The Model of Career Crisis Management for Women as a Means of Career Development in Relation to Lifelong Education

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the model of career crisis management for women, which was developed by the author. The research aims to evaluate the author's model of career crisis management as a means for career development in relation to lifelong education activities, which are carried out during contact hours, in the e-environment and as individual assignments. A repeated expert evaluation was performed to achieve the aim. The expert evaluation concluded that if using the model of career crisis management as a scientifically justified inference (observing the principle of gender conformity) and as a set of prerequisites (education content, kinds of counselling, various methods of counselling), it was possible to encourage women being in a career crisis situation to develop various skills (career management, decision-making, communication, computer skills, skills to adapt to new conditions etc.), thereby providing professional counselling for their career support through informing, educating and advising them by employing progressive methods (e-counselling, e-mentorism).

Keywords: women's career development, career support model, professional crisis management, lifelong education.

Introduction

Lifelong education means acquiring education and knowledge throughout the entire lifetime regardless of age and education or social status. It also influences the mental development of individuals, giving an opportunity to develop themselves and be knowledgeable in a particular field as well as to raise self-confidence, which leads to positive results when competing with others. However, not everyone who wishes to learn is given such an opportunity because acquiring education throughout the entire lifetime is influenced by the financial situation of the individual, the lack of information as well as technological resources.

The *Europe 2020* strategy sets the following priorities: smart growth, an economy based on knowledge and innovation, sustainable growth based on efficient uses of resources and inclusive growth based on a high employment rate. It also envisages reducing the number of individuals subject to the risk of poverty, which currently total 20 million, until 2020. This is a large number of people needing assistance in their career development. In Europe, 63% of women are employed, compared with 76% of men (Communication from the Commission..., 2010, 12).

In recent years, adult lifelong education has become urgent in Latvia, which is related to the situation with unemployment. As of 29 February 2016, there were 86581 registered unemployed individuals in Latvia, of which 44443 were women who needed assistance in their career development, which would involve both counselling and an educational programme (Maskaļovs, 2015; Women and men..., 2013, 22).

The successor of the Lisbon strategy – the Europe 2020 strategy – stresses the need to promote the integration of individuals into the labour market, the recognition of non-formal education and daily learning and the improvement of learning outcomes, to increase the topicality and openness of the education system as well as to build competences in residents, which are necessary for their further education throughout the entire lifetime (ES 2020 Stratēģija Lisabonas..., 2014; Mūžilga karjeras atbalsta politika..., 2011; Mūžilgs karjeras..., 2011).

D.Liegeniece (2002), based on the ideas suggested by M.Knowles (Knowles, 1988), concludes that adults get ready to learn when they feel the need to know how to do something in order to effectively change some aspect of their life. Besides, M.Knowles (Knowles, 1988) believes that it is not a good idea to wait until this readiness develops by itself and points that the readiness of adults to learn is associated with the following factors:

- understanding of what they need to know;
- focus on real problems rather than study courses;
- internal motivation to learn.

Lifelong education provides a positive result if individuals can use their acquired knowledge in their job and social life, thus raising their self-confidence and worthiness in society. Knowledge acquired influences the development of individuals throughout their entire lifetime.

Lifelong education means not only caring about one's own education and development but also contributing to the development of the whole national economy. As mentioned in the Lifelong Learning Memorandum, successful transition to an economy and a society that are based on knowledge requires transition to lifelong education (Mūžizglītības memorands, 2000; Latvijas Nacionālais, 2012). However, the change of a profession or a job is influenced not only by an economic crisis but also by individuals' own wish to change themselves or to acquire something new and to perfect their knowledge.

In Latvia, opportunities to acquire and perfect one's knowledge throughout the entire lifetime are provided by the government, local authorities and the private sector, and the opportunities are expanded and improved from year to year. Adults may continue or start learning at various educational institutions and in various ways (Mūžizglītība Tavai..., 2008; Mūžizglītības aktuālās..., 2008).

Women's career development, using lifelong education opportunities, and professional crises are currently very urgent problems. In professional crisis situations, women urgently need to refresh their knowledge, skills and competences in order to retain their professionalism and to fully participate in social events and their personal growth and career development. Also, women's successful integration into the labour market contributes to the development of the entire national economy. The problem is that women, getting into professional crisis situations, face difficulties to change their job as well the risk of depression increases. The author's research done over several years justifies the necessity for assistance in overcoming a career crisis, which is offered by the author in her model of career crisis management that includes an online lifelong learning programme.

The research aim is to evaluate the author's model of career crisis management as a means for career development in relation to lifelong education.

