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Orientations and Dilemmas of Guidance. An Attempt at Synthesis

In this article, I describe a model of guidance and highlight constitutive features that appear in all types of guidance. I also discuss recurrent dilemmas of guidance practice that take place across contexts and suggest solutions for them, based on my research into various guidance interactions.

Keywords: guidance, agency, guidance interaction, counselling interaction, dilemmas od guidance

Guidance is a set of institutional, collaborative activities which foster processes – of learning, growth, work, study, career or other pursuits, and everyday life – that are meaningful to the client(s). This fostering should be done in ways that strengthen the participants' agency and participatory sense. The focal processes are viewed as biographical, social, and societal**.** This is the generic model of guidance activity (Vehviläinen, 2014a). The *objects* of guidance activity (e.g. the topics or the foci of attention) can concern various situations, paths, aspirations, problems, conflicts, or challenges in life. Guidance is never the only – or even main –force shaping these processes. It is rather a space for inquiry into how these processes are constructed and negotiated in the clients' lives.

Multifaceted guidance: A family of practices

Counselling and guidance encounters – or institutional situations and encounters that share their key elements – are ubiquitous in Western societies, and guidance competencies are used in various workplaces and fields of life. The need for guidance as the systematic support of processes of change, learning, orientation, and life design has increased with the acceleration of changes in work life and the increasing urgency of constant learning at work. However, we also apply guidance-like skills and approaches when we raise our children and engage in our relationships in our daily lives as couples, families, neighbours, and citizens. For this reason, guidance is sometimes dismissed as redundant or "smothering": "Do we really need an expert for this?" "I've never got any counselling in my life, and I'm getting on just fine!" Indeed, guidance

has become an institutionalized form of intervention in a range of fields that have not been institutionalized for very long, such as career, identity work, maintaining workability, learning at work, integration into a new society after migration, etc.

Guidance is provided within various institutions in society. Many developmental challenges within the field of guidance arise from frictions and changes in these institutions. The expansion of guidance has been connected to neoliberalism and the individualism of postmodern Western society. There are two somewhat conflicting ways of making this connection. A more optimistic take on guidance is that guidance is a way of helping people navigate transitions and discontinuities, adapt, and rethink their lives and selves (Savickas et al., 2009). According to the other – more critical – view, guidance epitomizes the central form of governance in postmodern society: individual self-control, driven by the need for self-actualization and the constant re-shaping of the individual self as a "project. " Neoliberal economic and education policies utilize self-development and emphasis on competence as ways to manage individuals. Therefore, guidance has also been interpreted as a form of governance that works to engage individuals with the competitive values of society and to make individuals fully accountable for their problems. (Ecclestone & Brunila, 2015; Aaltonen et al., 2017).

While guidance is a profession, it is not one of the old, strong professions, such as education, medicine, and law. Consequently, the societal accountability of guidance is not as pronounced. The public may not yet widely recognize what good and skilful guidance is, or what constitutes a failure in guidance. However, this is likely to change as guidance professions are becoming familiar and the professionalism of guidance is strengthening. In fact, career guidance provided by primary and secondary education is currently under critical discussion in Finland, not only in research but also in media debates. For example, guidance practices have been shown to maintain gender segregation in vocational and career choices. Furthermore, the experience of the youth with immigrant background has shown that guidance may contribute tothe reproductionof social inequalities (Souto, 2020; Vehviläinen & Souto, 2021). At the same time, there is evidence that guidance can have a significant empowering effect on individuals' life course and learning processes (e.g. Hooley, 2014).

Guidance is not directly structured by any single discipline[1], and research findings on guidance are still scarce, especially in the Finnish context (but see e.g. Vuori et al., 2009; Koivisto, 2010 Koivu, 2013; Hooley, 2014). In the structures of research policies and activities, such as funding, publishing, and disciplinary divisions, guidance is concealed within other disciplines. The study of guidance is mostly of interest to those who are themselves guidance professionals.

[1] This is the disciplinary model aspired to by counsellogy as a study of the ways in which people cope by advising themselves, seeking advice, and providing advice to others, of the concomitantly produced relations, interactions, processes, facts, and phenomena, and of their micro-, meso-, and macro-contexts (from the Editors).

