Aalborg Universitet

Student Development Dialogue

A method for supporting students' reflections and professional development in Higher Education

Kjær-Rasmussen, Lone Krogh; Jensen, Annie Aarup

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Student Development Dialogue

SDD

A method for supporting students' reflections and professional development in Higher Education

Lone Krogh
Annie Aarup Jensen

Student Development Dialogue

SDD

A method for supporting students' reflections and
professional development in Higher Education

Lone Krogh
Annie Aarup Jensen

Contents

Student Development Dialogue

A method for supporting students' reflections and professional development in Higher Education

Lone Krogh
Annie Aarup Jensen

Series Preface

This booklet about Student Development Dialogue - A method for supporting students' reflections and professional development in Higher Education has been prepared for inclusion in the series about Research in Higher Education practices. The series are developed by the Higher Education Research Unit (HERU) in the Department of Learning and Philosophy at Aalborg University. It is our mission to produce timely booklets about research in Higher Education topics of local as well as international importance. The booklet is based on research evidence on how the use of Student Development Dialogue can enhance the learning process and support the learning outcomes for students.

This research synthesis intends to be a catalyst and inspiration for the systemic improvement

and sustainable development in higher education. It is published in paper form as well as being electronically available at htpp://www.learninglab.aauæ.dk/resources/

To ensure academic rigour and pedagogical usefulness, each booklet in this series has been reviewed first by the member of the Higher Education Research Unit to provide feedback before being sent for external blind review. The authors are Associate Professor Lone Krogh and Associate professor Annie Aarup Jensen, both from the Department of Learning and Philosophy. Both authors have been involved in extensive research relating to higher education teaching, focusing specifically on the development of PBL approaches, Academic development, Staff Development and innovative teaching – and assessment forms.

In this series we are aware that suggestions or guidelines for practice need to be responsive to specific educational settings and contexts. The booklet is therefore presented in a way that readers can consider the suggestions for their own practices and find suggestions for further reading and investigations.

Lone Krogh and Kathrin Otrel-Cass,
Series Editors

"Student Development Dialogues have supported me in my learning proces…. they helped me to focus more consciously on my learning and competence development and strenghtened my reflective skills."

Student, 2017

1 Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to present a pedagogical method that might support students in reflecting on important aspects related to the study processes they are going through, in order for them to become more aware of challenges they have to face during these processes. The method aims to empower students to find ways to overcome their challenges and to support them in completing their education. The Student Development Dialogue (SDD) represents a holistic perspective on the student, that allows individual students to integrate their past (life, work and educational experiences) and connect it with the present as far as their interests and the formal educational goals are concerned, and thence with the future, regarding their wishes for their personal academic career. Another purpose of the booklet is to contribute to raising awareness among teachers as well as students about the importance of students being focused on their personal competence strategy, being able to design and direct personal learning processes within a formal educational context, thereby reaching personal goals within the framework of their formal educational programme.

Why is it important to integrate tools/methods that support students in becoming more aware of their personal competence strategy?

Higher Education teachers have to deal with factors such as student motivation, which highly influence their choices and their opting-in and opting-out, and consequently their allocation of time and effort spent on education. At the same time, there is an obligation regarding the formal requirements and educational goals, which have to be fulfilled to a high level. Awareness of the importance of how these diverse didactic elements interact has increased, because we live in a world in transformation, with rapidly developing and changing demands and expectations regarding competences and students being able to meet and handle these challenges during education, as well as in their future academic career. This means that students have to learn to develop consciousness and strategies on how to handle challenges during their education. Bowden and Marton (1998) put it this way,

> "Students must be prepared for the unknown variation among situations in the future through experiencing variation in their education, which will enable them to discern critical aspects of novel situations" (p. 24)

Another indication of the consequences of the changing world for the demands on future graduates is presented by Hargreaves (2000) in his explicit enumeration,

> "…meta-cognitive abilities and skills - thinking about how to think and learning how to learn; the ability to integrate formal and informal learning, declarative knowledge (or know-

ing that) and procedural knowledge or (know-how); the ability to access, select and evaluate knowledge in an information soaked world; the ability to develop and apply several forms of intelligence as suggested by Howard Gardner and others; the ability to work and learn effectively and in teams; the ability to create, transpose and transfer knowledge; the ability to cope with ambiguous situations, unpredictable problems and unforeseeable circumstances; the ability to cope with multiple careers - learning how to "re-design" oneself, locate oneself in a job market, choose and fashion the relevant education and training." (p. 2)

As it appears, there are many and complex demands on and expectations towards students during (and after) their education. Therefore, support might be needed for students to get the most out of the opportunities that their study programme offers. This also means that students' experiences with different teaching and learning methods, and awareness of relevance during their studies are crucial for their competence development. They have to reflect on and understand the reasons for considering the different teaching and learning activities prepared by teachers, and the deeper meaning of learning goals and assessment structures. It is important

that they feel ownership of and responsibility for their study process. This can lead to students being in control – being aware of the expectations from the system and feeling less pressurised. The SDD may be one way of supporting students in this kind of learning process and competence development.

The booklet takes its point of departure in the following research questions:

- Which theories would be useful for developing a method that supports and enhances students' reflection on their study?
- What should characterise the method?
- What are the lessons learned by implementing SDD?
- What are the implications for the further development of the method?

The questions have been researched through review of learning theory and research findings of related methods, and analysis of SDD-forms filled out by students from 4 cohorts (132 SDD forms).

The booklet is organised around the following themes:

- The concept of Development Dialogues – on the inspiration for the concept of Student Development Dialogues and the historical background
- The theoretical underpinnings of SDD – the learning theoretical rationale

- The practice of SDD – principles and the importance of the educational culture
- How to prepare for and support reflective processes
- Implementation of the dialogue and follow-up
- Points to note – including ethical considerations
- Students' benefits from this and similar methods – concluding research findings

2 The concept of Development Dialogues

The concept of the Student Development Dialogue (SDD) (in Danish: StudenterUdviklings-Samtaler - SUS) was developed in 2003 inspired by what was called *Staff Development Dialogue* (MUS) (Hultengren, 1997; Lindgren, 2001; Lorentsen, 2008; Scheuer, 2001; Schubert, 2004; Trads, 2000), which regularly takes place between employers and employees in many private and public organisations in Denmark. MUS focuses on making employees more aware of their need for development related to expectations from the employers.

Some general characteristics of the MUS method are 1) the developmental perspective where the employee takes stock of and assesses his/her own development in order to plan for further development and career based on 2) identification of wishes and needs for professional development, using 3) a dialogical method with clearly defined steps (preparation, mapping, suggestions for solutions and summary). The SDD process is similar, although it also has some important and distinctively different characteristics (see chapter 3).

