Supporting students with disabilities / Inclusive Higher Education

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Case 1 (Chris)

“Mijn vastberadendheid zet mij telkens opnieuw vast. De begeleiding helpt me om te leren twijfelen.”

“I’m constantly driven into a corner by my determination. The support I’m getting, teaches me to reconsider my point of view.”

Case 1: Background

• Chris, a School of Arts (Music) student, struggles with his education

• School reports following concerns:
  • Student with ASD (autism spectrum disorder)
  • Antagonistic towards staff and curriculum
  • Communication between student and staff is difficult and often aggressive
  • Numerous physical complaints: inflamed wrists, aching joints, ...
Case 1: Background (2)

- Chris reports following issues:
  - School doesn’t offer a quality education
  - In constant pain
  - Never stops thinking, no peace and quiet in his mind

- “I do not want to talk about the ways my environment has to adapt and the adjustments they have to make because of my autism!”

Question

- What would you do in this case? How would you handle this?

  www.zeetings.com/SGD
Case 1: Interventions

- First approach: exploring Chris’s point of view
  - Why his resistance/antagonism? What won’t he accept?
  - What are his goals?
  - Chris does not want to be reduced to his diagnosis.
  - Strong and narrow focus on a successful life and career as a professional musician

- Different elements to consider when working with Chris:
  - Body language
  - Exploring his identity
  - Interpersonal communication: with the school, with fellow students
  - Student counselor and stuvo psychologist closely working together
Case 1: Conclusions

• Benefits of a stuvo counselor:
  • Maintains a certain distance from teaching staff
  • Deliberately takes on a naive position towards student and their education
  • Has the opportunity to act as an impartial witness, to listen to stories and experiences with an immediate need for intervention

• Turning away from autism and exploring other aspects of Chris’ identity made it possible to also discuss ASD and its effect

Case 2 (Laura)
Case 2: Background

- Laura is a student enrolled in an occupational therapy program
- Very high grades
- Student with ASD (autism spectrum disorder)
- Question: help me identify lecturers’ and institution’s expectations of me as a student and help me prepare for/engage with them
- Potential question raised by lecturers: ‘Can a student with ASD successfully graduate as an occupational therapist?’

Question

- What would you do in this case? How would you handle this?
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Case 2: Interventions

- Bringing Laura into contact with her student counselor: exploring the different expectations of each course and the best ways to communicate with lecturers

- Providing lecturers with information on ASD and tips on ways to interact with Laura

- Individual meetings with each lecturer: clarifying remarks and feedback from lecturer, trying to create mutual understanding in student-teacher communication

Case 2: Interventions

- Meeting with several parties (staff, STUVO member, student counselor, expert from the ASD BanaBa program): aim to shift focus from ‘can she graduate’ to ‘every student has a right to learn’

- Several classes (including the internship component) cause stress, but are completed successfully; yet there still remains doubt among teaching staff

- Laura – together with the stuvo team and a psychiatrist – wrote a ‘Laura manual’: her strengths, needs, how she studies and why
Case 2: Interventions

- Open invite to all lecturers to browse the ‘manual’ and ask questions (5 lecturers attended)

- Constant collaboration between Laura, stuvo psychologist and student counselor (assisted by Laura’s psychiatrist when necessary)

Case 2: Conclusions

- Acts as case manager, remaining in contact with all parties and keeping an overview

- Benefits: distance from teaching staff offers the opportunity to confront lecturers when necessary
  - => need for close collaboration with student counselor
  - Deliberately takes on a naive position
‘Maatwerk’ within Student Support Services

Maatwerk in practice

START
Intake assessment concerning reasonable adjustments (student support counselor)

(Intermediate) assessment and, if necessary, adjustment of approach

Application ‘Maatwerk’ service to case

Design support plan and start implementation
Conclusion

• Position stuvo:
  • Distance/case manager
  • Psychological and social support services
  • Close collaboration between different stakeholders

• ‘Maatwerk’ is tailored to specific needs!

• Gon → AP = numerous opportunities for closer collaboration between course and counselor and monitoring of the students’ needs and progress

Questions?