

KISTA OPEN ACADEMY

RECRUITING STUDENTS / STUDY GUIDANCE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Recruiting of students has been done in many ways throughout the years. In Sweden we have professional study guidance counsellors and traditionally the prospective student has had to visit an institution or a school to meet the counsellor. Of course students also have been recruited through brochures, exhibitions, labour agencies, organisations, etc not to mention personal contacts with friends in daily life but as a rule counselling has taken place in an office and the process has been somewhat institutionalized. This has definitely been an obstacle for what we today call our target groups.

In order to decrease the number of unemployed and receivers of social security benefits the aim today is to develop methods to find new ways of recruiting target group individuals.

A national project has launched methods as follows

- identify key persons in the borough
- approach the target group
- motivate to studies
- develop introductory courses
- make individual study plans

Objectives:

- Half the social security benefit costs
- Make individually directed efforts with respect for the individual's dreams about the future
- Study guidance shall be actively provided at the most important meeting places in society

In Kista there are two study guidance counsellors. They have their base at Kista Job and Learning Centre where they work with study guidance and also as coaches for job searching. They collaborate closely with the social services and the employment office. In Kista there are six chosen meeting places that the counsellors are visiting regularly to inform and motivate adults to studies.

1. The Salvation Army's open activities for women in Akalla.

This is an open meeting place for women and children specially directed to immigrants. One of the chief aims is to break the isolation for the women by offering a meeting place where you can be together irrespective of nationality and religion. Activities are arranged in

accordance with what the women themselves want to do and everything is built on voluntariness. Some courses are offered i.e. basic Swedish, keep-fit measures, cooking etc and there are also groups for the children. The staff members help the women with all sorts of practical advice and contact with authorities.

The counsellors make a visit here once every month to talk to the women and give information.

2. Meeting place 12

This is a non-profit association that started in 19997, formed by some unemployed persons who wanted to have a meeting place during day time. Today the place is open to lonely persons of all kinds who want to meet people and here there are activities like computer knowledge courses, Internet café, study circles and also outings are being arranged. People come here to be together, talk and break isolation but also to get help in the contact with authorities. The ambition is to help people understand how the Swedish society works.

The counsellors visit this meeting place once every month to talk and inform about actual courses and education on the whole.

3. Open pre-school

This is an open pre-school for parents, especially mothers that are at home with children aged 0-6. Here they can get together, have a cup of coffee/tea and talk.

The counsellors come here once every month to have informal talks with those who happen to be there. They discuss future plans, evaluation, Swedish for immigrants and of course ways of getting grants and allowances to finance studies.

4. Meeting Place

This meeting place is centrally located at Husby square. It is a modest form of citizens' advice bureau run by the local authority committee. The idea is to offer an open place for everybody to mirror the multicultural population living in Husby. In the locality there is a café with computers with access to internet that could be used free of charge between 9-17 o'clock.

The study organisation ABF have computer knowledge courses here and lots of activities arranged by associations of various sorts, parties, weddings, exhibitions, meetings, etc are taking place here.

The counsellors come here twice every month to offer information and individual talks in the café.

5. Kista Meeting Place

This is a citizens' advice bureau for Kista located in the shopping area. It is a place where you can meet several authorities i.e. the national insurance office, CSN (the authority that administrates study grants and allowances), consumer guidance, law, debt and budget guidance, local trade and industry co-ordinator.

Every Wednesday between 4 and 6 pm the study counsellors offer their services here to drop-in visitors. Some of the visitors come here specifically to see the counsellor but some come here for other reasons but use the opportunity to take advantage of the study guidance.

6. The Employment Agency in Kista

Here the study counsellors come every Monday morning to offer their services. They inform individually or in groups about studies, study grants and allowances. The regular contact with the staff here is very important for both parts.

Outreach activities

We know from experience that some components are more important than others when it comes to achieving good results in recruiting.

Environment

The environment is important. The counsellor comes to the individual's home surroundings where the individual feel safe. This could be a place where people meet, have a cup of coffee/tea, chat and have a nice time together.

The atmosphere is friendly and informal.

Time

Experience shows that time is an essential fact in connection with study guidance. In many ways it is a process and people need time to reflect before they make their decisions. The regularity of the counsellor's visits is also an important factor.

Accessibility

There are many ways of looking at accessibility. The fact that the counsellors come regularly to the same places at a specific time means some sort of accessibility. Both individuals and collaborating partners know where to come and when. It is also important to point out that the counsellors come to them. They don't have to go to a formal office. This means a lot psychologically, more than most of us could imagine. You don't have to book a time, you don't have to look for the right person and it is in your local environment. The chance of getting spontaneous, positive effects is good.

Method of working

Important ingredients in the counsellors' work at the meeting places are talking about studies, schools, financial support, evaluation of certificates, filling in forms and delivering all sorts of information.

The informal part of the work is important. By getting together having some small talk you can spread information and give influences you otherwise couldn't. This way the counsellors get information about the individuals that help a lot when planning for their future.

Professionality

Some personal qualities are important. Listening is one. It makes people feel more secure. The signals you send makes the whole difference. People must feel that they can trust you, that you are not one of those formal representatives of authorities they have met so often. They must feel that they can ask questions, perhaps reveal rather personal secrets and sorrows, information that could be vital for individual planning of the future. Via informal talks the counsellors find out about previous education, vocational experience, dreams and hopes.

Network

The counsellors have a large network in the borough and collaborates with the borough management, various authorities, non-profit associations, study associations, community health care centre, social care services and various organisations defending professional/industrial interests.

It helps a lot having many contacts in the neighbouring society. Collaborating is essential to achieve good results.

Unconventional methods

In Kista our study guidance counsellors have always had a liking for unconventional methods. Last year a mini learning centre was established at the borough library in Kista. One of our counsellors work 20 hours a week there.

The two last years we have arranged exhibitions with about 30 exhibitors representing all levels of education.

Our counsellors have also tried spontaneously to move out into the square close to the market place to create unconventional meetings with the population. They brought a table and some chairs and spent some hours there in the open having lots of visitors and could register very good results.

Study guidance counsellors are one of the most important tools to open doors to lifelong learning. In Kista we are lucky to have counsellors that are always open to trying new methods and establish new arenas on the terms of the target groups!

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