



Why interaction matters in guidance for social justice



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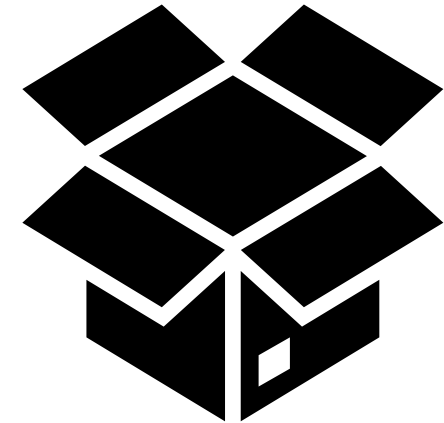
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- Guidance practices are mediated by various layers of social activity
 - Societal power structures
 - Policies, services and resources
 - Cultural norms, meanings, stories and repertoires
 - Work processes, practices and tools
 - Language as multimodal communication
 - Interactional practices

- Any guidance theory, model or ideal will have influence only when it takes shape in interactional practice
- If we intend to change guidance definitions, rethink its goals or combat for more just or sustainable functions for guidance in society and in our globe, but we leave interactional practices intact, we may end up paying only lip service to our new ideals!
- We know from interaction research that guidance and counselling practices have been shown to contain various tensions and conflicts between theory and practice; or between ideals and practice

- Guidance activity is a meeting point for various interests, some of which are not overtly addressed in encounters
- We need methodologies that are useful in detecting these various interests (people cannot always report them)
- **Without the micro level of interaction, we have a black box problem in guidance for social justice**
- **Societal phenomena are made alive in interaction – we detect the “macro” in the “micro”**



- Over the last two decades, the **social justice movement** has strengthened considerably, particularly in the field of educational and career guidance
- It emphasizes the criticism of guidance being used as a tool and space for neoliberal education policies & resulting in reproducing inequalities.
- the social justice movement seeks to actively build an alternative, imagine a different future, and make it a reality
- Guidance is viewed as a **potentially emancipatory practice. How is it translated to interactional practice?**

(Hooley et al., 2018, 2019)

- Guidance activity should be based on both the “good of the individual” and the “common good”
(Vehviläinen & Souto, 2021)
- Both “internal” (psychological) and “external” (societal) obstacles or hindrances to the client’s agency need to be identified and addressed
(Leiman, 2015)
- Guidance avoids hopelessness /lack of vision, while also refusing to “psychologize” societal problems
(Korhonen & Komulainen, 2021)
- The purpose of guidance is not only to equip individuals for “survival” or even “fulfillment”, but also to support the collective action that groups, teams, and networks undertake to shape their circumstances and our life on this planet. Guidance is about acting together, not just about setting individuals “on the right track”
(Hooley et al., 2018, 2019)
- The subject in guidance activity is seen in the light of his/her individual life history, as well as in his/her societal context and circumstances, i.e. “horizon for action”
(Hodkinson & Sparkes 1997; Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2015; Toiviainen, 2022)
- Guidance practitioners must not only observe and hear out the opinions, preferences, emotions, and concerns of their clients but also consider their social situations and the world in which they live. **Given this, guidance is a site and a process of learning for all its participants.**

Conversation analysis - critical potential?

- CA - a theoretical approach and methodology to study recorded multimodal interactional practices; multimodal interaction **as an order on its own right** (Sidnell & Stivers, 2012)
- CA investigates recordings of **naturally occurring interactions** to uncover the practices through which social actions are constructed by the participants in their **turn-by-turn activities** (Schegloff, 2007).
- The analysis “takes apart” what the participants have put together: **the sequentially organized activities** that accomplish encounters such as guidance
- CA studies institutional activities of clients and professionals, but **retains a distance** from professional theories about interaction. However, **CA results are applicable to practice.**

The key orientations in guidance interaction

Problem- solving orientation

- Main interest is to identify clients' **problems and solve them** using expert knowledge
- Main tools: client's tellings of their troubles, interviewing, professional's advice, instructions and recommendations

Inquiry orientation

- Main interest is to **understand**. To gain a richer, more analytic and diverse understanding of the issue at-hand
- The nature of the problem is not taken for granted; deeper understanding is a value in itself
- Main tools: Client's narration, professional's interpretative summaries and comments

Supportive orientation

- Main interest is to "**face the situation as it is**". To convey attention, interest, emotional availability. To tune into what the client has to say and experiences
- To facilitate the shared situation and joint attention
- Main tools: Nonverbal and verbal signs of attentiveness, concentration, presence, and affiliation; also meta-talk

