Put more wood behind the counselling-arrow
Organizational and personal aspects in career development

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The process from an individual perspective

Developments (such as industrialization, free information, new technology) in Western society in the 20th century have led to an increase in prosperity. Together with democratic movements and the increased speed of change this has led to a more individualistic approach. People claimed certain rights and felt more independent, deciding more and more about their own life.
There are also the individual differences that require a holistic approach at individual level. Examples of those individual differences are: different phases in life and different social-emotional developments, differences in combinations of intelligences and the level of development of each of these intelligences, individual competences, different social contexts, different challenges in employment. And this includes for the total of worklife career and development of all people.

A person has to deal with increased uncertainties in worklife. Large organizations / companies has mainly loyalty to a small core of employees, while a larger group of employees should be more flexible in the balance of keeping their job and finding new ones. In the turmoil of the economy flexibility with employment within small organizations is even more required. Temporary personnel is a must for many small companies , although at the same time they need a certain level of loyalty from their personnel. For individuals this means a change of thinking from loyalty to the firm and job security towards employability and flexibility. Providing top-down career management for such large groups of individuals is virtually impossible. Therefore individuals have to take the responsibility and power of control for their own career and manage this themselves. It is expected that, next to the collective bargaining by labour unions, individuals increasingly have to bargain for their own employability themselves. It demands full consideration of all contexts of worklife. It considers the individual as a whole, including paid work, where decisions are made regarding all aspects of worklife. What is illogically sometimes from an employability point of view might be very logical from the individual's perspective. Choices by a person are often made based on their social identity, on existing relations, on availability, on lust/pleasure and on overall benefit (Linn, 1998[1]). And this is not always equal to what is demanded for only work career management.
Another issue is that having certain diploma's is no guarantee for a job anymore. The context of work is changing, the work is more knowledge intensive, the knowledge is outdated, job descriptions are changing, and also the curricula leading to certain diplomas are changing continuously. It is difficult to compare present diplomas with old ones Also it is more difficult to get valued in present society on base of a diploma. Practice also shows that many people get their initial job through the value of their diploma (and the relations build during the practical periods) but later in life more and more through the networks they are participating in. Next to that it is often experienced that the value of the diploma for the individual still has to be 'proved' or 'showed' in practice. Because often the diploma doesn't give away a lot about the quality of the knowledge and experience.

The work environment is not the only social group where an individual is active in. Many work as volunteer, individually or in an organization and also in other environments such as in hobby's, amongst friends and in the family, there is a demand to utilise the competences one has. And also the career management of older people should be developed. Their working career won't stop at 60/65 (or earlier)

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[1] Linn, CE, A General Theory of Marketing. Stockholm 2010 (http://www.metamanagement.se/linn_gtm_08.pdf)

anymore, but will extend to later ages. Man and women life expectancy is now 77/82 year and still increasing and with less young people they will be asked to keep participating in society. Their role in society and partly in work will, also due to demographic changes, be of increasing importance. In these environments all individuals need an **insight in themselves**, their personal characteristics and in the environment(s) they are living and working in. "Who am I?", "How did I develop myself?", "What are my motives / driving forces?" are some of the questions to be answered, to become aware of their potential, their ability, their competences. It demands for a holistic view of the person to understand the whole and the natural logic behind it. And this should also include negative parts of the past, like for instance sincere illness or activities in an illegal environment, most aspects of life that has a big impact on a person's competence development, but are at first sight not often seen as beneficial for a work career.

Maybe even more important than lifelong learning is the lifelong valuing in all contexts in life. Because the answer to "who am I?" is measured in several value systems. The **value systems** are:
1. **Personal norms and values** of the person him- or herself. Part of these norms and values are fixed, others can change during life, caused by for instance the phase of life where one is in or by external factors.
2. The **social norms and values** of the direct social environment: how does my direct environment perceive me as a person. The social norms can change too, but slower while they are defined by a (informal) group. The individual has the option of change the social group in case the norms and values won't match anymore with his/her personal norms and values.
3. The **cultural and societal norms and values**
4. The **organisations' (/companies') norms and values**. These values are often laid down in a vision, strategy and business plan and partly subordinated by law, regulations and the market/customers.
5. The **legal** laws, regulations, rules, **formal** qualifications, formalized profiles. These values are often fixed, little flexible and have to be strictly obeyed.