Methodology

A repeated expert evaluation of the model of career crisis management for women was performed in January 2016 to achieve the aim. The model was enhanced based on the experts' recommendations. The first variant of the model was developed and its expert evaluation was done in May 2015, and it was published in the *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science* (Racene, Dislere, 2016). That research was carried out within the doctoral study programme at Latvia University of Agriculture, Institute of Education and Home Economics. All the experts involved in the research were selected among professionals who lived and worked in Latvia and had a length of service of more than 10 years. The four experts had experience in pedagogy and career counselling. They based their opinions on the importance of the model of career crisis management in career development in relation to lifelong education on their pedagogical and career counselling experience. The author developed a questionnaire and sent it together with a theoretical description of the model to the experts for evaluation. Kendall's W was employed to identify concordance among the experts. Before it, the model was approbated and a client developing lifelong education programme was tested on a group of 18 individuals – unemployed women registered with the State Employment Agency in 2015. The programme was developed and is available online in the Moodle environment (Racene, 2016).

The research aim is to evaluate the author's model of career crisis management as a means for career development in relation to lifelong education. Specific research tasks:

- 1. To activate discussion about the author's model of career crisis management for women as a means for career development in relation to lifelong education.
- 2. To perform an expert evaluation of the author's model of career crisis management.

Legal acts and other information sources were used to perform the tasks and achieve the aim. The present research employed statistical analysis methods: descriptive statistics in MS Excel and expert evaluation in SPSS.

Results and discussion

Necessity of lifelong learning in career development

In theory, lifelong learning is viewed as a unified system, and it continues throughout the entire lifetime. Individual motivation to learn and various education opportunities are the key factors for successfully implementing lifelong learning. The Lifelong Learning Memorandum calls for considerably increasing the demand for education as well as the range of opportunities for education, particularly with regard to those who least benefited from education and learning. This means that education and learning systems have to be adapted to individual needs in relation to labour market requirements. There are three basic types of purposeful learning (Table 1)

Table 1

Formal	Informal learning	
learning		
It takes place at educational and training institutions,	certificates and diplomas; instead, certificates are granted that confirm the completion of a course. Non-formal learning may take place at the job or it can be provided by civil society organisations and groups. Non-	<u>Informal learning</u> is a natural addition of daily life. Daily informal learning is not always purposeful and, therefore, sometimes people do not perceive it as perfecting their knowledge and skills.

Basic types of purposeful learning (Lifelong Learning Memorandum, 2000)

Non-formal learning plays an increasing role in the continuous process of lifelong education. Nonformal learning takes place outside schools, colleges and universities. Informal learning is usually not taken into consideration at all, although it is the oldest form of education and is the key form of learning in early childhood and, nowadays, throughout the entire lifetime.

American scientist M.Knowles, researching informal learning, finds that the best way how to organise informal learning is to employ the group and forum approaches. It is because there are significant differences between the interests in organised classes and the interests in lecture, forum and club programmes. The former are likely to be stable, long-term interests, while the latter are more transitory. Forums and club programmes are more flexible than organised classes. In a programme series the topics can range from pure entertainment to serious lectures, while an organised class is necessarily limited to a single subject-matter area. The lecture, forum, and club types of programmes generally require less commitment of time, money and energy from participants than do organised classes. As a result they are likely to attract people with somewhat less intense interest, thus gradually involving the people in lifelong education programmes and arousing their motivation to learn in order to contribute to their career growth (Knowles, 1988; Smith, 2002).

The author concludes that women's development takes place owing to lifelong education, and lifelong education is an opportunity to educate and employ oneself, to expand one's views, to be among the public and be satisfied with oneself and, finally, to find a job appropriate for one's education and skills or to start self-employment. Lifelong education involves learning throughout the entire lifetime. It is based on the necessity caused by the internal need or an exogenous factor (most often, it is the work environment) to acquire and perfect one's knowledge and skills. Nowadays, in the era of fast scientific and technological progress and high technologies, knowledge and skills acquired through formal learning get obsolete very fast. Lifelong education together with a specifically organised system of both formal and non-formal further learning contributes to the comprehensive development of personalities

and allows them to adapt to the new era and social changes and, if persistently raising their qualification or even undergoing retraining, not to lose their jobs or to timely change the jobs. In a purposefully planned further education system, lifelong education gives an opportunity to implement the principle of "learning throughout the entire lifetime" (Mūžu dzīvo, mūžu mācies, 2015). One of the components of lifelong education is adult education. Adult education is defined as a multiform educational process focusing on adults and providing the development of individuals and their competitiveness in the labour market throughout the lifetime (Izglītības likums, 1998). The forms of adult education are as follows: distance learning, various courses, seminars, online studies, use of the web etc. Nowadays, it is expected from adult education to increase the feeling of worthiness in all the participants after completing a course, and it could serve as the basis for the individuals to successfully integrate into the labour market. Acquiring new skills through lifelong education programmes can help create an individuality of another kind that is able to cope with a crisis and to engage in the professional and social life.

