

## Purposeful Development of Career Management Skills in the Podologists' Study Process

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**Abstract:** Improvement of the quality and attraction of vocational education is one of the priorities of education policy in the European Union; as a result demands also to the education of the health care specialists, including podologists, increase, paying more attention to purposefully set aims of the study programme, the organization of the study process and the planned learning outcomes. A study programme actually is the planning of the study process and content. Therefore the aims of the study programmes are closely connected with the processes and topicalities taking place in the society among which there is also the need for each specialist's abilities to manage his/her own life career. The aims set in the study programme are implemented during the study process. At present the career management skills are considered to be the leading individual skills that help to plan, organize, manage and control the effective use of the internal and external resources of the individual in order to attain the aims set in life. This refers not only to the skills necessary to choose the direction of education and future work but also in the professional development and successful management of the personal life. The professional formation of the podologist's career and the acquisition of the career management skills is topical already during their study process which is one of the planned learning outcomes. At present the formation of the career management skills in the study process of podologists is integrated indirectly. In order to explore the formation of podologists' career management skills in a purposefully organized study process the aims, methods and the planned learning outcomes of the study programme "Podology" implemented in P. Stradiņš medical college of University of Latvia and two European podologists' study programmes have been compared paying attention to the development of career management skills as the outcome of a purposeful pedagogical process. The aim of the article is to analyse the formation of podologists' career management skills in the frame of a purposefully organized study process. Research shows that the main stress in podology education is put on study process that has been directed to practice, which allows students to acquire the knowledge and skills that has been defined in study programmes, and as well promotes development of career management skills that are necessary in further professional development.

**Key words:** the study process of podologists, career management skills, purposefulness, higher education.

### Introduction

One of the priorities of the education policy in the European Union is the improvement of the quality and attraction of vocational education which leads to increased demands to the education of the health care specialists paying attention to the professional development of the specialists, including podologists (Cedefop, 2014). The professional formation of the podologist's career and the acquisition of the career management skills is topical already during their study process because the career management skills are considered to be the leading individual skills that help to plan, organize, manage and control the effective use of the internal and external resources of the individual in order to attain the aims set in life (VIAA, 2009). This refers not only to the skills necessary to choose the direction of education and future work but also in further professional development and successful formation of the personal life. The acquisition of the career management skills is underlined as a significant issue also in several topical guidelines of the European Union education, employment and social inclusion policy (Mūžilga karjeras..., 2012; Izglītības politikas..., 2013; Cedefop, 2014; OECD, 2014; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2013). The European Union member countries have worked to establish the infrastructure (career development support system) that would support lifelong acquisition, application and further improvement of the career management skills of all its citizens (VIAA, 2012). However, there are some intrinsic differences that are connected to the extent to which the development of these skills has been worked out in education and employment. The acquisition of career management skills has to be integrated effectively in the education process and the link with the knowledge and those skills that are necessary in work and in life activity in general has to be ensured (Latvijas ilgtspējīgas ..., 2010).

The curriculum actually is the planning of the study process and the study content; the aims of the curricula, in their turn, are closely bound to the societal values (Andersone, 2007). Therefore the content of the podologists' career management skills and the promotion of their development, taking into consideration the knowledge-based economy approach, the rapid change of technologies and the requirements of the labour market, should be envisaged as a weighty component already in the study process and the planned learning outcomes. Also A. Schleicher, the executive director of the education department of OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in the annual report of 2014 "Education and skills for life" expresses the following: „*The world economy no longer pays for what people know but for what they can do with their knowledge*”, demonstrating that it is necessary to think about skills maintenance not only about the quality of education at every stage of education (PEARSON, 2014).

The article analyses the formation of podologists' career management skills as a set of planned measures integrated in the study process that helps the young specialists to acquire and develop skills for coordinating one's interests, abilities and possibilities, for setting the aims of one's career and career management, and that gives knowledge and understanding not only about the world of work but forms the link with education, career planning and development throughout one's life.

