

DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS OF NEW PODOLOGISTS FOR WORK IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Because of the effects of globalization and because of the changes in social-political situation in world, the multicultural environment in Latvia is also changing. Latvia is becoming more and more attractive for foreign citizens from Europe and the same for citizens from elsewhere, who choose to settle here permanently or only for a period of time. That is a considerable challenge for education and healthcare.

Workers in the field of medicine, and also podology must guide their professional career development to the changing multicultural environment. That is why needs of young specialists are also changing, with knowledge, skills and competencies necessary in their profession, specialists must develop creativity and critical thinking, insight of values and culture, humanism and citizenship, decision-making and problem-solving skills as well as entrepreneurial abilities and communication skills.

In the process of preparing new podologists for work in a multicultural environment development of those personal attributes that are made of tact and diplomacy, as well as development of basic skill sets that include learning skill and skill to make compromises, career management skill set development as characterized by ability to collaborate, ability to notice changes in working environment and ability to give support become more important.

The goal of this article is to describe, theoretically and empirically, the development of necessary career management skills for work in multicultural environment to new podologists.

Key words: career management skills, study process, podologist, multicultural environment

INTRODUCTION

Migration processes in Europe influence the formation of the multicultural environment in Latvia. Latvia along with other countries of the European

Union has joined the UNESCO Convention on protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression. The Convention emphasises the duty of each country to preserve and develop the identity of their culture at the same time promoting respect for other cultures, facilitating the interaction of cultures and mutual enrichment (Latvija 2030; LR Saeima, 2010).

The multicultural perspective tries to ensure a conceptual framework that separates and distinguishes the complex diversity process, which governs society, at the same time ensuring harmony and cooperation uniting culturally different people. During the last twenty years multiculturalism has been recognised as a powerful tool not only for understanding groups of unfamiliar people but also for understanding ourselves and those with whom we are working together (Lombardo, 2016; Kokemuller, 2016).

The immigration processes that at present take place in the world due to globalisation, economic and political factors cause changes in the traditional multicultural environment. Immigration is not a process that can be assessed unambiguously. On the one hand, it can be assessed as a positive phenomenon which helps to solve the demographic problems of the receiving country and gives significant contribution to the development of its economic and cultural processes. On the other hand, immigrants often are perceived as a burden or even a threat to the receiving country creating too heavy a social load and competing with the local population for employment places thus changing the multicultural environment that has already been established in the respective society. Such competition is not yet felt in the profession of podologists; however, podologists work in the changing multicultural environment where the patients have their different culture traditions and life styles. This defines the necessity for the specialists' tolerance, the ability to accept the differences and to be humane in relations with patients and society.

The development of career management skills in the context of a multicultural environment is important in any profession, especially in one where there is constant interaction and cooperation with other people, nursing and educating them as it is in the podologist's profession.

The aim of the article is to reflect the theoretical and empirical analysis concerning the formation of the career management skills necessary for the future podologist (the student of podology) for work in a multicultural environment, using the survey method, literature and document analysis for the acquisition of the necessary data.

MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE CONDITIONS OF GLOBALISATION

At present society is characterised by multicultural aspects, the environment, in which each professional functions and it is not homogeneous. The latest developments in Europe testify that the multicultural environment is no longer as it used to be; changes take place due to globalisation. "Globalisation

is a multiangular process connected with economic, social, technological, political and other changes resulting in a situation that most of the world's countries and geographical regions become mutually closer connected and at the same time more dependant on each other. In practice globalisation is expressed in an increasing flow of goods and services as well as capital, money and people among countries" (Sabiedrības integrācijas fonds, 2012).