The European project AE-PRO, developed by the European Adult Education Association (EAEA), offers e-learning for educators of adults regarding adult education management and best practice examples in European countries. The objectives of the project, which started in 2015 and offers online studies free of charge in European countries, are as follows (AEpro, 2015):

- to raise the level of knowledge of employees about adult education in Europe;
- to implement the exchange of innovations through intergenerational learning;
- to provide an opportunity to learn from experts and peers;
- to give educators of adults an opportunity for professional development using Erasmus+ mobility grants.

The author appreciates activities initiated by Europe that are aimed at the professional development of educators of adults and borrows ideas for perfecting her *Client Developing Programme for career change for women being in professional crisis situations*. A number of scientists have worked on various aspects of women's career development, for example, J.Bimrose did an investigation into why the work done by women and men is differently evaluated by the public and analysed the ways how women can successfully integrate into the labour market (Bimrose, 2008); C.Chen worked a lot on the specifics of counselling women to help the women effectively combine their job and family responsibilities (Chen, 2008); D. Zytowski (Zytowski, 1969/2011) examined career development with regard to the role and responsibilities of a mother in a household; L.Belanger researched the ways how women can be successful if engaging in business (Belanger, 2015).

To provide career support to women being in professional crisis situations, the author developed the model of career crisis management as a means for career development in relation to lifelong education.

Characteristics of the Model of Career Crisis Management for Women

The model in career counselling specifies and allows forecasting expected outcomes from career support. Therefore, it is important to integrate such a model into career counselling, including career education, career support and career research, to achieve a result.

To provide assistance to women being in professional crisis situations, the author developed the **Model** of Career Crisis Management (Figure 1).

The **target audience** are women who wish or are forced to change their occupation and who are in a professional crisis situation.

The **purpose of the model** is to examine the situation in a client's career development, to determine the key ways of starting the career change, to identify the client's skills and wishes, to assess the feasibility of the client's future profession and to offer career counselling and an educational programme in order to overcome the professional crisis.

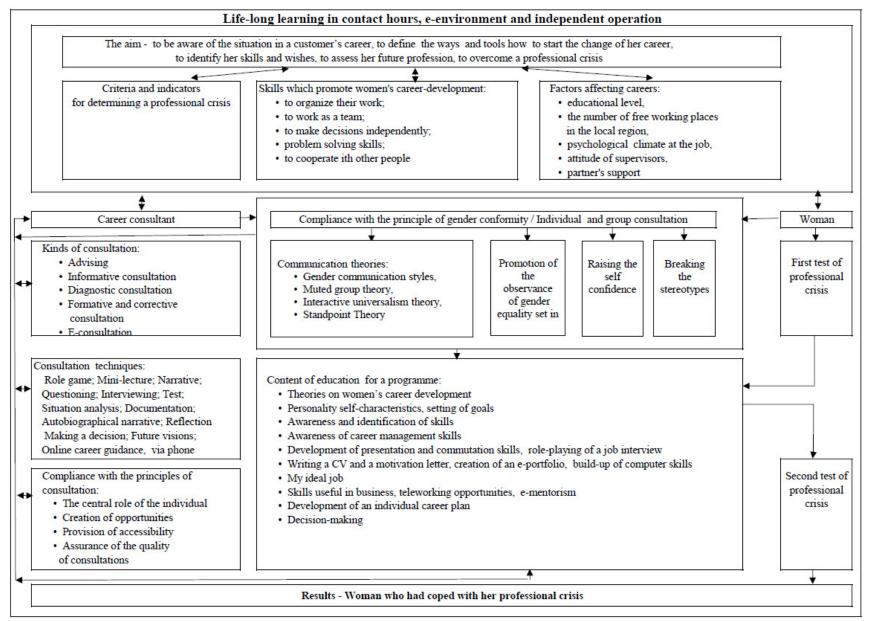


Figure1. Model of career crisis management for women [author' construction].