## Methodology

*The theoretical substantiation when analysing purposeful formation of the career management skills is found in the holistic approach to education (Miller, 2000; Rudge, 2008). It treats education as the process of personal development and the individual as part of the wholeness. The holistic approach (Forbes, 2003, Rudge, 2008) has a philosophical view on the challenges of teaching and learning that relates to today's pedagogical practice and student-centred approach in university pedagogy as well as human pedagogy theories which accept both the importance of the individual ability and individuality, and the creation of new pedagogical approach depending on the concrete circumstances (Амонашвили, 1989; Сенько, 2000; Huitt, 2011; Roth, 2006; Schnotz, 2006; Dauber, 2009); the above said fully refers to the podologists' study process. The ideas of human pedagogy can be used corresponding to the social environment, students' needs and pedagogical possibilities that envisage continuous advancement to the quality of education, continuous exploration of students' needs and the use of pedagogical possibilities (e.g., e-environment, simulation equipment, technologies) in the changing situations. Didactics of medicine (Fabry, 2012; Dahmer, 2007) explores with what content, what ways and what goals the key aim is attained- what skills and knowledge the graduates have acquired. The problem actually is that certain skills and qualification does not guarantee the ability to solve problems and challenges in work and life (Fabry, 2012). Thus, creativity and critical thinking, decision making and problem solving skills, entrepreneur and interaction skills, understanding of values and culture, humanism and civil consciousness that help students to attain the aims, promote the personality development and allow developing career management skills in today's changing world have to be developed along with the knowledge, skills and professional competences necessary in the profession (Saulīte, Andersone, 2016).*

In order to explore the formation of podologists' career management skills the aims, methods and the planned learning outcomes of the study programme "Podology" implemented in P. Stradiņš medical college of University of Latvia and two European podologists' study programmes have been compared paying attention to the development of career management skills as the result of planned tasks of the pedagogical process. It has to be added that in Europe podologist's education is implemented on several qualification levels, for example, in Germany, Switzerland and Latvia the podologist has the 4<sup>th</sup> professional qualification level while in several other European countries podologists receive education on the 5<sup>th</sup> and even 6<sup>th</sup> qualification level, as it is in the United Kingdom. The present study analyses information about three podologists' study programmes corresponding to the 4<sup>th</sup> qualification level gained from the home pages of the colleges - P. Stradiņš medical college of the University of Latvia, New College Durham, United Kingdom and Sozialpflegeschulen Heimerer, Germany (Table 1).

Table 1

*Comparative analysis of the podologists' study programmes*

<i>Education institution</i>	<i>P.Stradiņš medical college of the University of Latvia</i>	<i>New College Durham, United Kingdom</i>	<i>Sozialpflegeschulen Heimerer, Germany</i>
<i>Education level</i>	Full time first level higher professional education, 4 <sup>th</sup> qualification level (EQF-120 ECTS)	Full time higher professional education, 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> qualification level (EQF - 120 ECTS, plus 60 ECTS in every next level)	Full and part time professional education/Berufsausbildung, in German/, 3000 hours corresponding to education system of Germany
<i>Aim of the programme</i>	To prepare highly qualified, contemporarily educated, competent and competitive in the labour market specialists in podology.	To prepare high quality podologists for ensuring excellent care of patients.	<i>To prepare podologists as the cooperation partners between patients, doctors and technical orthopaedists.</i>
<i>Organization of the study process, methods</i>	The compulsory content of the first level professional higher education study programme comprises study courses, practice in health care institutions and development of the qualification work.	The programme integrates theory and practice, allowing developing one's clinical skills in assessment, diagnosis and treatment, as well as expanding one's knowledge of the normal and pathological processes in patients.	Theoretical and professional practical training in accordance with the study and examination regulations.
<i>Planned learning outcomes</i>	<i>To perform the professional activities in podologists' profession in accordance with the standard of the profession, professional competences, knowledge and skills determined in it.</i>	<i>By putting the patients' needs at the centre of our teaching, we equip graduates with the knowledge and skills required to provide the best possible service.</i>	<i>To perform the professional activity that ensures excellent podological care, rehabilitation and preventive measures.</i>
<i>Cooperation with employers</i>	Cooperation between the college, professional association, foreign specialists, employers and providers of career development services.	<i>Cooperation with the clinic, university and professional association.</i>	<i>Further partners: Ministry of Education, Labour Agencies, European Social Funds, the Professional Integration Program from the German Army as well as various institutions for rehabilitation.</i>

Taking into consideration the general nature of the information content displayed in the college home pages (Heimerer Schulen, 2017; Ausbildung Podologie, 2017; New College Durham, 2014; P.Stradins Medical College, 2017; Podology, 2017) which is defined by the privacy protection regulation of the information content, in order to reach the aim of the article the express survey of 20 second year students of the study programme "Podology" has been performed. The questionnaires were prepared and filled in during a face-to-face session. The questionnaires were anonymous, they comprised closed questions with the list of offered answers as well as the students had a possibility to add their own opinions and comments. The importance of career management skills, conditions promoting their formation, the applied teaching/learning methods and decisive factors related to the formation of career management skills in the study process were assessed on the 4 point scale.

