

THE MEASUREMENT AND ENHANCEMENT OF
EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREER SUCCESS

OVER DIFFERENT LIFE AND CAREER STAGES



Claudia M. van der Heijde

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for Oktay and Bertold

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Introduction

Furthering the development of workers' employability has the potential to be used by organizations to meet the fluctuating demands they face for numerical and functional flexibility (Marginson, 1989; Valverde, Tregaskis, & Brewster, 2000). Numerical and functional flexibility are absolute necessities for organizations to prepare for and to quickly adapt to the demands of fast-changing and fluctuating consumer and product markets, thereby maintaining and renewing their competitiveness and hence their viability. Clear definitions and instruments for the concept of employability are needed to facilitate this process. For individual employees, occupational expertise and employability are important factors for ensuring the high quality of skilled work during the entire career, and thereby other career outcomes such as salary and job satisfaction, in that they provide continuity to work and development.

Increasingly, domain-specific occupational expertise is not enough to guarantee positive work outcomes during the entire career, but rather, a more varied and transferable competence package is needed. Changes in the nature of work (Frese, 2000), as a result of knowledge intensification, globalization, and growth of the service sector are assumed to be at the root of this development. Aging groups are more at risk for experience concentration. In a study of the over-forties (Boerlijst, 1994), it was demonstrated that investments in the competence development of personnel after a certain age, are quickly cutshort.

Aging workers are extra at risk when having to meet the modern and faster-changing demands of today's labour market. When older workers lose their jobs, they face more than average difficulty in regaining employment. "In several OECD countries persons aged 45–64 years, are struggling more than other age groups with long-term unemployment" (Van der Heijde & van der heijden, 1995, p.143). They are not easily re-employed (e.g., Daniel & Heywood, 2007; Heyma, van der Werff, Nauta & van Sloten, 2014). The question arises as to whether age-related stereotyping or a decreased employability (i.e. their labour market value) is at the root of this problem.

From earlier research (Boerlijst, 1994) several interesting findings were collected regarding the relation of age with employability. The over-forties in employment do not appear to encounter serious problems in their present function or position, as long as this function remains indispensable or essential for their organization. Supervisors' evaluation of the quality of functioning of the over-forties and the over-fifties is unanimously rather high. However, in the eyes of their supervisors, the over-forties, and even more so the over-fifties, lack the skills and expertise needed for other fields beyond the immediate scope of their present job, and are evaluated as immobile in that sense.

As far as the relationship of employability to age goes, we may conclude that findings from Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2005) and earlier studies certainly suggest declines in employability, especially when evaluated by supervisors. A relevant question is which group of raters is more objective (supervisors or workers). These findings could also have been influenced by various career and life phase factors or labour market context factors such as a particular work area or line of work (e.g., managerial function) and location (e.g., Chiu, Snape, Redman, & Chan, 2001) In the future, more research is needed to measure competence levels of different age groups and also to re-evaluate expectancies regarding competence levels toward these different age group employees.

In this chapter, an outline on employability in a historical perspective is followed by a more extensive explanation of the concept of employability and recommendations that are rooted in empirical research on how to improve the employability within an organizational context, keeping various life and career stages in mind. The research questions of this thesis will then be presented, followed by the outline of this thesis. Finally a table summary is given.

1.1 Employability in a historical perspective

The concept of employability came into use from about 1955 (Versloot, Glaudé & Thijssen, 1998), and has acquired different meanings in the course of time. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century the concept of ‘employability’ has become rather fuzzy. A couple of (historical) overviews are available (Thijssen, 1999; 2000; Van Lammeren, 1997, 1998; Versloot, et al., 1998). One could consider the concept of employability as useful in pointing to certain historical work and organizational developments in Western countries (roughly from the seventies to the nineties), according to Thijssen in relation to the transition of an industrial to a post-industrial society.

Over the years, a gradual shift can be observed concerning who has been the main responsible party for employability ranging from government to organizations to individual workers, corresponding to three different definitions of work from the perspective of those different parties, namely, full employment (government), the deployment of people with a match between supply and demand (organizations) and attractive paid work (individual) (Thijssen, 2000). In parallel, a shift in studied target groups occurred from ‘population groups’ to ‘internal organizational segments’ to ‘very specific target groups’, such as for instance ‘young people in their thirties’.

Until the *seventies* employability was about ‘employment participation’ which is accompanied by ‘flexibility of society’. The first articles on this concept (Feintuch, 1955; Mangum, 1976; Orr, 1973) do not deal with the mobility of employees on the labour market between or within companies, but with the problems of the unemployed finding a job. This was during a period that lifetime employment was customary. In the case of a surplus of workers, one endeavours to fulfil the macroeconomic goal of filling all the vacancies and seeks a solution of unemployment of disadvantageous groups, such as the disabled. The government is the actor responsible for achieving the target of full employment and a decrease in the collective burden (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003).

During the two last decades of the 20th century (the eighties and nineties will be elaborated on separately), market developments caused organizations to reorganize themselves into becoming more flexible firms, compared with how things were previously. Geelhoed (1997) mentions an increasing global competitiveness, intensification of knowledge, increase of Information Technology, growing customer sovereignty and a changing macro environment, including the ongoing European integration. Besides this, more and faster changes took place, undermining organizational strategy and planning, which the organizations should potentially be able to flexibly anticipate.

In the *eighties* the concept of employability was linked to ‘suitability for work’ and ‘flexibility of organizations’. The trend in flexible working patterns continued. According to the OECD (Delsen, 1998) external mobility increased throughout Europe during the period ’85-’91 and in several countries the average job duration decreased. Aspects of ‘working life’ such as development and career were emphasized (Thijssen, 1998) and the tension between employment and the economic alertness of organizations (Van Lammeren, 1999) attracted attention. An increasing problem for organizations is the reconciliation of ‘numerical or external flexibility’ with ‘functional or internal flexibility’, because of the risks of flows of talent and investments.

When workers work for shorter time periods for one and the same employer, according to Ghoshal and Bartlett (1997) a loyalty model is replaced with a flexibility model. The psychological contract, the reciprocal silent expectancies of employer and employee change. Formerly, loyalty of employees was exchanged for lifelong employment and possibly a hierarchical career, while now competences (and flexibility) are exchanged for interesting work and career development. Baruch (2001) defines the essence of employability as the investments employers make in the development of their employees, whom they will not be able to provide with employment security, in this way enlarging their market value. Delsen (1998) states that numerical flexibility is only at the cost of

the employability of workers because employers are afraid to invest in human capital. Both parties, though, have to take their responsibilities and safeguard their own interests, whilst at the same time not taking advantage of other labour market participants.

In the *nineties*, employability became more and more associated with ‘being able to adapt and anticipate to change’ and to ‘flexibility of workers’ (Thijssen, 1998). Primarily, broad-based, enduring and fast deployment is stressed (Thijssen, 1998). The flexible and responsible employee maps out his career plans within but also outside the organization. Lateral career moves and development gain in importance compared with the traditional career of upward movements within the organization (Lankhuijzen, 2002).

In the 21th century, employability continues to be a *hot topic*. New waves of automation and robots will be responsible for the disappearance of the larger part of middle-class jobs. According to Frey & Osborne (2013), “high-skill and high-wage occupations are the least susceptible to computer capital”. Meanwhile, (knowledge) workers are competing more and more at global levels because of technological innovations, necessitating continuously reskilling and reinventing themselves, and being more entrepreneurial and self-steering. In addition, greying and dejuvenization are responsible for the delayed retirement of older workers, necessitating extra attention to different life and career stages.

1.2 Conceptualizations of employability

Employability is a concept that is studied from different angles and defined at more than one level (society, industry, organization, individual). The context in which employability is used exerts an influence upon its definition. Business and Management studies, Human Resource Management, Human Resource Development, Educational Science and Career Theory, are each exemplary for the use of the concept on different levels and the different meanings that are attributed

to employability. There has been a lack of studies integrating the different perspectives adopted in employability research (Thijssen, 2000). Owing to this situation, the concept of employability remains abstract and vague.

In this thesis we define *employability* at the individual level. Definitions of employability at the individual level are abundant (Forrier & Sels, 2003; Thijssen, 2000; Versloot, et al., 1998), each emphasizing different (and similar) career aspects in a (potential) employee, but all with employment as outcome: physical suitability (Gazier, 1990), cognitive suitability, (career) development (De Haan, Vos, & De Jong, 1994; Fugate, 2002; Sterns & Dorsett, 1994), learning, despecialization (Bolweg & Maenhout, 1995; Hoeksema & Paauwe, 1996; Pearson, 1988; Thijssen, 1997), flexibility, adaptation to (fast) changes (Bolweg, 1997; Friedrichs, 2000), and mobility (both external and internal).

Employability is believed to accommodate several or all of these aspects, depending on the angle from which it is studied, and consequently cannot be seen as a uni-dimensional construct. Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth, (2004), who studied its conceptual foundation from a career angle, use the term ‘variegated’. In search of the core of the concept, various attempts have been made to categorize, to capture its composing dimensions. Employability has more often been divided into a potential and a motivation component, known as ‘ability and willingness’ (Thijssen, 2000; Van der Velde & Van den Berg, 2000), representing ‘suitability of the individual for employment’ and ‘potential to be further developed or exploited by the individual’.

Running parallel to this study, a different attempt to define and operationalize employability, more extensive and detailed than the ‘ability and willingness’ distinction, was by Fugate et al. (2004) from the career angle. Because we aim to investigate how organizations and HR have the potential to enhance the employability of workers, we start from the organizational context. Our first objective in this study is to arrive at a solid definition and conceptualization for employability in this context. Strategic HRM needs to monitor what competences

are called for besides occupational expertise to contribute to organizations' flexibility and viability in the long run. Our argument is that at the same time, this operationalization of employability will be stimulating for the career outcomes of individual workers of different life and career stages (of different ages).

Organizations can use various HR policies and practices to their advantage because of their potential to enhance the employability (and thereby also the career outcomes) of individual workers. Employability is inextricably intertwined with learning and development as a means for adapting to change. Nowadays, awareness is growing on the importance of learning stimuli at different organizational levels for learning and (career) development, such as the level of the job, the team and the direct supervisor/direct leadership besides training and development (formal learning). Different aspects can be studied such as work content, leadership style, etc, that may be regarded as belonging to the area of informal learning. Furthermore, it is to be expected that the perception of these different learning stimuli may impact on workers at different life and career stages in different ways.

1.3 The research questions outlined in this thesis

This PhD research has two important objectives. Firstly, we aim to develop a valid and reliable measurement instrument for individual workers' employability at at least middle educational levels of functioning within organizational contexts (in order to provide data that could be generalized for future use in organizations). It was necessary to allow for the possibility that current workers, particularly older ones, might not be comparable with employees hired by companies some 20 years later on, in view of the increasing complexity and increasing level of difficulty of future jobs and a concomitant rise in required educational levels (see also Van der Heijde & Heijden, 2006, p. 457). Secondly, we will look into the relationships of employability enhancing organizational factors on the one hand and employability and career success on the other, taking into account life and career stages. We

foresee that the outcomes will provide us with clues to make practical recommendations for SHRM in that respect.

The main research question of this thesis is:

How to 1) define, 2) measure and 3) enhance employability and career outcomes within an organizational context, taking into account different life and career stages?

This main research question is divided into the following sub-questions and addressed in the following studies:

1. How can employability be defined and measured within an organizational context? Is employability associated with career outcomes? (Study 1)
2. Which HR practices have the potential for organizations to enhance employability and career success? Do these practices vary for workers in various age categories? (Study 2)
3. What is the contribution of workers' perceptions of the informal learning climate of organizations to workers' employability? What is the role of different life and career stages in the relationship between the perceived informal learning climate and employability? (Study 3)
4. What is the role of transformational leadership as regards enhancing the employability of workers? Do specific characteristics of workers such as personality and managerial function play a role in this respect? (Study 4)
5. What are the similarities between self-regulation and employability in different labour market contexts (Study 5)

1.4 Thesis Outline

In this PhD thesis, we have adopted a competence-based approach (elaboration of the Resource Based View of the firm) and complement it with career theory and a

life-span perspective on learning in organizations (Kanfer, & Ackerman, 2004). In this thesis employability is primarily studied within an organizational context, although in Study 5 our research angle is broadened slightly, by looking at a number of other labour market contexts and situations.

The prevailing methodological approach in this PhD thesis (besides analysis of relevant theoretical HR and career literature) is survey research (cross-sectional). We make use of various statistical validation techniques such as structural equation modeling and hierarchical regression analyses. Further explanation of the theoretical framework and methodological approaches is given for the separate studies. This chapter is concluded with a table summarizing the research gaps that were the starting point for our studies, the research questions and hypotheses.

Study 1: A competence-based and multidimensional operationalization and measurement of employability (Chapter 2)

In Study 1, we will address the definition and operationalization of the concept of employability, elucidating the competence-based approach that has been chosen, achieving this by studying the employees in their organizational context. The competence-based approach to employability is an elaboration of the resource-based view of the firm (Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994). According to the RBV, ‘competences’ are one of the possible resources that enable firms to reach (sustained) competitiveness.

The resource-based view of the firm can be placed somewhere in between so-called ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ (S)HRM approaches in the sense that it offers a framework for theorizing on and practising a balance between the interests of organizations and employees (Boxall, 1999). Competences are interpreted as being the key for both company and individual career success. The complexity of the concept of employability requires a multidimensional (survey) approach and measurement instrument. With the objective of decreasing common-method bias,

we aim to develop two versions of the employability measurement instrument: self-ratings and supervisor ratings.

The analysis of relevant theoretical literature and the determination of the employability dimensions, and the generation of an item pool covering each dimension of employability are combined with statistical validation techniques. These steps are aimed at optimizing the validity, accuracy and efficiency of the operationalization (De Groot, 1961). Besides investigating content validity, convergent and divergent validity and criterion validity of the multidimensional measurement instrument for supervisor ratings and self-ratings (using Structural Equation Modeling and a Multitrait-Multimethod approach), we also examine its predictive validity (Figure 1) for both objective and subjective career successes (using hierarchical regression analyses). Furthermore, implications for practitioners are discussed as regards future strategy planning of the company, performance interviewing and personal development plans, recruitment, staffing and career mobility practices. For employees the employability tool may serve as a useful tool in guiding career development and lifelong career success.

