

Sustainable Employability and continuous career development

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Workshop proposal for international IAEVG conference in Gothenburg

from October 2nd to October 4th, 2018.

Theme: *V Career guidance and counselling and the ever-changing labour market and access to work*

**Sustainable Employability and continuous career development;
experiencing the value of Core Qualities**

Gert van Brussel, PhD¹ & Judith Semeijn, PhD^{1,2}

¹ *Open University of the Netherlands,*

² *Maastricht University, The Netherlands*

[*Judith.semeijn@ou.nl*](mailto:Judith.semeijn@ou.nl)

Abstract (300 words max)

Sustainable employability of workers is an important issue for today's labour market. From research it is known that sustainable employability is affected by different factors, amongst others the personal characteristics of people. The development and stimulation of sustainable employability and labour participation can be supported by insights in and the awareness of the personality of individuals. After an introduction in the latest insights from research, this workshop will therefore offer exercises to get acquainted with the so-called Core Qualities as a method to work with personal characteristics that may be of importance for your behaviour and sustainable employability. We will experience and test the value of these personal characteristics that can be applied by every attendee. In addition, we will evaluate the practical value of the Core Qualities and its related concepts of Pitfalls, Challenges and Allergies for career counselling and guidance.

Keywords (3-5)

Sustainable employability, core qualities, career development, career guidance

Introduction

Today, people need to work longer until higher ages. They will have to be prepared for more changes at work, and in their work than some decades ago as well. Sustainable employability is therefore an important issue for the labour market of today, and refers to “working in such a way that they are able to meet their own needs and labor market requirements in the present, without compromising their ability to meet these in the future” (LeBlanc, Van der Heijden & Van Vuuren, 2017, p. 2).

Recently, Parkin Hughes, Semeijn and Caniels (2017) argued that when it comes to obtaining more sustainable outcomes for people, planet and profit, addressing the human factor at work still lags behind and needs far more attention. To enhance this attention for humans at work, an important role for life-long development and guidance seems warranted (Semeijn, 2018). What can career guidance contribute for this purpose?

Working with Core Qualities

Guidance can be aimed at being aware of and learn how to handle one’s so-called Core Qualities (Ofman, 1995). Core Qualities can be considered as personality characteristics or strengths that (give) colour (to) the behaviour and achievements of a person. Individuals are often recognized and valued by their (3-5) Core Qualities as parts of or the essence of their personality. Examples of Core Qualities are: Flexibility, Endurance, Creativity, Courage. Core qualities can be discriminated from skills and competences. Skills can be trained and learned, while core qualities can be developed as inner strengths that are already present in a person. Competences are broader concepts including skills, values and drives (Meyers, 2002).

Daniel Ofman, a Dutch business consultant, introduced the concept of Core Qualities in the nineties of the past century (Ofman, 1995). Other authors, such as Seligman (2002), also described and applied the concept of Core Qualities, for example in his happiness experiments (Seligman, 2002). Ofman surely vested and coined the term in the Netherlands and made it quite popular in consultancy and coaching practice. He believed that employees and leaders could benefit from awareness of and insights in their personal core qualities. He also claimed that besides individuals, teams and organizations have their typical core qualities.

In this workshop we aim to first give an overview of the latest literature on sustainable employability and the importance of core qualities for continuous career development and

sustainable employability (continuous labour market participation). Next we like to introduce the core qualities for a more practical purpose: the attendees of the workshop will apply the knowledge of their own core qualities for their own career development and possible use in their professional roles.

While working with core qualities, three concepts that are strongly related with Core Qualities are relevant as well:

- Pitfalls refer to the deformation of a core quality, hampering a person (team, organization) to be effective and successful. For instance: Flexibility becomes Inconsistency.
- Challenges are qualities that should be developed to counter a specific Pitfall. An example: Orderly counters Inconsistency.
- Allergies appear when too much of a Challenge is met in another person. Allergies are annoying, irritating and prevent fruitful cooperation. When Orderly is a Challenge, the corresponding Allergy can be met in Rigidity.