If the professional content of guidance has been relatively unclear to the public and policymakers, it may have been unclear for the practitioners in the field as well. There are conflicts and tensions between theory and practice (Vehviläinen, 2001b; Weiste et al., 2021). If the purpose of an activity is vague or implicit, it is also easily susceptible to hidden agendas. This, in fact was my core interest when I decided to start doing research on guidance. My major questions were: What is guidance and what ends does it serve?

The power of guidance

In sociological studies, guidance is often characterized as a survival strategy for people in the competitive society of the postmodern era, where everyone must construct their own path and compete in various markets for material, social, and cultural capital (Giddens, 1991). However, guidance can also be seen as a pedagogical relationship, an activity whereby people help each other in difficult situations and try to understand the world around them, to decide what should be done, and how to live. This kind of activity is ancient and not specific to postmodern life. Guidance may also have a potential for emancipation. With the support of others, people can shape their lives, grow as humans, cope with problems, criticize the conditions and forces that have shaped their lives, and participate in social activities in hope of finding a good life and a better world (Freire, 2017). Just as schooling can be viewed *both* as an institution that wields power and reproduces inequality *and* as a pathway to a better and more equal world, so can guidance acquire both the controlling and the emancipating content. The key questions are how guidance is carried out and realized, and what conceptions help us construct the critical praxis of guidance.

Over the last two decades, the so-called social justice movement has strengthened considerably (Hooley et al., 2018, 2019), particularly in the field of educational and career guidance. It poignantly emphasizes the risk of guidance being used as a tool of neoliberal education policy to reproduce inequalities. Furthermore, the social justice movement seeks to actively build an alternative, imagine a different future, and make it a reality.

Anne-Mari Souto and I have interpreted the emancipatory possibilities of guidance, especially in the context of primary and secondary school guidance for the youth with migrant backgrounds (Vehviläinen & Souto, 2021). Guidance activity should be based on both the "good of the individual" and the "common good." Consequently, both "internal" (psychological) and "external" (societal) obstacles or hindrances to the client's agency need to be identified and addressed (Leiman, 2015). In this way, guidance avoids hopelessness and the 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, but also to support the collective action that groups, teams, and networks undertake to shape their

circumstances. Guidance is about acting together, not just about setting individuals "on the right track" (see Hooley et al., 2018, 2019).

The subject in guidance activity is seen in the light of his/her individual life history, as well asin his/her societal context and circumstances (Vanhalakka-Ruoho, 2015; Toiviainen, 2019). Therefore, 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.

Definition of guidance: Collaboration, processes, agency

Below, I define guidance as a family of professional guidance practices. Of course, it would be possible to theorize each subtype separately and try to delineate the differences between them, but in my own research I have focused on the general constituents of guidance practices. I have aimed to distinguish guidance from other professional practices. In this way, I have also been able to identify guidance and its cognate practices wherever they appear, despite variations in terminology (guidance, counselling, mentoring, supervision, etc.). My definition of guidance and counselling is generic, and it seeks to capture what is common to all guidance activities, or this family of practices. I define guidance as

> an institutional and collaborative activity that fosters meaningful processes of individuals and groups in ways that strengthen their agency and participatory sense. These processes may be learning, growth, developmental, work and life design processes. Agency is perceived as a relationship between individuals and society, and it is viewed intersectionally (i.e. considering various mechanisms of social inequality; see Crenshaw, 1989).(Vehviläinen, 2014a; Vehviläinen & Souto, 2021).

Institutionality refers to the institutional location and anchoring of guidance (school, work life, leisure, career transition, integration, health care, rehabilitation, employment, etc.) and to the professional nature of guidance work and interventions. Institutionality also refers to conceptual tools, norms, rules, entitlements, and divisions of labour within and across activity systems. Besides, it also covers the boundaries and mediated spaces between individual lives and institutions.

Guidance activities are focused on key processes that should be meaningful and relevant to the client, nested in their lives, and owned by them. In some situations, such as guidance in learning settings, the guidance process involves a lot of pre-determined phases and proactive steps, guided by the curriculum and learning aims. However, the process sometimes involves less predictable steps and must then be "discovered" gradually and via negotiation. This is the case, for example, in work supervision, career guidance, and mentoring.

Despite this, the foci of guidance work in all guidance situations are always intertwined with clients' personal histories and meanings. Clients are the owners of the focal process of guidance.

