

Evaluation of Specialists' Competitiveness in the Supportive Environment of Modern Insurance Enterprise

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Abstract. The competitiveness of enterprise to a great extent depends on the competitiveness of each employee as a specialist, therefore it is important to evaluate the specialists' competitiveness and promote its development at modern enterprises. Modern competitive specialist is characterized by the following qualities/indications: 1) the indicators, characterizing personality's self-conception; 2) well-developed self-regulation and self - management; 3) different competences, including professional competency; 4) personality's orientation, including purposes of life and career, motives, attitudes, values, responsibility etc. While developing the methodology for the evaluation of staff's competitiveness at a modern enterprise, it was important to use this methodology for empirical research, including the evaluation of staff's competitiveness at one of the International Insurance Agencies in Latvia according to several indications of competitiveness. There were two parts of research: 1) the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness; 2) elaboration of *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise*.

Keywords: evaluation, modern enterprise, specialist's competitiveness, support and promotion system.

Introduction

Since Latvia became the Member State of the European Union, the importance of our society's competitiveness, the competitiveness of our enterprises and each member's competitiveness had become even more important. The development of the competitiveness of the population of Latvia and the national economy must be ensured. The important means for the development of competitiveness are lifelong and lifewide education, therefore enterprises and other various institutions become learning organisations that promote the professional development and competitiveness of their staff. The competitiveness of an enterprise to a great extent depends on the competitiveness of each employee as a specialist, therefore it is important to evaluate the specialists' competitiveness and promote its development at modern enterprises.

The ecological and synergetic paradigms in social sciences, including education sciences, enable to study a personality and/or an organization as a self-developing, self-organizing and self-evaluating system that functions in various spheres and learns to live, plan and forecast; constructs and accumulates its own experience; that is able to choose and to be responsible for the consequences of its own actions under the conditions of modern changes. The synergetic approach enables to draw a conclusion that nowadays an individual and/or an organization as open (dissipative) system must learn to live and change in the interaction with the changeable environment (Katane, 2007).

As we can see, in the old paradigm the competitiveness more often is related to the personality's success and victories over its competitor, sometimes it is related to an image of a harsh fighter, who has no mercy towards the enemy, competitor and who considers any means useful for achieving the goals. It is possible to draw the following conclusions from the substantiation of *the new paradigm of competitiveness*: crisis shall be attributed to all, even to the most successful entrepreneurs, the most advanced society and economy; however, to be competitive means to be able to adapt to new conditions, to overcome difficulties and to achieve more than before — before the crisis. In the new paradigm the ability to change, to live and develop in the changeable environment is particularly important. The development of an entrepreneur's (businessman's) competitiveness nowadays is related not only to the features characteristic to a leader, but, first of all, to the socio-psychological and moral characterizing indicators, the interaction of a personality with society, attitude towards other people, oneself, duties, moral and ethical values.

There are three spheres of the development of a specialist's competitiveness: 1) the sphere of professional activities; 2) the sphere of interaction with the environment, including interaction with social environment - other people; 3) the sphere of a personality's self-development, including self-awareness and self-determination.

The aim of article is to publish results of theoretical and empirical research, including evaluation results of specialists' competitiveness and the worked out *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise*.

Methodology

During several years the authors of this article performed research in collaboration with Gita Katana (the chief specialist of corporation "Balta" in Latvia).

Several trends of our theoretical research served as the methodological substantiation for the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness and creation of *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise*.

Theoretical basis of our research was the following:

- **Career Counselling** (Bloch, 2004; Goodman, Hoppin, 2007; Katane, Pençe, 2009; Kuijpers, Schyns, Scheerens, 2006; Melvin, Hale, Foster, 2014; Голочек, 2005);
- **Concurrentology, including substantiation of the concepts: personality's competitiveness and /specialist's competitiveness** (Floren, 1998; Katane, 2010; Katane, 2011; Katane, Īriste, 2013; Katane, Kalniņa, 2010; Peters, Waterman, 2004; Андреев, 2006; МИТИНА, 2003);
- **Management Sciences, including Personnel Management** (Caune, 2005; Dāvidsone, 2008; Forands, 2004; Katana, 2012; Katane, 2014; Katane, Kristovska, 2012; Katane, Kristovska, Katana, 2013; Kristovska, 2011);
- **Mentoring** (Achinstein, Athanases, 2006; Daloz, 1986; Jūsela, Lillia, Rinne, 2005; Kačkere, Odiņa, Rieksta, 2005; Katane, Laizāne, 2012; Konstantinova, Rivža, 2007; Konstantinova, 2008).