The notion of the multicultural environment at the present time has changed under the influence of globalisation; it has become different from the traditionally understandable process when communities of several cultures had for years lived in the society and the influences of several cultures and religions had existed in parallel. Contemporary society is characterised by a continuously accelerated development of science and technologies, the transition from the industrial society to the information society and a rapid application of information technologies in all spheres of life. One can observe fast communication flow that is characterised by enormous speed of information exchange in mass media, the spread of global technologies in time and space. Uncertainty and the change of cultural values govern society; a multi-ethnic society develops with the expressions of paradoxes of a cultural mosaic, conflicts and tense relations causing the alienation of personal identity from traditions and roots. Thus the boundary between the working time and leisure time disappears more and more, the gender roles change, career development accelerates and as a result the understanding of the career changes (Partnerības līgums ESI fondu 2014.-2020.gada plānošanas periodam [Partnership agreement for ESI fund planning period 2014-2020], 2014; Tēraudkalns, 2006; Jaunzeme, 2013). All the above mentioned processes can be described as a multicultural environment in which we find ourselves. However, there is still no unified position in using the notion 'multicultural'. Analysing different publications (Thompson, & Di Tomaso, 1988; Connerley, & Pedersen, 2005; Kokemuller, 2016) in the context of the multicultural environment different notions relating to the multicultural environment can be found in several sources, for instance: intercultural interaction- in culture, globalisation - in politics and economics, diversity - in pedagogy, multicultural workforce - in career management.

The multicultural environment is used speaking both in the aspect of genders, races, religious belonging and cultural differences. Multiculturalism is often described as the notion of diversity. Diversity, according to the definition, concentrates on the different while multiculturalism is more concentrated on the concrete features of different cultures. The discussion about the "correct" definition is still topical. Several researchers (Cox, 1994; Rijsman, 1997; Connerley & Pedersen, 2005) defend the definition of diversity that is based on the inequality of powers, for example, race and gender. Cox (1994) defines the cultural diversity as the reflection of differences of different population groups in one social system.

When a society is diverse, it will only stay together as long as its citizens value deep diversity in itself (Gutman, 2003; Honneth, 2003; Kymlicka, 2001).

This largely refers also to the education of new specialists, including podologists, in a multicultural environment.

The migration process, the movement of cultures (change) happens continuously; it has existed for centuries; however, at present these processes happen very rapidly which activates the issue of multiculturalism in education and the development of the professional career. For instance, Latvia has become more and more attractive for the foreign citizens both from the European Union and other countries who choose to settle temporarily or permanently for life here. Also the increase is observed almost in all groups of incomers whether they are foreigners who are connected with Latvia through the family, studies, employment, investment or shelter. The incomers often are families who need to be ensured of education possibilities, social services and health care. This is a challenge for preparing specialists for work in a new multicultural environment that so far has been little explored. Diversity in the workplace means bringing together people of different ethnic backgrounds, religions and age groups into a cohesive and productive unit (Root, 2016).

Podologists whose work influences the health of each individual and the society in general have to develop their readiness to pay attention to the development of such career management skills in the formation of their career that ensure excellent communication, the ability to adjust to the new conditions and to develop cooperation.

PODOLOGISTS' CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS NECESSARY IN THE MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Education systems are developed in each country according to the culture traditions, the level of life and society needs and education policy and training of qualified specialists, including podologists, is implemented with the help of it.

The understanding about a common Europe and Latvian education system in the European education space is changing. At present the unified Europe is characterised by the multicultural environment. The needs of new professionals in the multicultural environment are also changing, thus along with professional knowledge, skills and professional competences one should also develop creativity and critical thinking, decision making and problem solving skills, entrepreneur and interaction skills, awareness of values and culture, humanism and civilisation. It is said in the Handbook of multicultural education (*Multikulturālās izglītības rokasgrāmata*, 2012) that multiculturalism becomes an indispensable part of professionalism emphasizing the inclusion of the principle of multiculturalism in the statutes and regulations of schools, universities, colleges, public organizations, hospitals and enterprises - "The enterprise does not discriminate people by race, religion, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, national or ethnic belonging, language, physical or mental differences."

