‘Family and character – recipe for success in integration of NEETs?’

Simonas Gaušas
Partner/ Research Manager

9th December 2015, Conference
‘Influence of open youth work to the implementation of youth guarantee initiative’, Vilnius
Contents

Who?
Why?
What?
How?
Visionary Analytics – who we are

• Research-based policy advisory provider, founded in 2012 by experienced people with burning interest in...

• …EDUCATION:
  – Developing green construction skills (BUILD UP Skills Initiative)
  – Thematic Country Review of Apprenticeships in Lithuania
  – Development of the Lithuanian Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030”

• …INNOVATION:
  – Social and economic Return on Investment in R&D
  – Roadmaps for implementing smart specialisation strategy in LT
  – Lithuanian high technologies development feasibility study
Why family? Why character?

- **FAMILY:**
  - Quality nurturing is key for child’s success later in life

- **CHARACTER:**
  - Character is as important for child’s success later in life as cognitive (academic) skills
The importance of FAMILY (1)

- Trauma and chronic stress can cause changes in part of the brain (prefrontal cortex) which is responsible for self-regulatory activities.

- This can negatively affect the child’s e.g. ability to concentrate and ability to handle emotional disappointments.

- Effects may be inward (depression) or outward (aggressive behaviour).
Michael Meaney experiments

A pup that is raised by an anxious, low-nurturing mother becomes an anxious adult.

A pup that is raised by a relaxed, high-nurturing mother becomes a relaxed adult.
The importance of FAMILY (2)

• Parents are antidote to trauma and chronic stress. The effect of good parenting is not just emotional or psychological, it is biochemical. It is especially significant in early childhood.

• High quality nurturing (comforting, hugging, talking):
  – acts as a buffer against the biochemical damages trauma and stress can cause to a child
  – helps to manage stress and self-regulate
Attachment

- Mary Ainsworth experiments in 1960s with emotional capacity of 1 year old children:
  - Securely attached
  - Anxiously attached

- Minnesota study (2005) tracked these children for decades and concluded that securely attached children were:
  - Pre-school: more attentive and engaged
  - At the age of ten: more confident, more curious, better deal with setbacks
  - In secondary school: less drop outs
How to ensure secure attachment?

- Child-parent psychotherapy
  - Identifying at-risk parents
  - Promoting stronger relationships between children and parents
  - Intensive – sometimes once per week for as long as one year
  - Evaluations show significant positive effects of such interventions

- Programs that target emotional, psychological and neurological pathways can be also effective for teenagers

- Youth advocate programmes
  - Substitute or supplementary family structures for children who do not have them
  - Mentors for children
  - Mentors involve children in their life
Introduction to the Study and its Methods

The importance of CHARACTER (1)

• Character – values (change overtime) Vs abilities/ strengths (remain relevant in time)
• 24 character strengths by Seligman/ Peterson:
  – Traditional: bravery, citizenship, fairness, wisdom, integrity
  – Emotional: love, humour, zest, appreciation of beauty
  – Day-to-day interactions: social intelligence, kindness, gratitude
• Strengths are very much changeable. Even IQ is NOT permanent (IQ and M&M’s)
• 2 types of character development initiatives:
  – Moral character (vague, value judgement, whose?) – ethical values (fairness, generosity, respect, tolerance, honesty, etc.)
  – Performance character (concrete/ tangible, no judgement, person’s abilities!) – values like effort, diligence, perseverance
Importance of transversal skills – general

Higher education graduates recruited in the last 3-5 years have the skills required to work in respondents’ companies

Flash Eurobarometer 304 (2010)
Importance of transversal skills – teamwork

Satisfaction with the skills and capabilities of higher education graduate recruits

Teamworking skills

Flash Eurobarometer 304 (2010)
Importance of transversal skills – communication

Satisfaction with the skills and capabilities of higher education graduate recruits

Communication skills

Flash Eurobarometer 304 (2010)
Importance of transversal skills – ability to adapt

Satisfaction with the skills and capabilities of higher education graduate recruits

*Ability to adapt to and act in new situations*

Flash Eurobarometer 304 (2010)
Importance of transversal skills – problem-solving

Satisfaction with the skills and capabilities of higher education graduate recruits
Analytical and problem-solving skills

Flash Eurobarometer 304 (2010)
Importance of transversal skills – planning

Satisfaction with the skills and capabilities of higher education graduate recruits
Planning and organisational skills

Flash Eurobarometer 304 (2010)
Importance of transversal skills – decision-making

Satisfaction with the skills and capabilities of higher education graduate recruits

Decision-making skills

Flash Eurobarometer 304 (2010)
The importance of CHARACTER (2)

- Character = intellect or academic knowledge
- Harder to develop abilities for long-term goals (M&M’s now versus diploma later)
- Achievement = motivation + willpower
- How to balance them out?
Knowledge Is Power Programme (KIPP)(1)

• Middle school for disadvantaged 10-14 year olds since 1995
• ‘Second family’ focused on climbing the mountain to college
• Faced very high drop out rates among college students
• Changed strategy:
  – Focused on 7 key character strengths
    1. Grit (passionate commitment to a single mission and dedication for it)
    2. Self-control
    3. Zest (living life with a sense of excitement, anticipation, and energy)
    4. Social intelligence
    5. Gratitude
    6. Optimism
    7. Curiosity

....
Knowledge Is Power Programme (KIPP)(2)

• Changed strategy:
  – Focused on 7 key character strengths....
  – ....Introduced tools at KIPP:
    • Character report card
    • Social portrait of a child with strengths and weaknesses
    • Therapy based on reflection of own actions
    • Creating and sticking to rules (mental willpower)
  – Alumni support programme monitoring college persistence (academic, financial, socio-emotional and non-cognitive)

• KIPP provides a substitute for social safety net
Character Lab
Character lab

• Early stage nonprofit on a mission to develop character

• Team of researchers, designers, and educators working on:
  – Discover the ideas and strategies that build character
  – Translate good ideas to useful products (e.g. character growth card, goal setting instrument)
  – Ensure that people who work with students do what the research says is best, e.g.:
    • rich material how to develop different character strengths)
    • throughout the year, Character Lab invites educators to participate in short-term design sessions with their staff
The importance of CHARACTER (3)

• Character = habits

  Watch your thoughts, they become words
  Watch your words, they become actions
  Watch your actions, they become habits
  Watch your habits, they become your character
  Watch your character, it becomes your destiny

Frank Outlaw

• Not kids are good or bad, but they habits are
• Shifting from fixed mindset to growth mindset
Next steps – do we...

• ...promote stronger relationships between children and parents?
• ...adequately mentor our teenagers?
• ...have social portrait of NEETs?
• ...stress character to the same level as IQ?
• ...measure character?
• ...have character development programme?
• ...experiment enough?
Interesting, but too short?


- Watch: TEDx talks about importance of character and teaching character

- Visit: Character Lab
Thank You

Simonas Gaušas
Visionary Analytics

Simonas@visionary.lt

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