Research methods: analysis and evaluation of scientific literature, a questionnaire, modelling, performing mathematical processing of data.

The research was divided into two parts: 1) the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness; 2) elaboration of Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise.

In order to support and promote the development of a specialist's competitiveness at an enterprise, in the beginning it is important to answer the following questions: What is competitiveness? What is the methodological basis for the assessment of competitiveness? These questions could be answered by studying the results of research performed in the field of *Concurrentology*.

It is possible to observe two tendencies in the substantiation of a specialist's competitiveness. These tendencies are related to the liberally rational and humanistic paradigms in education: 1) scientists of economics and other disciplines, on the basis of regularities, categories, conceptions, theories of economics, try to use transfers for the development of the definitions of a specialist's competitiveness; 2) the representatives of pedagogy and psychology sciences develop the substantiation of *a personality's competitiveness* and/or *a specialist's competitiveness* on the basis of humanistic and ecological approach in education. The competitiveness of a specialist is related to his or her *marketability and employability in the labour market* (Katane, 2011; Katane, Īriste, 2013).

Competitiveness is an integrative totality of an individual's qualities (qualities of a personality and a specialist) that ensures its viability, including development and self-actualization, under the conditions of changing environment. *The basis for the personality's competitiveness is experience*. The competitive personality is characterized by the following qualities/features: 1) the characterizing indicators of a personality orientation and self-conception, including determination and action oriented towards success; the readiness to overcome difficulties and take a risk; persistence, adequate self-assessment and daring to take a risk; 2) well-developed self-regulation, including volition, stress endurance, self-reflection, including *analytical-evaluating* and *systemic thinking*; *personality's*

flexibility (flexibility in thinking, emotional sphere, behaviour), the ability to make a decision; the responsibility for the made decisions and their consequences; 3) different competences, including professional competences and creativity as an ability, *oneself-(ego-)* and *environment-(eco-)* oriented *friendly thinking, attitude* and *behaviour*: observation of moral and ethical principles, the principles of environmental, including social environment (community), balance and sustainability, readiness for the co-operation with other people; 4) readiness to change oneself in order to maintain the balance with the changing environment, readiness to start changes in the environment on the basis of environment-friendly attitude and action (Katane, 2010; Katane, 2011; Katane, Kalniņa, 2010; Katane, Kristovska, Katana, 2013).

In order it would be possible to study and evaluate the competitiveness of research base enterprise employees, it was necessary to have *research methodology*. For this purpose I.Katane, the author of the article, elaborated methodology for the evaluation of a specialist's competitiveness, which was grounded on the results of previously performed studies (Katane, 2010; Katane, 2011; Katane, Kalniņa, 2010) and which, in collaboration with G.Katana and I.Kristovska was approved within the pilot research at one of the Latvian enterprises.

The system of indicators for the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness consists of 66 indicators. The methodology elaborated and applied for the research aim comprises not only the system of indicators for the evaluation of competitiveness, but also a questionnaire developed in conformity with it, as well as the methodology for the determination of a specialist's competitiveness levels and competitiveness coefficient. The elaborated research methodology of competitiveness enables to evaluate each specialist's competitiveness not only according to 66 criteria, but also to determine each specialist's competitiveness coefficient and competitiveness level according to the scale of levels from 0 to 9. (Table 1).