A student-centred approach is still topical in the implementation of the tertiary level study process in practice; it develops with time and is substantia-

ted in the theory of pedagogy. Despite the theory of human pedagogy which sometimes in a narrow sense is connected with religion and spirituality that has not been assessed unambiguously the ideas of human pedagogy today experience a repeated Renaissance which is determined both by the change of social political system and the globalisation processes in the world, the discoveries of innovative technologies and science, the requirements of the labour market and international agreements as well as societal needs and attitude.

Nowadays human pedagogy focuses on human freedom, preservation of self-esteem and the use of personal potential. The central principle of humanism - human value, is still being activated in the views of today's theoreticians (Dauber, 2009; Huitt, 2011; Barrett, 2006). Training podologists in accordance with the requirements of the current labour market it is necessary to promote the development of the set of such personal features that includes the sense of tact and diplomacy; the development of key skills that involve the learning-to-learn skill and the skill to compromise; the development of career management skills including the skill to cooperate, the skill to observe the change of the working environment and the skill to give support. The promotion of the development of the mentioned skills in the study process and the choice of the didactic methods for the implementation of the aims and content of the study course is more often determined by accidental influence than consequently planned learning outcome. Fabry (2012) in his article "Didaktik der Medizin" also stresses that the key problem of medical education is the question with the mediation of what content, what ways and what aims the main aim is reached- what skills and knowledge the graduates have mastered. However, the problem is also the fact that certain skills and qualification do not guarantee the future specialist's ability to solve problems and challenges in work and life. Therefore when organising the study process it should always be considered whether the philosophical, ethnic and social skills are clearly formulated for the involved parties.

Also in the profession standards of the podologist and the code of ethics, based on the law of patients' rights (Saeima, LR, 2014) it is said that in the work with the patient/client no different attitude depending on the person's race, ethnic origin, the colour of the skin, gender, age, disability, health, religious, political or other conviction, national or social origin, property or family situation or other conditions is allowed (Latvijas Podologu biedrība [Latvian Association of Podologists], 2011; Ministru kabinets, [Council of Ministers] LR, 2013). The analysis and reconstruction of values, world outlook and human values influence the didactic decisions (Fabry, 2012), which closely relate to the theories of human pedagogy that voice the opinion that it is necessary to understand a person in wholeness, evaluating particularly the growth and development of the individual during the lifetime.

Both the globalisation processes and the change of the socially political situation and the rapid formation of the multicultural environment in Europe determine the necessity to develop career management skills that would ensure further development of the professionals facilitating the ability to adapt and integrate in the changing work environment, improving the criteria for attitu-

des and values in order to set new (further) aims for attainment (OECD, 2014). The content of the podologists' career management skills are based on the key skills necessary in lifelong learning (CEDEFOP, 2008; OECD 2014), the skills necessary for employability (career management skills-CMS) (ELGPN, 2013) and skills necessary in podology (Ministru kabinetu, LR, 2013), (See Table 1).

Table 1.

The content of the podologist's career management skills

Set of key skills (OECD) ¹	Set of key skills (EU lifelong learning framework) ²	Skills necessary in the (Profession standard of the podologist) ³	Skills necessary for employability (CMS) ⁴
leadership	communication in the mother tongue	key skills in medicine	self-management (the skill to organise oneself)
digital skills	communication in foreign languages	specific skills in the field (podiatry)	the skill to work in a team
communication skills	mathematical skills and key skills in science and technologies	language and communication skills	understanding the business and the client
emotional intelligence	digital skills	interaction and stress management skills	problem solving
global citizenship	the skill to learn (learning to learn)	decision making skill	communication, literacy
entrepreneurship	social and civic skills	self-assessment skill	application of numeric literacy
problem solving	self-initiative and entrepreneurship	innovative skills (the skill to apply new technologies, digital skills)	application of information technologies
team work	awareness and expression of culture	entrepreneurship skills	initiative and entrepreneurship

Source: adapted from ¹ OECD (2014), ² Cedefop (2008), ³ Council of Ministers, Profession standard of the podologist (2013), ⁴ (ELGPN, 2013)

Analysing the skills defined in the Professional standard of the podologist, the set of key skills necessary for lifelong learning and the set of skills necessary for employability (career management skills), and using the qualitative content analysis method (Pipere, 2011; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) skills of the same name or the same meaning were selected from the four groups of skills. During the content analysis eight career management skills were separated and criteria describing them were defined (See Table 2).