The survey found out students' opinion about the aim the attainment of which requires career management skills. This, mainly, reflects the necessity of the career management skills in the

podologist's further professional development and self-development. The education guidelines that present a contemporary understanding of the career (PEARSON, 2014; OECD, 2014; Izglītības politikas..., 2013) also stress that career management skills incorporate not only the professional growth but the whole changing life context of man and the personality as a whole (Figure 1).

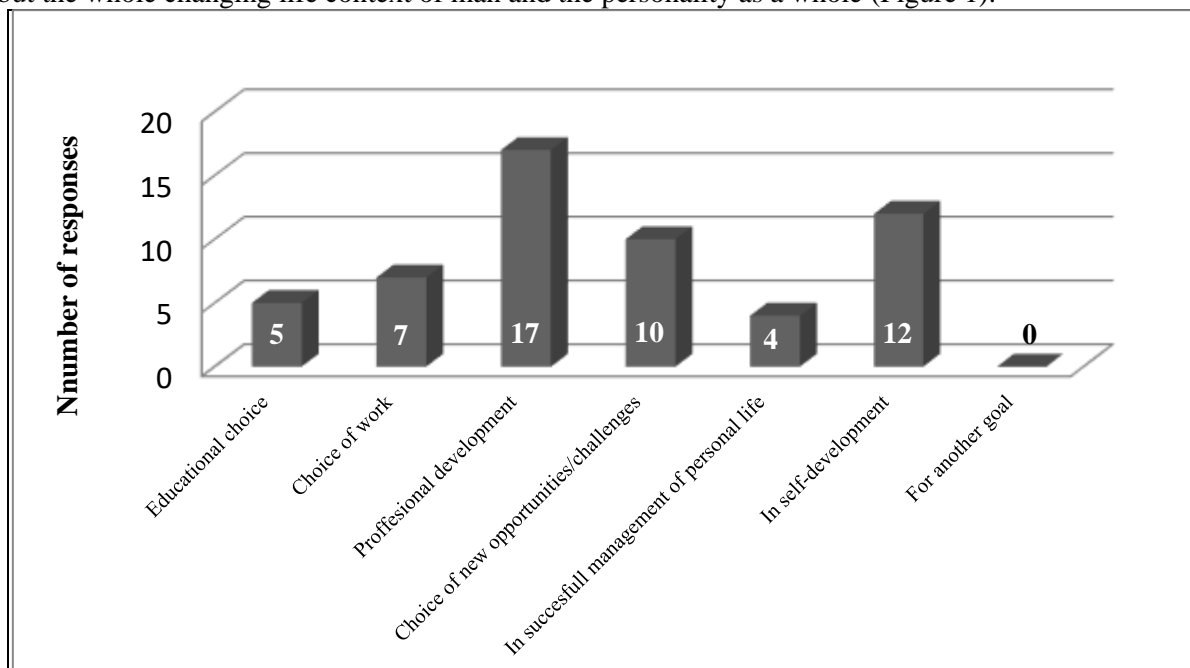


Figure 1. The purposes for which the career management skills are necessary.

Students' opinion about the factors promoting the development of career management skills in the study process has been found out. The person's maturity and the content of the study programmes were mentioned as the main factors which promote the formation of career management skills (Figure 2). This relates to D. Super's (Super, Super, 2001) career development theory in which the core concept is the career maturity (vocational maturity) that is explained as a successful and harmonious development of the career throughout the life and is based not only on the internal need to improve intellectually as one of the main individual factors but also the necessity caused by such external factors as a purposefully organized (student-centred) study process to gain and continuously supplement one's knowledge and skills.