Table 1

Methodology for the Determination of the Common Level of Competitiveness

No.	Level of Competitiveness	Limits of Obtained Self-evaluation Points	Level of Competitiveness
1.	9	244 - 264	Very high level
2.	8	222 - 243	High level
3.	7	200 - 221	Relatively high level
4.	6	178 - 199	Level, which is a bit higher than the average level
5.	5	156 - 177	Average level
6.	4	134 - 155	Level, which is a bit lower than the average level
7.	3	111 - 133	Relatively low level
8.	2	89 - 110	Low level
9.	1	67 - 88	Very low level
10.	0	0 - 66	Critical level of competitiveness

At the research base enterprise, which is one of the international insurance agencies in Latvia, there are more than 700 employees employed. The enterprise has 59 branches in Latvia. It is one of the most significant employers of the insurance industry in Latvia. Since the research base enterprise is working on its growth and sustainable development on an ongoing basis, the enterprise management was truly interested in this study.

Results and Discussion

Evaluation of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Insurance Enterprise

There were 18 specialists of division Y of X International insurance agency in Latvia involved in the research. The specialists self-evaluated their competitiveness. There were questionnaires given to the research respondents.

There were 66 indicators for the evaluation of competitiveness defined in the questionnaires. The respondents had to evaluate their competitiveness according to each of these indicators in the scale of 4 points. If a respondent fully agreed to the statement, he or she marked the statement with a tick, choosing answer "Yes" in the respective column of the table, which, according to the nominal scale, meant 4 points. If the respondent completely disagreed to the statement, he or she marked the statement with a tick in the column of "No", which in the data processing gave 1 point. Partial agreement to the statement in the nominal scale equalled to 3 points in the nominal scale, whereas partial disagreement – to 2 points. The maximum number of points, which could be obtained by a respondent, was 264 points (in total for the evaluation according to all 66 indicators). For each specialist employed at Y division, who participated in the research, there was determined not only the level of competitiveness, but also the coefficient of competitiveness by dividing the number of obtained points by the maximum number of points, which could be obtained (Table 2).

Table 2

Results of the Evaluation of Insurance X Enterprise Y Division Respondents' Competitiveness
(N = 18; n=66; $\Sigma_{\max}=264$)

No.	Respondents	Competitiveness Evaluation Amount (Σ)	Level of Competitiveness	Coefficient of Competitiveness
1.	A	209	7th level	0.79
2.	B	217	7th level	0.82
3.	C	209	7th level	0.79
4.	D	219	7th level	0.83
5.	E	218	7th level	0.83
6.	F	233	8th level	0.88
7.	G	223	8th level	0.84
8.	H	191	6th level	0.72
9.	I	227	8th level	0.85
10.	J	238	8th level	0.90
11.	K	204	7th level	0.77
12.	L	222	8th level	0.84
13.	M	216	7th level	0.81
14.	N	198	6th level	0.75
15.	O	215	7th level	0.81
16.	P	192	6th level	0.72
17.	R	199	6th level	0.75
18.	S	196	6th level	0.74

Irrespective of the fact that the coefficients of competitiveness determined as result of self-evaluation performed by respondents – specialists of research base enterprise Y division are relatively high, because they are close to "1", and the levels of specialists' competitiveness are within the range from level 6 to 8 (Table 2; Table 3), several indicators show that it is necessary to provide assistance.

Table 3

Proportion Indicators for the Levels of Respondents' Competitiveness in the Sample

(N = 18; n = 9)

No.	Absolute Number of Respondents (N = 18)	Proportion of Respondents in the Sample ($\Sigma = 100\%$)	Levels of Respondents' Competitiveness (n = 9)
1.	5	28	6th level
2.	8	44	7th level
3.	5	28	8th level

Having analyzed and evaluated the obtained results according to the indicators, we drew a conclusion that the highest evaluation was given by respondents to their driver's skills and licence as an indicator

of competitiveness, because independent and fast moving from place to place by means of one's own vehicle ensures their mobility in the labour market, thus adapting to the fast pace of modern society's life, as well as providing a potential perspective to work at several work places, if necessary.