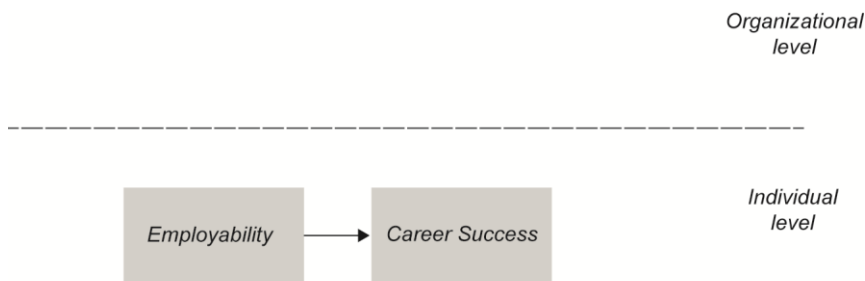


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Study 1 (black boxes and arrows)

Study 2: In search of suitable age management practices for lifelong employability and career success. (Chapter 3)

Despite an increasing dependence of the market on older workers, organizations still do not pay enough attention to their (broad) development. Investing in human capital of older workers, remains problematic for reasons including prejudices about learning motivation and ability and an expected lower rate of return on investment (Greller & Simpson, 1999; Kooij, 2010; Ng& Feldman, 2008). Several studies argue that general declines in work performance with age are simplistic and misleading, (Sterns & Miklos, 1995; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Ng& Feldman, 2008). Certain physical and/or cognitive declines could easily be compensated for by other factors such as motivation and/or experience. Furthermore, individual differences appear to be larger than age differences (e.g., Ilmarinen, 2001).

An age management policy is ideally one that strives for a working population that is diverse with regard to age. Such a policy will enhance the broad development of all age groups and is not only short-term focused and narrowly-focused on the present work domain. Policies that advocate a tailored competence development for different age groups can be regarded as biased regarding how certain career and life phases unfold and do not take into account individual differences. What is proposed is an age management policy that is accessible to all ages, combined with attention to the individual worker's situation. Employers need a broader and less time-related outlook with regard to the development of competences of their workers.

In Study 2, potential factors of age management are explored, specifically with regard to the development of specific and broad competences (employability) and thereby possibly also career success. These could involve different organizational initiatives (managerial and other). The mediating role of employability between the learning value of the job, an age-related HRM policy (supervisor career support), organizational learning opportunities (in this publication referred to as learning climate factors), and career success is assessed

(using hierarchical regression analyses). Furthermore, we test interaction effects with age, to find out whether or not these HR practices have a stimulating effect in the case of all age categories (see Figure 2).

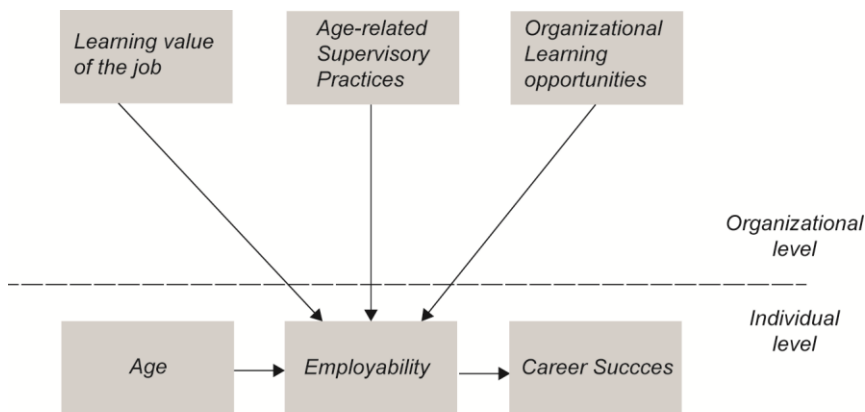


Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Study 2 (black boxes and arrows)

Study 3: Informal learning climate perceptions as determinant for lifelong employability

An empirical study among European ICT professionals (Chapter 4)

When focusing on the role of psychological learning climates for competence development and employability, the focus has been more on the role of training and development and so-called formal learning climates than the informal side of learning climates. Since the greater part of learning among workers is informal (Borghans, Golsteyn, & De Grip, 2006; Huys, De Rick, & Vandenbrande, 2005; Rhebergen and Wognum, 1997) and empirical findings on the importance of perceptions of informal learning climate for employability are still scarce (Fouarge, De Grip & Nelen, 2009), we need more research into that area. This study

examines a group of ICT professionals, as they were estimated to be an eligible research population with regard to informal learning climate and employability, considering the fact that developments occur with great rapidity in the ICT industry.

The psychological informal learning climate is defined and operationalized into three levels, namely the perceptions that workers have of their learning experiences 1) at the job level, 2) the supervisor level and 3) the larger organizational contextual level after D'Amato and Zijlstra, (2008). Firstly we will examine the assumption that perceptions of these different indicators of the informal learning climate will decline with age, dictated by earlier research findings. Secondly, we will test the assumption that supervisor ratings of employability will decline with age, contrary to self-ratings. Thirdly, we will test our assumption that perceptions of the informal learning climate are indeed positively related to competence development, i.e. employability. Additionally, we will try to attain a more variegated picture of aging beyond calendar age alone (De Lange, Taris, Jansen, Kompier, Houtman, & Bongers, 2010; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004), including various aspects of career and life stages, such as ICT professional tenure and general perceived health. We will use Structural Equation Modeling as the method (including bootstrapping to demonstrate the indirect effects of age and career and life stage variables) (see Figure 3) Outcomes of this study will hopefully enable us to make SHRM recommendations to mould, shape and possibly formalize policies concerning informal learning climates with regard to workers, which vary according to different career and life stages.

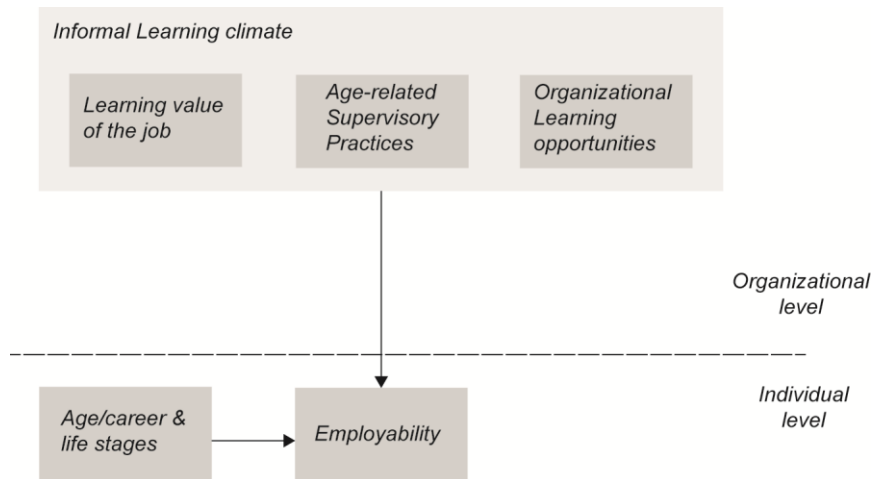


Figure 3: Conceptual Model of Study 3 (black boxes and arrows)

Study 4: Employability and social innovation: The importance of and interplay between transformational leadership and personality (Chapter 5)

Both employability and transformational leadership can be regarded as important social innovations and be deployed as such in SHRM. This chapter draws attention to the fact that transformational leadership could be a useful tool for enhancing employability and career development of workers. The combination of rapid developments (e.g., new production concepts, and new technology) together with increased commercialization places higher demands across the workforce on the productivity, creativity, and flexibility of individual employees. Leaders are able to support the employability and career development of their workers through the transformational leadership style, which is people-focused. Besides explicitly devoting attention to individual career development, transformational leaders achieve this through inspiring and motivating workers to contribute to the (moral) values and goals of the organization and by stimulating creativity and innovativity

among individual workers. Leadership styles that are only task-related (i.e. instrumental, transactional) are most unlikely to fulfil workers' needs in that respect. Studying transformational leadership and examining the conditions under which this has a stimulating effect for the employability of workers is what is needed.

Worker characteristics such as personality, work role (e.g., managerial role) and other lifespan factors must always be taken into account for a customized approach, given the uniqueness of each and every employee. Earlier findings pointed in the direction of connections between the personality of the leader and the degree of transformational leadership and transformational leadership performance. Furthermore, the personality of a specific worker may or may not match a particular leadership style. Workers with a managerial function are also more inclined to demonstrate certain personality patterns. This last category also attains higher ratings of career success and is therefore expected to be less dependent on their leaders' transformational leadership styles for their employability and career development, contrary to workers without a managerial function.

We will first examine the hypothesized positive relationship between transformational leadership and employability (both supervisor-rated and self-ratings) (see Figure 4) After this, and on an explorative basis, we will look into the relationships between the dimensions of personality, transformational leadership and self-rated and supervisor-rated employability for workers with and without a managerial position. (Structural Equation Modeling)

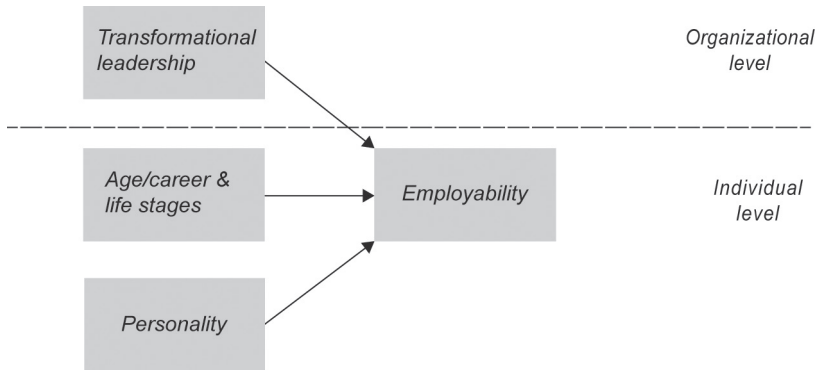


Figure 4: Conceptual Model of Study 4 (black boxes and arrows)

Study 5: Employability and self-regulation in contemporary careers (Chapter 6)

Since most careers are best characterized by a variety of working relationships, interruptions, and sometimes even career switches, individual employability cannot always be measured in terms of being a member of the organization. When switching between different labour market contexts, the only stable factor is the person him or herself, introducing the important concept of self-regulation. In contemporary careers, in general, workers meet a larger array and multiplicity of changes, and as a result will have to take responsibility to frequently re-evaluate and make adjustments to their careers (self-steering, also called self-management or self-regulation) (King, 2004; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012). In this chapter, similarities between the concepts of self-regulation and individual employability are explored in a theoretical literature study, within different labour market contexts such as the unemployment context, the organizational context and the reorganizational context. The chapter concludes with practical implications for career counselling and guidance.

Chapter 7 presents conclusions and a discussion on the separate studies. After discussing the results, we will then present recommendations for future scientific pathways and practical recommendations for SHRM.

Table summary

Research gap	Research questions	Hypotheses	Chapter
<p>No agreement on the definition of employability (on the individual level) and lack of research on the associations with career outcomes</p>	<p>How can employability be defined and measured within an organizational context? Is employability associated with career outcomes?</p>	<p>*Employability is a multidimensional concept, consisting of professional expertise, complemented with broader competences: anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance *Employability is positively associated with both objective and subjective career outcomes</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>An age management policy is ideally a policy that is focused on attaining and exploiting a diverse workforce with regard to age. Older workers have less access to HR practices, such as training and development, despite their need to update and their ability to learn. Which HR practices have potential to stimulate career success via employability of all age groups?</p>	<p>Which HR practices have potential for organizations to stimulate employability and career success? Do these practices vary for workers in various age categories?</p>	<p>*Age-related HRM policy, learning climate and learning value of the job are positively related to the career success of workers via employability (as mediator) *Age-related HRM policy, learning climate and learning value of the job are positively related to the employability and career success of workers of all ages (no interaction effects of these factors with age)</p>	<p>3</p>

<p>We have more knowledge about the impact of training or formal learning climates on employability, but less so on the role of informal learning climates of organizations in enhancing workers' employability</p>	<p>What is the contribution of workers' perceptions of the informal learning climate of organizations to workers employability? What is the role of different life and career stages in the relationship between perceived informal learning climate and employability?</p>	<p>*We expect a negative relationship between employee age and perceptions of informal learning climate *We expect a negative relationship of employee age with supervisor ratings of employability and a positive relationship with self-ratings of employability. *We expect a positive relationship between perceptions of informal learning climate and ratings of employability. *Including different career and life stage characteristics in the model, in addition to age, will not alter the previously hypothesized relationship between informal learning climate perceptions and employability.</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>Transformational leadership is believed to have the potential to advance the employability and career development of workers, compared with more instrumental or transactional forms of leadership. Following knowledge about associations of TL with personality, it is necessary to simultaneously gain insight into the role of the personality of workers in this TL-employability relationship</p>	<p>What is the role of transformational leadership as regards enhancing the employability of workers? Do specific characteristics of workers such as personality and managerial function play a role in this respect?</p>	<p>*We expect transformational leadership to be positively related to both self-rated and supervisor-rated employability</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Lack of connection concerning the employability of workers between different labour market contexts</p>	<p>What are the similarities between self-regulation and employability in different labour market contexts</p>	<p>-----</p>	<p>6</p>

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2

A Competence-based and Multidimensional Operationalization and Measurement of Employability

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Abstract

Employability is a critical requirement for enabling both sustained competitive advantage at the firm level and career success at the individual level. We propose a competence-based approach to employability derived from an expansion of the resource-based view of the firm. In this contribution, we present a reliable and valid instrument for measuring employability. This measure is based on a five-dimensional conceptualization of employability, in which occupational expertise is complemented with generic competences. Two sources of raters (employees and their immediate supervisors) are involved in developing and testing the measure. Since the five dimensions of employability explain a significant amount of variance in both objective and subjective career success, the predictive validity of the tool is promising. This instrument facilitates further scientific HRM research and is of practical value in light of job and career assessments, recruitment, staffing, career mobility, and development practices.

Introduction

Stimulating occupational expertise and employability of employees appears to be advantageous for both organizational and employee outcomes (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Van Dam, 2004). Highly employable workers (Van Dam, 2004) are necessary for organizations in order to meet fluctuating demands for numerical and functional flexibility (Marginson, 1989; Valverde, Tregaskis, & Brewster, 2000). In addition, employability enables employees to cope with fast-changing job requirements. London and Greller (1991) refer to “loosening of organizational commitment (to markets, tradition, and employees), accommodating a more volatile and competitive environment” (adapted from Baerveldt & Hobbs, 1988), and job content becoming more demanding, in terms of technical knowledge and skills.

Careers increasingly have become boundaryless, in the sense that during career progression, more boundaries are crossed (e.g., occupational, departmental, and organizational) in comparison to earlier and more predictable hierarchical careers (De- Fillippi & Arthur, 1996; Gunz, Evans, & Jalland, 2000). When careers are less predictable, a thorough diagnosis of competences, or employability, is a crucial starting point for all career policy activities. A sound measurement instrument for employability enables individual employees to keep track of their competences and career needs. Only after this assessment should workers undertake action to improve their employability—for example, by means of job-related or organizational career interventions such as mentoring, networking, and age-related HRM policy (B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2005).