To be able to present oneself to these different systems a person has to be very flexible. He or she has to have insight in his/her own competences and the demand from the different systems. A total portfolio of jobs, activities, competences and changes to be valued against is therefore a must. In such a portfolio a competence biography describes how informal, non-formal and formal learning experiences have developed the competences. In such a description of reality all learning experiences in all contexts can / should be taken in consideration, because for the individual it leads to comprehend itself.
And as a competency biography is film of the dynamic life, looking at the moments of change (school-work, work-work, voluntary-learning, work-retirement, etc.) can be even more important than description of jobs These are the moments in life of the highest flexibility and uncertainty managed by the person and they are learning moments of utmost importance.
Wikipedia describes employability as "*the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers, and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work.*" From an organizational point of view the dependency between employer and employee is mentioned. From the individual perspective employability is covering a wider range,

including voluntary work, hobby and even private life. It are not only the employers who formally defines the work to be done and who only pays for the individuals assets. Also other contexts in society values and invites the individual to participate and become part of the steering mechanism. Maybe the simple explanation by Wikipedia: *"employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work."* is more covering the perspective of the individual / society. And in the changing perspectives towards the dynamics of the networked society the focus is changing from employer (as work provider) / employee (as work taker) towards the individual (as competence provider) and the organisation (as competence taker).

Methods and instruments
Many methods and instruments are used in work and life career management, ranging from becoming aware of one's competences to supporting people in their empowerment in work and life. All these instruments can be classified in the following functions:
- Get interested and motivated in competence development and management
- Becoming aware and understand competences
- Identifying all competences and start to describe them (in a portfolio)
- Understanding the value of competences in worklife contexts (e.g. by companies)
- Have competences validated
- Make them visible for others (e.g. HR, managers)
- Make an action plan for future development and using of competences
- Steering the environment to optimise the development and use

Before describing a few of these methods and instruments, it is important to make a classification for these instruments. In "The unfinished story of VPL" (Duvekot, Schuur, Paulusse, 2005[2]) a general process model in 5 phases / 10 steps is introduced for the use of Valuation of Prior Learning (VPL) by individuals, in spite of their characteristics or objectives. VPL is a continuous valuing and competence management process. It takes place at all levels, from very informal -like being appreciated by your colleague or your client- up to the most formal valuation, like accreditation with a diploma according to the national standards.
The 5 phases / 10 steps are similar to the 5 phases as mentioned in chapter 2. The 10 steps go more In detail and includes also the search for the right counselling / validation and at the end the phase of empowerment, how the person will grow in strength and self and network reliance.

The competence management process is divided in five phases:
I. Engagement and awareness of the value of your own competences,
II. Recognition (formal and informal) of my competences, by looking back, reflections
III. Valuation and validation of my competences, formal, informal and looking forward
IV. (Advice concerning the) development of my competences,
V. Structurally taking up my competence based development process, according to a personal or through the organisation steered plan.

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[2] Duvekot R, Schuur C, Paulusse J, The unfinished story of VPL; Validation and valuation of Prior Learning in Europe's Learning Cultures, Utrecht, 2005
(http://www.educacion.gob.es/educa/incual/pdf/rec/06_VPL_the_unfished_story_in_Europe.pdf)

Together these five phases form the valuing and competence management process. The phases can be divided again in 10 steps. Below the 10-step-model is presented in a scheme.
In this model the 7th step refers specific to the assessment and formal recognition of competences against formal normsetting frameworks like the National Vocational Qualification Frame work (NVQ) and/or EQF (VPL).
In Worklife guidance the 7th step refers to matching against other norm-setting frameworks, like organisational, company, social and other ways of recognition, like awards, keeping a job, getting a higher function, raise of income, etc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aware-ness	Starting/ targets	Prepara tion & PDP	Retro-spective	Choose standard	Valu-ation	Vali-dation	Pro-spective	Working on PDP	Empower-ment
Commitment		Recognition		Valuation			Development		Empower ment

For each step in the valuation of competences, from awareness to empowerment, different instruments or methods can be used. In chapter 3 examples of the career management methods and instruments that can be used by career counsellors are mentioned.