The model's client developing programme intends to give every client an opportunity to engage in personalised e-learning activities that match their learning needs. The author employed Moodle – the globally popular course management system –, which offers to learn the author's client developing programme for career change for women being in professional crisis situations. The website also provides the methodology suggested by the author (Racene, 2016). A pedagogical experiment was also done in the e-environment to approbate the model in social networks on the Internet.

The model identifies **factors influencing a career** (educational level, the number of working places in the local region, psychological climate at the job, attitude of supervisors, partner' support, etc.), defines a professional crisis as well as develops and approbates criteria and indicators for dealing with the professional crisis.

A career counsellor and a woman or women being in a professional crisis situation participate in a career counselling session and use the model.

The kind of counselling (advising, informative, diagnostic, corrective, formative or e-counselling) is chosen depending on the client's wishes or the content of the career counselling.

In developing the model, the author used communication theories focusing on communication with women to contribute to career support to women being in a professional crisis situation. Nowadays, issues related to differences in perception and communication between women and men are very topical. Women's self-confidence is often associated with their body size, leanness and corpulence, sexual attractiveness, colour of hair and skin and virginity (Stevenson-Moessner, 2000).

While researching a career with regard to the principle of gender conformity (Racene, 2015), the author found that it was very well reflected in communication theories. These theories explain and help cope with unreasonable misconceptions concerning the role and functions of genders.

The theory on gender communication styles (Tannen, 1990/2007; Tannen, 1992a; Tannen 1992b) stresses that particularly communication differences are those leading to misunderstandings and confusions. Communication between women and men is characterised by different communication norms and different language usage principles, and these differences can obstruct their understanding.

Muted Group Theory (Muted Group Theory, 2015; Kramarae, 1996a; Kramarae 1996b; Ardener, Ardener, 2005) states that individuals with smaller influence are difficult to perceive by others (cooperation partners, managers and subordinates); consequently, they are forgotten, their ideas and activity are silenced and they are made unobvious. According to this theory, it is difficult for some members of society to integrate into a successful society because men act more differently than women; silence involves a lower status in society.

Interactive Universalism Theory (Benhabib, 1992) proposes new communicative ethics based on the concept of universal interaction among all individuals. S.Benhabib aims to extend norms, so that they can fit everyone. Communicative ethics means that everyone is responsible for the voices not being heard and to understand muted voices.

Standpoint Theory (Harding, Wood, 2014) explains that individuals are located in various places and exist in different times, different standpoints exist and therefore future perspectives differ. According to the theory, different standpoints are due to different genders, races and sexual orientations and, accordingly, there are different development prospects for every group (Racene, Dislere, 2016).

Social cognitive theory assigns the key role to processes based on cognition, (human) replacement, self-regulation and own thoughts (when individuals think and decide something themselves) to ensure the adaptation of individuals, and changes (i.e. human actions) are inconsistent with the conceptions of human functioning that assign a too important role to environmental or biological factors. The theory gives direct recommendations to make intervention (Lent, 2013; Hackett, Lent, 2008; Lent, Lopez, Lopez, 2008), in the result of which individuals are motivated to make corrective changes in their lifeThe model takes into account the following **principles of counselling** (Visu mūžu pieejama konsultēšana..., 2005):

1) **central role of individuals** (*independence, objectivity, confidentiality, equal opportunities, the comprehensive approach*);

- 2) creation of **opportunities** (giving opportunities, active participation);
- 3) **improvement of availability** (transparency, friendliness and empathy, continuity, usability, accessibility, adaptation);
- 4) **quality of counselling** (appropriate methods of counselling, persistent enhancement, rights to handle and enforce complaints, competent personnel).

The **purpose** of the **Client Developing Programme**, which is included in the model and is offered as a lifelong learning programme, is to examine the situation in a client's career development, to determine the key ways of starting the career change, to identify the client's skills and wishes, to assess the feasibility of the client's future profession – both the demand for the profession in the labour market and the client's competitiveness –, to advise the client how to start seeking for a job and how to prepare for the job and to contribute to the development of socially active and educated personalities that are able to fully and actively integrate and live in the modern society.

The *Client Developing Programme* for career change for women in professional crisis situations is intended to help women who need advice and assistance in a crisis situation and to provide necessary information, to promote their thinking and encourage them to analyse their surrounding environment and their situation, and to raise their self-confidence and to contribute to their professional success. The programme involves 10 individual online classes to get familiarised with the client and her problems and to perform various assignments and tests until, working together, a decision is made.

The programme involves a methodology regarding how to make decisions, identify problems in one's life and to choose appropriate solutions to how to present one's ideas and make others focus on them as well as to provide an opportunity to everyone to use personalised e-learning activities, developed in the Moodle environment, that match their training needs (Racene, 2016).

