

MARITIME STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL CAREER PLANNING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AS ASSESSED BY LECTURERS'

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Abstract

The particular dynamics of vacancies and movement of labour force, rapid changes of activity content are characteristic of maritime sectors and its labour market. It urges to activate the research of future seafarers' professional career planning and career planning skills development. The empirical part was devoted to the investigation of the lecturers' assessment of maritime students' professional career planning skills and the lecturers' participation in the process of professional career planning skills development. The research showed that the maritime students quite seldom address their lecturers on the issues of professional career planning. Less than a half of the lecturers frequently communicates with students on the issues of professional career planning. The qualitative research showed that the success of students' professional career is determined by the professional competence; general and career planning skills.

Key words: maritime education and training, maritime student, professional career, professional career planning skills.

Introduction

Educational institutions have not only to ensure the qualified specialists' education, but also provide the opportunities to gain knowledge, skills and attitudes system necessary for the development of their career – *systematic and streamlined development for career*. (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, Peterson, 2000; Sampson, Reardon, Peterson, Lenz, 2004; Pukelis, 2007). European Commission Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000) emphasizes that the objective of the vocational guidance, career guidance and counselling as well as services of career planning development is to ensure that every person could easily access high quality information and advice related to lifelong learning and professional activity opportunities.

The particular dynamics of vacancies and movement of labour force, rapid changes of activity content are characteristic of maritime sectors and its labour market. It urges to activate the research of future seafarers' professional career planning and the increase of professional career planning skills development. Maritime Education and Training institutions (MET) have not only to ensure the preparation of qualified specialists but also systematic and streamlined education for a career.

The aim of the research is to reveal the manifestation of maritime students' professional career planning skills as assessed by the lecturers.

The objectives of the research:

1. To define the principles of professional career planning skills development model.
2. To determine the lecturers' participation in the process of professional career planning skills development.
3. To ascertain the lecturer's assessment of maritime students' professional career planning skills development: what knowledge and skills maritime students require while planning their professional career?

Research Focus

The maritime students' professional career planning skills development model being created is multi-component, encompassing different components and based on different principles.

The operation of maritime students' professional career planning skills development model is based on the following principles:

The principle of interaction – the learners', educators' and labour world society's interaction as well as the compatibility of their activities is necessary for the functioning of the harmonious operation of the model. The accordance of maritime students' professional career planning skills development with the needs of labour market is grounded on the principle of interaction. This interaction provides a constant character of vicissitude and renewal, determines the dynamicity of the maritime students' professional career planning skills development model.

The principle of entirety – the principle of person's freedom of self-determination is clearly expressed in all theories of career development. It is important to pay attention to the external limitations of personal freedom (economical conditions, social stereotypes, problems of discrimination, etc.). Internal factors constricting personal freedom (anxiety, fear, poor development of self-image, behavioral shortfalls, etc.) are no less significant. Therefore it is necessary to concentrate the development to a personality as an entirety, keeping in mind the whole spectrum of its needs.

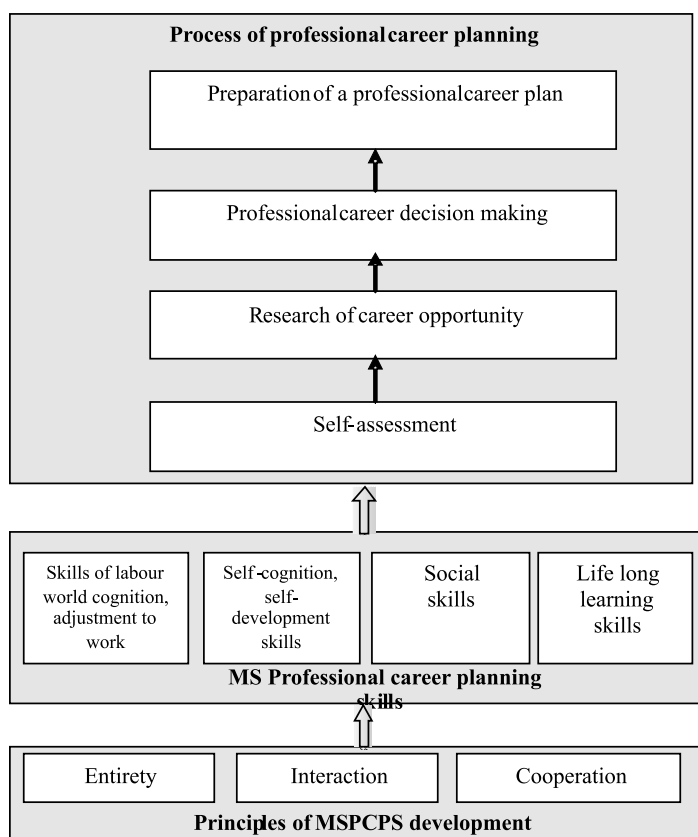


Figure 1: Model maritime students' professional career planning skills development (MSPCPS).