In the literature (Laursen, 1999; Lorentsen, 2008) MUS is defined as a *systematic,* regularly continuing, *planned* and *well prepared* dialogue between staff and manager. The dialogue process is typically divided into 3 phases, 1) preparation, 2) completion and 3) follow-up. During the preparation and the follow-up phases staff

members normally fill out forms, which are the point of departure for the dialogue and conclude the dialogue. The intentions behind the MUS system are to connect past, present and future for the staff member, while establishing further professional development.

MUS is also defined as a dialogue about competence development of the individual staff member related to demands from the organisation in question. One might say that MUS aims to establish connections between staff members, organisations, and individual strategies and plans (Steen, 2000). MUS can be seen in the light of its focus on human resource development taking place in many modern firms in Denmark (Werner & DeSimone, 2003). In a pragmatic perspective, many tools for organisations, HR staff, and work committees have been developed and published for the purpose of promoting the quality of competence development (Buch, Gringer & Jarlov, 1997).

Important issues from research on Staff Development Dialogues

Research documents that it is important to understand two aspects of the nature of MUS, *firstly* the dialogical aspect and *secondly* the organisational connection (Laursen, 1999).

The dialogue form in MUS has been researched from a critical as well as a pragmatic perspective. The pragmatic approach focuses on analysing and reaching a conclusion about advice on the optimal dialogue form and patterns in MUS. The critical approach is about reaching an analytical understanding and critique of fundamental factors in the MUS, such as genre, interaction, initiative, power and dominance (Lorentsen, 2008). Generally, research on staff development dialogues is based on conversation or discourse analyses or functional grammatical analyses and analyses on initiative and response in the dialogue, (Hultengren, 1997; Lindgren, 2001; Lorentsen, 2008; Scheuer, 2001; Schubert, 2004; Trads, 2000). Analyses show that focus on the linguistic and dialogic form is important. If the participants are not aware of it, asymmetric aspects from outside the area for the MUS will be reproduced during the conversation, in a way that may make employees feel uncomfortable or prevent them from expressing the thoughts and wishes that might be important for their future career. This means that there should be particular focus on the character of the dialogue and the power relations between dialogue partners, if a constructive exchange of opinions and ideas is to take place. These research results are important for the development of principles for finding dialogue partners for the students.

More specific awareness of linguistic behaviour may promote an equal and dialogic basis for the MUS. In 1986 advice was formulated in the publication 'Make the development conversation more positive' (authors' translation)

(Oxvig-Østergaard, 1986). The advice concerns establishing a fruitful conversation environment through awareness of forms of address, forms for asking questions and active listening (Hornstrup & Loehr-Petersen, 2003). Furthermore, inspiration from the concept of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) is often recommended, as is professional intimacy, which is characterised by broadness, awareness of perspectives, balancing between distance and empathy, focus, engagement, timing and patience (Højlund Larsen & Plenge, 2003; Steen, 2000).

Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

1. Appreciative Inquiry is the art of asking uncondition al, positive questions to strengthen a person or a system's capacity to anticipate and heighten positive potential for learning.
2. Appreciative Inquiry emphasises the art of crafting positive questions. The following list summarises the Appreciative Inquiry perspective on questions:
   a We live in a world, which our questions create
   b Our questions determine the results we achieve
   c The more positive our question, the more it will create the possible
   d Our questions create movement and change

Examples of questions based on the understanding of Appreciative Inquiry

1. What has been a high-point experience in your educational life so far, when you felt most alive, successful, and effective?
2. Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself, your work, and your education?
3. What are the core factors that make you function at your best, when your education feels a great place to be in?
4. Imagine it is two years into the future and you are close to ending your education well. What's happening that makes it vibrant and successful? What has changed? What has stayed the same, and how have you contributed to this future?
5. What can you continue doing to keep the good?
6. What can you begin to do to make it better?
7. What can you stop doing because it no longer serves or gets in the way?
8. What are some transitions you'll need to make because you have existing responsibilities and constraints, and can't just drop everything immediately?

And more openly:

9. Tell me a little bit more about it

The questions are inspired by Stratton-Berkessel (2010). In some organisational contexts staff will receive a questionnaire to fill out, or just reflect upon, in order to prepare for the meeting.

3 Theoretical underpinnings

The rationale for applying Student Development Dialogues is underpinned by learning theories such as the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), here further developed by Mott (1992), who states that the Zone of Proximal Development represents:

> "…the distance between the present level of development – determined from autonomous problem solving - and the possible development, determined from the level for problem solving that is possible through supervision/guidance from adults or more capable collaborators.
>
> The present level of development characterises the development retrospectively…… while the proximate zone of development characterises the development prospectively, it means the development, which is within range." (Authors' translation). (p. 114)

This means that a dialogue partner in SDD takes the role of the competent 'adult' or 'collaborator' in the meeting with the student and thus supports the development as much as possible by means of the dialogue.

The understanding of the concept of 'dialogue' is inspired by the Norwegian researcher Olga Dysthe, who focuses on the close relation-

ship between thinking, writing, reflection and dialogue in the learning process (Dysthe, 2005). The concept of Student Development Dialogue is related to an understanding of learning and development in which reflection is a key element, and the dialogue is considered a tool to facilitate the student's processes of recording, reviewing and reflecting. The term 'dialogue' may carry different meanings in a pedagogical sense. Here it is to be understood in a sense close to its Greek origin, 'logos' meaning 'word' and 'dia' meaning 'through', i.e. meaning-making or negotiation of meaning through words. This is not the same as 'everyday conversation', which with reference to David Bohms' work on dialogue is, "a spontaneous movement between asking and answering questions about each other's lives" in order to "establish, maintain or develop social contact" (Karlsson, 2001). Nor is it, as pointed out by Bohm (2013), the same as 'discussion', which has a more analytical stance together with a competitive dimension. A discussion can be won by one of the interlocutors, whereas a dialogue is about the exchange of ideas and meanings with the purpose of learning rather than judging (Karlsson, 2001). This understanding of the concept of 'dialogue' supports the intention of reducing power relations in the Student Development Dialogue and emphasises that the focus is on professional development.

Socio-cultural theories of learning (e.g. Säljö, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978) stress the importance of language and social factors for learning and consider learning to talk as learning to think. In Student Development Dialogues the dialogue partner's task is to facilitate or 'scaffold' the student's development through authentic questions about issues that are relevant and meaningful to the student at that particular time of the study. These are the fundamental elements of the SDD method, where students are encouraged to reflect on goals, personal understanding or resources and challenges, to write about this and to talk with a dialogue partner (the competent collaborator/teacher).