Increasingly, domain-specific occupational expertise is insufficient to guarantee positive work outcomes during the course of one’s entire career. Unfortunately, previous research has demonstrated that many employees are not able to keep up with the faster pace of change, as investments in competence development diminish with age (Boerlijst, 1994; Thijssen, 1996). This is highly problematic, since career development is largely dependent upon initiatives and

investments of the employees themselves (Hall, 1976), although it must be stimulated by the organization.

In the next section, we address the definition and domain-independent (see B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2000) operationalization of the concept of employability. An overview of the theoretical framework is given, elucidating our competence-based approach as an extension of the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991; Nordhaug & Grønhaug, 1994; Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994). This perspective enables us to align two different theories on employability: the one from Fugate et al. (2004) and the one from Van Dam (2004). Fugate et al. (2004) have career outcomes as their first focus, while Van Dam depicts organizational outcomes as her first focus of employability (more specifically, organizational flexibility).

We then discuss the development of a measurement instrument for employability, in which employability is composed of occupational expertise and four more generic competences. In the theoretical framework, the relationship to other concepts of interest concerning employability will be clarified. Subsequently, we outline our research methodologies, followed by the results of the psychometric analyses. In the discussion and conclusion, we consider the implications of our study for organizational practitioners and provide suggestions for future research.

A Competence-Based Approach to Employability

The concept of employability came into use around 1955 (Versloot, Glaudé, & Thijssen, 1998). However, it is only since the late 1990s that employability has been empirically studied. Several historical overviews shed some light on the development of its conceptualization and definitions (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003; Van Lammeren, 1999; Versloot et al., 1998). *Employability* is studied from different angles and distinct levels (individual, organizational, and industrial) across a wide range of academic disciplines, such as business and management studies, human resource management, human resource development, psychology,

educational science, and career theory. However, few studies have tried to integrate these different perspectives (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003).

Definitions and synonyms of the concept at the employee level are abundant (De Grip, Van Loo, & Sanders, 2004; Forrier & Sels, 2003; Fugate et al., 2004; Harvey, 2001; Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003; B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden & Thijssen, 2003; Van Lammeren, 1999; Versloot et al., 1998), each emphasizing a diversity of career aspects of (potential) employees but all referring to employment as an outcome. Some examples of these career aspects are physical suitability (Gazier, 1990), cognitive suitability, (career) development (De Haan, Vos, & De Jong, 1994; Sterns & Dorsett, 1994), learning, despecialization (Bolweg & Maenhout, 1995; Hoeksema & Paauwe, 1996; Pearson, 1988), flexibility, adaptation to (fast) changes (Bolweg, 1997; Friedrichs, 2000), and mobility (both external and internal). Employability is believed to accommodate some or all of these aspects, depending upon the angle from which the concept is studied and, consequently, it is not a unidimensional construct. Fugate et al. (2004), who recently thoroughly studied its conceptual foundation from a career angle, use the term *variegated*.

Apart from the large variety of employability definitions, one might be able to distinguish a link between the conceptualization of employability and certain historical work and organizational developments in Western countries (Van Lammeren, 1999; Versloot et al., 1998), in relation to the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial society (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003). Employability is a symbol used to address work-related problems related to this transition. Until the 1970s, employability was about employment participation and was accompanied by the so-called flexibility of society. The government was considered the actor responsible for achieving the target of full employment and a decrease in the collective burden (Thijssen & Van der Heijden, 2003). During the last decades of the twentieth century, market developments compelled organizations to reorganize themselves into more flexible firms (see also Boselie &

Paauwe, 2004; Geelhoed, 1997; Van Dam, 2004). Changes are taking place at a faster rate and in increasing numbers, undermining organizational strategy and planning, and which the organizations should be potentially able to flexibly anticipate on.

These developments enforce a reorganization of the structure of work (like despecialization and deregulation) and the transition from a job-based HRM system to a competence-based person-related HRM system (Lawler, 1994; Mikkelsen, Nybø, & Grønhaug, 2002; Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory, & Gowing, 2002). New production concepts, such as total quality management, lean production, business process redesign, and socio-technics (De Lange, 2001; Steijn, 2002) all decrease the division of labor and increase teamwork. These changes have implications for the ideal employee profile and the type of skills that are needed (Felstead & Ashton, 2000). Furthermore, human capital or human resources have been gaining in importance and increasingly should be taken into account in organizational strategy making.

According to the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991; Nordhaug & Grønhaug, 1994; Wright et al., 1994), competences are one category of possible resources that enable firms to achieve performance and (sustained) competitiveness. The resource-based view of the firm can be positioned somewhere in between so-called *soft* (Guest, 1987; Legge, 1995) and *hard* strategic HRM approaches in that it offers a framework for theorizing on and practicing balance between the interests of organizations and employees (Boxall, 1999; Looise, 1998). In such a context, employee competences are treated as valuable assets that must be nourished and are interpreted as being beneficial for both employee and organization. As such, occupational expertise and employability provide both work continuity and career development opportunities.

This approach is more moderate and realistic compared to using only market-driven and cost-reducing decisions for competitive strategy, and subsequently labor management (hard approach) or high-commitment models (soft

approach) (Guest, 1987; Legge, 1995; Looise, 1998). A prerequisite for sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Nordhaug & Grønhaug, 1994) consists of a unique combination of acquiring and retaining competent workers, and adequate HR policies and practices of investing in them. Boxall (1999) refers to *human resource advantage* in order to stress the positive outcomes of this combination.

Within a competence-based approach to employability, competence models are used to unify individual capabilities with organizational core competences (Rothwell & Lindholm, 1999). Besides vertical and horizontal alignment, Mulder (2001) stresses the following functions of the concept: strategic (as a route planner), communicative (yielding transparency), dynamic, developmental, employability, and performance improvement. Athey and Orth (1999, p. 216), define *competency* as “a set of observable performance dimensions, including individual knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as collective team, process, and organizational capabilities, that are linked to high performance, and provide the organization with sustainable competitive advantage.” In the conceptualization that is central in this article, competence is defined at an individual level.

While in practice, the terms *competence* and *skills* are often used simultaneously, it might prove illuminating to elaborate on the distinction between the two. Skill concerns the execution of a single task, while competence deals more with the execution of a whole series of different tasks in a certain (occupational) domain, all of them performed well and in an integrated manner (Mulder, 2001; Onstenk, 1997). This integrating and synergetic process into competence and competent action is then enacted with the aid of different personal qualities such as motivation, attitudes, behavior, and personality.

In the remainder of this section, our line of thought will be elaborated upon by referring to some competence approaches, definitions, the functional use of the concept, and its added value, all directed toward the development of an employability theory. First of all, insights from a rationalist versus an interpretative

approach to competence are dealt with and integrated. Sandberg (2000) describes the *rationalist* approach toward human competence as an attribute-based phenomenon. In this approach, workers with better knowledge and skills will automatically outperform others. In the past, competence was more about potential, qualification, or IQ (McClelland, 1973), and was also referred to as *competency* (Mulder, 2001).

Increasingly, the emphasis lies on the application of potential (knowledge and skills) (see also Athey & Orth, 1999; Mulder, 2001). Accordingly, in his *interpretative* approach to human competence at work, Sandberg (2000) points to the importance of the knowledge and skills people *use* when working. In this approach, *conceptions*, rather than *attributes*, determine the level of competence of individual workers. The experience gained by employees determines the framework or mind-set from which the work is undertaken, and subsequently, the goals set (motivation) and the means, such as knowledge and skills, that are deployed to do the work.

Cognition and emotion both contribute to the development of competence. According to Sternberg (1996), success in work is not restricted to IQ or technical skill but is a result of the balance between cognition and emotion. Sternberg (1999, p. 438) defines successful intelligence as “the ability to balance the needs to adapt to, shape and select environments in order to attain success (however within one’s sociocultural context).” Limiting this definition to a working environment, it can be regarded as a synonym for the concept of employability.

One example of how conceptions may contribute to the attainment of competence can be found in work by Dweck and Leggett (1988), in their social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. They describe the role played by the mind-set of orienting people toward certain goals (learning orientation vs. performance orientation) leading to adaptive or maladaptive behavioral patterns, and thereby addressing the mechanism through which personal attributes interact.

Another powerful concept in light of our employability model is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to “beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands” (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 408). However, it is not only the beliefs about one’s capabilities, but also one’s beliefs about working life and work content (e.g., beliefs on the usefulness of the work, beliefs in certain work methods, moral beliefs) that might influence a person’s motivations, actions, and performance.

The dynamic component of the concept of competence points to its process character (Orlikowski, 2002; Scarbrough, 1998). Th. Van der Heijden, Volz, Reidinga, and Schutte (2001) define competence management at an organizational level as “the *continuously* integrated fine tuning of competences and talents” (p. 27). In the current study, employability is defined as “the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences” (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005, p. 143). This definition is compatible with definitions like “the chance for employment on the internal or external labor market” (Forrier & Sels, 2003) and “a form of work-specific active adaptability that enables workers to identify and realize career opportunities” (Fugate et al., 2004).

Building on its dynamic character, another important dimension of the concept (Onstenk, 1997) is that learning and development for the employee is a means for adapting to change. Correspondingly, core competence at an organizational level is perceived as collective learning (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). The concepts of continuous professional development (CPD) and lifelong learning (LLL) are often mentioned with regard to the employability theme. As such, competence development is measured by determining the applicability of knowledge and skills or possible transfer. The degree of transfer is characterized by the extent to which contexts differ and in which the learned material can be applied (Perkins & Salomon, 1992). However, transfer of competences in the sense of so-called learning, which is about the application of knowledge and skills in divergent

working situations, is often lacking (Cheng & Ho, 2001), although it is fundamental for employability enhancement.

To summarize some key elements, (1) employability is advantageous for both career outcomes and firm outcomes; (2) at the employee level, employability is advantageous for both present performance on the job as well as career outcomes (long-term performance, implying the process of adaptation and learning); (3) besides adaptive behavior, employability may contain personal elements such as personality, attitudes, motivation, and ability; and (4) employability represents the combination of specific and more generic competence.

Dimensions of Employability

This section addresses the competence-based conceptualization of employability, in which the dimension of *occupational expertise* is complemented with four more general competences: (1) *anticipation and optimization*, (2) *personal flexibility*, (3) *corporate sense*, and (4) *balance*. There is clear evidence, from both strategic HRM (Capelli & Crocker-Hefter, 1996; Wright & Snell, 1998) and from career theory (Miles & Snow, 1996), of the importance of a broader competence package. More specifically, there also is evidence of an increase in the importance of adaptive and social competences (Rodriguez et al., 2002) alongside domain-related knowledge and skills in jobs, following the evolution in organizational form. The proposed employability dimensions relate to job-related matters as well as aspects of a broader career development. Taking into account the interests of both employees and employers, we have adopted a dual orientation, both toward the development of human potential and toward the development of the work process (see Van der Krogt, 1998).

The first dimension of employability that is taken to be a prerequisite for positive career outcomes of workers is referred to as *occupational expertise*. A number of authors, including Boudreau, Boswell, and Judge (2001) and Onstenk and Kessels (1999), claim that occupational expertise constitutes a substantial

element of employability. Occupational expertise also is seen as a significant human capital factor for the vitality of organizations. Furthermore, due to the intensification of knowledge, its importance is only growing (Enders, 2002; Schein, 1996; B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2005).

In times of recession, workers most likely to be made redundant are the ones whose occupational expertise is lacking, obsolete, or outdated. According to De-Fillippi and Arthur (1996), people with occupational expertise derive greater benefit from interfirm career opportunities. For the measurement of occupational expertise, our first dimension of employability (see B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2000), we used an instrument originally developed to measure professional knowledge and skills, including meta-cognitive ones. This measure also accounts for social recognition by important key figures. Aside from a high degree of knowledge and skills related to a particular professional domain, experts need to be perceived and labeled as high performers and excellent professionals if they are to have a basis for employability enhancement.

The second and third dimensions of employability concern adapting to changes and developments at a job-content level and at other levels, such as the career as a whole, that are relevant in the light of performance outcomes. An important component of employability described by Kluytmans and Ott (1999) is the “willingness to adapt to changes in terms of employment, job contents, conditions, or locations.” Future changes that might influence the work context of employees include, for example, mass unemployment and reorganization. In our employability framework, two different types of adaptation are distinguished, the first one being a self-initiating proactive variant that is referred to as *anticipation and optimization*, and one more passive, reactive variant entitled *personal flexibility*. Both adaptation types coexist and function to enhance the employability of the professional worker.

Anticipation and optimization does not concern adaptation in its basic form, but rather entails preparing for future work changes in a personal and creative

manner in order to strive for the best possible job and career outcomes (Bhaerman & Spill, 1988; North, Mallabar, & Desrochers, 1988). Increasingly, employees have to enact their jobs and their professional life themselves (Weick, 1996), owing to the complexity of work and difficulty of employers to predict future work content. In present-day, knowledge- intensive markets, employees certainly have an opportunity to fulfill labor requirements by creating the future themselves instead of merely performing fixed tasks. In the employability career approach adopted by Fugate et al. (2004), “person centered active adaptation and proactivity conceptually underpin the construct of employability.” Similarly, studies on proactive personality summarized by Crant (2000) suggest this to be “an important element of employee, team, and firm effectiveness.”

Career management will be optimized when fine-tuning is achieved between personal preferences and market developments. Labor market knowledge (Gaspersz & Ott, 1996) is an essential element in planning a career. Ball (1997) similarly proposes an optimization dimension of career competence for labor market position improvement, although it is different in content from the proposed dimension in our instrument.

Personal flexibility does not relate to flexibility at the content level of a job. Besides creative adaptability, employees must passively adapt to changes occurring in their work and labor market environment that they did not choose. As well as referring to the capacity for smooth transitions between jobs and between organizations, the concept encompasses adapting easily to all kinds of changes in the internal and external labor market. Numerous changes in organizations and their environments, such as mergers and reorganizations, call for flexible employees at multiple levels. In addition, they make great demands upon people’s resilience. Reorganizations require employees who cope easily with, and recover readily from, disappointments. As the temporal and spatial structures of organizations change, a greater variation in working time and place occurs. An example can be seen in phenomena such as flexible warehousing and telework.

Another source of variation is the employee's pool of colleagues or the peer group, which is more often subject to changes.

The dimension of personal flexibility has been deemed an important ingredient of employability by other researchers (see, e.g., Boudreau et al., 2001; Fugate et al., 2004) and has been labeled *adaptability*. We consider personal flexibility to be the opposite of so-called rigid behavior, and in that sense a prerequisite for and ingredient of adaptation. Employees with high scores for personal flexibility will derive greater benefit and further their career development from different experiences because they welcome changes. Flexible employees expose themselves more easily to changes and have a better understanding of how to take advantage of changes.

