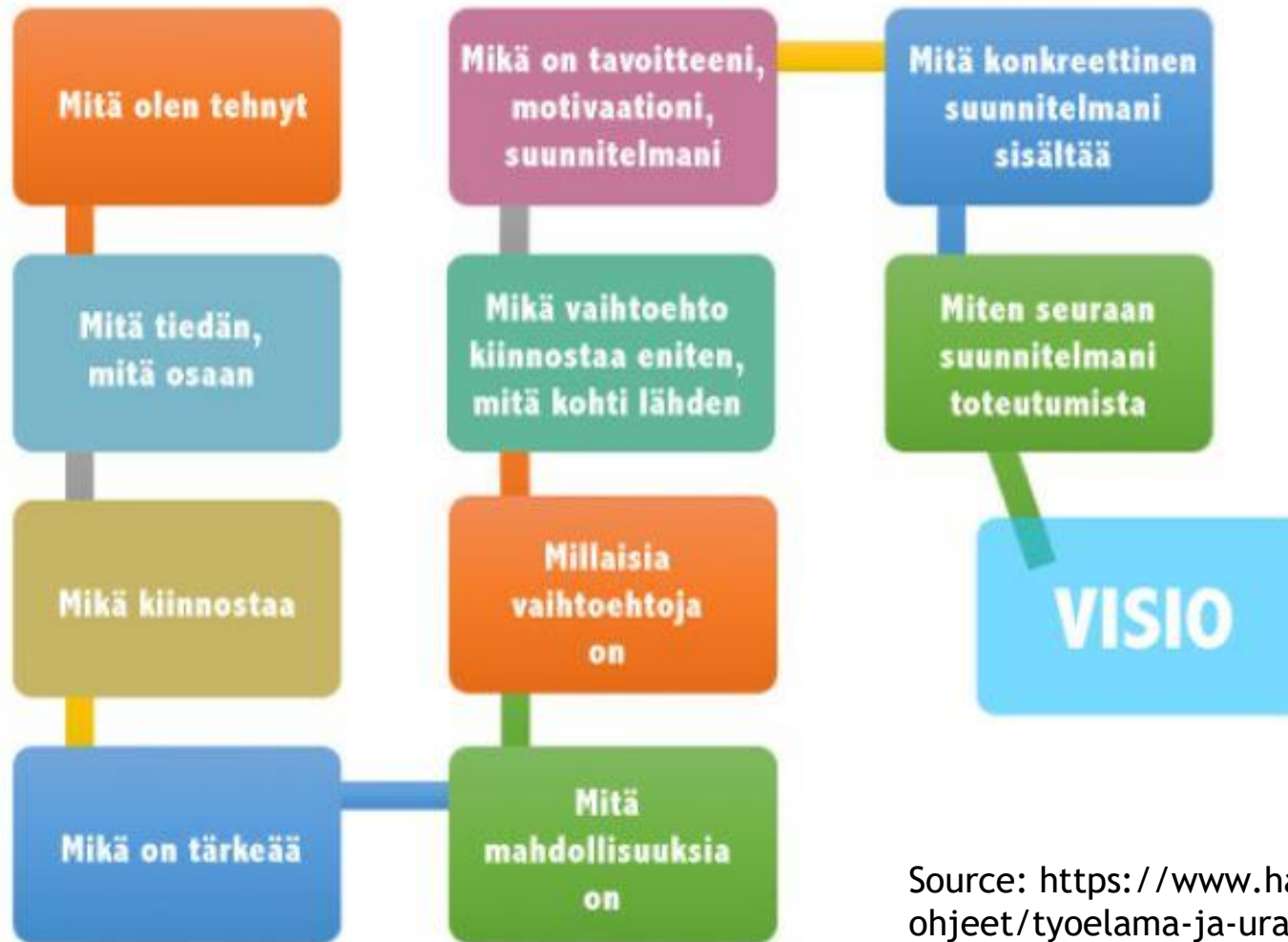
Career workshops

- Both online sessions and workshops
- Voluntary attendance, targeted especially for students with disabilities
- **Content:** recognising skills and strengths, motivation, interests values & career focus, skills gained from studies, cv & cover letter, interview practise, video cv, LinkedIn cv, how to find and apply for hidden jobs.
- Individual guidance sessions by project counsellor

After the project:

- Career workshops were continued as voluntary studies
- Career materials for students were placed on uni website
- Career workshop toolkit for university staff

Career planning path



Source: <https://www.hamk.fi/opiskelijan-ohjeet/tyoelama-ja-urasuunnittelu/>

Why are career workshops important 1

- In many UAS career guidance is embedded in studies, there is no separate unit or courses
 - becomes invisible to students
 - it is not clear anymore who has the responsibility for career guidance
- Guidance skills vary greatly among uni teachers (research)
- Even guidance counsellors need more career guidance skills and methods
- Students had not taken time to analyze, what skills are gained from their degree

Why are career workshops important 2

- Career guidance is important in all stages of studies, beginning, middle and end
- Peer support works well
- Increases trust in employment prospects -> increases study motivation
- Sends message "we care where you go after graduation"
- Many students need practical "hands on" support in jobseeking
 - Students with disabilities often need individual guidance

Some key points and recommendations 1

- There is a lot to improve in accessibility
- University staff needs more knowledge:
 - how disabilities and special needs affect studies and employment
 - how to tailor study methods
- Good practises:
 - Full time Accessibility Advisor
 - Training by ”experience experts”

How to provide support without labeling?

Some key points and recommendations 2

- Students with disabilities would benefit from extra support in finding employment
 - Commitment and coordination of the staff
- Employers need more information and experiences on diversity in the workplace



Everyone needs quality career guidance

- Recognising relevant skills and planning one's career is important for everyone in the constantly changing world of employment, even more so for students with special needs and disabilities.
- Starting point in career guidance should always be individual skills, interests and dreams, not prejudice and ideas of what kind of study fields and jobs suit people with disabilities.

My article

<https://unlimited.hamk.fi/ammattillinen-osaaminen-ja-opetus/towards-accessible-higher-education/>

Tervetuloa

Unikin osaamisen löytöretkelle!



Thank you!

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