Career dialogue
A dialogue (Kuipers, 2008[3]) focuses on examining thoughts, feelings and behaviour. It is about the learner's career and this is what the conversation is built around. The learner has a say on the topic of the discussion and on how the discussion can be of assistance to the learner. The counsellor refrains from solving problems and instead examines, together with the learner, several options that may help the learner along.
A career dialogue is different from a testing interview, in which the counsellor conducts tests to find out whether the client is sufficiently knowledgeable about a particular subject. It is also distinct from an inquiring, exploratory and concluding (part of a) conversation, in which two people merely keep each other informed. The format of the dialogue is appreciatory, confrontational (presenting contradictions in expressions and/or behaviour, question the realistic nature of thoughts), exploratory, aimed at learning to reflect, activating and network-inducing. The dialogue is about talking with the learner and not just to or about the learner.
Like CH-Q, the career dialogue focuses on become aware and clear of competences and the valuing by others by a form of self-reflection in most of the 10 steps, excluding the formal validation.

Portfolio
Many forms of a portfolio exists and can be available in digital or written version. A portfolio should contain the following items: a general description of a person, description of education, paid work and

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3 Kuijpers M, *Career dialogue: About learning to talk (and) about learning to choose*, Cinop 2009.(http://www.cinop.nl/projecten/euroguidance/docs/Career%20Learning/11%20career%20dialogue.pdf)

other activities, a list of competences, and an action plan. It is obvious that all should be accompanied by formal proof.

Huge efforts at international, national, branch and organisational level have been made to implement portfolio and they are partly and/or only used in the organisation or locally . And even when portfolios are used, the information is just as much as the organisation demands or just as much as the individual wants to insert the information. Many portfolios contain the function descriptions of job the person had, but often the reality in work was partly different from the function description and personal competences are not always described. Also keeping the portfolio updated is much work and the revenue is often seen only in the long run.

Portfolio are also used to match a person with certain profiles. The results have to be taken very carefully, as the results depends very much on the limited information given and the descriptions used.

360 degree feedback

This instrument is often, but the research shows direct outcomes might not reflect the real situation, because this instrument demands from different actors around a person an informal assessment, which can either be threatening for the individual (seen as an assessment) or the actors cannot give an objective assessment. Information coming from a 360 degree feedback could be harmful when for instance be used in a selection for outplacement.

Competency based interview

In Competency-based interviews (also called structured or behavioural interviews) the questions targeting specific competencies. Each candidate is asked similar questions, related to the context where they have developed these competences and provide examples of proof. The competences are matched with criteria belonging to competences in a certain job profile or in an educational profile.
Exercise as STAR(RT) and WACQER are examples of this

Self-reflection

Self-reflection as a structured reflection on practice, is either part of a formative evaluation process or as a voluntary professional activity.

The self-reflection process can begin with a series of global questions:
- Which current practices can I abandon to make room for new patterns in my work?
- What can I do to make my work more effective?
- Who are my clients? What do they want?
- Who am I? What do I have to offer? What restricts my work?
- How can I force myself out of my comfort zones and preferred cognitive style?
- How do I seek new opportunities for learning?
- Am I having fun?

After completing the process, the individual should proceed to identify the areas for professional growth.

Tests

Different kinds of tests are used in career management. Much of them are online available. The test can differ from psychometric tests such as aptitude, personality and IQ tests, up to job selecting and career search tests.

Quality assurance and control

Dealing with all the aspects of the individual self-management of competencies implies highly skilled and qualified experts. The way the relevant learning processes are being conveyed is a key success factor for fostering its effectiveness and sustainability. In order to ensure and guarantee the level of performance, of reliability and responsibility required in applying the methods and handling its impacts on users and guides/trainers a coherent system of quality assurance and control is essential. It has to meet the general conditions applied to such systems. The common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, march 2004) provide evidence to that effect.

Implementation in practice – an example

The Association CH-Q has developed a **concept for quality assurance and control** in 2002**.** It is based on standards for programs, tools and services, including principles and guidelines. The label "CH-Q" stands for the associated leading-edge quality - both in Switzerland and abroad. In line with the common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning, the Association CH-Q has divided the normative functions and the operational activities into separate structures:

- the Association CH-Q itself is not a provider. Its role is to ensure the frame conditions, the foundations for implementation and further progress, the quality assurance and control;
- the transfer of the system into education, training and in the socio-economic field and its application is in the responsibility of the providers. They define the adaption and application of the methods, the processes and procedures on a operational level in line with their particular needs;
- the independent CH-Q Commission of Certification and Accreditation is responsible for maintaining and monitoring the quality, for issuing the CH-Q certificates and accrediting the training and guidance concepts developed by the different qualified providers.