It is not difficult to appreciate that organizations have much to gain from flexible employees. Regarding numerical flexibility, hiring temporary workers provides organizations with the security of not spending too much on personnel costs in times of decline. Another positive side effect lies in the fact that the core of people working in the organization benefit as they experience less competition for promotions (Barnett & Miner, 1992), and for lifetime employment (Baruch, 2001) (see Barnett & Miner, 1992, for an elaborate overview and more details on this matter). This side effect provides continuity in work and career development for a certain group of employees (although at the expense of the others—that is to say, the temporary workers) and to the organization as a whole.

The fourth dimension of employability is *corporate sense*. The erosion of the traditional dichotomy between managers and support staff means that employees have to participate more as members of an integrated team, identify with corporate goals, and accept collective responsibility for the decision-making process (Chapman & Martin, 1995). Besides that, corporate sense extends the organizational citizenship behavior concept (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000) to participation and performance in different workgroups, such as the department, the organization, working teams, the occupational community, and

other networks. The number of groups to which employees may belong has increased tremendously in recent decades (Frese, 2000; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Besides departmental and organizational collaboration, employees may participate in project networks, occupational networks, industry networks, and virtual networks, to mention but a few. Corporate sense builds on social capital (networks) (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; see also the special issue of the *Academy of Management Executive* guest-edited by Rosalie L. Tung [Vol. 17(4)]), social skills, and emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). It is about sharing responsibilities, knowledge, experiences, feelings, credits, failures, goals, and the like.

The last dimension of employability that is distinguished in our employability framework is termed *balance*. Balance is defined as compromising between opposing employers' interests as well as one's own opposing work, career, and private interests (employee) and between employers' and employees' interests. Paauwe (1997) claims that employability is out of the question without an honest exchange relationship between employer and employee, a relationship where both parties balance their investments and profits (see also Bolweg & Maenhout, 1995; Van Dam & Thierry, 2000, on the exchange theory).

Working life is characterized by strongly competing demands that are not easily balanced. Increasingly, organizations have to deal with paradox (Handy, 1994). Organizations often refer to employability as the deployment of their personnel, a terminology that implies pawns without initiative that can be moved around like chess pieces, while at the same time, employability refers to highly self-reliant and self-managing employees. Moreover, organizations ask for highly committed and at the same time highly flexible employees. Bolweg and Maenhout (1995) refer to the so-called management paradox to indicate this development. Another paradox with which employees are confronted is the need to both specialize and despecialize. According to Weick (1996), being able to alternate between these two is highly beneficial in present-day boundaryless careers.

Employees also have (increasing!) interests that are difficult to unite, at the work process level, (career) developmental level, and private level (Bolweg & Maenhout, 1995; Van Beckhoven, 1997).

Research Methodology

The measurement of employability presented in this article is based upon the idea that some characteristics of expert performance and of employability are valid regardless of the domain of expertise of a particular professional (see also B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2000, for a more elaborate discussion on the aim and value of a domain-independent tool). The proposed five dimensions of employability are measured by means of five measurement scales ranging in length from seven to fifteen items scored on a six-point rating scale. Examples of scale anchors are as follows: not at all, to a considerable degree, never, and very often. For a full outline of all scale items, see Appendix A.

Sample and Procedure

The sample selected to test the psychometric qualities of the measurement instrument consists of two groups of respondents: the employees themselves and their immediate supervisors. One effective and valid manner for measuring a concept is to use multiple measurements and preferably to use both objective as well as subjective measurements, since these provide different perspectives (Borman, 1974; Klimoski & London, 1974). However, qualitative dimensions of work performance are known to be difficult to obtain from objective measurements (Hennessey & Bernardin, 2003). For this reason, we opted for supervisor ratings along with self-ratings to best capture the behaviors beneficial to improving work and career outcomes.

While we are aware of rater bias among supervisors (Thornton & Byham, 1982), we nevertheless wish to emphasize the use of this group of raters with regard to the key role played by their perception in the career progress of the

employee. Moreover, self-ratings have been demonstrated to be more reliable when employees are aware that ratings are also being given by their supervisors (Mabe & West, 1982), because the *leniency effect* is suppressed (Arnold & MacKenzie Daveys, 1992; Campbell & Lee, 1988; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Hoffman, Nathan, & Holden, 1991; Holzbach, 1978). We test for rater bias in supervisor and self-ratings in the validity analyses and report these in our results.

Data were gathered during the autumn and winter of 2002, in a large Dutch firm that produces building materials. Two nominally identical versions of the questionnaire were used: one employee version (the self-rating version) and one supervisor version. The supervisors filled out a questionnaire that contained amended items worded to express the extent of employability of their respective employees. Most employees of the firm were included in the study and were asked directly by their supervisors to participate. Each supervisor had to complete employability questions on their subordinates. Questionnaires were limited to a maximum of three employees per supervisor for practical (time restrictions) and reliability reasons (B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2000).

The selection of employees was restricted to those with at least middle educational levels of functioning, in order to provide data that could be generalized for future use in organizations. It was necessary to allow for the possibility that current workers, particularly older ones, might not be comparable with employees hired by companies in, say, 20 years (see also B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2005).

Our final research sample consisted of 314 employees and 334 immediate supervisors (i.e., 290 pairs). The employees worked in numerous types of jobs at middle and higher educational levels. For the employees, 83.3% were male, 84.8% of them were married or cohabiting, 11.2% were single, and 3.9% were divorced at the time of the study. Regarding their education level, 0.8% had only a primary education, 40.9% had a high school degree (or recognized equivalent), 30.8% had basic vocational education (or recognized equivalent), 15.3% had a BA, 2.2% had an MA, and none of the employees had a doctorate.

Development of the Questionnaire Different methods exist for constructing measurement instruments representing abstract concepts. Each has specific advantages and disadvantages. Oosterveld and Vorst (1996, p. 2) refer to them as “risks for a valid measurement.” In order to benefit from various advantages and to decrease the number of disadvantages, we have opted for a combination of methods. The effectiveness, usefulness, or the so-called instrumental utility of an operationalization comprises validity, accuracy (reliability), and efficiency. It reflects how useful or how valuable the operational definition is in its aim to represent the concept as intended in a certain research context (De Groot, 1961).

A multidimensional construct can be measured by using different subscales that measure the different component dimensions. The process of item formulation for each scale should be related to underlying theoretical assumptions, including the statistical method to test these assumptions (Kidder & Judd, 1986). In our study, both the validity and reliability of the instrument were optimized by means of an analysis of relevant theoretical literature (Step 1), and by using statistical validation techniques. The employability instrument is a compound instrument consisting of five dimensions, which can also be considered as a set of five instruments (De Groot, 1961). Steps two (determination of the employability dimensions) and three (provisional item formulation for the different dimensions) led to an item pool for each dimension of the concept of employability.

The first dimension was measured using a previously developed instrument for professional expertise (B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 2000). The scales in the original instrument each contained 12 to 19 items but were reduced to a maximum of 10 items in order to enhance the user-friendliness, efficiency, and symmetry of the scales. Items were reduced by means of a renewed content analysis of the existing scales by an expert group of scientists, followed by a reliability analysis and an exploratory factor analysis. Some scales of the professional expertise instrument gained increased validity, as some items that displayed overlap with the supplementary employability scales were removed (Step 4). Moreover, a thorough

linguistic evaluation of the different items was also taken into account (Step 5), followed by a formulation of the introduction and instructions for respondents (Step 6). The data collection, using e-questionnaires, took place during the autumn and winter of 2002 (Step 7).

Different methods of test construction (Oosterveld & Vorst, 1996) were used to further enhance the psychometric qualities of the instrument. These methods examined the different items, both their content and their psychometric qualities. Both convergent and divergent item validity and criterion validity were examined. Subsequently, the homogeneity of these scales was tested and optimized using Cronbach's alpha and factor analytic techniques. Part of the data analysis (Step 8) was performed at the item level. Both convergent and divergent item validity were investigated by studying the correlation structure of all items in the five measurement scales. In order to support the idea of multidimensionality of a concept, items within subscales should display higher intercorrelations compared with items from different subscales. However, the component subscales of one (multidimensional) construct should also be positively correlated (Kidder & Judd, 1986). Items that did not discriminate sufficiently were eliminated.

Subsequently, correlations were studied between the scale scores of the employees and the scale scores of the supervisors. The latter research step assesses criterion validity. Multiple regression analysis was used for this purpose. All research steps together, combined with rechecking the content validity of the items, led to the elimination of a considerable number of items (Step 9). The goal of the procedure as a whole was to obtain a valid, though parsimonious representation of the whole concept of employability.

Measures with Regard to Predictive Validity

Objective career success was measured using four single items. Objective hierarchical success was measured as the number of promotions. Number of promotions was defined as “any increase in hierarchical level and/or any significant increase in job responsibilities or job scope employees have experienced since joining your current organization” (*organization-specific objective hierarchical success* [first item]) and in your entire career (*overall objective hierarchical success* [second item]). Objective financial success was measured, as *current gross income* (per month) (third item). The fourth item was *number of periods of unemployment* of longer than one month in the entire career.

Subjective career success was measured using the measurement scales from Gattiker and Larwood (1986). These scales consist of an organizational (*job satisfaction, interpersonal success, hierarchical success, financial success*) and a nonorganizational (*life satisfaction*) component. A sample item is “I am drawing a high income compared to my peers.” The items require responses on a five-point format: (1) does not apply at all to (5) applies a great deal.

Results

Tables Ia and Ib show the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlations between all study variables. All five scales appear to be homogeneous for both groups of raters ($N_{employees} = 314$, $N_{supervisors} = 334$) with Cronbach’s alphas for the five measurement scales varying from .78 to .90 for the self-ratings and from .83 to .95 for the supervisor ratings. It is interesting that the alpha coefficients for the supervisor ratings all are higher compared to the corresponding ones for their employees. It could well be that the ratings by employees reflect a reliable and valid but somewhat more differentiated self-image. The outcomes might also be attributed to a *halo* effect. Empirical studies have shown that a halo effect is less prominent in self-ratings compared with ratings by others (Hoffman et al., 1991; Holzbach, 1978; Thornton, 1980).

Table 1a Means and standard deviations for variables under study(N_{employees} = 314, N_{supervisors} = 334)

		M	SD
1	Age employee	40.94	9.20
2	Years working experience employee	20.54	10.58
3	Age supervisor	42.95	7.79
4	Length of supervising this employee ^a	2.73	1.30
5	Occupational Expertise (self-ratings)	4.78	.43
6	Anticipation & Optimization (self-ratings)	3.72	.66
7	Personal Flexibility (self-ratings)	4.44	.49
8	Corporate Sense (self-ratings)	4.13	.72
9	Balance (self-ratings)	4.30	.51
10	Occupational Expertise (supervisor ratings)	4.36	.67
11	Anticipation & Optimization (supervisor ratings)	3.49	.71
12	Personal Flexibility (supervisor ratings)	3.92	.67
13	Corporate Sense (supervisor ratings)	3.90	.72
14	Balance (supervisor ratings)	4.17	.54
15	Number of promotions in the company	1.34	1.63
16	Number of promotions in the career	3.46	2.40
17	Monthly gross income (EURO)	3266.30	1328.63
18	Periods of unemployment >1 month in career	.27	.92
19	Job satisfaction	3.51	.47
20	Interpersonal career success	4.00	.39
21	Hierarchical career success	3.35	.57
22	Financial career success	2.92	.64
23	Life satisfaction	4.36	.43

^a years of supervision was measured using the following classification: 1=<1year; 2= 1-2 years; 3=3-4 years; 4=5-6 years; 5>=7 years

Table 1b Correlations and reliabilities for variables under study (N_{employees} = 314, N_{supervisors} = 334)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
1	.95**																							
2	.12*	.07																						
3	.10	.11*	.47**																					
4	.05	.02	.08	.03																				
5	-.14*	-.14*	-.05	-.11*	.40**																			
6	-.18*	-.22**	.04	-.14*	.56**	.48**																		
7	.06	.04	.15*	.00	.53**	.32**	.53**																	
8	-.01	-.03	.05	-.02	.44**	.30**	.31**	.30**																
9	-.17**	-.16**	.25**	.19**	.26**	.05	.17**	.22**	.28**															
10	-.30**	-.29**	.22**	.15**	.21**	.10	.39**	.32**	.28**	.14*														
11	-.33**	-.32**	.15**	-.02	.21**	.10	.24**	.37**	.26**	.13*	.70**													
12	-.09	-.08	.26**	.15**	.27**	.10	.24**	.37**	.26**	.06	.77**	.75**												
13	-.13*	-.12*	.13*	.11*	.18**	.09	.12*	.21**	.29**	.04	.69**	.68**	.71**											
14	-.16**	-.20**	.11	.18**	.06	-.04	-.11*	.15**	.05	.02	.54**	.56**	.49**	.83										
15	.30**	.31**	.10	-.06	.09	.17**	.13*	.32**	.04	-.05	.06	.04	.49**	.00	.45**									
16	.40**	.33**	.35**	.10	.25**	.16**	.21**	.47**	.20**	.15**	.11	.08	.27**	.08	.19**	.41**								
17	-.02	-.02	-.08	-.09	.02	-.11*	-.00	-.15**	-.09	-.13*	-.12*	-.01	-.15**	-.12*	-.04	-.00	-.13*							
18	.13*	.13*	.15**	.03	.16**	.25**	.13*	.40**	.35**	.09	.07	.15*	.15*	.16**	.24**	.00	-.13*	-.09						
19	.00	-.00	.13*	.15**	.33**	.23**	.23**	.33**	.30**	.26**	.17**	.18**	.20**	.21**	.11	.02	.35**	-.06	-.09	.40**				
20	-.18**	-.17**	.13*	-.06	.09	.32**	.19**	.36**	.18**	.05	.19**	.20**	.27**	.14*	.19**	.22**	.24**	-.11	-.06	.46**	.58			
21	-.15**	.12*	.15**	.14*	-.21**	-.22**	-.19**	.18**	.16**	-.03	-.11	-.09	-.04	-.02	.07	.05	.14*	-.03	-.03	.13**	.01	.09	.61	
22	-.04	-.03	-.01	.02	.34**	.24**	.29**	.33**	.27**	.04	.07	.06	.04	.13*	.01	.06	.14*	-.11*	-.11*	.22**	.21**	.14*	.08	.67
23																								

*p<.05. **p<.01.

Paired samples *t*-tests confirm that, for each scale, the self-ratings are systematically higher than the corresponding supervisor ratings. In other words, the previously mentioned *leniency effect* (Arnold & MacKenzie Daveys, 1992; Campbell & Lee, 1988; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988; Hoffman, Nathan, & Holden, 1991; Holzbach, 1978), the tendency of employees to provide a somewhat rosier image of themselves, was found in our data. The rating differences might also be explained by the fact that supervisors, in their roles as (stringent) judges of their employees' performance and behavior, tend to emphasize the negative side relatively more than the positive side of employee functioning. In other words, the so-called *hardness effect* might also be a contributing factor (Oosterveld & Vorst, 1996). All intermethod correlations are significant and positive. The convergence of two indicators of one and the same employability scale supports the validity of both (Cronbach, 1990). The correlations range from $r = .21$ to $r = .39$.