The four described concepts are interconnected in a dynamic way and can be visualized in a so called Core Quadrant. Figure 1 shows a Quadrant that is build up from the Core Quality: Helpful

Insert Figure 1.

Value of the method

Several studies of Seligman underpin the value of awareness of core qualities for the development of well-being happiness and personal growth of adults. A study evaluating the development of Core Quality in young students of elementary schools concluded that they are capable of recognizing their own Core Qualities and linking them with their actions (Ruit & Korthagen, 2013). Studies on the value of using the Quality concepts and the Core Quadrant for the development of sustainable employability and further career development are not available yet.

However, the Core Quality concept, also described by Seligman et al. (2005), seems to be very useful and fruitful for practitioners. A lot of our Dutch colleagues, career counsellors and consultants, are currently applying the Quality concepts and Quadrant as a tool. All kinds of

other tools for practice with Core Qualities, such as card games (KernKonsult, 1995), are developed and applied as well (Ofman, 1995, Gerrickens, 2000).

Exercises and assignments

During the workshop we will present several individual and group exercises that will give a clear insight in the described concepts. Participants will be facilitated to construct their personal Core Quadrants. Guidelines are provided for practice in career counselling and consultation focussed on the development of sustainable employability (and possibilities for continuous labour participation). In addition, we will discuss the value of the described concepts and tools for practice with the participants.

Summary and conclusions

The development and stimulation of sustainable employability and labour participation can be supported by insights in and the awareness of the personality of individuals. Working with personal characteristics, such as Core Qualities and its connected concepts such as Pitfalls, Challenges and Allergies, as well as the Core Quadrant as an overarching framework seems to have practical value for career counselling and guidance. More research would be needed for scientific validation. This counts especially when it comes to application of the Core Qualities for the development of sustainable employability, continuous labour participation and career development. However, based on earlier studies in different fields of application, we would like to test whether the ‘proof of the pudding is in the eating’ during this workshop.

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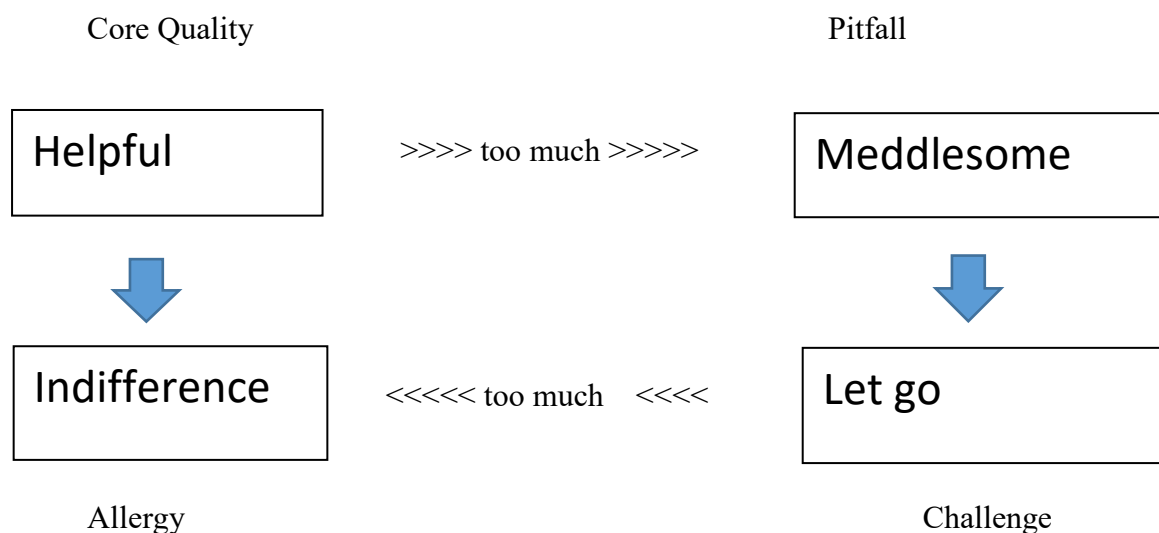


Figure 1. Core Quadrant: Helpful