The emphasis on the process means that the work and attention of guidance professionals are not directed solely to the desired results or outcomes of guidance activity. The focus is also on process elements, such as motivation, prior knowledge and attitudes, values, re-interpretations of goals, and difficulties in the process. When attention is shifted from outcomes alone to the process in its entirety, guidance activity can be influenced in more diverse ways and fitted to respective stages of the process.

Guidance is, or should be, founded on collaboration. The partnership on which it is based is also called "alliance" (Safran et al., 2007). If guidance is not successful, this is often because its collaborative nature has not been taken seriously. The more carefully and transparently the relationship is built, the easier it will be to deal with problems that may arise on the way. It is always possible to return to what has been agreed on and committed to together.

The purpose of guidance is to strengthen the client's agency (Vehviläinen, 2014a; Vehviläinen & Souto, 2021). The term agency refers to the client's subjectivity and to the zone of the client's potential activity. This means the person's active, engaged, creative, and responsible relationship within a particular social context (Edwards, 2007; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Vehviläinen & Souto, 2021). The strengthening of a person's agency is expressed in the expansion of his/her scope of action, which often affects the activities of others as well.

Guidance aims to systematically support agentic participation in a relevant social context (such as school, work, family life, etc.) and, simultaneously, in a biographical context. The movement towards stronger agency may manifest in changes in *individual dispositions* (abilities, interests, motivation, self-efficacy, resilience, skills, and understanding); *social participation* via authorship, responsibility, and creativity; and *critical awareness*, activity, and activism. These changes are unique to individuals and their situations, but they are not treated as individualistic phenomena. Guidance is fundamentally a relationship of pedagogical nature. The participants of this relationship seek to understand what is true about the world and themselves as part of it by asking how they have been shaped by the world and how the world is shaped by them and others. For this reason, guidance emphatically aims to deepen the *participatory sense* (Alhanen, 2019) of all the parties to the guidance alliance.

The effort to strengthen the client's agency will influence the practices and methods used in guidance. Since the possibilities of and obstacles to agency are unique, guidance interventions must also be tailored to individual situations. Agency is strengthened through partnership with a negotiated course of action, a shared goal, transparency in terms of policies, interests and objectives, and the possibility of jointly assessing the guidance process along the way (Vehviläinen, 2014a).

Figure 1 shows the dimensions of agency identified in the pedagogical research literature. Changes in agency are embedded in individual dispositions, such as interests, motivations, knowledge, understanding, competencies, and attitudes. Changes in agency also manifest in authorship, creativity, and participation in communities, in one's ability to rely on others and share knowledge. A change in agency may also entail a change in activity, relationships, positioning, and one's critical stance towards one's environment or confronting oppressive circumstances. Becoming more agentic is intertwined with one's core values, greater self-awareness, and capacity for more complex observation directed both "inwards" and "outwards." Guidance seeks to identify the central obstacles to the client's agency. As these obstacles can be both internal and external, guidance is characterized by a constant movement between the individual and the societal perspectives.