The principle of cooperation – the effective and systematic cooperation between a person himself, environment and career planning skills educators leads to the success of this process. The cooperation in the process of education both in European and national documents is recognized as a value and aspiration (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, Williams, 2000). The process of cooperation enables to change the education participants' provisions, encourages the sharing of information and creation of new knowledge. The contribution of personal efforts to the learning process is directly related to the level of self-developed professional career planning skills. The development of the skills will be inefficient without personal efforts, motivation, self-determination and personal interest.

The aim of professional career planning skills development is to help young people to acquire skills in the area of professional career management systemically, to encourage a personality to be responsible for the development of his/her professional activity and personal professional self-expression. When personality changes, the system of values changes as well therefore the planning professional career is affected not only from outside (changes in labour market, emergence of new professions, the development of opportunities to study and/or work abroad, etc.) but by internal factors, too.

In order to ensure professional career planning skills development, human material and technical resources are necessary. Lecturers, supervisors of apprenticeships, their professional maturity are very important in the process of maritime students' professional career planning skills development. The success of skills discussed in the theoretical part of the research: *cognition of labour world, social skills and life long learning* education and the application of these skills in the process of maritime students' professional career depend on their competence.

The planning of professional career is a constant process consisting of self-assessment; research of professional career opportunities; professional career decision making and professional career plan preparation stages (Pukelis, 2003). A person has to assess the relation of dynamically changing external factors and personal priorities with real possibilities, to take the decisions and plan their implementation with regard to the future changes.

Self-cognition and self-assessment entail two skills important for a professional career:

- the cognition of personality's features important for the professional career;
- the cognition of influence of personal development to the professional career.

This stage is based on self-cognition and the cognition of own abilities and insights, the determination of one's own interests, skills, values, personal features, goals. An activity, that is interesting for us itself is related to our inner motivation naturally encourages us to be interested in the field related to it and develop our career within its limits. Therefore the cognition of own interests is especially important in order to take good career decisions providing inner satisfaction. The knowing own abilities and available competences enables people to evaluate their own strong, weak sides and the ones to be developed with regard to separate professional alternatives (Gottfrendson, 2005, 2008; Savickas, 2005, 2011).

Skills of professional career opportunity research are:

- gathering, evaluation and usage of professional career information;
- the research of global social, technological development trends;
- the research of employment opportunities;
- the research of learning opportunities.

This block of skills enables to collect reliable information on the economical, social and technological development trends, the opportunities to work and learn. Skills of self-cognition and professional career opportunity research help to accumulate information about themselves and the surrounding world that is necessary for a professional career.

Professional career decision making. Career decisions are not daily decisions, therefore their consequences are long-term; in fact they determine the successes and failures of a professional career. That is why professional career decision making skill development is emphasized as an essential skill. It is important to be able to evaluate and control the influence of external factors (place and

time of decision making, the pressure from the surrounding people, etc.) on the professional career decisions being made.

The group of professional career planning skills encompasses three skills:

- creation of a professional career vision;
- professional career decision making;
- preparation of a professional career plan.

A skill of a professional career plan preparation entails the acquisition of different knowledge, necessary for creating a professional career plan. It is knowledge about the structure of a career plan, its stages of formation and its content. This knowledge helps to create the formal structure of a career plan.

Methodology of Research

General Background of Research

In January, 2012 the lecturers of Lithuanian Maritime Academy and Klaipeda University Maritime Institute, delivering lectures in the study programmes of Marine Navigation and Marine Engineering were surveyed in writing. The questionnaire for the lecturers was intended to pursue the following objectives:

- To reveal, how frequently the maritime students address lecturers on the issues of professional career planning;
- To determine, what demand for the information on professional career planning the respondents notice while communicating with the maritime students;
- To ascertain lecturers' readiness to provide information about the seafarer's profession content, the peculiarities of and requirements for the seafarer's speciality, the offer and demand for seafarers in the labour market, etc.

Sample Selection

The representativeness of the sample size was ensured. The size of the representative sample was calculated according to Paniotto's table (5% error). The general sample of the research consisted of 42 lecturers. 35 lecturers responded the questionnaires, thus the questionnaire response rate was 83 %.