Alongside with the driver's skills and licence, the respondents have given high assessment to the following indicators of their competitiveness: ▪ a desire to improve oneself as a personality, including acquisition of new knowledge, to develop one's skills and abilities; ▪ I have my own principles, which I try to observe, because they are the grounded on values in my life; ▪ readiness to take upon responsibility for one's words and actions before oneself and others; ▪ other people's respect, who can achieve a lot in life; ▪ a desire that I would be respected by others, including colleagues and the management of enterprise; ▪ a desire and striving to achieve success in one's life, including one's profession; ▪ a desire and orientation towards the success in one's life; ▪ a desire to achieve success, to receive recognition and praise from others – this enhances self-confidence, creates positive emotions and inspire to start new activities; ▪ a specialist's professional competency; ▪ an ability to forecast the events of the nearest future and to model own behaviour according to the situation; ▪ the ability to develop own career successfully by achieving high results in any sphere; ▪ I'm not envious and malevolent; I'm glad not only to for my success, but also for the success of others; ▪ readiness to overcome difficulty in order to achieve the planned.

The lowest evaluations were received concerning several indicators, which proves that the research participants need assistance regarding the following spheres of competitiveness: public speech and presentation skills; a psychologist shall assist in learning how to manage one's emotions, mood; achievement of planned aims (if it is impossible to achieve the set aims, perhaps, the specialists shall assist in adjusting aims and motivation spheres); flexibility of behaviour and conformity with the particular situation; forecasting skills in relation with critical thinking. Unfortunately, it is necessary to admit that: 1) respondents have relatively low self-confidence; 2) respondents do not see the opportunities to have professional growth at the research base enterprise, as well as they do not know how to realize it. Most of all the research participants are afraid of making mistakes. When establishing a system for the support and promotion of the development of competitiveness at the enterprise, it would be necessary to assist the specialists from the above mentioned fear through mutual cooperation.

Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise

On the basis of the results of theoretical research, as well as on the results of the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness at the research base enterprise (International Insurance Agency in Latvia) there was elaborated *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise* (Katana, 2012; Katane, 2014; Katane, Kristovska, Katana, 2013).

The aim of this conception is to *develop the specialists' competitiveness*, providing appropriate and friendly environment for the specialists' professional and career development. There are three functional spheres of *Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise* (Figure 1). We can see from Figure 1 that the functions of personnel management, career counselling and mentoring differ due to the specificity of each sphere, but they also mutually complement each other, showing that the functional segments of these spheres partially overlap.

The authors of the article have devised a detailed description of functions performed by each component of the system (Addition, Table 1).

Each support and promotion sphere is represented by a specialist, who is a member of a support team and whose responsibility is to perform many and different functions: a personnel manager, a career counsellor, a mentor. In this support system it is very important to cooperate with each specialist at the enterprise, but particularly with those, who need support regarding the development of competitiveness (Figure 2).

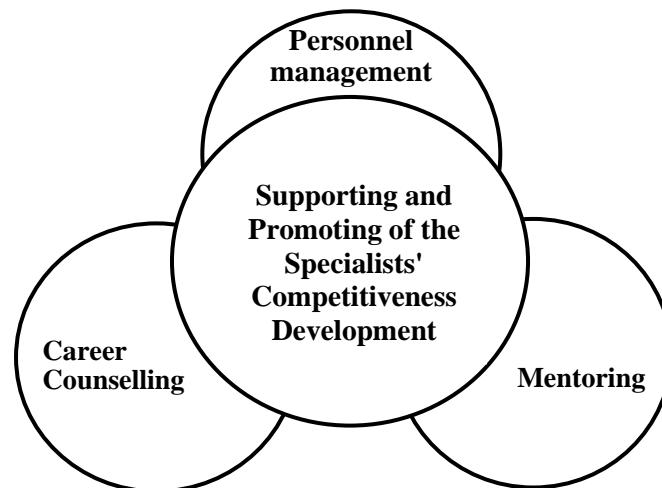


Figure 1. The Functional Spheres of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise (Authors' design).