Multitrait–Multimethod Analysis

A multitrait–multimethod (MTMM) analysis (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) was performed in order to check convergence and divergence of our multidimensional instrument. A multitrait–multimethod analysis provides insight into the amount of variance that is caused by the kind of method that has been used (method variance) and the degree of variance that is explained by the trait or concept. In a multitrait–multimethod analysis, at least two traits are measured by at least two maximally different methods. *Convergent validity* demonstrates that the two different methods really measure the same underlying traits or concepts. *Discriminant validity* demonstrates that the underlying traits or concepts are really different traits or concepts. Table II shows the correlations between all traits (or dimensions) we have measured with the two different methods— that is, the self-ratings and the supervisor scales.

Table 2 Correlation matrix following the Multitrait-Multimethod approach; self-ratings (N =314) and supervisor ratings (N = 334) including Cronbach’s alpha’s and inter-scale correlations

		Self					Supervisor				
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Self	1. Occupational expertise	(.90)									
	2. Anticipation & optimization	.40	(.81)								
	3. Personal flexibility	.58	.48	(.79)							
	4. Corporate sense	.53	.53	.53	(.83)						
	5. Balance	.44	.32	.31	.30	(.78)					
Supervisor	1. Occupational expertise	<u>.26</u>	.05	.17	.22	.14	(.95)				
	2. Anticipation & optimization	.22	<u>.21</u>	.32	.28	.10	.69	(.89)			
	3. Personal flexibility	.21	.19	<u>.39</u>	.26	.13	.70	.75	(.88)		
	4. Corporate sense	.22	.10	.24	<u>.37</u>	.06	.77	.69	.71	(.85)	
	5. Balance	.18	.09	.12	.21	<u>.29</u>	.60	.54	.56	.49	(.83)

Convergent validity is determined by the *mono-trait, hetero-method* correlations, the underlined values in Table II. According to Campbell and Fiske (1959), convergent validity can be demonstrated if these values are “significantly different from zero and sufficiently large to encourage further examination of validity.” In their excellent article, they label .46 and .40 as “impressive validity values.” Our validity values are less impressive but certainly indicative of a valid operationalization of the concept of employability.

Facteau and Craig (2001, p. 215) state, “Perhaps one of the most consistent findings in the empirical literature on performance appraisal systems is that the ratings obtained from different sources generally do not converge.” They tested for the structure of a multifaceted construct evaluated by four different rater groups (supervisors, peers, subordinates, and self-ratings) and demonstrated the equivalent structure of the construct among the rater groups despite nonconvergence, and advocate the comparability of the different rater group scores. Likewise,

Oosterveld and Vorst (1996) mention that a larger part of the variance can often be accounted for by the methods used to measure a trait rather than the trait itself (see also B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden & Verhelst, 2002).

The proposed multidimensional character of our instrument requires outcomes demonstrating the significance and validity of distinguishing between the different scales, the discriminant validity. *Discriminant validity* is indicated by means of three outcomes (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Firstly, the *heterotrait–heteromethod* correlations (gray, not underlined, in Table II) need to be lower than the *monotrait–heteromethod* correlations (gray, underlined). Correlations between different traits measured with different methods should be lower than correlations between the same traits measured with different methods. Our data give us good reason to assume that different meanings, or concepts, are indeed reflected by the five scales. Only in the case of the anticipation and optimization scale have exceptions been found, in that there are three heterotrait–heteromethod values exceeding the monotrait–heteromethod value (.21) of the scale. This relatively low correlation is perhaps an indication that supervisor and employee disagree more with regard to this dimension than the other dimensions.

Second, the heterotrait–monomethod values (white areas in Table II) need to be lower than the monotrait–heteromethod values (grey, underlined). Correlations between different traits measured with the same method should be lower than correlations between the same traits measured with different methods. This requirement is not met (see Table II), owing to the greater method variance (Fecteau & Craig, 2001). Moreover, according to Campbell and Fiske (1959), the heterotrait–monomethod values should not converge with the reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha). Fortunately, our results are in line with this requirement and lead us to conclude that the outcomes are satisfactory.

The third test of discriminant validity requires that the patterns of correlations for each set of raters should be similar. This means that the interscale correlations should be lower than the within-scale homogeneities, both for the self-

ratings and the supervisor ratings. Table II indicates that this requirement is fully met. Overall, while examining the multitrait–multimethod matrix it is obvious that the criteria of convergent and discriminant validity are met to a reasonable extent.

Structural Equation Modeling

Finally, we performed analyses based upon structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques, using the AMOS 4.0 program (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999), in order to investigate whether the conceptualization of employability is exhaustive—that is, covers all possible aspects or dimensions. Several alternative models were tested to find a model with the best fit. This modeling was performed at the item level. Alternative models were compared to a second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which in our case is the hypothesized structure of employability. In this model, employability is presented as a latent variable, and so are its subdimensions: (1) occupational expertise, (2) anticipation and optimization, (3) personal flexibility, (4) corporate sense, and (5) balance.

The alternative models (Table III) comprise, respectively, a null model with all the items and their error terms (no latent constructs), a one-factor model in which employability is measured by all the items (no distinction between employability dimensions), a first-order model that measures the five employability dimensions separately (uncorrelated), and a first-order model in which the five employability dimensions are correlated (correlated factors model).

Table 3 Confirmatory factor analysis of the employability measurement instrument (SEM)

<i>Competing model (47 items)</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df <i>ratio</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>Target coefficient</i>
<i>Employee</i>					
null model	6227.6***	1081	5.76	.114	
one-factor model	3027.9***	1034	2.93	.073	
uncorrelated factors m.	2479.3***	1034	2.40	.062	
correlated factors m.	1981.1***	1024	1.94	.055	
hierarchical model (<i>second order</i>)	2004.8***	1029	1.95	.051	.99
<i>Supervisor</i>					
null model	11440.8***	1081	10.58	.162	
one-factor model	3999.6***	1034	3.87	.089	
uncorrelated factors m.	3834.6***	1034	3.71	.086	
correlated factors m.	2799.0***	1024	2.73	.069	
hierarchical model (<i>second order</i>)	2821.2***	1029	2.74	.069	.99

*** $p < .001$.

In accordance with previously established multivariate normal distributions, we relied on maximum likelihood estimation of covariance matrices. The goodness-of-fit of the model was evaluated using absolute indices, which are more useful when

using the AMOS full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation for missing data in the AMOS program. The absolute goodness-of-fit indices calculated were the chi-square (χ^2) measure, the normed chi-square measure (χ^2/df) (Jöreskog, 1969), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). According to Schumacker and Lomax (1996), a χ^2/df ratio between 1 and 5 is an indication that the hypothesized model fits the data, and RMSEA values below or equal to .08 are indicative of an acceptable fit (Cudeck & Browne, 1993). Subsequently, the target coefficient (Marsh, 1987) was calculated, measuring that part of the covariances among the first-order factors that is explained by the second-order factor (the ratio of the chi-square of the correlated first-order model to the chi-square of the second-order model, with a maximum of 1, indicates that all covariances are explained by the second-order factor).

The SEM analyses are performed twice, once for the self-ratings and once for the supervisor ratings. In Table III, the results of the SEM analyses for the self-ratings and for the supervisor ratings are presented. For both self-ratings and for the supervisor ratings, an acceptable fit was obtained for the second-order model (for the self-ratings: $\chi^2(1029) = 2004.8$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.95$, RMSEA = .051; for the supervisor ratings: $\chi^2(1029) = 2821.2$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.74$, RMSEA = .069) and the correlated first-order model (for the self-ratings: $\chi^2(1024) = 1981.1$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.94$, RMSEA = .055; for the supervisor ratings: $\chi^2(1024) = 2799.0$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.73$, RMSEA = .069).

Regarding the second-order model, indices of the self-ratings were especially promising, as compared to the supervisor ratings, although the decrease of the indices across the alternative models was the same for the supervisor ratings as for the self-ratings. This is an indication of an equivalent structure of the construct among the rater groups (see also Faccieu & Craig, 2001). The target coefficient for both self-ratings and supervisor ratings, with regard to the first-order correlated model (baseline) and the hypothesized second-order model, is .99. From

this finding, we conclude that 99% of the covariation among the five first-order factors is explained by the second-order factor of employability.

In Table IV, the standardized first-order factor loadings of the second-order model are presented (the supervisor outcomes are given in parentheses). They are all statistically significant, with *t*-values varying between 4.84 and 10.12 ($p < .001$) for the self-ratings and *t*-values varying between 6.45 and 16.45 ($p < .001$) for the supervisor ratings. Moreover, the standardized second-order factor loadings suggest strong relations of the indicators with the latent variable employability (self-ratings: .81 for occupational expertise, .71 for anticipation and optimization, .87 for personal flexibility, .79 for corporate sense, and .53 for balance). For the supervisors these are .88 for occupational expertise, .87 for anticipation and optimization, .91 for personal flexibility, .93 for corporate sense, and .63 for balance. The combined results of our study argue in favor of accepting our hypothesized second-order employability model.

Table 4 Hierarchical CFA: Standardized factor loadings per item and dimension (SEM) (supervisor in parentheses)

	Occup Exp	Ant & Opt	Pers Flex	Corp Sense	Balance
Occupational expertise1	.59 (.65)				
Occupational expertise2	.56 (.73)				
Occupational expertise3	.66 (.81)				
Occupational expertise4	.59 (.59)				
Occupational expertise5	.65 (.72)				
Occupational expertise6	.60 (.67)				
Occupational expertise7	.57 (.76)				
Occupational expertise8	.71 (.79)				
Occupational expertise9	.70 (.75)				
Occupational expertise10	.53 (.89)				
Occupational expertise11	.63 (.86)				
Occupational expertise12	.62 (.83)				
Occupational expertise13	.52 (.79)				
Occupational expertise14	.50 (.76)				
Occupational expertise15	.67 (.85)				
Anticipation & optimization1		.65 (.68)			
Anticipation & optimization2		.51 (.75)			
Anticipation & optimization3		.63 (.65)			
Anticipation & optimization4		.74 (.86)			
Anticipation & optimization5		.64 (.77)			
Anticipation & optimization6		.48 (.67)			
Anticipation & optimization7		.52 (.59)			
Anticipation & optimization8		.55 (.77)			
Personal flexibility1			.62 (.75)		
Personal flexibility2			.41 (.46)		
Personal flexibility3			.53 (.82)		
Personal flexibility4			.74 (.87)		
Personal flexibility5			.66 (.73)		
Personal flexibility6			.56 (.69)		
Personal flexibility7			.58 (.72)		
Personal flexibility8			.50 (.58)		
Corporate sense1				.60 (.76)	
Corporate sense2				.58 (.69)	
Corporate sense3				.59 (.62)	
Corporate sense4				.70 (.59)	
Corporate sense5				.77 (.69)	
Corporate sense6				.70 (.65)	
Corporate sense7				.56 (.71)	
Balance1					.41 (.50)
Balance2					.72 (.70)
Balance3					.74 (.79)
Balance4					.47 (.47)
Balance5					.58 (.70)
Balance6					.50 (.62)
Balance7					.48 (.56)
Balance8					.54 (.51)
Balance9					.41 (.50)

Self-ratings: $\chi^2(1029)=2004.8$, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.95$, RMSEA= .051;

Supervisor ratings: $\chi^2(1029)= 2821.2$, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.74$, RMSEA= .069)

(All factor loadings are significant at $p < .001$)

Predictive Validity

To demonstrate the predictive validity of the employability measurement instrument for career success, hierarchical regression analyses were performed, using both objective and subjective career success measures (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986). This enabled us to better represent a modern career in which lateral career moves are more frequent (as opposed to the traditional hierarchical career). The results of the analyses can be found in Tables V and VI. Age, gender, highest educational qualification, years of experience, and managerial activities of the employee were controlled for in the analysis (Step 1). Subsequently, age, gender, and years of supervision (of that particular employee) by the supervisor were controlled for (Step 2). The employability dimensions are imported in Step 3, assessing their predictive value for the career outcome in question. Supervisor ratings are used here to prevent common method bias (Doty & Glick, 1998). Interestingly enough, each career outcome appeared to be predicted by different employability dimensions, their effects not always being positive. The predictive value of the separate competences for the different career success outcomes is now considered.

Promotion within the organization is not significantly predicted by any of the employability dimensions. Occupational expertise is related positively only to subjective interpersonal success, which is rather remarkable. Occupational expertise is negatively related to the number of promotions in the entire career and, likewise, negatively related to subjective hierarchical success. A negative relationship of the career anchor of technical competence (similar to occupational expertise) with employability was found in earlier studies (Van Dam, 2004).

Table 5 Hierarchical regression results: Predicting objective career success

Predictor/ Step	Promotions within organization					Promotions in entire career					Gross income per month					Periods of unemployment ^c				
	β					β					β					β				
	At step	Final	R ²	ΔR^2		At step	Final	R ²	ΔR^2		At step	Final	R ²	ΔR^2		At step	Final	R ²	ΔR^2	
Indiv. Factors																				
age	-.31	-.33				-.03	-.01				.53***	.46***			.15	.19				
gender	-.05	-.07				-.08	-.05				-.25***	-.22***			.05	-.01				
high educ q	-.15**	-.15**				-.02	-.04				.06	.05			-.11*	-.10				
years exp	.41**	.40**				.30	.28				-.24	-.18			-.19	-.19				
no manage	-.18***	-.20***	.08***	.08***		-.26***	-.23***	.17***	.17***		-.29***	-.20***	.34***	.34***	.07	.01	.02	.02	.02	.02
Supervisor Factors																				
age	-.02	-.01				.06	.06				.19***	.16***			-.02	.00				
gender	.08	.09				-.03	-.01				-.07	-.10*			.27***	.24***				
supervision	.16**	.15**	.11***	.03**		-.16**	-.14**	.19***	.02*		.02	.01	.38***	.04***	-.09	.00	.10***	.10***	.08***	.08***
Employability																				
oc expertise	-.01	-.01				-.29***	-.29***				.04	.04			-.08	-.08				
antic & opt	.04	.04				.09	.09				-.08	-.08			-.20**	-.20**				
pers flex	-.08	-.08				.04	.04				.04	.04			.33***	.33***				
corp sense	.05	.05				.19**	.19**				.20**	.20**			-.13	-.13				
balance	-.03	-.03	.12***	.00		-.07	-.07	.23***	.03**		-.06	-.06	.41***	.03**	-.09	-.09	.15***	.15***	.05***	.05***
Overall	F= 2.72	dfs	13, 270	Overall	F= 6.04	dfs	13, 269	Overall	F= 13.70	dfs	13, 260	Overall	F= 3.79	dfs	13, 278					

^a Supervisor ratings

^b R² values do not always add up because of the rounding of numbers

* p<.10. ** p<.05. *** p<.01.