Table 2.*Podologist's career management skills and their criteria*

Podologist's CMS	Criterion
Key skills in medicine and specific skills in the field	Observes the boundaries of the professional competence and takes responsibility for the professional activities
	Identifies the problem under care, puts forward the aim for care and makes the plan for care
	Evaluates, solves and eliminates complex problems (non-standard situations)
Interaction and communication skill	Devotes undivided attention, listens to and asks questions
	Understands the content of documents
	Can give arguments
Innovative technology skills	Masters technologies, equipment and adjusts them for work
	Uses and applies methods of scientific achievements in problem solving
	Develops new strategies/methods for problem solving
Decision- making skill	Is independent
	Makes the most suitable decision
	Forms alternative approach to problem solving (critical thinking)
Planning and self-assessment skill	Sets priorities
	Assesses and compares one's own actions (SWOT analysis), makes improvements
	Plans one's own time and that of others
The skill to act in a (multidisciplinary) team	Develops cooperation
	Provides support
	Adjusts to the change of the work environment
The skill to learn (learning to learn)	Perceives new information
	Reflects on knowledge and experience
	Implements self-guided learning
Entrepreneurship skills	Uses ideas creatively and creates new ideas
	Assesses the quality of one's actions
	Works independently (organises one's own work)

Source: developed by authors

As it was mentioned before, the theoretical substantiation of formation and development of the podologists' career management skills is based on the approach of human pedagogy that orients on the personality development as a whole (Амонашвили, 1989; Сенько, 2000; Huitt, 2011). Human pedagogy is characterised so by a man-centred, student-oriented pedagogical approach and the use of such teaching/learning methods that develop an independent creative functioning. Learning is an active process, especially when using the possibilities of innovative technologies. The main teaching/learning methods that help to develop independent and creative action are – solution of problem situations, seminars, research, self-guided learning, that promote the development of such career management skills as the decision making skill that included independence, the making of the most suitable decisions and an alternative approach to problem solving (critical thinking) and the skill to work in a multidisciplinary team, which includes cooperation, providing the support and adjustment to the change of the work environment. On the basis of the theoretical description of the multicultural environment the set of these skills has to be mentioned as vitally necessary for work in a multicultural environment because it confirms the readiness of the young professional to adjust to the change of the work environment, to make independent and adequate decision, to develop cooperation and provide support.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS NECESSARY FOR THE PODOLOGISTS' WORK IN THE MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE STUDY PROCESS (DISCUSSION BASED ON THE SURVEY FINDINGS)

In order to research the formation of the career management skills necessary for the work of the new podologist in the multicultural environment, two of the eight skills necessary for the podologist's career management have been analysed – the decision making skill and the skill of forming the cooperation in a multidisciplinary team. Three criteria have been set for each skill to determine its application in practice, using the Likert scale measurement in the interval from 1 to 4 as an indicator in which 4 means the application of the skill in all situations, 3 – in most situations, 2- in separate situations and 1- in no situation. In the framework of this study 20 second year students of the podology program were surveyed and the findings were compared with the survey results of 45 graduates from the study program "Podology". The answers given by 17 students and 44 graduates were admitted as useful for the analysis. Taking into consideration the unequal number of respondents in both the groups, the data were calculated in percentage for visual comparison of survey results; they were compared in the MS Excel program and reflected in column diagrams where the set of students' data n=17 corresponds to 100% and the set of graduates' data n=44 also 100%.