The advantages of elaborated *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise* are the following: 1) the conformity of conception with the aim of its development, namely, for the support and promotion of staff's competitiveness; 2) the relation of conception to the theory and practice of management; 3) transparency and comprehensibility of conception; 4) real and practical possibility to devise a system for the support of staff's competitiveness in an organisation and provide cooperation and teamwork between specialists of different kinds and levels; 5) the universality of the system and its wide application at different kinds of organizations and enterprises (enterprises/institutions/different government agencies), the amount of personnel management, career counselling and mentoring functions are sufficient, if they uncover the wide spectrum of functions in the support and promotion of staff's competitiveness; 6) the scope and sufficiency of personnel management functions included in the support and promotion system; 7) the scope and sufficiency of career counselling functions included in the support and promotion system; 8) the scope and sufficiency of mentoring functions included in the support and promotion system.

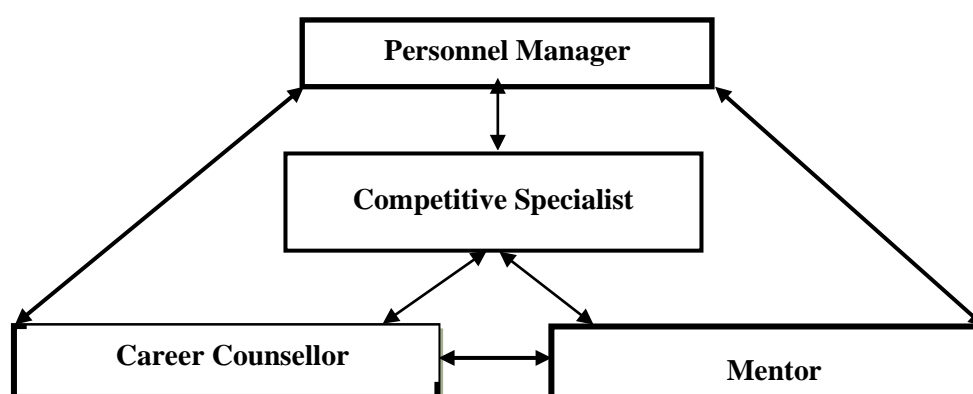


Figure 2. The Support and Cooperation System at a Modern Enterprise (Authors' design).

Conclusions

- The competitiveness of an enterprise to a great extent depends on the competitiveness of each employee as a specialist, therefore it is important to evaluate the specialists' competitiveness and promote its development at modern enterprises.
- The ecological and synergetic paradigms in social sciences, including education sciences,

enable to study a personality and/or an organization as a self-developing, self-organizing and self-evaluating system that functions in various spheres and learns to live, plan and forecast; constructs and accumulates its own experience; that is able to choose and to be responsible for the consequences of its own actions under the conditions of modern changes.

- *Competitiveness* is an integrative totality of an individual's qualities (qualities of a personality and a specialist) that ensures its viability, including development and self-actualization, under the conditions of changing environment. *The basis for the personality's competitiveness is experience.*
- The methodology specially elaborated for the research aim and applied for the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness consists of three parts: 1) a system of 66 indicators for the evaluation of competitiveness; 2) a questionnaire; as well as 3) a method for the determination of the coefficient of competitiveness and the level of competitiveness. This methodology could be applied for the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness at any enterprise, and it enables to obtain valid and credible results.
- The obtained results show that the levels of research base enterprise employees' competitiveness are within the range of levels 6 to 8. But the range of the coefficient of competitiveness is from 0.72 to 0.9. This proves that the specialists employed at the research base insurance enterprise have relatively high self-evaluation level of their competitiveness. However, irrespective of the above mentioned, the methodology for the evaluation of competitiveness enabled to analyze and evaluate in detail the strengths or advantages and the weaknesses or disadvantages of the specialists employed at the enterprise, which identified the problems existing in the sphere of cooperation and mutual relations, as well as in the sphere of career development at the enterprise.
- On the basis of results obtained regarding the evaluation of specialists' competitiveness, it was concluded that it is necessary to elaborate and introduce *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise*. There are three functional spheres of *Conception of Support and Promotion System for the Development of Specialists' Competitiveness at a Modern Enterprise*: 1) personnel management, 2) career counselling, and 3) mentoring. The functions of such spheres differ due to the specificity of each sphere, but also mutually complement each other, showing that the functional segments of these spheres partially overlap. It would be advisable to have a career counsellor and a mentor/mentors at each medium and large enterprise.