^c In case of 'periods of unemployment', negative relationships are positive and vice versa: the more of the competence the less periods of unemployment.

This result could be explained by the fact that experts are very committed to their profession. Following their profession is their primary career goal, which consequently leads to less hierarchical mobility and change. This result also may be caused by organizations, in the sense that they thrive if people keep on doing what they do best. The fact that we are unable to demonstrate a relationship between occupational expertise and at least the number of periods of unemployment can be explained by the funneling character of expertise. People are overspecialized to the degree that this might have a negative impact on their job acquisition. We strongly assume a positive relationship between occupational expertise and firm outcomes with knowledge intensification.

Anticipation and optimization is a significant predictor for periods of unemployment; the higher the score on this employability dimension, the fewer periods of unemployment employees suffered. Preparing for and adapting to future changes in a personal and creative manner, and striving for the best possible results, indeed seem to protect a person from unemployment. However, anticipation and optimization is negatively related to subjective financial success. A logical explanation would be that employees scoring higher on this dimension are more impatient with regard to increasing their salary.

Personal flexibility is only positively related to periods of unemployment: the higher the score on this employability dimension, the more periods of unemployment employees suffered. Based on our results, a person does not seem to benefit from the capacity to adapt easily to all kinds of changes in the internal and external labor market that do not pertain to one's immediate job domain. We do expect this employability dimension to have a positive relation to firm outcomes though (see, for example, Van Dam, 2004), with negative repercussions on employee outcomes. Corporate sense appears to be a significant predictor for the number of promotions in the entire career, gross income, and subjective hierarchical success. These results are a strong indicator for the positive impact of the employability dimension on both objective and subjective career success.

Participation and performance in different workgroups seem to be very important activities for a person's career success (Seibert et al., 2001).

Finally, balance was positively related to job satisfaction and life satisfaction, both subjective career success outcomes. Compromising between opposing employers' interests as well as one's own opposing interests (employee) and between employers' and employees' interests fulfills an important role. Job satisfaction and life satisfaction are important outcomes for employees in order to maintain their productivity in the long run (Korman, Wittig-Berman, & Lang, 1981).

Implications for Practitioners

The validated employability measurement instrument offers a user-friendly opportunity for practitioners to monitor competences of the organization's personnel on a continual basis, which is helpful to plan relevant actions for the future strategy of the company and for other research objectives (such as demonstrating relationships with financial outcomes; see, for example; Cascio, 2005). This will help practitioners in their role as strategic business partners. The instrument is simple to use and can be deployed throughout different sectors and jobs. Practitioners are able to monitor the employability of the employees with this instrument and use it in their annual performance interviews and personal development plans. The instrument presented here has high practical value both for managers, since it is aimed at improving existing evaluation methods used for assessing their subordinates, and for employees, in providing thorough suggestions aimed at improving their career development.

Moreover, the instrument could be deployed with the objective of integrating performance interviews and personal development plans (see also Rodriguez et al., 2002). Differences between supervisor ratings and self-ratings could serve as a fruitful topic of conversation. Our instrument might also be used as a means of comparing competences of employees in different organizational units or

departments. The latter might lead to an improvement in recruitment, staffing, and career mobility practices.

Conclusions and Discussion

In conclusion, in the competence-based approach to employability outlined in this article, employability (1) is advantageous for both career outcomes and firm outcomes, (2) is advantageous for both present performance on the job as well as career outcomes (long-term performance, implying the process of adaptation and learning), (3) in addition to adaptive behavior, may include personal elements such as personality, attitudes, motivation, and ability, and (4) represents the combination of specific and more generic competences.

The measurement of employability presented in this article is based upon the idea that some characteristics of expert performance and of employability are valid regardless of the domain of expertise of a professional. The present study is explorative in the sense that a domain-independent operationalization of employability was nonexistent in the literature. Our study was designed in order to test the psychometric properties of the measures and indicates that the criteria of convergent and discriminant validity have been met to a reasonable extent. A valid and reliable multitrait instrument has been achieved. The five scales appear very homogeneous, for both the self-ratings and for the supervisor ratings. Although employability is thought to be a multidimensional concept, the five dimensions are not fully exclusive and represent correlated aspects of employability. This is why the factor structure is oblique instead of orthogonal.

The distinctive power of the five scales, however, is satisfactory given the higher intrascale correlations, the outcomes of the multitrait–multimethod analysis, and the SEM analyses. These results support our theory, which states that employability involves: (1) occupational expertise, (2) anticipation and optimization, (3) personal flexibility, (4) corporate sense, and (5) balance.

One limitation is that the measurement instrument has been tested using only one sample. In the future, we will test the generalizability of our findings by applying the employability theory and measurement instrument in other samples and professional sectors. Another limitation of this study is that only the influence of employability upon employee (career) outcomes has been studied in this contribution. Studying the relationship of employability with firm outcomes is the next important step in this research project. Moreover, the cross-sectional design that we have used for testing the predictive validity of employability for career success should, in future studies, be replaced with longitudinal studies to prevent reverse causation (Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, & Allen, 2005).

The predictive validity of the employability measurement instrument upon objective and subjective career success measures has been demonstrated. For most career success measures, the predictive role of employability is significant. All five employability dimensions appear to be significantly related to one or more of the career success measures. The pattern varies for the different career success measures. In some cases, there is a negative or null relationship between the employability dimension and the career success measure (especially in the case of occupational expertise and personal flexibility). Nonetheless, overall we expect that certain employability competences indeed stimulate particular career outcomes and consequently positively influence organizational outcomes. This assumption needs to be further explored and tested in new studies.

Using both self-ratings and supervisor ratings is of great importance. The disagreement between supervisors and employees on the employability dimensions is indicative of the difficulty of evaluating employability. The suggestion made by Van der Heijden (2000) to use think-aloud protocols aimed at explaining why a rater gives a particular rating to a particular item might also be used in the near future. It is possible that this technique will improve the validity of the instrument, albeit at the expense of the homogeneity of the scales. If raters are asked to provide concrete examples of performances or behaviors of the ratees, response sets such as

the halo effect will probably be sifted out, at least to a certain extent. If raters have to justify their choices and are encouraged to think more carefully about their answers, the differentiation between item meanings will probably increase, leading to a further increase in valid outcomes.

Only if ratings are explicitly based on empirical, verifiable observations of behavior and performance can we use them confidently in annual job and career assessments. The instrument presented here has high practical value both for managers (aimed at improving existing evaluation methods used for assessing their subordinates) and for employees (in providing thorough suggestions aimed at improving their career development). The proposed measurement instrument enables us to further investigate the relationship between individual, job-related, and organizational career activities and characteristics on the one hand and employability on the other hand. This might eventually produce useful recommendations for enhancing lifelong career success. Knowledge concerning these relationships is desirable from both an organizational and an individual perspective.

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Appendix

Occupational Expertise

1. I consider myself competent to engage in in-depth, specialist discussions in my job domain.
2. During the past year, I was, in general, competent to perform my work accurately and with few mistakes.
3. During the past year, I was, in general, competent to take prompt decisions with respect to my approach to work.
4. I consider myself competent to indicate when my knowledge is insufficient to perform a task or solve a problem.
5. I consider myself competent to provide information on my work in a way that is comprehensible.
6. In general, I am competent to distinguish main issues from side issues and to set priorities.
7. During the past year, I was, in general, competent to carry out my work independently.
8. I consider myself competent to be of practical assistance to colleagues with questions about the approach to work.
9. I consider myself competent to weigh up and reason out the “pros” and “cons” of particular decisions on working methods, materials, and techniques in my job domain.
10. Overall, how do you see yourself in terms of your work performance?
11. How much confidence do you have in your capacities within your area of expertise?
12. How would you rate the quality of your skills overall?
13. What proportion of your work would you say you brought to a successful conclusion in the past year?
14. I have a ___ opinion of how well I performed in the past year.

15. During the past year, how sure of yourself have you felt at work?

Anticipation and Optimization

1. How much time do you spend improving the knowledge and skills that will be of benefit to your work?
2. I take responsibility for maintaining my labor market value.
3. I approach the development of correcting my weaknesses in a systematic manner.
4. I am focused on continuously developing myself.
5. I consciously devote attention to applying my newly acquired knowledge and skills.
6. In formulating my career goals, I take account of external market demand.
7. During the past year, I was actively engaged in investigating adjacent job areas to see where success could be achieved.
8. During the past year, I associated myself with the latest developments in my job domain.

Personal Flexibility

1. How easily would you say you can adapt to changes in your workplace?
2. How easily would you say you are able to change organizations, if necessary?
3. I adapt to developments within my organization.
4. How quickly do you generally anticipate and take advantage of changes in your working environment?
5. How quickly do you generally anticipate and take advantage of changes in your sector?
6. How much variation is there in the range of duties you aim to achieve in your work?
7. I have a _____(very negative-very positive) attitude to changes in my function.
8. I find working with new people _____ (very unpleasant-very pleasant).

Corporate Sense

1. I am involved in achieving my organization's/department's mission.
2. I do that extra bit for my organization/department over and above my direct responsibilities.
3. I support the operational processes within my organization.
4. In my work, I take the initiative in sharing responsibilities with colleagues.
5. In my organization, I take part in forming a common vision of values and goals.
6. I share my experience and knowledge with others.
7. How much influence do you exercise within your organization?

Balance

1. I suffer from work-related stress.
2. My work and private life are evenly balanced.
3. My working, learning, and living are in harmony.
4. My work efforts are in proportion to what I get back in return (e.g., through primary and secondary conditions of employment, pleasure in work).
5. The time I spend on my work and career development on the one hand and my personal development and relaxation on the other are evenly balanced.
6. I achieve a balance in alternating between a high degree of involvement in my work and a more moderate one at the appropriate moment.
7. After working, I am generally able to relax.
8. I achieve a balance in alternating between reaching my own work goals and supporting my colleagues.
9. I achieve a balance in alternating between reaching my own career goals and supporting my colleagues.

3

In search of suitable age management practices for lifelong employability and career success¹

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Abstract

Despite an increasing dependence of the market on older workers, organizations still do not pay enough attention to their (broad) development. In this study, potential factors of age management are explored, specifically with regard to the development of specific and broad competences (employability). The mediating role of employability between an age-related HRM policy, learning climate and learning value of the job and career success is tested for. Argued is for an age management policy which is accessible to all ages, combined with attention to individual differences.

Introduction

Despite an increased awareness of our graying working population, it is remarkable that more attention is devoted to retirement issues compared to investing in human capital of older workers (Greller & Simpson, 1999). Reasons are amongst others prejudices against older workers and expected lower costs to returns (Greller & Simpson, 1999). While they need, just as much as young workers in a dynamic knowledge market, to stay updated and (stay cognitively stimulated) for maintaining their employability and career success.

Research findings point into the direction that despite certain physical or cognitive declines with age, these can easily be compensated by other factors, such as motivation and/or experience. Studies overall do not show a sign of declines in work performance with age (Sterns & Miklos, 1995). Individual differences are expected to fulfill a larger role than whatever age decline. Learning capacity has shown not to decrease with age. Cognitive declines for instance were reversible through training (Sterns & Miklos, 1995). Despite this information there are signs that older workers gain less access to training as younger workers (Sterns & Miklos, 1995).

In order to keep up with this faster pace of change, a more varied and transferable competence package is called for. Increasingly, domain-specific occupational expertise is not enough to guarantee positive work outcomes during the entire career. While on the one hand, larger domain related expertise is expected to accompany aging; on the other hand, expertise nowadays is getting outdated much more easily. They also have to deal with the faster change in the nature of work (Ilmarinen, 2001: “work organizations, work methods and tools, and also work loads are changing today faster than human resources can easily adapt”; London & Greller, 1991).

Employability, here is defined as ‘the *continuously* fulfilling, acquiring and/or creating of work through the optimal use of competences’ (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005a; 2005b). It entails a kind of self-management in which

specialist occupational expertise is easily counterbalanced with more general competences such as flexibility. In this study employability is measured by a multi-dimensional instrument in which occupational expertise is complemented with the more general competences of anticipation & optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005a; 2005b). The five employability scales contain items in the domains of work performance, and career development and –management.

In the majority of the organizations, development of expertise is short-term focused and narrow-focused on the present work domain. In line with the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991; Wright, McMahan, & Mc Williams, 1992), investments in human capital are strictly in line with the firm's direct needs. It is not focused on long term career development and on attaining a broader competence package. In organizations awareness has to grow on the need to also invest in broader and more non firm specific competences, appropriate for an innovative dynamic context.

The career development during a person's entire career is largely dependent on the initiatives and investments of the employee him- or herself (Protean career, Hall, 1976), but also needs ample scope from within organizations. Specific policies at the organizational level are called for, to deal with the maintenance, and improvement of the employability and career development of older workers. Age management could involve different organizational initiatives (managerial and other) that address all age groups, and in this sense could be of benefit to all age groups within the organization. In this study, the role of employability as a mediator of potential age management policies and career success is studied. Potential components of age management and their effect on career success via employability are tested for.

Theoretical background and formulation of hypotheses

Employability mediating the relation between age management and career success

An age management policy, is ideally a policy that is focused on attaining and exploiting a diverse workforce with regard to age. Different age groups have different strengths and weaknesses. They can learn from one another and can complement one another. An age management policy is a HRM policy that is tailored to the (career) development of specific age groups, and not only restricted to the aging workforce. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (1997) describes ‘age management’ in terms of “supporting employability i.e. keeping the workforce skilled, motivated and able-bodied”. Age management in this sense will stimulate the career success of different age groups via employability.

For an organisation to be attractive to employees, it should provide lifelong learning opportunities and chances to grow in knowledge and skills, and to improve their capabilities. There are several strategies that can be used in order to promote growth and to prevent obsolescence (Arvey et al., 1984). Potential activities are measures aimed at encouraging and stimulating individual career development, whether they are planned or not, in which an organisation engages. Factors that might be of importance in stimulating the employability and career success of employees of all age groups are an age-related HRM policy (the role of the manager), a positive organizational learning climate, and the learning value of the job. These potential age management practices are now further explained subsequently.

In the research from Tuomi et al. (1999), the role the manager is fulfilling, seems of crucial importance. The manager is an essential link in the sense that he or she may be a catalyzer or hinderer of expertise and career development. An *age-related HRM policy* (Van der Heijden & Mikkelsen, in preparation), is a scale that

measures the attitude and support of the superior, not only with regard to age, but also to other career related aspects of the employee, such as personal career phase and capacities. An age-related HRM policy specifically may be related to career success via employability in the sense that managers need to stimulate the broad development of competence of their employees and need to prevent the funneling of expertise. All age groups, and certainly aging workers need exclusive attention from their managers in this sense.