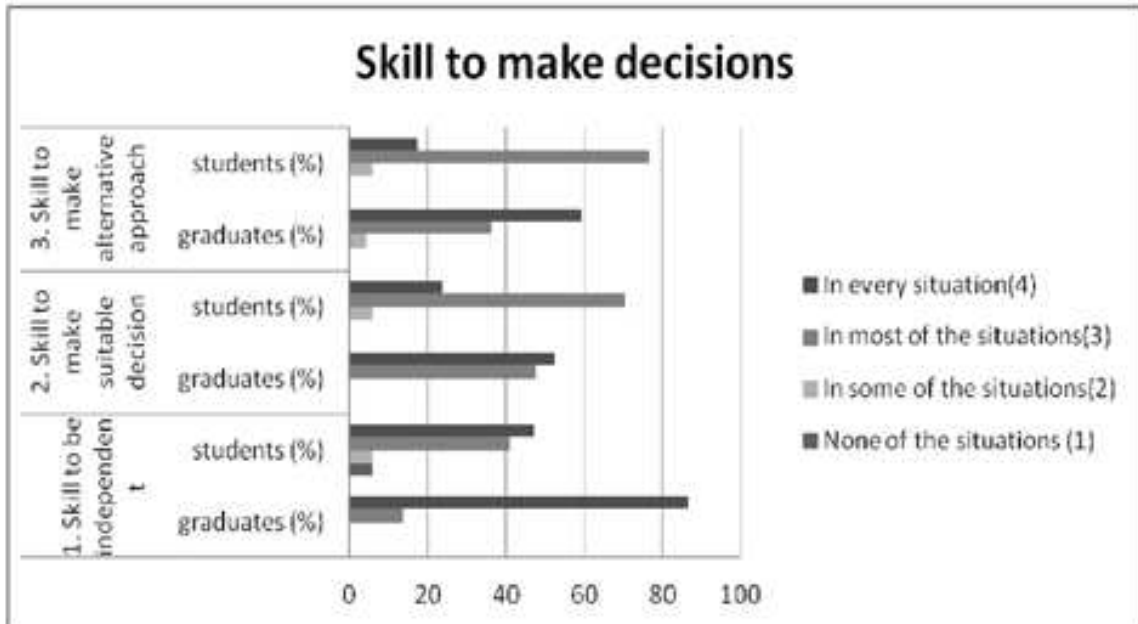
The skill to make an adequate decision determines both the new specialist's further career development and the ability to find an optimal solution in non-standard situations and guides the independence. Podology students' opinion about the independence, making the adequate decision and formation of an alternative approach to problem solving which is defined by the skill to think analytically and critically was found out in the survey. Comparing findings concerning the assessment of independence in the group of students and the graduates (see Pict. 1) allows concluding that the majority of podology students can be independent in all or in most situations but the majority of working specialists (87%) are independent in all situations. This corresponds to the results of the theoretical study about independence as a significant component in the group of career management skills and the basis for making decisions in the changing work and multicultural environment conditions.

However, only a little less than a quarter of podology students (23%) and half of the working specialists (52%) are able to make a totally adequate decision in all situations and this determines the necessity to improve the study process so that the future podology specialist is able to act freely and responsibly in the multicultural environment.

The majority of podology students (77%) in most situations are ready to form an alternative approach to problem solving, and more than a half of working podologists (59%), in their turn, are able to develop an alternative approach to problem solving in all situations thus confirming their readiness for work in different conditions and non-standard situations.