Research shows that emotional aspects play an important role in students' study life, in particular when they are starting a new study programme, where both the context, their fellow students and the subject areas are new and unfamiliar (Jensen, 2015). In this type of situation, the Student Development Dialogues can play a particularly important role in de-mystifying the new surroundings, and explaining the discourse and the rationale behind the procedures. Furthermore, when students are met with empathy from the dialogue partner, in the sense of being open and taking a non-directive stance towards the students, it will allow them to become in charge of their life (Schmid, 2001).

Another aspect of the process of becoming-in-charge is related to the concept of self-assessment. During the SDD process students will invariably engage in aspects of self-assessment processes, as they are being explicit about their hopes and dreams and their experiences of chal-

lenges and doubts, as well as their reflections on how to manage their educational trajectory. Self-assessment is often described as a cyclic process consisting of three elements: self-monitoring, self-evaluation and identification and imple-mentation of instructional correctives (MacMil-lan & Hearn, 2008). In this case, the students do not have to go through this process entirely alone, since they have their dialogue partner with whom to try out their thoughts, and who may also ask them reflective questions. In this way, they are gently introduced to doing self-as-sessment, and in a wider perspective they may benefit from that competence, as self-assessment may serve as motivating factor for their learning processes (Dysthe, 2005).

4 The practice of Student Development Dialogues

The SDD method was developed based on the research findings regarding Staff Development Dialogues and the theoretical underpinnings. The rationale behind the SDD method is that the reflective activities have to be organised in such a way that students can reflect on and connect between their past (prior knowledge and experi-ence from education and, if relevant, from work-ing life), their present and their goals and wishes for the future in relation to their education and academic career. By answering pre-formulated questions on a preparatory form and through being challenged and supported by the dialogue partner, they should be able to reflect on their perceived challenges and their resources and possibilities in the learning processes. This pro-cess ideally supports students towards taking on responsibility and being empowered in relation to achieving their study goals.

As in the MUS method, the SDD represents a *systematic,* regularly continuing, *planned* and *well prepared* dialogue between the student and the dialogue partner. This dialogue is divided into 3 phases,

1. Preparation (individually), where students complete a form containing questions which may lead to reflections on the learning goals and demands of the formal study regulation (Studieordningen), their personal expecta-tions and wishes and decisions about how to

work and study and how much effort they will – or can - put into reaching their goals. They are asked to reflect on their previous educational trajectory in order to become explicit about their perceived strengths and interests, which they might wish to build on or further develop. The completed form is sent to the dialogue partner no later than 2 days before the meeting is going to take place.

2. Meeting between the dialogue partners. The student meets with the dialogue partner and a dialogue between the two takes place based on the questions and answers (reflections) in the form.
3. Follow-up after the meeting. In this phase, students reflect and draw conclusions on the dialogue and write down how to work with personal challenges regarding their studies until the next SDD meeting.

The idea is that students actively and carefully study the goals and intended learning outcomes of the study programme as they are stated in the study regulation, make an effort to interpret them and relate them to their own background and wishes. Based on this reflection, students describe in the above-mentioned SDD form their competences as they see them, and the visions, ideas and dreams they hold for their future professional life. Furthermore, students use the SDD preparatory form – together with the dialogue - to consider which steps to take in order to proceed and they make plans to ensure the

desired progression. During the preparation phase students are 'obliged' to consider positive aspects as well as challenges to work with, based on earlier experiences.

There is, as mentioned, clear inspiration in this process from the MUS method. However, there are some very important differences between the context in which MUS and SDD take place, much of which is related to who *owns* the process and the outcome, and has to do with the intended equality in the process:

1. The student is in charge of calling the meeting, whereas in a MUS context the management invites staff to the meeting.
2. The student alone decides which aspects to focus on during the dialogue.
3. Wishes and needs to be identified refer to a combination of the formal regulations and demands laid down in the study regulation – *and* to the student's own wishes for a professional profile, competences, future career, visions *et cetera*. In a MUS context, the wishes and needs to be met are primarily related to the strategic plan of the company or organisation.
4. The student is responsible for follow-up – whereas in MUS the leader has the responsibility, the means and formal competence to follow up.
5. Power relations between the participants are different – student / teacher – employee / employer.

The dialogue partner is a teacher, who is familiar with the study programme. However, it is important for ethical reasons that the dialogue partner will never have any kind of gatekeeper function in relation to students, e.g. as an internal examiner. To ensure the students' trust and ease of mind during the meetings, they should never have to worry that the dialogue partner might assess them and their study work at some point in the future. This measure is also taken in order to reduce the asymmetric power relationship between the teacher and the student during the dialogue situation. It is important to be aware that the meetings where the dialogues take place are strictly confidential.

The reason why the dialogue partner should not have any gatekeeper function in relation to the student is:

It is essential that the dialogue centres on the student's professional development, so focus is on questions related to this. However, it must not be forgotten that the SDD represents the very unusual situation where the student has a teacher's undivided attention. Therefore, it may happen that students, who from time to time can have a hard time in education, will come up with very intimate and emotional aspects of a personal nature. Consequently, a dialogue partner may come to know about the student's more personal issues, which the student might fear will be misused in, for instance, an exam situation.

The term 'dialogue partner' is chosen with great care, since it is important to be able to identify and understand this particular type of communicative situation, the relationship between the participants and the status of the student involved. It is thus not a question of 'coaching', 'supervision', 'therapy' or 'study guidance'. 'Dialogue partner' is meant to indicate that the relationship is intended to be as equal as possible, and that the dialogical form is the foundation for development.

It is important that the dialogue partner (the teacher) have a personal interest in practicing these kinds of ¨power-free¨ dialogues with students, otherwise the students will be lost - and will not benefit from the dialogues in the way that is intended.

Understanding the method

Students have to balance between the expectations of being a part of a formal study structure and an environment characterised by professional and academic development and collaboration *and* the expectations of being able within these environments to construct and develop an individual academic professional identity, based on prior education and in some cases on professional experience.

Therefore, an initial task for students is to learn to understand the study programme's expectations, implicit as well as explicit. This pertains to all aspects of study, such as student behaviour

and performance, learning goals and expected learning outcome, connections between their educational and professional background and the possibilities that may open up for them by taking part in the study programme.

Awareness of the knowledge and experience-based structure for professional dialogues and the climate around the dialogue situation, the role of the dialogue partner and the possible inequality aspects has made it possible to 'translate' these aspects and put them into a form of systematic professional development dialogue with students in an educational setting.