The *learning climate* of the company, could exert influence on the development of competences of the personnel and subsequently their career success. Learning climate is “the space and the stimulus that employees are given in order to behave in a learning manner” (Klarenberg, Van Moorsel & Poell, 1996). Organizations are partly dependent on their personnel for flexibly adapting to environmental changes, necessitating a stimulating learning climate (Bartram, Foster & Lindley, 1993). Important features of a learning climate are Autonomy within work processes, communication, co-operative structures, attitudes of and support by superiors, as well as time for learning, and opportunities to develop (e.g., Bergmann et al., 2000; Heintel, 1992; Jenewein, Knauth & Zülch, 2002; Lorscheider, 1997). Bartram, Foster & Lindley (1993) did develop the LCQ, Learning Climate Questionnaire, in which the perceptions² of the employees fulfil an important role in the emergence of the learning climate of the organization. For this study we focus on three LCQ scales we consider specifically advantageous for the development of competences: time, team and opportunities to develop.

Apart from the learning climate in the organization, specific job features might contribute or hinder the ongoing development of competences: *the learning value of the job*. “The individual job should entail opportunities to enlarge one’s occupational expertise by developing new knowledge and skills. Each job should be rich in resources, tools and learning materials and it should offer ample

² Also the learning climate of the department can play a major role.

opportunities for social interaction and collaboration. Tasks should be varied and to some degree unpredictable and able to be explored freely without heavy pressure to achieve an immediate goal” (Van der Heijden & van der Heijde, 2004).

Positive career outcomes are very important to aging workers to be able to stay on (longer) in the working process productively and with satisfaction. Career success is operationalized as both objective and subjective career success evaluations to obtain a complete picture (e.g., Gattiker & Larwood, 1988; Judge et al., 1995). Empirical evidence has suggested that subjective perceptions of one’s own career do not always correspond to external objective criteria and extrinsic and intrinsic career evaluations do not always overlap (e.g., Korman, Wittig-Berman & Lang, 1981; Poole, Langan-Fox & Omodei, 1993).

Hypothesized is that because of the positive attitude of the manager towards the career stage of different age groups or through a positive learning climate or a high learning value of the job, the extent of employability (competences) will increase which consequently will have a positive effect on career success of workers (H2a). To demonstrate that this effect applies to all ages (and not only to younger workers), and thus is suited as age management practice, we will test for interaction effects of these potential age management practices with age (H2b). On an exploratory base, moderated mediation (Frazier, Tix & Barron, 2004), is tested for, that is the appearance of the mediator effect of employability, only for specific age groups.

H1 Age-related HRM policy, learning climate and learning value of the job are positively related to the career success of workers via employability (as mediator).

H2 Age-related HRM policy, learning climate and learning value of the job are positively related to the employability and career success of workers of all ages (no interaction effects of these factors with age).

Methodology

Setting

The study was performed in a large Dutch company that produces building materials and involved employees from different occupational fields in middle- and higher-level jobs. The employee selection was thus limited to employees active no lower than at a middle level of functioning or in a middle management position. The reason is that in order to study data which may be generalized for future use in organizations, allowances are made for the possibilities that the present workers, particularly the older ones, will be difficult to compare with the employees who will be hired by companies in, say, 20 years' time (Boerlijst, Van der Heijden and Van Assen, 1993). Until about thirty years ago, simple functions and simple tasks were dominant in most working organizations. As a consequence, the bulk of older employees in our existing working population has a rather low level of education. As the complexity and level of difficulty of future functions will on average be higher than it is now, we have every reason to expect that the average educational level will likewise have undergone a sharp rise by the year 2010.

Sample and procedure

The sample was based on two groups of respondents: the employees themselves and their immediate supervisors. 335 direct supervisors and 330 employees, i.e. 289 pairs, were included in the study. The employee sample consisted largely out of males, (83, 3 percent), against 16,7 percent of women. Their average age was 40,94 years. 84,80 percent of the employees reported to be married, while 3,90 percent was divorced. Of the persons that were married or were cohabiting, 63,10 percent of the partners was working part-time or full-time. On average these employees were engaged at this company for 126, 28 months, which is 10,5 years.

Concerning the highest educational qualification we found the following distribution:

1. Primary education	0.8 %
2. High school (or recognized equivalent)	40.9 %
3. Vocational education (or recognized equivalent)	30.8 %
4. Higher vocational education	15.3 %
5. Academic degree	2.2 %
6. Doctorate (PhD)	0.0 %

All employees of the firm in question were included for the study and were asked directly by their supervisors. Each supervisor had to complete employability questions on their subordinates. It was decided on a maximum of three employees per supervisor for practical (time restrictions) and reliability reasons (Van der Heijden, 1998). The employees have filled in the e-questionnaire while they were at work. There was no time limit to complete the questionnaire. The estimated time for completion was 45 minutes. All responses have been collected on an anonymous basis. The questionnaires of respectively the employees and matching supervisor were connected by a number. There were no specific problems while filling in the questionnaire.

Measures

Employability is measured by a new instrument consisting of five different scales (7-15 items each), which elaborates on an already existing instrument, measuring ‘occupational expertise’³ (Van der Heijden, 1998; 2000). The measurement of employability presented here is based on the idea that some characteristics of

³ In the original study ‘occupational expertise’ was termed ‘professional expertise’ (Van der Heijden, 1998; 2000).

expert performance and of employability are valid regardless of the domain of expertise of a professional. The five dimensions of employability (occupational expertise, anticipation & optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance) will be measured by means of seven to fifteen items that are scored on a six-point Likert rating scale ranging from: (1) to (6). Examples of scale extremes are ‘not at all’, and, ‘to a large degree’, and ‘never’, and ‘very often’.

The employability tool (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005a; 2005b) consists of an employee’s and a supervisor’s version. Direct supervisors and employees, fill out nominally identical versions of the questionnaire. The supervisors fill in the amended version of the questionnaire, which contains items worded so as to express the extent of employability of their respective employees. All five scales have high reliability scores with Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .78 to .90 for the self-ratings (N=314), and .83 to .95 for the supervisor ratings (N=334) (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005a; 2005b).

Age-related HRM policy is measured by means of a five-item scale developed by Van der Heijden and Mikkelsen (in preparation). A sample item is “My supervisor has talked with me about my career development in relation to my age during the last year?” All items will be scored on a six-point rating scale ranging from: (1) strongly disagree, to (6) strongly agree. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale is .77.

Learning climate is measured with three scales of the Learning Climate Questionnaire (Bartram, Foster & Lindley, 1993): time, team style and opportunity to develop (together 30 items). A sample item is “There are lots of different ways to learn new jobs here” (opportunity to develop). All items will be scored by means of the following rating scale: (1) never true, (2) rarely true, (3) sometimes true, (4) usually true, and (5) always true. Cronbach’s alpha’s for the scales are .69 (time), .80 (team style), and opportunity to develop (.79).

Learning value of the job is measured by a new, and psychometrically sound scale (Van der Heijden, in preparation) in order to measure the amount of learning value of an individual's current job. Six items that are scored on a six-point rating scale are used. A sample item is "My job enables me to further develop my talents". The scale anchors for each item range from: (1) strongly disagree, to (6) strongly agree. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is .81.

Objective career success is measured with three single items. *Objective hierarchical success*, is measured as number of promotions. Numbers of promotions is defined as 'any increase in hierarchical level and/or any significant increase in job responsibilities or job scope' they have experienced 'since joining your current organization' (*organization-specific objective hierarchical success*) and 'in your entire career' (*overall objective hierarchical success*). *Objective financial success* is measured, as *current gross income* (per month).

General subjective career success will be measured with 7 items from Bozionelos (2004). A sample item is "I am drawing a high income compared to my peers". The items require responses on a 5-point format: (1) does not apply at all, to (5) applies a great deal. The scale is based upon the subjective career success scales from Gattiker and Larwood (1986, 1988), which consists of an organizational and a non-organizational component (organizational, interpersonal, hierarchical, financial and life success). Most recently (Bozionelos, 2004) reported an internal consistency of .70 for the scale.

Table 1 Descriptives and correlation table for variables under study (N=333)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1 Age employee	40.94	9.20	-																				
2 Age supervisor	42.95	7.79	.11*	-																			
3 Age-related HRM-policy	3.02	.63	-.05	.00	(.77)																		
4...LCQtime	2.80	.50	.17**	-.09	-.25**	(.69)																	
5...LCQteam	2.43	.55	.05	-.12*	-.40**	.54**	(.80)																
6 LCQopp	2.66	.57	.02	-.25**	-.39**	.50**	.59**	(.79)															
7 Learning value	4.37	.78	-.04	.08	.20**	-.04	-.24**	-.32**	(.81)														
Employability (self-ratings)	4.78	.43	.04	.08	.00	-.10	-.01	-.17**	.00	(.90)													
8 occupational expertise	3.72	.66	-.14*	-.05	.14*	-.13*	-.14*	-.31**	.31**	.40**	(.81)												
9 anticipation & optimiz.	4.44	.49	-.18**	.04	.01	-.10	-.07	-.25**	.19**	.58**	.48**	(.79)											
10 pers flexibility	4.13	.72	.06	.15*	.18**	.01	-.12*	-.39**	.30**	.53**	.53**	.53**	(.83)										
11 corporate sense	4.30	.51	-.01	.05	.19**	-.35**	-.28**	-.31**	.11	.44**	.32**	.31**	.30**	(.78)									
12 balance																							
Employability (supervisor ratings)	4.36	.67	-.17**	.25**	.01	-.07	-.04	-.19**	.07	.26**	.05	.17**	.22**	.14*	(.95)								
13 occupational expertise	3.49	.71	-.30**	.22**	.00	-.14*	-.11	-.26**	.17**	.22**	.21**	.32**	.28**	.10	.69**	(.89)							
14 anticipation & optimiz.	3.92	.67	-.33**	.15**	.06	-.11*	-.10	-.23**	.19**	.21**	.19**	.39**	.26**	.13*	.70**	.75**	(.88)						
15 pers. flexibility	3.90	.72	-.09	.26**	.04	-.01	-.05	-.24**	.18**	.22**	.10	.24**	.37**	.06	.76**	.69**	.71**	(.85)					
16 corporate sense	4.17	.54	-.13*	.13*	.04	-.14*	-.13*	-.22**	.08	.18**	.09	.12*	.21**	.29**	.60**	.54**	.56**	.49**	(.83)				
17 balance																							
Objective career success	1.34	1.63	.16**	.11	.10	.15**	.00	-.05	.06	.05	-.04	-.11*	.15**	-.05	.02	.00	-.05	.06	.00	-			
18 Number of promotions at Company	3.46	2.40	.30**	.10	.07	.11*	-.01	-.19**	.25**	.09	.17**	.13*	.32**	.03	-.11	-.05	-.06	.04	-.08	.45**	-		
19 Number of promotions in career	3266.30	1328.63	.40**	.35**	.13*	-.03	-.14*	-.37**	.17**	.25**	.16**	.21**	.47**	.20**	.15*	.11	.08	.27**	.07	.19**	.41**	-	
20 Monthly income (gross) EUR																							
21 Subj. career success	3.63	.29	.02	.20**	.42**	-.27**	-.44**	-.48**	.34**	.19**	.24**	.18**	.38**	.42**	.11	.11	.14*	.18**	.19**	.21**	.19**	.36**	(.50)

*p<.05. **p<.01

Results

Descriptives

In table 1 some descriptives of the variables included in our model are reported, including, means, standard deviations and reliabilities of scales (Cronbach's alpha). We do use age as a continuous predictor variable in our statistical analyses.

Employability mediating the relation between potential age management factors and career success?

The mediating role of employability for *age management* and career success is tested for by hierarchical regression analysis. In this procedure, relevant demographic variables are put into the regression equation first, including age, followed by the potential age management variables (age-related HRM-policy, learning climate, learning value of the job) and subsequently the employability dimensions. The advantage of this method is an estimation of the relative and subsequent contribution to the explained variance (R^2) in career success by these three different steps. After that the order of entry is reversed to assess direct and mediator effects of these steps.

Table 2 demonstrates that the picture is different for the different career success measures. For number of promotions in the organization, 8 percent of the variance ($R^2=.08$) is explained by the factors in the model. Individual factors, and more specifically, highest educational qualification is significantly and negatively related to number of promotions in the organization ($\Delta R^2=.04$, $p \leq .01$, $\beta = -.14$). Not all organizational factors, but LCQ time was significantly and positively related to number of promotions in the organization ($\beta = .16$). There is no confirmation of our hypothesis of the mediator role of employability with regard to this career outcome.

With regard to number of promotions in entire career, a substantial amount of the variance ($R^2=.22$) is explained by the factors in the model. Individual factors ($\Delta R^2 =.10$, $p \leq .01$), and more specifically, age is significantly and positively related to number of promotions in the entire career ($\beta = .25$). Organizational factors ($\Delta R^2 =.09$, $p \leq .01$) and more specifically LCQ opportunity to develop ($\beta = -.27$) and learning value of the job ($\beta = .16$) are significantly related to number of promotions in entire career. The reversed model shows that there is a significant and negative relation of employability with promotions in entire career ($\Delta R^2 =.07$, $p \leq .01$), but not as a mediator between individual or organizational factors (occupational expertise, $\beta = -.26$).

With regard to gross income per month, a substantial amount of the variance ($R^2=.39^{**}$) is explained by the factors in the model. Individual factors ($\Delta R^2 =.25$, $p \leq .01$), and more specifically, age ($\beta = .34$) and gender ($\beta = -.26$, women) are significantly related to gross income per month. Organizational factors ($\Delta R^2 =.09$, $p \leq .01$), and more specifically, LCQ opportunity to develop ($\beta = -.27$) is significantly and negatively related to gross income per month. Our hypothesis of employability as a mediator between individual and organizational factors is confirmed for this career outcome ($\Delta R^2 =.04$, $p \leq .05$). Corporate sense ($\beta = .22$) is significantly and positively related to gross income per month.

With regard to subjective career success, a substantial amount of the variance ($R^2=.39^{**}$) is explained by the factors in the model. Striking here is that the individual factors do not play a major role. Organizational factors ($\Delta R^2 =.34$, $p \leq .01$), and more specifically, age-related HRM policy, ($\beta = .23$), LCQ team ($\beta = -.20$), LCQ opportunity to develop ($\beta = -.21$) and learning value of the job ($\beta = .12$) are significantly related to subjective career success. Our hypothesis of employability as a mediator is not confirmed for this career outcome. Only corporate sense ($\beta = .18$) is significantly and positively related to subjective career success.