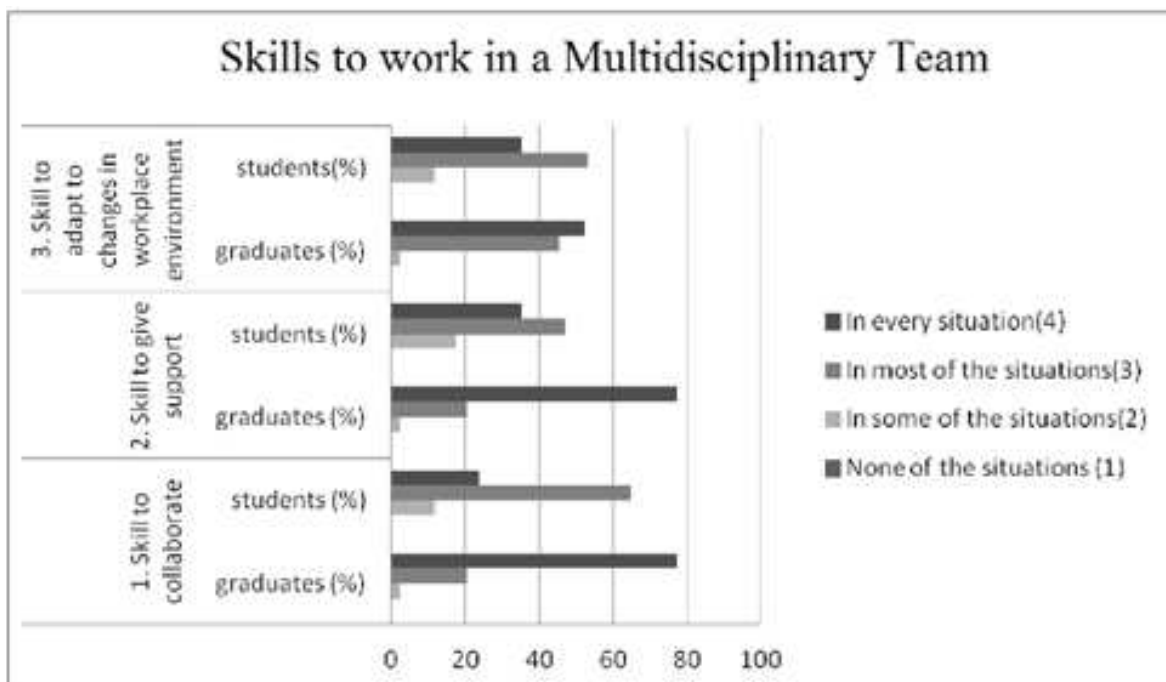
Podology as an interdisciplinary branch is connected with providing care and support to a diverse group of patients which determines the necessity to develop cooperation with different specialists of the health care team. The podologist's ability to develop his/her professional career in different directions, to accept the change in the conditions and to function successfully in a team is influenced by the adjustment to the change of the work environment. Evaluating the findings of the survey about the development of cooperation (see Pict. 2) it is evident that in the graduates' group the greatest part of respondents (77%) can form cooperation in all situations which is determined by the work specifics of the podologist as a member of a multidisciplinary care team. Yet, in the students' group only less than a quarter of respondents (23%) can develop cooperation in all situations and a few students (12%) develop cooperation only in some situations which can be explained with students' possible lack of practical experience. In general the survey findings prove that the study process is still oriented to the formation of mutual cooperation because more than half of respondents (65%) are able to develop cooperation in almost all situations.

Pic. 1.
The decision making skill



The changing multicultural environment is described not only by patients with different cultural traditions and life styles but also the change processes taking place in the work environment. Half of the working podologists (52%) are able to adjust to the changes of the work environment in all situations and almost as may of the surveyed students (53%) can change the work environment in most situations thus confirming their readiness to work in a multicultural environment.

Pic. 2.
The skill to develop cooperation



Providing support both in the process of caring for the patient and in developing cooperation with colleagues is also very important. The analysis of the survey data shows that almost half of students (47%) are ready to give support in almost all situations and only a few less (35%) of students in all situations. Also the majority of the working podologists (77%) can give support in all situations or almost all situations (21%), confirming the readiness to understand and accept the different, to be aware of the importance of the human value factor in health care which relates to the tolerance and acceptance of the difference expressed in the code of ethics of podologists, the law on patients' rights and the theoretical explanation of the multicultural environment.