The impact of the developments in society and the need for life career management is that the responsibility for the individual career planning and development has to move more and more from the HRM-department and from labour offices towards the sustainable self-management of competences and career. Traditional HRM models and instruments are less applicable. Individual have to manage more and more their own career, but also career advisors in their work move away from taking responsibility for the impact of the career management, this in contrast with the industrial age where employers invested in and co-navigated the career of their employees and took care of the personnel in a lot of aspects. From the individual perspective the individual defines his life (including work) career by making formally or informally a balanced, holistic action plan. Steps in this plan can be short term as well as more long term developments. In this plan work career steps can be defined which are in line with life career development. Thite (2001[4]) refers to this as the multidimensional career movements.

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[4] Thite, M. (2001) "Help us but help yourself: the paradox of contemporary career management", *Career Development International*, 6(6), 312-317.

Charter

Calonder and Schuur (2007) formulated a Charter for a Sustainable Competence Culture as a major contribution to the setup of a society that empowers individuals in order for them to act in a autonomous way (individual success) and to participate and integrate in modern society and in the labour market (success for society). They describe a framework, including a benchmark tool, for:
– Defining the principles for an open and flexible system of competence-based formal and informal learning and recognition
– Creating specific processes, procedures and supporting actions to guarantee access and quality
– Setting up a frame of reference for the application

Calonder A, CCM Schuur, "*Towards a sustainable Competence Culture to achieve Lifelong Learning*"
Chapter 10 from the book "*Managing European Diversity in lifelong learning; The many perspectives of the Valuation of Prior Learning in the European workplace*"; Duvekot R, ea, Vught, 2007.

The **Charter for a sustainable Competence Culture** intends to give a major contribution to the setting up of a society that empowers individuals:
– To act in an autonomous way (***individual success***);
– To participate and integrate in modern society and in the labour market (***success for society/organisation***).

The efforts are concentrating on building a sustainable Competence Culture within an active, permanent and wide dissemination of Lifelong Learning.

A) Defining the principles for an open and flexible system of competence-based formal and informal learning.
A.1. Individual, cultural literacy
Empowering individuals to act autonomously
 • Enhancing their understanding of themselves and their possibilities (consistency / self-identity)
 • Widening the competency of self-responsibility (steering own decision making)
Supporting individuals to cohere to a greater whole
 • Providing relevant background information which enables them to deal today's challenges (cultural literacy)
 • Providing conditions which help the integration in society
A.2   Holistic approach
 • Linking different areas of life / activity and recognizing, valuing achievements from all of them
 • Building bridges between cultural, general and vocational education and to the labour market
 • Encouraging equivalence of formal and non-/informal learning as well as developing equal opportunities
 • Promoting permeability (modularisation)
 • Connecting bottom-up und top-down approaches.
A.3   Shared responsibilities
 • Transparency of the roles of the stakeholders
 • Separation of guidance and procedures of qualifications
 • Paying special attention to interfaces (bottom-up und top-down)

- Personality-/data protection in relation with processes and instruments
- Adequate application of special instruments supporting various aspects of process orientation and sustainability.

B) Creating specific processes, procedures and supporting actions to guarantee access and quality.

B.1   Personal development, career flexibility and mobility

Establishing processes enabling individuals:

- to make them aware of their potential, to use it in a deliberate and realistic way and accept full personal responsibility for it to take charge of managing their own capabilities, competencies and qualifications in a sustainable way
- to focus on competence oriented solutions while planning their careers
- to use the self-management of competencies in a profitable way for their personal development and integration in society
- Connecting bottom-up und top-down approaches

B.2   Procedures of recognition and validation

Establishing manageable, affordable and accessible procedures which enable individuals

- to provide and present understandable and valid evidence of their achievements, capabilities and competencies
- to submit evidence in an appropriate form for formal national and international certification where this is available and appropriate for the individual
- to use evidence for formative and summative purposes.

C)   Setting up a frame of reference for the application.

C.1   Standards, structures, quality assurance

- Providing understandable information about procedures of recognition which encourage individuals to make use of it
- Emphasising the meaning of values, adopting common standards and guiding principles as fundaments for an overarching system of recognition and validation
- Establishing structures which reflect the different levels of processes and procedures and the different roles and activities of the stakeholders involved
- Defining quality criteria and establishing systems of quality-assurance for the application of procedures and processes.

Calonder and Schuur prefer to refer to all stakeholders in this whole process and of lifelong learning and valuing of competences, rather than only to employers and employees. An important issue is the independency between the stakeholders, thus between guidance and the validation and the employer. For instance in moments of economic crisis, the employer can use the career management of personnel for selection of the best and for stimulating / supporting outplacement, which actually is against the socio-psychological need of (job/income) security of the individual. Or a labour office directs its aims at employability (paid work) in preferably short term (re-)integration actions, while the individual at that moment might favour other solutions.