Instrument and Procedures

To implement the aim of the research, the analysis of scientific literature and a quantitative research based on the anonymous questionnaire survey in writing was carried out. The quantitative research was supplemented with the qualitative one by asking the lecturers to express their opinion, which knowledge and skills are the most necessary for the maritime students, who plan their professional career. Thus, the qualitative content analysis revealed knowledge and skills most needed for the maritime students, planning their professional careers.

Data Analysis

The data gathered during the quantitative research were systemized and analyzed using mathematical statistical methods. The mathematical statistical data analysis was performed using SPSS 16 adapted for Windows operating system. The following have been applied for the analysis of the quantitative data: the methods of descriptive statistics (percentages of data distribution, averages, medians, standard deviations have been calculated); nonparametric tests (chi-square, Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient) and dichotomous analysis.

Results of Research

Quantitative Analysis

The research was aimed at revealing the manifestation of maritime students' professional career planning skills as assessed by the lecturers as well as the lecturers' participation in the process of professional career skills development.

The research showed that the maritime students rarely address their lecturers on the issues of professional career planning. More than a half of the respondents – the lecturers, who participated in the research (52 %) – pointed out, that the students seldom address them. One fourth of the respondents (26 %) indicated that the students frequently address them and the 13 % said that they very frequently communicate with the students on the issues of professional career planning. An inconsiderable part of the respondents noted, that students never address them (3 %), and 7 % of the respondents do not provide such consultations.

The research was also aimed at determining, whether the lecturers can provide the maritime students with the information on the peculiarities and requirements of the chosen profession, the demand and offer for seafarers in the domestic and foreign labour markets, etc. (See Figure 2).

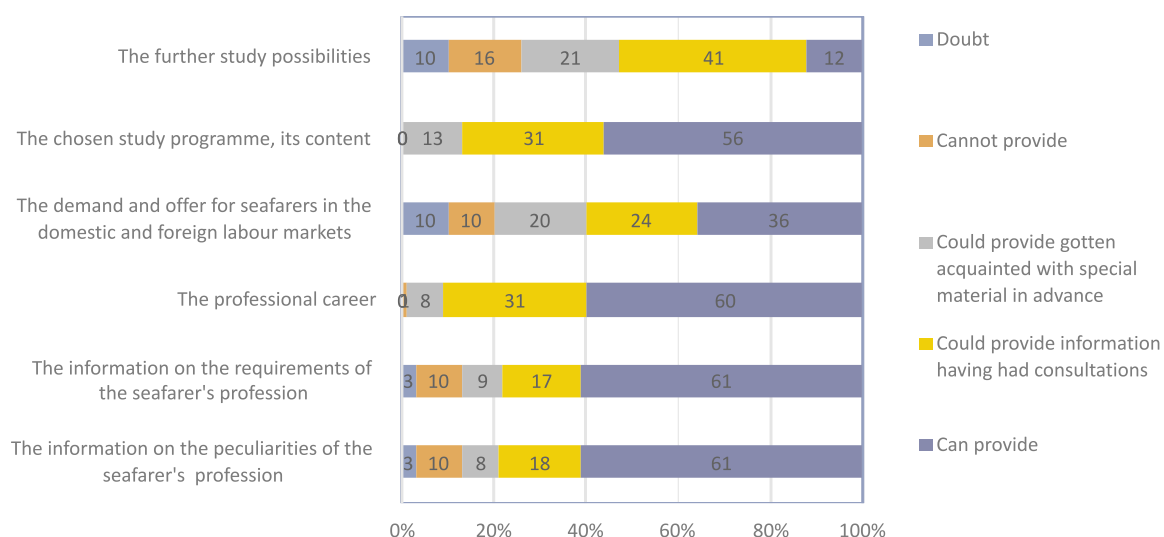


Figure 2: The distribution of lecturers' opinions evaluating their readiness to provide information.

According to the results of the survey, a considerable part of the lecturers indicated that they were able to provide information on the peculiarities of seafarer's profession (61 %), the requirements for seafarer's profession (61 %), the professional career (60 %) and the chosen study programme, its content (56 %). Some respondents pointed out that they could provide information having had consultations or gotten acquainted with special material in advance: on the further study possibilities (26 %); the demand for seafarers in the domestic and foreign labour markets (44 %); the professional seafarer's career (39 %).