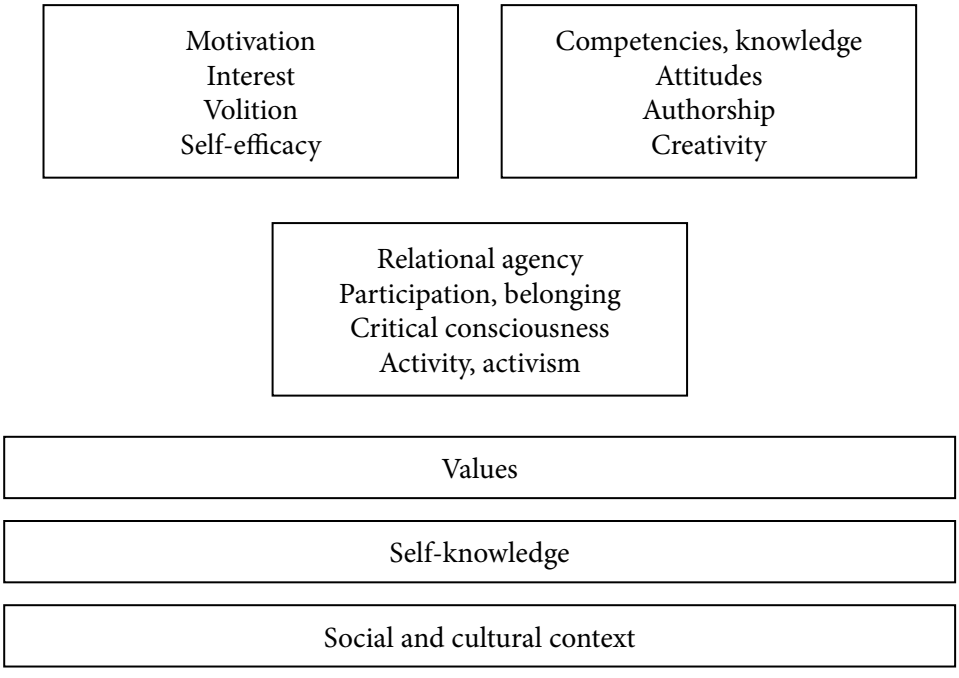

Figure 1. Elements of agency

According to philosopher Kai Alhanen, the participatory sense refers to individuals' ability to view themselves as part of and shaped by social and natural environments, and to their willingness to consider and take responsibility for their own influence on them (Alhanen, 2019). In guidance, clients may, for instance, examine how their perceptions of certain values (for example, wellbeing and prosperity) and social institutions (such as gender and ethnicity) have formed their understandings of what is possible for them. Also, guidance practitioners may become sensitive

to what position they themselves take to these values and social institutions in their actions and ways of speaking.

What happens in guidance interactions?

Guidance is carried out in and through interaction, and its emancipatory possibilities are connected to skilled interactional practices. When I began to study guidance interactions in the 1990s, I expected that interactional practices and patterns of talk in guidance would resemble those of psychotherapeutic interactions. Indeed, guidance approaches emphasized, and continue to emphasize, that guidance professionals or counsellors are neither teachers nor advisers. However, I was surprised to find out that advice-giving and instructions based on expert knowledge recurred in guidance interactions. In fact, this continues to be the case. Later, I studied interaction in both guidance and psychotherapeutic settings. In all these types of encounters, it is the job of the professionals to listen to their clients' experiences with respect and attention and to focus on and become involved in a professional way in the handling of their case. How do these encounters differ? How do we recognize guidance?

In terms of interactional practices, service encounters are structured around the expectation that clients seek expert solutions to their problems. The professional has the right and obligation to solve the problem through recommendations, information, and advice. It is the clients' job to seek help and to talk about their understanding of the problem in such a way that the professional can work on it. In therapeutic encounters, the clients' descriptions of their problem become an object of joint work and exploration. The professional's contributions build and focalize this interpretive work, while also teaching the client to examine his/her experience in accordance with the psychotherapeutic approach being applied. Thus, the main tools for therapeutic encounters are the client's extensive and self-reflective descriptions of his/her experience, and the professional's mirroring and interpretive comments on them.

The "trademark" of guidance is that it combines the practices of the other two types. The goal is, on the one hand, to help clients explore and interpret their experiences and situations and, on the other hand, to apply professional knowledge and seek possible solutions. Because of this, both problem-solving and explorative talk can be found in guidance encounters. In my view, this is the reason why guidance professionals often describe guidance as demanding. They must constantly balance and negotiate these two orientations. Indeed, they need to locally decide and negotiate when to offer advice and when to abstain from it (Vehviläinen & Löfström, 2016; Vehviläinen, 2003).

Initially, I set out to study guidance interaction in the late 1990s because guidance interaction practices appeared vague and implicit. Theories of guidance described it as a partnership or "negotiation", but there were very few concrete

descriptions of how this would be carried out in practice, on the level of interaction. It was also my experience that the practice and theory of guidance ran remotely apart. A wide range of hidden agendas and interests were played out through guidance encounters. Therefore, looking at guidance at the micro level of interaction appeared fruitful. I sought to provide basic research descriptions of the core interactional phenomena of guidance by using conversation analysis (Vehviläinen, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2001b). Later, I developed a generic model of guidance activity to support and contextualize these findings (Vehviläinen, 2014a).