The most important aspects to be aware of are:

- systematic and well prepared design, achieved by students filling in a form before and after a dialogue has taken place (thus supporting reflection, preparation, reflection and conclusion)
- awareness of linguistic and dialogical form as a precondition for the success of the dialogue, including a need for attentive linguistic behaviour in relation to, for instance, listening, asking questions, sending appreciative signals, empathy and presence
- support for students in establishing connections between the requirements of the study regulation and their strategies and plans as individuals
- focus on the aspect of competence development.

The importance of educational culture

The SDD method has been developed as an integrated part of a study programme, which is founded on a Problem-Based Learning (PBL)[1] approach to learning, i.e. a problem-based project-organised pedagogy. In this model, students are encouraged to work collaboratively and thus benefit from each other's knowledge, skills and competences in their professional learning processes (Lund & Jensen, 2011; Lund & Jensen, 2012). Working with the PBL method means a shared and *collective* approach to learning and learning outcome. On the other hand, applying the SDD method encourages focus on *individual* students' professional and personal development, on how to integrate their prior education and experience into the present study, on how to become aware of their resources, challenges and wishes for a future professional profile and to determine how to achieve these (Lorentsen, 2008).

For some students these two approaches may be experienced as two opposing logics and learning philosophies, which may be difficult to combine and handle within the same study programme (Lorentsen, 2008, p. 14). It should also be said that the idea of student development dialogue seems to be a novel initiative in the Danish educational context and, as such, a new experience for students, who will have had no prior experience of the phenomenon, and thus have no knowledge of the purpose, form and expected results of the method. Student reactions

range from lack of understanding of the purpose, through opposition and nervousness - to curiosity and positive expectations (Lorentsen, 2008). It is therefore important that students be properly introduced to the SDD method beforehand and have the opportunity to ask questions about it.

5 Preparing for and supporting reflective processes

In preparation for the meeting with the dialogue partner the student fills in a form with questions pertaining to the semester under consideration. These questions are formulated so as to support students' abilities in reflecting on different aspects of their study plans and strategies in relation to their development of professional skills and competences.

The questions ask students to connect their past (prior knowledge and experience) with their present and their future to create a personal education strategy. The procedure of filling in the preparation form, answering and reflecting on study-relevant questions and being challenged and afterwards supported by a dialogue partner offers the opportunity to reflect on their challenges and possibilities in the learning processes.

When preparing questions to prompt reflection, Mezirow's theoretical framework on content, process and premise reflection (Mezirow, 1991) may serve as inspiration. Particularly relevant is his approach to the concept of reflective thinking as an essential component of his model of transformative learning for adults.

Dewey is often considered to be the originator of the concept of reflection as an important aspect of learning and education. His definition (Dewey, 1933) has been widely quoted:

1 See Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen and Jensen (2012) for further elaboration of the principles of Problem Based Learning (PBL)

"Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends." (p. 9)

Mezirow interprets Dewey's definition as implying that 'reflection means validity of testing' (Mezirow, 1991, p. 101). When Mezirow himself considers reflection, the influence of critical theory upon his work becomes apparent:

"Reflection involves the critique of assumptions about the content or process of problem solving…. The critique of premises or presupposition pertains to problem posing as distinct from problem solving. Problem posing involves making a taken-for-granted situation problematic, raising questions regarding its validity." (p. 105)

Mezirow proceeds to subdivide reflective thinking into three categories of 1) content, 2) process and 3) premise reflection.

Content reflection is *"Reflection on **what** we perceive, think, feel or act upon"* (p. 107). In the SDD context this could lead to questions where the student is asked to describe experiences and reflect on them and their meaning.

Process reflection is concerned with the method or manner in which we think. Mezirow defines it as:

"Examination of how one performs the functions of perceiving, thinking, feeling or acting and an assessment of efficacy in performing them". (pp. 107-108)

In the SDD context this could lead to questions concerning the students' study habits, learning strategies etc. and their reflections on those.

Premise reflection. This is a higher level of reflective thinking, since it is through *premise reflection* that we can transform our meaning framework, as it opens the possibility of perspective transformation. Mezirow views premise reflection as involving us in becoming aware of *why* we perceive, think, feel or act as we do.

"To undergo a perspective transformation it is necessary to recognize that many of our actions are governed by a set of beliefs and values which have been almost unconsciously assimilated from the particular environment. Premise reflection then requires a critical review of presupposition from conscious and unconscious prior learning and their consequences." (Mezirow, 1981 in Kember, 1999, p. 23)

17

In the SDD context this could lead to questions concerning, for instance, the students' underlying assumptions about weak points, feelings of shortcomings, as well as the strong points. Here, students may also address beliefs, attitudes and emotions. The important issue is, however, that the questions should not be inquisitive, but instead open and thus allow the students to take up the issues that are relevant to themselves.

Problems related to reflection processes

Mezirow (1991) did not regard introspection as reflective because it involves no attempt to re-examine or test the validity of prior knowledge. Kember (2001), Boud and Walker (1985), found that triggering reflective learning usually involves a sense of discomfort. Boud and Walker explained that emotional barriers might inhibit reflective learning if frustrations are not acknowledged and addressed. Kember (2001) emphasised the important role of the educational system in supporting students to make their paradigm shift so that they can turn their emotional responses into positive learning experiences. Boud and Walker (1985) found that recognition of the association of the emotional response to reflective learning is necessary. Antikainen's biographical research on educative processes, looking at life experiences, life histories and lifelong learning (Antikainen, 1998; Antikainen & Kaup-

pila, 2002) is also relevant for understanding the rationale behind the SDD method.

Antikainen (1998) drew attention to the fact that when investigating adults' learning processes, it is imperative to take into account both the structural conditions and limitations to which individuals are subject *and* the possibilities and subjective choices that they make for themselves. Translated into the context of SDD, this means that we have to be aware that students in the formal educational system are governed by structural conditions. These stipulate, for instance, that they are obliged to participate in Student Development Dialogues as part of their study programme and they have to fill in the preparatory SDD forms prior to meetings with dialogue partners. Thus, they are to some extent compelled to start reflecting on and verbalising their understanding of the study programme and its demands and requirements - also a part of the structural conditions - *as well as* reflecting on their own ideas, hopes, intentions and plans for their study, i.e. their understanding of the possibilities and their subjective choices.

Antikainen (1998) refers to development processes and indications of significant learning experiences as related to empowering learning,

> "…significant learning experiences are those which appeared to guide the interviewee's life-course, or to have changed or strengthened his or her identity." (p. 218)

'Empowerment' may be understood as the ability to do something, to control something, or to adjust to or to integrate into something.