It can be noted that despite the capability of the majority respondents to provide the information for the maritime students, a part of the lecturers lack preparation to inform the maritime students about the demand for seafarers in the domestic and foreign labour markets, the chosen study program and its content, the requirements for seafarer's profession and the peculiarities of it.

Applying the *Mann-Whitney* test, while comparing the lecturers' answers according to a marine rank, held by them, a statistically significant difference was estimated by assessing the provision of information on the peculiarities of seafarer's profession. The lecturers, holding a marine rank, were prepared to provide information about the peculiarities and requirements of seafarer's pro-

fession better than those without a marine rank (the answer rank mean of the marine rank holders was 21, and the one of the non-holders – 14; *Mann-Whitney U* = 84.000, *p* = 0.005).

To sum up, the students quite seldom address their lecturers on the issues of professional career planning. Less than a half of the lecturers frequently or very frequently communicate with students on the issues of professional career planning. The lecturers feel the most ready to inform about the peculiarities of the seafarer's profession, the requirements for it, the professional career. They are the least prepared to provide information on the possibilities for further studies, seafarers' demand in Lithuanian and foreign labour markets. The lecturers holding a marine rank, are better prepared to provide information about the peculiarities of seafarer's profession and requirements for it, than the ones who do not hold a marine rank.

Qualitative Analysis

The lecturers were asked an open question, what knowledge and skills the maritime students, planning their professional career, require most. During the data content analysis, three main groups of answers, i.e. categories, were distinguished:

1. Professional competence;
2. General skills;
3. Professional career planning skills.

The first category is professional competence. The following sub-categories were attributed to this category: theoretical speciality knowledge and practical knowledge and skills.

In lecturers' opinion, professional knowledge, skills and competences are of prime importance. It is related to the theoretical speciality knowledge and its application in practice. Legal knowledge is necessary for the future seafarers, as seafarers' training, certification and their work at sea is regulated by international and national legal acts.

The lecturers also have a notion that the maritime students, planning their professional career, require to gain practical skills not only during their sea-going training with a good mentor, but also during the simulator training. The electronic simulator is a computer system that imitates real working conditions, the most frequently occurring critical situations and provides a possibility to acquire and improve the skills of working in special conditions. The imitation of real situations allows the evaluation of professional competence and acquisition of modern technology usage skills.

The second distinguished category is general skills. In lecturers' opinion, general skills are as important as the excellent knowledge of profession, they assist in ensuring person's possibilities to develop professionally and personally. As ships' crews are frequently multi-national, English language skills and understanding other cultures are necessary. It is closely related to the ability of knowing other people, understanding their behaviour and feelings. This trait is termed as the knowledge of psychology.

Most lecturers distinguish the following skills: ability to work in a team, to solve problems quickly and accurately. It is important to acquire the leadership, work planning, organizing and individual problem-solving skills for management level seafarers.

The third category is career planning skills. Self-cognition skills, skills of labour world cognition, adjustment at work and knowledge of career planning are attributed to it. In lecturers' view, it is a necessity for the maritime students to know themselves, to perceive their professional intentions, to analyze the tendencies and perspectives of the labour market while planning their professional career.

To generalize, the success of students' professional career is determined by the professional competence; general and career planning skills, in lecturers' opinion.

Conclusions

Maritime students' professional career skills development model is founded on the following principles: *the principle of interaction*, which claims that pursuing the continuous adjustment of

maritime students' professional career skills development content with the needs of marine labour market and peculiarities of seafarers' profession, the interaction of learners, educators and labour world and the harmony of their activities are indispensable; *the principle of entirety*, concentrating the development to a personality as a whole, seeing the whole spectrum of his/her needs; *the principle of cooperation*, emphasizing the importance of systematic cooperation between a person and his/her educators.

The development of professional career planning skills: *self-cognition, self-management (self-education), labour world cognition, adjustment to work, lifelong learning, and social skills* is defined as a process enabling persons to plan their professional career as a consistent and managed process. Therefore the mission of professional career planning skills development is to encourage a personality to be responsible for the planning and improvement of the own professional activity.

The maritime students quite seldom address their lecturers on the issues of professional career planning. Less than a half of the lecturers frequently or very frequently communicate with students on the issues of professional career planning. The lecturers feel the most ready to inform about the peculiarities of the seafarer's profession, the requirements for it, the professional career. They are the least prepared to provide information on the possibilities for further studies, seafarers' demand in Lithuanian and foreign labour markets. The lecturers holding a marine rank, are better prepared to provide information about the peculiarities of seafarer's profession and requirements for it.

The success of students' professional career is determined by the professional competence; general and career planning skills.

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