The main **career counselling techniques** employed by the programme.

Role game. It is a reality simulation technique for playing a role that does not make any consequence in reality through offering "players" an opportunity to perform certain actions or practise certain behaviours and/or abilities. (Karjeras konsultēšanas metodes, 2009). Situation analysis. Usually real situations that can be associated with clients' experiences are used for an analysis. The most usual scheme for a situation analysis is as follows: identification - formulation - assessment - solution decision-making. Mini-lecture. It involves giving information briefly. Narrative. It focuses on priorities, choices, self-exploration etc. Questioning. This is a technique for acquiring information and communicating with a client. Interviewing. To choose a profession, interviews are performed with the purpose to identify a client's professional goals, interests, prospects and abilities as well as to help the client plan the career, to encourage the client to make decisions in the professional self-determination process. Autobiographical narrative. It helps to better understand whether clients appreciate their life experience and how they develop their identity. Test. It is a systemised procedure for comparing the behaviours of two or more individuals. Documentation. A counsellor needs a book for registering clients and has to make a client file in which all materials that are acquired during counselling are collected (Karjeras attīstības atbalsts, 2008). Decision-making helps summarise and analyse information, make choices and implement them (Karjeras konsultēšanas metodes, 2009). Feedback (reflection) allows participants to express their opinions, observations and feelings about what happens as well as helps the pedagogue assess any training stage (Rubana, 2004). Future visions assist in planning carer growth and in setting goals (Karjeras izglītība skolā, 2009). E-guidance involves career support activities and services, using all forms of ICT: online career e-guidance, a phone and the Internet (Racene, Dislere, 2016).

In the result, after the content of education in the author's *Client Developing Programme* has been learned by a client, the client's professional crisis is repeatedly tested. Implementing the model, women can overcome their professional crisis owing to learning the programme and career counselling. The result of applying the author's model of career crisis management for women and online *Client Developing Programme* is women who have overcome a professional crisis.

Expert evaluation of the model of career crisis management for women

The **model of career crisis management for women** was evaluated by experts. The experts were asked if they agreed and could do an expert evaluation. All the four experts had a length of service of more than 10 years. All of them had experience in pedagogy and career counselling. They based their opinions on the importance of the model of career crisis management in career development on their pedagogical and career counselling experience. Kendall's W is employed to identify correlation among several variables. It is often known as Kendall's nonparametric coefficient of concordance. The coefficient is calculated for a variable that has been evaluated by various experts (Paura, Arhipova, 2002). The expert ratings on a scale from 1 meaning inappropriate to 5 meaning appropriate served as input data for calculating Kendall's W. The expert evaluation results for the model of career crisis management are shown in Table 2.

Processing experts' evaluations with SPSS program and getting results Kendall W = 0.793; p = 0.007 that indicates a fair significant degree of agreement. Three rating groups of experts' opinions may be identified. The highest ratings – first place – were given to an assertion that the methodology provided by the model was appropriate and sufficient to contribute to overcoming a professional crisis, the author's principle of gender conformity (Racene, 2015) included all the necessary dimensions and the author's model helped women cope with a professional crisis. Second place was given to an assertion that the methods used were appropriate for career counselling and the client developing programme for career change for women being in a professional crisis situation was suitable. An assertion that the content of education in the client developing programme promoted the change of careers for women was placed in third position. Such a model of career crisis management is useful to practitioners – career counsellors, who could use it to plan and provide career support to women being in professional crisis situations.

Conclusions

- 1. Lifelong education is an opportunity to educate and employ oneself, to expand one's views, to be among the public and be satisfied with oneself and, finally, to find a job appropriate for one's education and skills or to start self-employment. The author's Client Developing Programme was developed in the e-environment as a lifelong learning programme.
- 2. Employing the model of career crisis management as a scientifically justified inference (observing the principle of gender conformity and counselling principles) and as a set of prerequisites (education content, kinds of counselling, various methods of counselling, a repeated test of a professional crisis), it is possible to provide women being in a career crisis situation with professional counselling for their career support through informing, educating and advising them by employing progressive methods (e-counselling, e-mentorism).
- 3. The expert evaluation revealed that the experts' opinions were quite unanimous, and the highest ratings were given to an assertion that the methodology provided by the model was appropriate and sufficient to contribute to overcoming a professional crisis.
- 4. According to expert opinion it can be concluded that women being in a career crisis situation learning the author's online programme in career education what was developed as a lifelong learning programme and receiving professional counselling can enhance their career development and can cope with their professional crises.

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