Orientations in guidance interaction

When teaching guidance interaction and methods of guidance, I describe the core elements of guidance encounters in ways that are concise and flexibly applicable to daily work. My solution is based on my research on guidance interaction in various contexts: in career guidance within labour market training contexts (Vehviläinen, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2003) and in the supervision of MA theses and PhD dissertations (Vehviläinen, 2009a, 2009b, 2012). Subsequently, I have also studied study psychological consultations (Vehviläinen & Svinhufvud, 2018), work supervision (Vehviläinen, 2014c), and guidance for workability and wellbeing (Tiitinen et al., 2018; Weiste et al., 2018). In various training courses and workshops, I have found that guidance practitioners recognize these core elements as part of their daily work.

In my *Guide to Guidance* (Vehviläinen, 2014a), I discuss four orientations that recur in various guidance settings: a problem-solving orientation, an inquiry orientation, a supportive orientation, and an instructive orientation. By the latter, I mean organizing guidance interventions as a planned path for systematic learning purposes. I will take a closer look at the other three orientations below. They occur in both dyadic and group guidance interactions. Guidance orientations are shown in Figure 2.

The problem-solving orientation was the first one I came across when researching guidance interaction in the 1990s and early 2000s. Advice sequences occurred in my data so frequently that advice looked like the main interactional "tool" of guidance professionals (Vehviläinen, 2001a, 2001b). This was very much against the prevailing guidance ideology in career guidance in the 1990s. I had to deal with this discrepancy in my ensuing training activities and further research. Surprisingly enough, I still find myself dealing with it. Guidance approaches maintain that guidance is primarily not about advising clients or suggesting solutions for their problems. At the same time, new data sets and discussions in the field reveal that advising continues to be the key tool of guidance professionals, even when they wish otherwise.

Orientations of guidance interaction		
Problem-solving orientation	**Inquiry orientation**	**Supportive orientation**
Main orientation is to identify the client's problems and solve them using expert knowledge Problems are barriers and they need to be removed **Main tool: client's accounts of problems, professional's advice, instruction, and recommendations**	Main orientation 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 tool: Client's narration, professional's interpretive summaries and comments**	Main orientation is to face the situation "as it is" Professional offers attention, interest, emotional availability, and tunes into what the client has to say Professional facilitates focusing on the shared situation and task **Main tool: Nonverbal and verbal signs of attention, focus, presence, affiliation, and meta-talk**

Figure 2. Orientations of guidance interaction

Alongside the dilemmas of guidance and advice, another central theme has surfaced in relation to what I call the *supportive orientation* in guidance, meaning the professional way of creating the physical and mental space that promotes collaboration, the attentive reception of what the client wants to tell, and the expression of presence, compassion, and "being there." This orientation has become an important focus in training. The choice of the supportive orientation involves difficult emotions on the part of the professionals. They may feel they are not skilled in empathy or in handling their clients' anxiety (Souto & Vehviläinen, 2019; Souto, 2020; Vehviläinen & Souto, 2021). Finally, the *inquiry orientation* is typical of psychotherapeutic settings (Peräkylä et al. 2008). My central message has been that, in guidance settings, this orientation is often unsystematic and under-used and can thus be overshadowed by the problem-solving orientation.

The problem-solving orientation

Guidance interaction is often governed by a pattern of talk where the material narrated by the client is "screened" for potential problems. When problems are expressed or identified, the guidance professional hastily responds to them by

providing solutions. Also, clients themselves often request advice. They may also express complaints and worries about their situation. Typically, these actions elicit the professional's advice and recommendations. Advice may also be initiated by professionals as they may actively identify problems and offer solutions. (Vehviläinen, 2009a.)

The problem-solving orientation can be found in multiple guidance contexts (e.g. Vehviläinen, 2009b, 2012). Invariably, guidance practitioners recognize it as a key practice. In training situations, I often hear professionals admit that despite constant worry that they should not advise so much, they "slip into it" in their hurried daily work. Why is the problem-solving orientation so dominant?

Firstly, being "solution-focused" may be perceived as the most direct path to the desired change. It is believed that the most crucial aspect in bringing about change is to find a practical solution, informed by expert knowledge, without delay. The relationship between human learning and problem-solving is perhaps another explanation. In any case, learning has often been modelled as a problem-solving endeavour (Dewey, 2019; Bereiter, 2002; Engeström, 2004). Our understanding of expertise is typically founded on the idea of a particular field of declarative knowledge (i.e. competence in a specific area), as well as the authority and problem-solving capacity based on it. When participants in guidance training courses and workshops describe what burdens them in guidance, they often mention the lack of expert knowledge and "keeping up with the field." It is distressing not to know the answer to the client's question. One feels more like an expert when one has a particular field where one is more knowledgeable than the client.