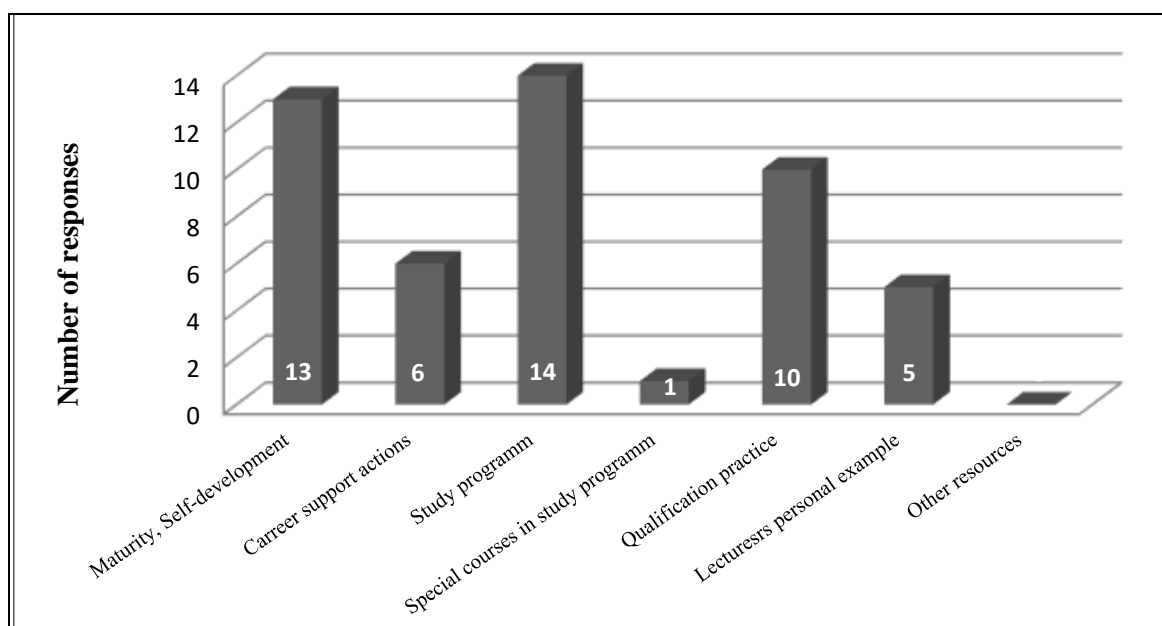


Figure 2. Factors promoting the formation of career management skills in the study process.

The most important study methods (Figure 3) that promote the formation of career management skills in a purposefully organized study process mentioned by students are practical classes, the solution of non-standard situations and the study practice outside the college that allow applying the latest ideas and developments in science in the care for patients, solving successfully the problem situations and prepare the new specialists for starting independent professional activity.