> "…the core of empowerment can be found in a participatory approach, and it includes two aspects linked with each other: transformation of the individual's self-definition and transformation of social environment through participation." (pp. 219-20)

Notable indicators of empowerment can be:

> "…the expansion of an informant's worldview or cultural understanding; the strengthening of a person's 'voice' so that he or she has the courage to participate in a dialogue or even break down the dominant discursive forms; and the broadening of the field of social identities or roles." (p. 220).

Participation in SDD should ideally help strengthen the students' voice, further develop their independence and support their professional identity development through verbalisation and reflection. It is not, however, an easy task. Research into student reactions to taking on more responsibility for their learning shows that even final year students may still be taken aback by the 'system's' expectation that they should have some ideas themselves about what they want to do with this particular education in relation to job and career prospects (Lorentsen & Lund, 2008, p. 133). Moreover, it costs students a lot of work and mental energy to put the reflection process down in words and it seems to be rather easier for them just to talk about what they have done (Krogh & Jensen, 2013).

6 Implementation of the dialogue and follow-up

Our research on Staff Development Dialogues suggests it is preferable for the Student Development Dialogue to take place in a neutral location (Lorentsen, 2008), i.e. not in a teacher's office, but rather in a meeting room – emphasising the 'neutral ground' and the intention of equality between the dialogue partners.

Before the meeting the student has, as mentioned earlier, filled out a form with questions pertaining to the specific semester. The dialogue partner receives the form two days in advance and prepares for the meeting by going through the replies and checking if there are issues or questions that need clarification or if specific information is required.

The first dialogue is scheduled to take one hour. Subsequent dialogues may last between 45 minutes and one hour. The important thing here is that the student should be informed prior to the meeting about the timeframe.

For many students, the concept of Student Development Dialogues is a new phenomenon, which is not similar to anything they have encountered before. Students may have different preconceptions and understandings and be doubtful of the relevance of the approach to their understanding of a Higher Education study programme. They may also be wary of the role of the dialogue partner: is it a control function? am I to be evaluated during the meeting? It is therefore important during the first meeting to take the time to clear up any misunderstandings, to explain the purpose and rationale behind the concept and to discuss it with the student in order to highlight the distribution of roles, the responsibilities and the intended learning outcome of the approach. This should be done even though the students have already received collective information about the SDD method.

In general, it is important that it is the student who is setting the agenda for the meeting, and that the focus of the dialogue is on the issues the student regards as most relevant. However, students differ, and some are less forthcoming in taking the lead in the dialogue. In such cases, it is recommended to start with the questions in the forms, as well as the replies and statements supplied by the student.

To avoid too significant differences in the operationalisation of the method (Williams et al., 1998), a thorough introduction should be given both to students and to teachers/dialogue partners. Since this is a new and thus unfamiliar role for the teachers as well, it is important to make sure they too are 'on board' with the rationale and principles.

Research into the distribution of speaking time in Staff Development Dialogues (MUS) has shown that, more often than not, the person in the most powerful position speaks the most (Hultengren, 1997). Since the Student Development Dialogues are intended to have a formative feedback aspect and are based on an equal-

ity principle, students should speak the most and the dialogue partner should facilitate the process through question techniques and encouraging narratives.

Examples of questioning techniques (inspired by Hornstrup, Tomm & Johansen, 2009)

When asking questions in general, be attentive towards:

Quite neutral questions when you want to gather facts.

You should ask concrete questions when there is something you do not understand. For example, "Can you give an example?"

Only ask one question at a time. When you ask several questions at once, you often only get answers to the easiest-answered one that students remember.

Open questions invite long answers, while closed questions invite short answers, such as yes or no, black or white.

"Tell me " is a good introduction to open-ended questions when you want the other to answer extensively.

When you meet someone who often generalises, you could ask questions that nuance, e.g.: "No one would listen to her" you could follow with the question: 'Were there none who listened?"

When someone leaves out information, you can ask about what is left out. For example, "The decision is taken" may lead to a question, "Who made the decision?"

Using interrogative or question words
Use of the classic question words is always useful, consider:

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

What then ..... consequences?

7 Points to note

When preparing the form and the questions to support the students' reflections before the meeting it is important that the questions be closely related to the content of the specific semester (or other relevant period) in question. Also,

1. there should be questions which allow the students to situate themselves in that semester while reflecting on their study trajectory, i.e. the past experiences and knowledge gained and also make projections into the future (planning for coming semesters, expressing ideas/wishes for careers, jobs etc.);
2. the concrete format/layout should be appealing to the students. There have been examples where students report by templates with 'too many squares and boxes';
3. the questions should be phrased in a straightforward and not too abstract way, yet still inviting reflection.

Ethical considerations are another issue of importance. The meeting is confidential, and the dialogue partner is thus not allowed to report to others the content of the discussions or any information given in confidence. At the same time, the meeting is not a place for students to vent their discontent with teachers or other staff. The focus is on the student's professional and study-related development. In order for the student to feel confident with the situation, dialogue partners should never appear in roles/functions where they seem to be the examiner, or in other ways appear to assess the student. Students should thus never experience the dialogue partner as a gatekeeper in relation to their study.

8 Students' benefit from this and similar methods

In the educational context, a concept similar to the Student Development Dialogue has been developed and evaluated: Student Process Dialogues (Bager & Due Hansen, 2010). Student Process Dialogues are here described as a supervision form, which is *neither* career guidance *nor* professional guidance, but a kind of holistic guidance, which connects subject- and profession-related reflections with personal clarification regarding subject-related and professional perspectives and possibilities.

In an international perspective, the SDD may to some extent be compared to the so-called Personal Development Planning system (PDP) in UK Higher Education, which is characterised as

> "..a structured and supported process undertaken by individuals to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development" (Jackson, 2001, p. 1)

Essential key concepts of the PDP system are: learning, self-evaluation and development, which are seen as being the cornerstones of a structured and supporting process of reflection. Other key concepts, which are more directed towards the labour market, are: self-knowledge of skills, strengths and capabilities (Gough,

Kirwan, Sutcliffe, Simpson & Houghton, 2003; Strivens, 2010).

Research findings

The rationale behind the PDP system is that students will be supported in being more effective, independent and self-directed in learning processes as they become more aware of the deeper explanations on how things happen in the learning system. Students also tend to strengthen their understanding of learning in other contexts (competence consciousness and transfer), and improve their abilities in studying, planning their career and articulating personal goals, evaluating these with respect to their performance. Finally, they develop a positive attitude towards learning and lifelong learning (Gough et al., 2003).