The recurrence of the problem-solving orientation also stems from interactional reasons. In fact, it takes special interactive work not to embark on the problem-solving orientation. When one is asked to give advice or hears worries and complaints, giving advice is the routinely expected and "natural" response. In addition, if a person deemed to possess knowledge and power is asked for advice and has the relevant expertise, the interactional "rules" expect him/her to fulfil the request right away. If guidance professionals wish to withhold their response, they will have to do additional interactive work to avoid responding (Vehviläinen, 2001a, 2003).

Another feature that explains the prevalence of the problem-solving orientation is the fact that guidance professionals are often deeply committed to helping their clients and want to make a difference in their lives. In regular social life and ordinary conversations, we tend to offer advice whenever other people share their troubles. In peer group guidance, it is typical that participants start to offer each other empathy and advice. Empathy and advice seem to come naturally as they correspond to the practices of mundane conversations concerning dealing with problems (Jefferson, 1988). The reflective, inquiry-oriented mode is much more demanding since it requires more skill and theoretical understanding of the participants.

Yet another reason for the prevalence of the problem-solving orientation is that clients often insist on obtaining advice from guidance professionals. They expect

to receive answers and will be disappointed to leave without them. They also expect to receive support, and advice is one form of support (Vehviläinen, 2014b).

One can wonder why the problem-solving orientation should be a problem, and whether the guidance and counselling theory is wrong to recommend removing advice from the centre stage. Advice certainly has its place in guidance, especially when it concerns learning processes. Guidance often requires that, at certain points, participants together formulate optional solutions and practice new ways of working or acting (Vehviläinen, 2014b). The guidance professional's advice is a reasonable part in this collaboration. However, it is important to time the advice correctly, not to deliver it prematurely, and to allow the client to participate in producing potential solutions.

Good advice is based on unhurried consideration. When the client and the guidance practitioner create a space for exploration together, many things can be brought into this space, without any immediate need to resolve them. In my datasets, however, the guidance professional often hurries to come up with advice as soon as an "advice-relevant" issue has surfaced in the talk, as if wishing to "tick the problem off the list". This may lead to premature or superficial advice, or advice that is not relevant to the client's situation. Taking the client's issues "to the table" for exploration will reduce the pressure that both parties may feel to rush into problem-solving. When clients are allowed to explore various aspects of their experience, they also feel that they are being heard, and they also have a chance to "hear their own thoughts." Reflective discussion helps determine the relevance and interrelationships of the different elements of the client's meanings.

Research on advice shows that advice is best received when it is based on hearing the recipient's views prior to its delivery (Vehviläinen, 2012, 2014a; Heritage & Sefi, 1992). When advice is not hurried into – that is, it is not delivered directly upon hearing the client's questions –it will be possible to make sure that the relevant joint working problem is identified (Vehviläinen & Svinhufvud, 2018).

In guidance, advice is often given not simply to be heeded; it also needs to be understood. This is the only way to make advice useful for the client's process. This is another reason why time should be taken to understand the client's meanings and relevancies and thus to find out what hinders understanding on the client's part.

The inquiry orientation

As suggested above, successful advice is based on a sound understanding of the ways in which clients approach their issues, how they have tried to work on them, and what problems they have run into. In practice, this is reflected in how the guidance professional poses questions to the client (Vehviläinen, 2001a, 2001b, 2012). Indeed, the inquiry orientation appears in the use of questions. Questions elicit talk from the client, but not only to influence the topical directions for the talk.

Questions should also communicate a sincere interest in hearing what the client thinks and feels. Questions in guidance are not interview questions. Instead of gathering a "material" for the professional's use, they bring out the relevant material for joint exploration.

So-called mirroring is another key tool of inquiry work. It comprises summarizing and rephrasing the other speaker's talk, with the aim of ensuring that it is understood correctly and at the same time focusing on what appears to be at the heart of the matter. Mirroring allows the participants to gradually arrive at shared understandings (e.g., Weiste & Peräkylä, 2013; Vehviläinen & Svinhufvud, 2018).