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Addition

Table 1

The functions of the system for the support and promotion of specialist's competitiveness

 <p>Career counselling functions in the enterprise</p>	<p>Personnel management functions</p>	<p>Mentoring functions</p>
Information is provided about the situation in the labour market, the trends in the development of the labour market, the requirements of the labour market, opportunities for acquisition of education in Latvia and abroad	Devising and implementation of enterprise development strategy and/ or conception in the regional, national and international level	Creation and provision of optimal conditions for the exchange of experience in the enterprise
Information is provided about personnel management policy in the enterprise, the system of monitoring, control, assessment, promotion of staff professional performance and the system of remuneration in the enterprise	Planning of human resources, staff selection and recruitment	Integration of new specialists in the enterprise and promotion and fostering of successful professional performance
Provision of individual consultations about career advancement opportunities in the enterprise, motivation and encouraging	Administration of staff, record keeping	The support and strengthening of new specialists' motivation
Assistance in career planning-guidance, incl. promotion of lifelong career planning	Provision of information exchange, incl. both vertically (between the supervisor and the subordinates) and horizontally (between employees)	Encouraging new specialists to grow professionally, providing welfare, personality development and the quality of learning
Career counselling; individual and group counselling	Monitoring and control of staff performance in the enterprise	Support and promotion of lifelong education for enterprise staff in different age groups
Provision of career education in the enterprise	Assessment of professional performance	To plan, supervise and coordinate the process of education and further education, turning the enterprise into an organisation that is learning.
Organising of competition, election for a post and/or candidates for the post	Fostering of staff's professional development	Popularisation of the best work experience, incl. personal experience, in the enterprise
The creation of professional profiles for the staff in the enterprise and candidates for vacancies	Fostering and support for professional education and further education	Expansion of cooperation between enterprises (employers) and providers of education

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Career counselling functions in the enterprise	Personnel management functions	Mentoring functions
Assessment of professional suitability	Development and implementation of remuneration system in the enterprise	Introduction of generation renewal traditions, their promotion, development and maintaining of cooperation culture
Organisation and monitoring of trial work	Implementation and control of rules set in the statutes of the enterprise	Provision of experience exchange between specialists of different age in order to provide professional development
Helping staff to acquire an ability of staying in the position	Regulation of mutual relationship among the staff within the limits of enterprise statutes	Protection and support for the monitored
Assessment of staff competitiveness and measures and support for its improvement	Provision of conditions in the enterprise that are necessary for professional performance, incl. care about safety at work, safe working environment in the enterprise	Initiation of different improvements and changes in the enterprise
Cooperation with psychologist in the enterprise or outside it, incl. organisation of psychologist's consultations for the staff	Provision of social care and health care for the staff	Maintaining and continuing of enterprise's culture traditions
Prevention of occupational burnout and provision of psychotherapy for those who are in need of it	Motivation, furthering of loyalty, promotion of positive attitude towards the work	Expanding of opportunities for staff's leisure time activities, involving into education of interest or non-formal education
Work on the improvement of career consultation methodology, approbation and implementation of new methods in the enterprise	Making staff feel stability	Openness towards dialogue and cooperation; provision of psychological and professional support to the monitored
Cooperation with the management of the enterprise, mentors of the enterprise and other specialists	Provision of gradual renewal of generations in the enterprise	Performing of mediator's functions in case of necessity between: 1) the employee and the monitored; 2) the monitored and colleagues
Development and coordination of a group for career support and provision of professional growth of enterprise staff.	To ensure the exchange of experience, involvement of enterprise staff into different projects, also international	Fostering of cooperation between different specialists in the enterprise