Similar findings can be emphasised in the SDD method. In spite of some resistance and frustration, especially in the beginning, students feel happy with the system and become more effective, self-regulated and self-directed when they have become used to the system, as they become more aware of their personal resources and difficulties and learn how to work with these aspects. Many students enjoy the individual talk with a professional. They seem to develop a personal identity related to study. They generally reach higher degrees of awareness as their understanding of learning processes and strate-

gies is improved, as is and they improve their ability to relate and apply their knowledge, skills and competences in new learning and work contexts. They improve their abilities in studying and planning their career. They also become able to formulate personal goals and evaluate these with reference to their performance. At the same time, the SDD method seems to support retention of students and reduce students' dropping-out (Jensen & Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen, 2013).

Research also shows (Ramsden, 2003; Ulriksen, 2004) that students get the best out of education if, as an initial task in a study programme, they learn to understand and become aware of the implicit as well as the explicit expectations written into that programme. These expectations regard all aspects of study, such as student behaviour and performance, the learning goals and expected learning outcome, the connections between their education background and experiences (life experiences and maybe professional background) and the possibilities that open up for them by taking part in the study programme. It has been found important that students learn to decipher the vocabulary and terminology, the implicit and explicit signals and intentions of the study programme, as well as the values on which it is based, in order to understand their role as students and what is expected from them (Ulriksen, 2004). This process entails both decoding and interpretation. Coming, for instance, to a university master programme from a bachelor background, perhaps from another educational institution, some students may find this interpretation process frustrating and bewildering (Jensen & Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen, 2013). The final steps in the ideal scenario are the student's reflection on the result of the interpretation and decision on whether or not to acknowledge and accept the premises and values of the education and accept and understand the conditions of being the active and responsible part in learning processes towards an academic career.

Students report using the dialogues to describe the challenges they experience in their studies, saying that they gradually find their professional identity (Jensen & Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen, 2013; Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen & Jensen, 2013). They become able to be explicit about their competences and basically feel that the institution is taking notice of them (Hansen, 2010). The dialogue also offers the students an opportunity to address issues they may wonder about, ranging from the institutional practice and discourse, to understanding the rationale behind the structure of the specific study programme or rules and guidelines. The dialogue partner thus may facilitate the students' understanding of the institutional culture, the educational context and its requirements as well as its potentials. As a consequence, one of the benefits is seen to be that the students are more or less directly supported in dealing with emotions related to their situation as students in Higher Education, such as insecurity and fear of failure (Jensen, 2015).

Furthermore, students report that being 'forced' to reflect regularly on what they wish to gain from their education and what they might see as their future career has sharpened their focus on what subject areas they choose to work with in order to enhance their academic profile. The dialogues and the process of answering the questions in the preparation forms help students navigate the course and reflect on the choices they make. Also, looking back on their SDD forms, they are able to see indications of their own development throughout the study programme, and they become increasingly able to identify and be explicit about their knowledge, skills and competences (Jensen & Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen, 2013). They gain and practice a professional vocabulary.

Development of professional competence includes the ability to assess yourself, knowing your strengths and limitations, and the student development dialogue is intended to scaffold this process. Boud et al. (2013) found that students over time became more experienced in criteria-based judgments, and that it was important to support the process systematically with a framework including feedback.

If students choose to take advantage of the SDD they will train themselves in comprehensive self-assessment based on the criteria of the study programme and thus gradually become less dependent on the judgment of others.

9 Implications for the further development of the method

We have researched the SDD method continuously since it was introduced in 2001. In concluding our booklet, it should be noted that the method has been subject to constant evaluation, research and development over the years, due to changes in the study programme, results of feedback from students and our evaluations and changes in the student group. For instance, the questions in the reflection form have been changed every year with each new cohort of students. Here, it is important to bear in mind that we are talking about a very situated and context-sensitive system. Related to the educational programme, each semester has its own reflection form to match the goals of that semester. Consequently, one education programme cannot simply adopt the reflection form of another. This very context-sensitive and dynamic method should be subject to serious and careful didactic analyses, including reflection and decisions related to the described learning goals for a specific module, semester or course, the content, the nature of the specific professional or subject area and student backgrounds. An example of the general format and types of reflective questions can be found in the Appendix.

It should also be emphasised that it is not sufficient merely to form a hypothesis about the student cohort. On the contrary, it is essential, as a part of the continuous development process, to get substantial feedback data from students with

their reactions to how the method is applied in the specific education area, and the kind of questions that are in the forms. Do they experience them as understandable, meaningful, and relevant foundations for reflection, development and dialogue? Further development or adjustment of the method must therefore take place on the basis of research data, to ensure that the method fulfils the educational goals and ethical considerations, and reflects the students it is designed to support.

When the method functions, it becomes a source of invaluable knowledge and understanding of the students for dialogue partners, as well as for students themselves, regarding their approaches to their studies, their backgrounds, their knowledge, experiences and resources and the things they have to cope with. Based on our research, we may say that the method, as we have been using it, has supported and helped many students navigate their journey through education.

Suggested readings

Bager, L. T. (2005). Studieprocessamtale som led i udvikling af universitetsuddannelse. In H.L. Andersen & L.T. Bager (Eds.), *Uddannelsestænkning og fagdidaktik på universitetet*. Aarhus: Arbejdspapirer fra Center for Undervisningsudvikling, Aarhus Universitet.

Baume, D. & Ward, R. (2004). *Personal Development Planning and the Progress file.* Retrieved from https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/pdp_progress_file_0.pdf. The Higher Education Academy.

Boud, D., Lawson, R. & Thompson, D.G. (2013). Does student engagement in self-assessment calibrate their judgment over time? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 2013 Vol. 38, No. 8,* 941–956.

Gosling, D. (2003). *Personal Development Planning*. Birmingham: SEDA Staff and educational development association.

Gough, D.A., Kirwan, D., Sutcliffe, S., Simpson, D., Houghton, N. (2003). *A systematic map and synthesis review for the effectiveness of personal development planning for improving student learning*. London: The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information, Coordinating Centre, Social Services Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Hansen, S.D. (2010). Studieprocessamtalen som universitetspædagogisk redskab. *Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift, nr. 9 2010.* 55-58.

Horsdal, M. (2002). *Livets fortællinger: En bog om livshistorier og identitet*. Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag.

Jensen, A. A. (2015) How Does It Feel To Become a Master's student? Boundary Crossing and Emotions Related to Understanding a New Educational Context. In B. Lund & T. Chemi (Eds.), *Dealing with Emotions. A Pedagogical Challenge to Innovative Learning* (pp. 61-80). Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Kember, D. (2001). Transforming teaching through action research. In D.A. Watkins & J.B. Biggs (Eds.) *Teaching the Chinese Learner. Psychological and Pedagogical Perspectives*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong/Camberwell, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Lorentsen, A. (2008). *Portfoliounderstøttede udviklingssamtaler i videregående uddannelse – Evaluering af en case. Arbejdspapirer om læring*. Aalborg: Institut for Uddannelse, Læring og Filosofi, Aalborg Universitet.