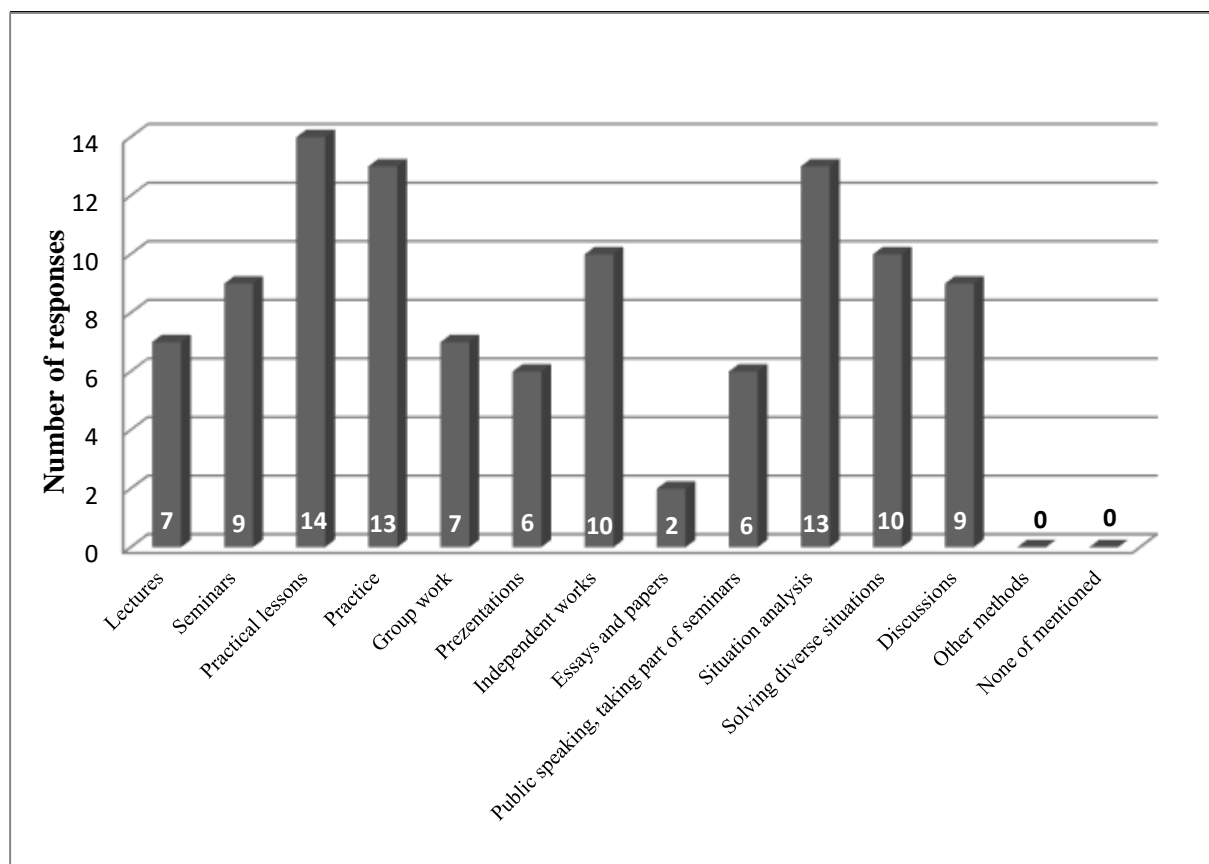


Figure 3. Study methods promoting the formation of the career management skills.

## Results and discussion

The results of the comparative analysis demonstrate that according to the information given in the home pages of the above mentioned colleges the main emphasis in the education of podologists is laid on organizing a practice-based study process that includes interactive lectures and practical classes both in two-year and three-year programmes. The formation of career management skills, in its turn, is not envisaged directly either in the aim of the programmes of the planned learning outcomes; it can be understood from the use of such key words that characterize the career management skills as - competitiveness, cooperation, adjustment to the change of conditions (patients' needs) and professionalism.

The analysed study programmes of podologists of the three above mentioned colleges combine theory and practice that consolidates the clinical skills, diagnostics and treatment as well as broadens students' knowledge about physiological and pathological processes and which are mentioned as the most important study methods (Figure 2) that promote the formation of career management skills in a purposefully organized study process by the majority (14 of 20) of respondents from P. Stradiņš medical college of the University of Latvia. Students parallel to lectures attend seminars and clinical practises. The results of the analysis of the organization of college study programmes and the way of studies prove that students have a possibility to acquire the knowledge and skills defined in the study programmes as well as to improve and develop communication skills, presentation skill, critical thinking skill, the skill of working in a group and to follow the principles of a multidisciplinary health care team necessary for the labour market. Also students' opinion (Figure 3) reflects a similar situation because the majority of the new podologists (13 of 20) mention the study practice outside the college and the solution of non-standard situations as intrinsic methods promoting the formation of podologists' career management skills. The comparatively big number of practices in the podologists' study programmes ensures students' readiness for the professional

activity, e.g., in Germany or the United Kingdom, similarly as in Latvia the study practices are organized in students' groups both in the pre-clinic rooms of the educational institutions and the health care institutions. The cooperation with employers and the formation of the new podologists' career starts already in the study process during the clinical practices when students find themselves in a real work environment both in out-patient institutions, senior homes and in-patient departments (clinics) where the practice mentors perform their professional work in the speciality and involve students in the health care team as it is proved by the information provided by the study programmes of P. Stradiņš medical college of the University of Latvia, "Sozialpflegeschulen Heimerer", Germany and "New College Durham", the United Kingdom.

Although the professional development of new podologists initiates already in the study process it is still a continuous, the advancement-based process which is necessary both in the professional development and self-development and which is also demonstrated by the survey results where almost all respondents (17 of 20) indicate that career management skills are needed in the professional activity and more than a half (12 of 20) point out career management skills are needed in self-development thus acknowledging that modern understanding of career envisages that career management skills incorporate not only the profession but the whole changing life context of man and the personality as a whole.

## Conclusions

One of the planned learning outcomes of a purposefully organized pedagogical process is the formation of the whole changing life context of man and the personality as a whole that at present is integrated indirectly in the podologists' study process which is confirmed by the aims of the analysed study programmes and the results of students' survey.

The formation of the podologist's the whole changing life context of man and the personality as a whole is determined by the study process and personality maturity that help to achieve the professional development, self-development, new challenges and educational aims.

The content of the study programme which is ensured by purposefully organized practical classes, study practices and situational tasks promote the formation of career management skills in the study process.

The college programmes combine theory and practice that consolidates not only the clinical skills, diagnostics and treatment but also promote the development of the professional career which is defined by a purposeful organization of the study process and is directed towards the development of career management skills.

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