The findings of the study allow us to conclude that the decision making skill and the skill to develop cooperation are significant not only in the professional work of the podologists, the ability to adjust to the change of conditions and the acceptance of the different but they also ensure the young specialist's competitiveness and career development possibilities in the multicultural environment.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The multicultural environment under the influence of globalisation changes substantially. The migration processes, too, promote the movement of culture thus transforming the traditional multicultural environment of the society that has formed in its historical development. Changes in the multicultural environment have the fastest impact on social and health care. Thus due to these changes more and more attention in the education of the new specialists-podologists should be paid to those career management skills that largely define the inclusion and development of the new specialists in the work environment and the quality of the services they provide. Therefore respecting the principles of multiculturalism, during the podologists' study process the use of the personal potential of each new specialist, the development of an independent and creative action is emphasised and the application of such teaching/learning methods as solution of problem situations, seminars, research, self-guided learning that promote the acquisition of the key skills of medicine and the specific skills in the field, interaction and communication skills, innovative technology skills, decision making skills, planning and self-evaluation skills, cooperation skills, the learning skills and the development of the entrepreneurship skills is underlined and they are also defined as the podologist's career management skills.

Among the eight skills included in the group of the podologist's career management skills for the work in the multicultural environment two skills have to be singled out especially – the decision making skill and the cooperation formation skill in the multidisciplinary team. These, based on the theoretical description of the multicultural environment are especially important in the podologists' professional work and development in the current diversity conditions characteristic to the society and in their continuous change.

The use of the career management skills necessary for the work in the multicultural environment confirms the independence of the new podologists, their skill to make the most adequate decision and to form an alternative approach to different situations, paying attention to the development of these skills already in the study process.

Independence, decision making, critical thinking and alternative approach to problem solving is influenced by the experience which is based on the skill to use the specialist's already existing potential. The experience forms already in the study process by improving the attitude and value criteria for setting further aims. The skills to make decisions, to think critically, to find alternative approaches in problem solving independently strengthen through professional development facilitating the ability to adjust and to integrate in the changing work environment.

The podologist's skill to work in a team does not mean only professional functioning in a multidisciplinary team of health care specialists but also cooperation and providing support to other people, dynamic adjustment to the change of conditions and work environment. Exactly the formation of these career management skills establishes the basis for work in a multicultural environment and determines the new podologist's growth and career development in general.

Globalisation processes and the change of the cultural environment takes place here and now therefore special attention in the training and career education of the young specialists, including podologists, should be paid to those skills and groups of skills the quality of which substantially influences the interaction in the multicultural environment and thus also the health care. The work with people from different ethnic and religious communities is today's reality for which we are educating the new specialists also in the field of podology.

SHORT OVERVIEW

The article about the development of the future podologists' career management skills in the multicultural environment emphasises the transformation of the cultural environment taking place in the globalisation process and the impact of the conditions created by the new multicultural environment on the processes taking place in the society, the education process and the education of podologists. During the theoretical research, based on the studies of several authors (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005; Cox, 1994; Gutman, 2003; Honneth, 2003; etc.), the analysis of international documents (Latvija-2030. Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības stratēģijas līdz 2030. gadam [Latvia 2030. Sustainable development strategies of Latvia for 2030], 2010; Partnerības līgums ESI fondu 2014.-2020. gada plānošanas periodam [Partnership agreement for ESI fund planning period 2014-2020], 2014; etc.), the analysis of the podologists' education documents and Podologist's profession standard (Ministru kabinets, [Council of ministers] LR 2013), it was found how changes in the multicultural environment influence the advance of the podologists' education process, career deve-

lopment and which podologist's career management skills are necessary for work in the multicultural environment.

Setting the aim to reflect the formation of the career management skills necessary for the future podologist (the podology student) for work in a multicultural environment, during the practical research applying the qualitative content analysis method, the set of career management skills necessary for the podologist was defined. Based on the results of the theoretical study, two skills necessary for work in a multicultural environment were singled out from the eight skills defined in the group of podologist's career management skills – the decision making skill and the cooperation formation skill. Their application in practice is analysed using the survey and comparative analysis method. The research has resulted in the conclusion that the decision making and cooperation formation skills are important not only in the podologist's professional work, the ability to adjust to the change of conditions and the acceptance of the different but they also ensure the competitiveness and the career development possibilities of the new specialist in the multicultural environment.

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