Williams, E. A., Butt, G. W., Gray, C., Leach, S., Marr, A., Soares, A. (1998). Mentors' use of dialogue within a secondary initial teacher education partnership. *Educational Review*, Nov 98, Vol. 50, Issue 3, 225-239.

References

Antikainen, A. (1998). Between Structure and Subjectivity: Life-histories and Lifelong Learning. *International Review of Education, 44, 2-3,* 215-234.

Antikainen, A. & Kauppila, J. (2002). Educational generations and the futures of adult education: a Nordic experience. *Int. J. of Lifelong Education, Vol. 21, No. 3 (May–June 2002),* 209–219.

Bager, L. T. (2005). Studieprocessamtale som led i udvikling af universitetsuddannelse. In H.L. Andersen & L.T. Bager (Eds.), *Uddannelsestænkning og fagdidaktik på universitetet.* Aarhus: Arbejdspapirer fra Center for Undervisningsudvikling, Aarhus Universitet.

Bager, L.T. & S. Due Hansen, S. (2010). *Studieprocessamtaler.* Aarhus: Center for Undervisningsudvikling, Aarhus Universitet.

Bohm, D. (2013). *On Dialogue.* London and New York: Routledge Classics, Routledge.

Boud, D., Lawson, R. & Thompson, D.G. (2013). Does student engagement in self-assessment calibrate their judgment over time? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 2013 Vol. 38, No. 8,* 941–956.

Bowden J. & Marton, F. (1998). *The University of Learning,* Beyond Quality and Competence. London and New York: Routledge.

Buch. A. , Gringer, B. & Jarlov, L. (1997). *Mit liv, mit job, min fremtid*. København: DJØF, IDA, DM.

Cooperrider, D. & Whitney, D.D. (2005). Appreciative Inquiry – A Positive Revolution in Change. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Dewey J. (1933). *How we think: a restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston: Heath & CO Publishers.

Dysthe, O. (2005). Teoriforankring. En social-interaktiv og dialogisk læringsmodel. In Dysthe, O. *Det flerstemmige klasserum. Skrivning og samtale for at lære* (pp. 51-97). Århus: Klim.

Gough, D.A., Kirwan, D., Sutcliffe, S., Simpson, D., Houghton, N. (2003). *A systematic map and synthesis review for the effectiveness of personal development planning for improving student learning*, London: The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information, Coordinating Centre, Social Services Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

Hansen, S.D. (2010). Studieprocessamtalen som universitetspædagogisk redskab. *Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift, nr. 9 2010,* 55-58.

Hargreaves,D. (2000).OECD-CERI-GOVERNING-BOARD. Château de la Muette, Paris, Friday 24th March 2000, Presentation by Professor David Hargreaves, University of Cambridge, UK. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/1850140.pdf

Hornstrup, C. & Loehr Pedersen, J. (2003). *Udviklingssamtaler i grupper: udvikling gennem dialog*. København: Jurist- og Økonomforbundet.

Hornstrup, C., Tomm, K. & Johansen, T. (2009). Spørgsmål, der gør en forskel. *Nye tanker - nye muligheder.* 1-15. MacMann Berg. Retrieved from http://macmannberg.dk/wp-content/filer/Spoergsmaal__der_goer_en_forskel.pdf.

Hultengren, E. (1997). Medarbejderudviklingssamtalen som dialog. In H. Alrø (Ed.), *Organisationsudvikling gennem dialog* (pp. 79 - 107). Aalborg: Aalborg University Press.

Højlund Larsen, M. & Plenge, N. (2003). *Samtalebogen: om samtaler på arbejde*. København: Gyldendal.

Jackson, N. (2001). *Personal Development Planning. What does it mean*? LTSN, The Higher Education Academy. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265158472_Personal_development_planning_what_does_it_mean

Jensen, A. A. (2015). How Does It Feel To Become a Master's student? Boundary Crossing and Emotions Related to Understanding a New Educational Context. In B. Lund & T. Chemi (Eds.) *Dealing with Emotions*. *A Pedagogical Challenge to Innovative Learning,* (pp. 61-80). Rotterdam/Boston/Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Jensen, A.A. & Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen, L. (2013). Master students' trajectory towards a professional identity. In C. Rust (Ed.), *Improving Student Learning - Through Research and Scholar-*

ship: 20 years of ISL, (pp. 138-150). Oxford: Oxford Brookes University.

Karlsson, O. (2001). Critical Dialogue: Its Value and Meaning. *Evaluation*. SAGE Publications. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Vol 7(2), 211–227

Kember D. (1999). Determining the level of reflective thinking from students' written journals using a coding scheme based on the work of Mezirow. *International Journal of Lifelong Education. Vol. 18, No. 1*, 18 – 30.

Krogh, L. & A. A. Jensen (Eds.) (2012). *Visions, Challenges and Strategies for Problem-based Learning*. Aalborg: Aalborg University Publishers.

Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen, L. & A. A. Jensen (2013). Supporting Students' reflections in HE by use of Student Development Dialogues. In C. Rust (Ed.); *Improving Student Learning - Through Research and Scholarship: 20 years of ISL,* (pp. 151-163). Oxford: Oxford Brookes University.

Laursen, J. (1999). *MedarbejderUdviklingssamtaler: det udviklende arbejdsmiljø*. København: Danmarks Forvaltningshøjskole.

Lindgren, M. (2001). *Utvecklingssamtal mellan chefer och medarbetere: undersökning av en samtaltyp i arbetslivet*. Lund: Lunds Universitet. Institutionen för nordiska språk.

Lorentsen, A. (2008). Portfoliounderstøttede udviklingssamtaler i videregående uddannelse – Evaluering af en case. *Arbejdspapirer om læring*. 4. 2008. Aalborg: Institut for Uddannelse, Læring og Filosofi, Aalborg Universitet. Retrieved from http://vbn.aau.dk/files/14259052/wp_4_2008_9788791543593.pdf

Lorentsen, A. & Lund, B. (2008). Indførelse af portfolio som pædagogisk redskab og som struktur for dokumentation af kompetence i kandidatuddannelse – potentialer og udfordringer. In B. Lund (Ed.), *Portfolio i et lærings- og uddannelsesperspektiv* (pp. 109-142). Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetsforlag.

Lund, B. & Jensen, A. A. (2011). Framing of Collaboration and its Impact on Creativity and Innovative Skills. In M. Horsdal (Ed.), *Communication, Collaboration and Creativity: Researching Adult Learning*. (pp. 145-160). Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag.