Sustainability can only be reached if the responsibility is shared amongst the stakeholders, but the final power-of-control of career management is in hand of the individual. Needed for that is a consistency in the total of life career management and the understanding of themselves, their self-identity. For that they also need background information and more understanding how to deal with today's' challenges . The holistic approach will support them in connecting bottom-up (the individual in charge) and top-down (system provides) approaches. Then the behavioural change towards the sustainable competence of self-responsibility can and steering of the own decision-making is becoming reality.
The civil impact is limited as long as the descriptions are not matched against formal descriptions such as educational profiles, job profiles, function profiles.

Process
Advising in the field of career development should focus more on the awareness raising and self-management of competences and careers. The individual should become his/her own advisor. In a **network** environment this is already the case. In this environment individuals are g able to communicate and share information with others in similar situation, exchange their experiences, guide each other and only when necessary look for advise on the Internet or in a self-directed meeting with an advisor and/or manager. In fact this has already been common practice for many years. In a year report the Dutch labour office (CWI, 2001) described how people found their job and which percentage kept their job. 25% found their job through **informal** channels (the individual contacts friends, colleagues, previous employers, etc.) with a success quote of around 60%. And 18% found their job through job agencies, an intermediary between the individual and the employers. The higher success quote is partially the result of the selecting process during intake.

Ways of finding work	Without a job	With a job	Total	Success quote
	(%)	(%)	(%)	
Unemployment office	6	2	3	0,2
Advertisement	10	23	19	0,4
Job agencies	21	17	18	0,8
Informal channels	22	26	25	0,6
Walk-in application	15	8	10	
Misc.	24	25	25	0,3

It is interesting that when persons are being asked how they got their present job, most people answer 'through contact / connections". In case of the first or second job the answer is more 'through contacts in my practical period' or 'through formal application, based on my diploma's and application letter'. The conclusion might be that in worklife guidance more attention has to be placed on networking and informal contacts and thus increasing the chances for getting and/or keeping work.
In a career environment that is both functioning in a formal and informal way and is steered bottom-up as well as top-down it is more difficult to stick to formal quality procedures only. The quality system should reach further than only measure the quality of the input (the training) or the output (the qualification). Quality in a dynamic, fast changing environment demands for a measurement based on the outcome (the benefit) and have direct feedback to the stakeholders.

Summary

Present society needs employability and participation, not only in paid work, but in all contexts of life. The increasing speed of change in the knowledge and network society requires high flexibility and individual approaches. Lifelong preparation and planning for work has changed in lifelong learning, valuing and working. Education has to change from preparing for a job to preparing for employability and participation.

Responsibility for the individual career planning and development moves more and more from the HRM-department and from labour offices towards the sustainable self-management of competences and career. Traditional HRM models and instruments are less applicable.

The answer is sustainable self-management of career and competences, where the individual has the responsibility and the power of control. To accomplish that is needed:

1. A sustainable competence-culture that empowers individuals for them to act in a autonomous way (individual success) and to participate and integrate in modern society and in the labour market (success for society);
2. New methods and instruments, such as CH-Q, career dialogue, portfolio;
3. New roles for HRM and career advisors;
4. A policy that supports the flexibility and participation (more support for and use of informal learning and informal valuing, next to formal education and formal accreditation and RPL).

Challenges for the future

The challenge for the near future is that stakeholders in the field of career management will have to connect their perspectives:

1. **Individuals** have to be more aware and take the power-of-control of his/her own career and development in all contexts of their life; The individual makes ongoing choices for his/her career;
2. The **company / organisation** has to be able to connect these individual career paths to the needs of the organisation itself; this means connecting integral portfolios and personal development plans with organisation development plans and, looking over their own borders, consider that investments in short term labour in the end also can have a positive long term outcome for society and for the organisation itself;
3. The **supporting organisations** (public and private services; education and training; guidance) should be able to meet the demand / needs of individuals and the organisations; i.e. operate customer-oriented and demand-steered and develop from a ongoing support organisation to a continuously upgrading and transfer of their services to be used by the individuals themselves;
4. The **authorities and social partners** should support these three levels by means of legislation and arrangements so that the individual career development will not face obstacles but only favourable preconditions to take up one's career for the benefit of the individual, the organisation and the society.