Storytelling is the third important means of inviting clients into the explorative orientation. At the heart of the inquiry orientation is dedication to helping clients externalize their internal reality. Sometimes, narration is best fostered by hearing others' experiences in "sharing circles." Also, additional resources, such as texts, pictures, and films, can be used to trigger reflection.

The essence of the inquiry orientation lies in speaking in ways that help the participants gain a deeper understanding of the matter at hand. Guidance often works on issues that are complex, emotionally charged, and open to multiple interpretations. If there are inquiry phases in a guidance encounter, this will help those involved arrive at a shared understanding, rather than just routinely presupposing a common understanding.

The inquiry orientation is also important in that it offers opportunity for critical reflection, which is a key element in learning. When we explore an issue, we assume that our views may change, and we remain open to new interpretations. This way of talking is called dialogue (Alhanen, 2019), and it is the domain of good guidance interactions. In everyday life, conversational situations are rarely tuned to such a sincere pursuit of understanding. Rather we often find ourselves time-pressured to find the right answer, make our point, solve a problem, or carry out various tasks. However, the only relevant goal of dialogue is to deepen the interlocutors' understanding (Alhanen, 2019). In guidance, dialogue has this very function as guidance is expected to create a space that promotes confidential, trustful, and focused thinking, with a sincere commitment to searching for what is true and real. This is how inward and outward understanding grows: I understand my own actions and meanings, as well as those of others.

In high-pace guidance contexts, people sometimes consider the inquiry orientation unnecessary ("let's not make things complicated," "let's cut to the chase," etc.). Sometimes, people believe that dealing with difficult issues is too distressing and that moving quickly to solutions will be more rewarding. However, the perspective of hope always springs from facing the reality as it is. It is a basic human effort to try and understand what is happening and why, to consider various aspects of things, and to attempt to keep up with the situation. Fundamentally, this is a search for the truth.

The supporting orientation: Doing nothing?

The supporting orientation is often inconspicuous. It can sometimes be difficult for guidance practitioners to perceive it as a professional orientation or as "doing anything" at all. The supporting orientation is the professional way of being in the service of the client's process. It means focusing one's attention, and helping others to focus their attention, on the shared situation and on the communications of the other party. It also involves emotional attentiveness and expressing empathy and other affective content.

The supportive orientation is always aimed at enabling the participants to share a common space and to collaborate. Of course, the quality of this support must vary, depending on the occasion. Sometimes we are already familiar and share a lot of common understanding. At other times, support requires a significant amount of energy, for example, when the client is anxious, or when there is a difficult situation of conflict in guidance.

The supportive orientation often goes unnoticed because it mostly occurs by nonverbal means: gaze, gestures, motions, serenity, posture, settling oneself into the physical space, being oriented towards the other, facial expressions, voice quality, and prosody (Weiste & Peräkylä, 2014). Guidance practitioners' meta-talk – that is, the verbalization of what is happening in the interaction or other observations on the situation–functions as part of the supportive orientation as well.

Guidance practitioners sometimes protest: "I am not a therapist!" However, supportive skills are not specific solely to therapy; in fact, all human work requires using them. Supporting is inconspicuous when things flow easily, but it is there even then. Supporting is necessary in framing the situation, transitions within the situation, and whenever tension or intense emotional states arise among the actors. The supportive orientation is basically about conveying both verbally and non-verbally that "I'm here, and I see and hear you; I see and hear what you have at hand."

Good enough guidance?

Guidance orientations fluctuate in guidance encounters. All the participants in a conversation can influence transitions between them. Guidance professionals should understand how to invite their client to embrace these orientations, how to change orientations, and how to time them. The rule of thumb in guidance is that the supportive orientation opens a common working space and channels one's entry into the inquiry orientation. The inquiry orientation fosters a deeper understanding and helps the professional and the client formulate relevant questions and working problems. After that, solutions may be sought, and future actions planned.

Guidance interaction is a renewable resource and can be rehearsed every day. Clients can be invited to assess their guidance interactions and provide feedback

to the guidance professionals. In addition, the guidance professional needs the support of colleagues and a community capable of sustaining a guidance culture where everyone can learn and grow.

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