How guidance may reproduce social inequalities via micropractices

- The busy tempo of daily work: no time to stop, **not being present** → resorting to unhelpful routines and stereotypical thinking
- **Overemphasis on the problem-solving orientation:** the professional selectively focusses on issues that are "fixable" and in their own professional comfort zone; rushes to solve "typical problems"; becoming cynical about "difficult clients"
- The culturally biased **premises of guidance**
 - For instance: individualism, "find your true self"; "It needs to be an autonomous choice -- or otherwise I cannot hear you"
- The **language, spaces and "genres"** of guidance may exclude clients
 - the office setting and spatial arrangements
 - need to talk extensively about self
- **Societal "blind spots":** guidance professionals are not aware or not ready or are afraid to face the realities of some clients/pupils/students
- **Shallow client-centeredness:** "if they do not mention it, it does not exist to us"
 - For instance the experience of racism at school or in work placements

Practices of guidance interaction that foster its emancipatory potentials

- Calm and respecting manner, **concentration** and friendliness
- **Not more minutes but rethinking the dynamics of the encounter:** Organising the encounter so as to provide space for supportive and inquiry orientation prior to any problem-solving
- *Meta talk* about guidance and the shared activity – **not to assume shared understanding but building it mutually**
 - Understanding how to build alliance in guidance
 - Invitation to collaboration
- **Creative use of language, spaces and "genres"**
 - Out of the office? Using multimodal interaction in diverse ways? Moving around? Parallel activities? "Not talking but doing"?

(Vehviläinen & Souto 2021; Vehviläinen 2021; Sotkasiira & Souto 2022)

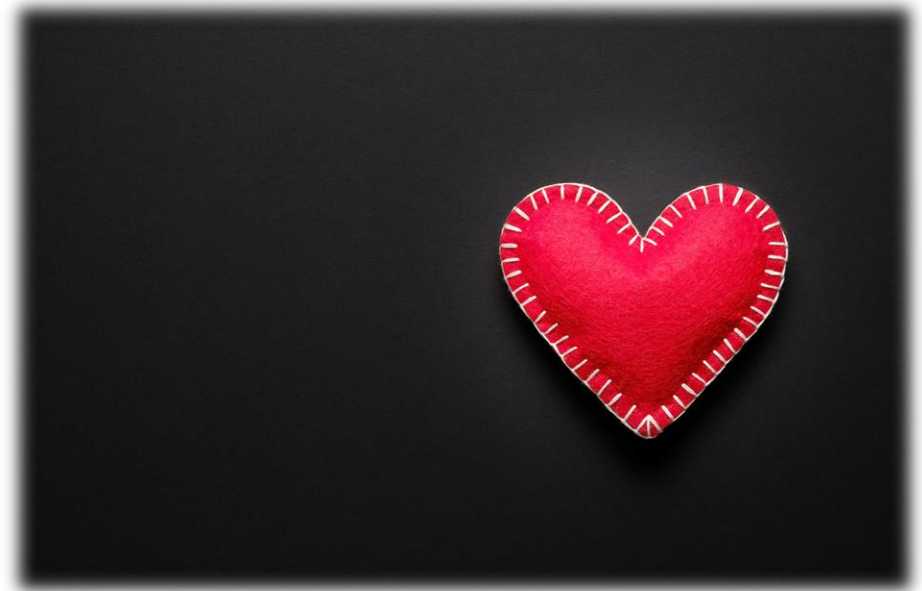
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- **Sensitively making space for difficult topics**
 - at schools this is often a matter of group and classroom activities and local cultures
- **Peer interaction (and various other collective constellations) as spaces for exploration** of societal issues and positions
 - How guidance professionals build group spaces and foster safe spaces
 - School class or training group as a relevant social space
 - Various constellations
- Guidance professionals **learn about societal inequalities** and support each other in critical (self)exploration
- Learning from each other – not “giving guidance” but co-engaging with the world around us and within us

To summarize

- Socially just guidance is about creating and re-creating spaces of dialogue and "meetings of minds"
 - **Unpacking unhelpful routines that we already have plenty of research about!**
→ **many training possibilities**
 - Along with theorizing, we need to experiment and practice new ways of working
 - Mutual learning - learn from the clients
 - Learn from the activists!
- (Sotkasiira & Souto 2022)
- Guidance professionals' readiness to explore outside the professional comfort zone
 - Collegial support among guidance professionals necessary for this! **Professionals also need safe spaces for learning**

- Thank you for your attention – let us discuss!



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