Lund, B. & Jensen, A. A. (2012). Creativity development by management training in POPBL. In L. Krogh Kjær-Rasmussen & A.A. Jensen (Eds.), *Visions, Challenges and Strategies for Problembased Learning.* (pp. 117-135). Aalborg : Aalborg Universitetsforlag.

McMillan, J.H. & Hearn, J. (2008). Student Self-Assessment: The Key to Stronger Student Motivation and Higher Achievement. *Educational Horizons, Vol. 87, Iss. 1*, 40.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mott, L. (1992). *Systemudvikling: Den menneskelige dimension*. København: Samfundslitteratur.

Oxvig-Østergaard, I. (1986). *Gør udviklingssamtalen mere positiv*. København: Civiløkonomerne.

Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.

Scheuer, J. (2001). *Dialogisk interaktion i medarbejdersamtaler*. Aalborg: Aalborg Universitet.

Schmid, P.F. (2001). Comprehension: the art of not knowing. Dialogical and ethical perspectives on empathy as dialogue in personal and person-centred relationships. In S. Haugh & T. Merry (Eds.) *Empathy*, (pp. 1-19). Llongarron, Ross-on-Wye (PCCS Books).

Steen, T. (2000). *Dynamiske medarbejderudviklingssamtaler*. Frederikshavn: Dafolo.

Stratton-Berkessel, R (2010). Appreciative inquiry for collaborative solutions: 21 Strengths based workshops. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer. Retrieved from http://positivitystrategist.com/author/pmadminrsb/

Strivens, J. & Ward, R. (2010). An overview of the development of Personal Development Planning (PDP) and e-Portfolio practice in UK higher education. *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education, Special Edition: Researching and Evaluating PDP and e-Portfolio Practice*, 1-23.

Säljö, R. (2003). *Læring i praksis – et sociokulturelt perspektiv*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Trads, S.F. (2000). *Interpersonelle relationer i medarbejdersamtaler*. Ph.d. –thesis. Aalborg: Institut for Kommunikation. Aalborg Universitet

Ulriksen, L. (2004). Den implicitte studerende. *Dansk Pædagogisk Tidsskrift, 3*, 48-59.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society. The Development of Higher Psychological Processes.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Werner, J.M. & DeSimone, R. (2005). *Human Resource Development*. New York: Thomson South Western.

Williams, E. A., Butt, G. W., Gray, C., Leach, S., Marr, A., Soares, A. (1998). Mentors' use of dialogue within a secondary initial teacher education partnership. *Educational Review, 00131911, Nov 98, Vol. 50, Issue 3*, 225-239.

Appendix

Preparation form for Student Development Dialogue
The preparation form has to be sent to the dialogue partner no later than 2 days before the dialogue meeting

1st Semester
Name (student): _____

Name (dialogue partner): _____

Date: _____

Motivation
On wishes for your study
Here we ask about your motivation for choosing the XX study programme.
1. What is your motivation for choosing to educate yourself to becoming Bachelor / Master in XX? (Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What are your expectations for the education and what do you wish to learn and study through the education?
(Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Past
On your present competences

Below, we ask you to write about your background, and the experiences on which you build and expand by taking the course in XX.

1. Sketch out your present professional profile and explain the formal and informal competences you have acquired through your previous education and job experience, if any.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Try to assess your strong and weak points as regards subject-related knowledge and your study-related competences.
(Describe and state your reasons for each point, and give examples of how your competences are expressed)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Present
On status and need for development towards your Bachelor/Master profile

These questions target your present education and how you get the most out of it.

1. How do you feel in relation to the study – both in terms of subject-orientation and social relations?
   (Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. How can you create connection and coherence between your previous education and your present study?
   (Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What do you already know about your own way of acquiring knowledge? What is your preferred way of learning?
(Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Which knowledge and competences do you need to and wish to strengthen through your education?
(Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Future
On development activities and learning strategies

The last part of the form focuses on your immediate future and how you can make a strategy for reaching your goals.

1. What are your wishes for your future competence and job profile?
(Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Which possibilities do you see in the study programme modules to support you in development of your future Bachelor / Master profile?
(Describe and state your reasons)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Which learning strategies do you need for developing your profile?
(E.g. learning to structure your work, develop your study technique, learning to read and understand theories, working steadily without getting stressed, collaborating in study groups, receiving support from fellow students, getting support due to dyslexia, reading training, improving English language skills, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Follow -up-reflection

The after-reflection has to be sent to the dialogue partner no later than a week after the meeting has taken place.

Describe the reflections you have had after the Student Development Dialogue.

1. Describe your learning goals until the next Student Development Dialogue:
(Sum up elements from the form and the dialogue)
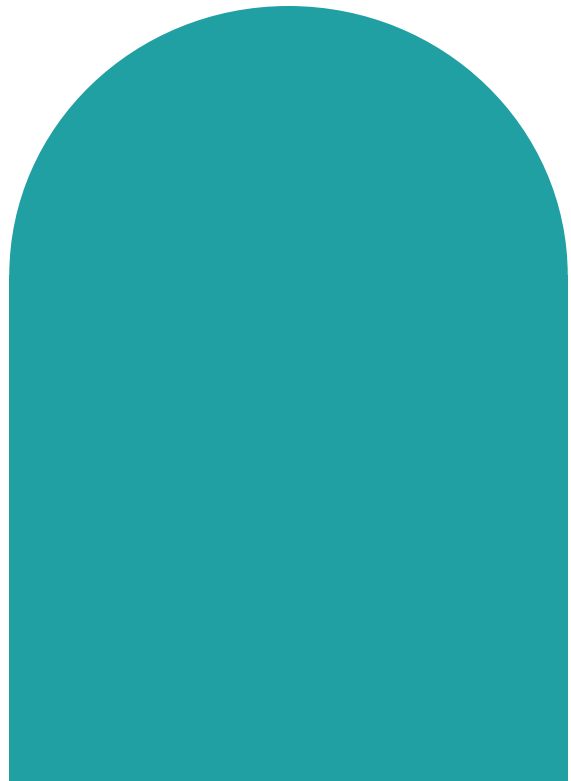
_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

AALBORG UNIVERSITY PRESS

The series includes

The booklet presents a pedagogical method to support students in reflecting on important aspects related to the study processes they are going through, in order for them to become more aware of challenges they have to face during these processes. The method aims to empower students to find ways to overcome their challenges and to support them in completing their education. The Student Development Dialogue (SDD) represents a holistic perspective on the student, that allows individual students to integrate their past (life, work and educational experiences) and connect it with the present as far as their interests and the formal educational goals are concerned, and thence with the future, regarding their wishes for their personal academic career.