

Title: Online Mentorship – The Answer to Support Vulnerable Young People Around the World?

Facilitator and room number: Simon Fakir & Christoph Selig; 1.401

Documented by: Anika Kriesel

Number of participants: 6

Who are you and to which institution do you belong?

My Name is Simon Fakir and I am Co-Founder and CTO of Volunteer Vision. One of our priorities is supporting SOS young people on employability through innovative and sustainable methods.

We enable employees worldwide to engage as digital 1:1 mentors for young jobseekers between 18 and 29 years old. Our platform enables mentors and mentees to meet online and to conduct joint online learning sessions with embedded eLearning materials. By measuring the social as well as business impact, we can make distinctive statements about the personal as well as professional development of both mentors and mentees.

SOS Children's Villages is the largest non-governmental organisation focused on supporting children without parental care and families at risk in 135 countries and territories. We help children who can no longer live with their parents and families in difficult living conditions so children can grow up in a nurturing environment and their rights to care, education, health and protection are respected and fulfilled. For more information, visit www.sos-childrensvillages.org

We also work on the integration of innovation and technology to support the development of children, young people, their families focusing on digital skills development with e-learning, online mentorship, development of ICT skills, access to technology and online education resources in emergency situations, etc.

For more information, visit www.sos-childrensvillages.org/ict4d

Starting questions:

Is online mentorship an answer to support vulnerable youngsters at scale around the globe?

What does it take to make online mentoring effective? How do you build a valuable and learn-orientated relationship online? Online mentoring – an overrated hype or the next step in eLearning?

Sequence of content:

First, the facilitators introduced the GoTeach-mentoring project of Deutsche Post DHL and the role of Volunteer Vision as digital experts. Both are collaborating with SOS Children's Villages.

Afterwards, the online mentoring system of Volunteer Vision was presented. The session ended with a question round and a discussion.

Main arguments presented by the facilitator:

Teenagers of SOS Children's Villages need role models and local employees of DHL could support them.

Therefore, the multistakeholder pilot project was implemented to connect people around the world regardless their location through an online mentoring platform.

Advantages of this online mentoring are a more precise matching of people, the personal online training sessions at the beginning, a platform with content packages, automatic reminders, automatic feedback forms and the fact that more people can be reached at low costs.

Main points of discussion:

Discussed were the advantages and disadvantages of online and offline mentoring as well as their challenges and opportunities. Another point of discussion were the session packages with topics

such as job orientation, application processes, first hand work experiences, language, Microsoft Office skills and general soft skills offered on the platform by Volunteer Vision.

Results of the session:

- Online mentoring is less “emotional” than offline mentoring and the relationship building and support in emergencies is limited. Nevertheless, it can also be seen as a complementary option for offline mentoring in cases such as sickness or if students go abroad.
- Generally, the online mentoring “contract” should be only for ten sessions, one hour each, to motivate both sides and establish confidence towards the role as mentor and mentee. In reality, in most of the cases the mentor and mentee talk longer than one hour anyway and continue the relationship after the ten sessions.

Main statements highlighting the results of the discussion:

- It is essential, that offline and online mentoring are complementary and not in competition.
- For the success of the mentoring, automatic reminders are very helpful in order to reduce dropout rates and motivate busy mentors to meet their mentees.
- The motivation of employees to volunteer in their free-time is one of the main challenges.

One thing that was laughed about:

“Letting companies pay for it! That’s a good idea!”

Further remarks:

The mentors are trained by SOS Children’s Village, they also coordinate their visits and ensure compliance with countries regulation.

The programme is financed by corporate partners like Telecom, who pay per license for their company. For the future, the facilitators wish to provide more material and topics for the sessions and would appreciate any collaboration with other organisations.