Table 2 Hierarchical regression results: Predicting career success

Predictor/ Step	Promotions within organization				Promotions in entire career				Gross income per month				Subjective Career Success			
	At step	Final	R ²	ΔR ²	At step	Final	R ²	ΔR ²	At step	Final	R ²	ΔR ²	At step	Final	R ²	ΔR ²
Indiv. Factors																
age	.09	.06			.27**	.25**			.34**	.34**			-.01	.03		
gender	-.08	-.04			-.12*	-.02			-.31**	-.26**			-.16**	-.09		
highest ed qualification	-.13*	-.14*	.04**	.04**	.02	-.05	.10**	.10**	.13*	.08	.25**	.25**	.02	.00	.03	.03
Org factors																
Age-related HRV policy	.06	.07			.01	.00			.06	.05			.24**	.23**		
LCQtime	.17*	.16*			.11	.10			.05	.03			-.02	-.04		
LCQteam	.03	.02			.12	.12			-.02	-.01			-.19**	-.20**		
LCQopp	-.10	-.08			-.25**	-.27**			-.32**	-.27**			-.24**	-.21**		
Learning value	.04	.05	.07*	.03	.19**	.16**	.19**	.09**	-.01	-.03	.35**	.09**	.13*	.12*	.36**	.34**
Employability^a																
oc expertise	.06	.06			-.26*	-.26*			.08	.08			-.04	-.04		
antic& opt	.10	.10			.05	.05			-.01	-.01			-.13	-.13		
pers flex	-.18	-.17			.04	.04			-.05	-.05			-.02	-.02		
corp sense	.07	.07			.15	.15			.22*	.22*			.18*	.18*		
balance	-.03	-.03	.08*	.01	-.07	-.07	.22**	.03	-.09	-.09	.39**	.04**	.11	.11	.39**	.02
Overall	F= 1.86		dfs	13, 271	Overall	F= 5.72	dfs	13, 270	Overall	F= 12.62	dfs	13, 260	Overall	F=	dfs	13, 272
Employability^a																
oc expertise	.01	.06			-.26*	-.26*			-.08	.08			-.04	-.04		
antic& opt	.04	.10			.05	.05			-.02	-.01			-.13	-.13		
pers flex	-.21*	-.18			.04	.04			-.18	-.05			-.02	-.02		
corp sense	.17	.07			.15	.15			.47**	.22*			.18*	.18*		
balance	.00	-.03	.02	.02	-.07	-.07	.07**	.07**	-.01	-.09	.10**	.10**	.11	.11	.06**	.06**
Org factors																
Age-related HRV policy	.06	.07			.01	.00			.01	.05			.24**	.23**		
LCQtime	.20**	.16*			.11	.10			.14	.03			-.02	-.04		
LCQteam	-.01	.02			.12	.12			-.01	-.01			-.19**	-.20**		
LCQopp	-.08	-.08			-.25**	-.27**			-.39**	-.27**			-.24**	-.21**		
Learning value	.04	.05	.06	.03	.19**	.16**	.16**	.09**	.00	-.03	.21**	.11**	.13*	.12*	.38**	.32**
Indiv. factors																
age	.06	.06			.27**	.25**			.34**	.34**			-.01	.03		
gender	-.04	-.04			-.12*	-.02			-.26**	-.26**			-.16**	-.09		
highest ed qualification	-.14*	-.14*	.08*	.03*	.02	-.05	.22**	.06**	.08	.08	.39**	.17**	.02	.00	.39**	.01

^a Supervisor ratings

^b R² values do not always add up because of the rounding of numbers

*p≤.05. **p≤.01.

It is important to test for main effects first, after which mediator and moderator effects can be tested for, which are usually smaller than main effects. Hypothesis H1 is confirmed for gross income per month. Employability acts as a mediator between individual factors, (organizational) potential age management factors and gross income. Hypothesis H2 is also confirmed: possible interaction effects of the potential age management practices and age were tested for: for number of promotions in entire career, gross income and subjective career success (the career success factors with significant organizational effects). No significant interaction effects were found. This leads us to conclude that the significant effects we found for these organizational practices are applicable to all ages, which makes them suitable age management practices. For employability, which appeared to act as a mediator between individual and organizational factors and gross income per month, moderated mediation was tested for on an exploratory basis, more specifically with regard to corporate sense. No interaction effects with age were found, meaning that mediation probably is occurring throughout all age groups. We choose to not present the absence of these interaction effects.

Discussion

Organizations could profit from age management by stimulating a tailored competence development for different age groups. A Canadian study in the technology sector (Duxbury, Dyke, & Lam, 2000), concludes that a tailored HR approach is needed for different age groups to stimulate career development. Different age groups are dealing with different career issues. Career development can be stimulated through different means for different age groups, depending on different needs with regard to different work, life and career developmental aspects. Differences in competence levels, such as possible declines in flexibility of aging employees can also be taken into account in this sense. Such a tailored approach could be detrimental in the sense that it could bring discord between age

groups and in that sense a policy of which all ages can profit from would be better. Besides, in this study was demonstrated that the level of more generic competences stays behind compared to more specific competences, both for older as well as for younger employees. In different studies on aging also the importance of individual differences is strongly emphasized (Greller & Simpson, 1999; Sterns & Miklos, 1995), which is pointing to the need for an individual approach of the (development of the) older worker.

Organizational factors such as an age-related HRM policy, learning climate, and learning value of the job have an effect on career success, particularly for *subjective career success*. For this career success measure especially the combination of the different potential age management strategies we tested for in this study, appeared to have a significant effect. These are important potential age management factors since they effect all ages (no interaction effects found with age). We have to look further into detail into the specifics of these organizational practices to optimize our knowledge with regard to their application.

Mediation of employability between individual and organizational factors and career success is only demonstrated for gross income per month. And more specifically this is due to the employability dimension 'corporate sense'. From our hierarchical regressions, only 'corporate sense' fulfils a positive role for career success. Organizations could use this knowledge and pay more attention to the training and development of corporate sense: Corporate sense refers to the expertise derived from participation and performance in different work groups like the department, the organization, working teams, the occupational community, and other networks. It is about sharing responsibilities, knowledge, experiences, feelings, credits, failures, goals, etcetera (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005a, 2005b). Occupational expertise seems to hinder the number of promotions in the entire career (a direct effect) what can be explained by the fact that experts are very committed to their profession. Following the profession then is the main career goal, which leads to less mobility and change as a consequence. This can

also be caused by organizations in the sense that they thrive if people keep on doing what they do best.

From these results, it may be concluded that, aging and potential age management factors fulfill important roles with regard to employability and career success. Further studies between age groups over different industries are needed to be able to generalize and to look more into these relationships. Case studies of the implementation of different age management policies in different companies would make a valuable qualitative contribution to the knowledge base. A limitation of this research design is the fact that a cross sectional design was used where a longitudinal design is more appropriate with regard to studying career issues.

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5

Employability and social innovation: The importance of and interplay between transformational leadership and personality

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Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to draw attention to employability being an important social innovation that potentially thrives with transformational leadership, partly depending on certain personal characteristics such as managerial role and personality.

Methodology/approach

The study was carried out among pairs of employees (314) and immediate supervisors (334) working at a large Dutch company that produces building materials. We made use of Linear Regression and Structural Equation Modeling to test our hypothesis and explore our assumptions with regard to the research model.

Findings

We have found that transformational leadership is positively related to employee and supervisor ratings of employability. Furthermore, there is some indication that transformational leadership enhances employability in some situations, demonstrating differences between categories of workers with and without a managerial function. Moreover, it appeared that after controlling for personality, only the positive relationship between transformational leadership and supervisor ratings of employability, remained for the workers not having a managerial function.

Research limitations/implications

Our study design comprised a cross sectional approach and therefore future longitudinal research is necessary to investigate causal relationships between transformational leadership, personality and employability.

Practical implications

In terms of individual career development practices, our outcomes should be translated into increased attention for aligning leadership style to meet the requirements of all types of employees across the life-span.

Social implications

By providing more insight into the increased importance of transformational leadership for certain groups of workers, this contribution is intended to come up with opportunities for increasing the employability for different types of workers.

Introduction

Lifelong employability of workers can be regarded to be one of the most typical examples of social innovation today. It entails, amongst others, increased self-steering, initiating self-development and versatile roles. The combination of fast developments (e.g., new production concepts, and new technology) together with increased commercialization put higher demands across the workforce on productivity, creativity and flexibility of individual employees. Obviously, in order to meet the current requirements, employable workers need leaders that enable (and not block) their employability orientation. In this regard, Alimo-Metcalfe, Alban-Metcalfe, and Briggs, (2002) mentioned “serving and enabling others to lead themselves” as an important characteristics of nowadays leaders.

Only around the beginning of this century, scholars have made a start with establishing relationships between human resources (e.g., leadership behaviors, and workers’ employability), on the one hand, and team and organizational performance (e.g., Camps & Rodríguez, 2011; Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011 ; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012; Stoker, Looise, Fisscher, & De Jong, 2001), on the other hand.

In this contribution, we will empirically investigate the relationship between transformational leadership and employability for both employees and managers. First, we will start with a thorough explanation of the key concepts, and we will provide an outline of our research model. Next, we will continue with the methodology of our study, followed by the results and a discussion of the outcomes.

Theory

Employability of workers has the potential to boost both career and organizational outcomes (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004; Van Dam, 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). In Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006), the competence-based approach to employability, being an extension of the Resource-

Based View of the firm (RBV), has been introduced, and has formed the basis for several studies aiming to better understand what determines employability and how employability contributes to career success throughout the life-span (e.g., De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden & Bakker, 2011; Van der Heijden, De Lange, Demerouti, & Van der Heijde, 2009). According to RBV, sustained competitive advantage can be obtained by *human resource advantage* (Boxall, 1998) referring to “a unique combination of acquiring and retaining competent workers, and adequate HR policies and practices of investing in them” (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006, p. 451)

One of the most important determinants of workers’ employability comprises the role of the leader, or so-called manager of the individual employee. Leaders are perceived to be important stakeholders that may enable their workers to thrive (to be completely at the service of their workers), and in that sense transformational leadership is emphasized to be a key factor in nowadays management, besides transactional leadership. “It embraces Greenleaf’s concept of ‘servant leadership’” (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2005).

Furthermore, we argue that personality might work as an intervening factor in this transformational leadership-employability relationship. We expect the personality of the worker to be of influence for his/her employability, possibly interacting with the transformational leadership behaviors of his/her superior.

Employability

Both findings from Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) as well as from career studies point into the direction of the importance of a broad competence package for all workers at the labour market. Besides the development of Human Resources or Human Capital directed towards organizational performance, another organizational strategy to reach competitiveness is to work on the flexibility or manoeuvrability of their organization (Boselie & Paauwe,

2004). One important manner to achieve this is through the qualities of the personnel. In the postulated SHRM framework (see Wright & Snell, 1998) two flexibility pillars, concerning the human capital pool are presented: “1) developing a human capital pool with a broad array of skills, and 2) promoting behavioral flexibility among employees.” As far as career studies are concerned, it is the *more general competencies* that help with the application of more specific skills, herewith stressing the importance of transfer (e.g., from education to labour market of between different labour market situations), which is the equivalent of learning. However, the supposed transfer does often not take place (Cheng & Ho, 2001), herewith seriously hindering lifelong employability, and through this, organizational success (see also Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006).

Some research findings are indicative for a positive relationship between the introduction of new production concepts and different newly required types of skills (Felstead & Ashton, 2000). Besides the fact that most organizations still function largely under the Tayloristic concept, (Taylor, 1911) they have also added new production concepts (or workforce innovations) like Total Quality Management, Lean Production, Business Process Redesign and Socio-technics for the effectivity and efficiency of the operational management (De Lange, 2001; Steijn, 2002). The similarity between the above-mentioned production concepts is the decrease in division of labour and an increase in team work (De Lange, 2001), pointing to despecialization. This asks for different role behavior from employees in nowadays' working organizations, and appeals more to the *versatility, flexibility and social skills* of the ones involved. To conclude, currently, working organizations are in a strong need for a broader competence package for all of their employees, besides domain-specific occupational expertise, herewith enhancing their possibilities for their broader deployment.

In our competence-based approach to employability, we define the concept of competence as the behavioral result of diverse personal capabilities and motivational and attitudinal factors while employability is defined as “the

continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences” (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006, p. 453). As such, employability deals with functioning in complex working situations (Frei, Duell, & Baitsch, 1984), is directly connected with goals, and in that sense variable in content (Onstenk, 1997), and has a dynamic and developmental character (Onstenk, 1997; Van der Heijden, 1998). With the increase in velocity of market developments, having employee potential becomes less interesting as compared to the realisation of that specific potential.

To meet employability needs of workers and performance and flexibility needs of the organization, occupational expertise is complemented with the more broad competences of anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance. Anticipation & optimisation and Personal flexibility are flexibility dimensions, discernible as one proactive/creative variant and a more passive adaptive variant. Corporate sense represents the needed increase for social competence. Finally, the dimension of Balance is added, taking into account all these different elements of employability that are sometimes hard to unite and need fine tuning. These 5 dimensions will be now be shortly explained.

The first dimension, being *occupational expertise* is growing in importance given the increase of the knowledge-intensive market (Schein, 1996), and comprises a very important human capital factor that can be regarded as a prerequisite for the employability and career outcomes of professionals (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001). Occupational expertise is also an extremely important human capital factor for the vitality of organizations (Van der Heijden, 2000). Personnel with firm-specific knowledge, is perceived to be a highly important part of a firm’s resources and extremely difficult to replace. Occupational expertise includes knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, skills, and social recognition (see Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006 and Van der Heijden, 2000 for more specific details).

Anticipation and optimisation, being the second dimension of employability, does not concern a passive adaptation to the labour market, but comprises preparing for future changes in a personal manner, and striving for the best possible results. Employees have to enact jobs increasingly themselves (e.g., Weick, 1996), in a creative way due to the growing complexity of work and difficulty for employers to predict future employment content. This dimension also concerns both employers' and employees' interests, at an individual performance and career level, and at an organizational performance level. On the content level of the occupation, a continuous development is needed to anticipate and adapt to future occupational changes. Development becomes optimized when practised continuously (Continuing Professional Development and lifelong learning) and applying newly acquired knowledge and skills for optimal benefit. (see also Collin, Vander Heijden & Lewis, 2012)

The dimension of *personal flexibility* has also been considered as an important ingredient of employability by other writers [see for example Boudreau, Boswell and Judge (2001)], and Fugate, Kinicki & Ashforth (2004), and has been labelled as 'adaptability' by these scholars. Next to the capacity to make smooth transitions between jobs and organizations, personal flexibility encompasses adapting easily to all kinds of (unforeseen) changes on the internal and external labour market. Organizations profit because flexible and resilient workers adapt more easily to and profit more from frequently occurring changes, such as mergers and reorganizations.

Fourth, *corporate sense* is defined as the participation and performance in different work groups, like the organization, (project) teams, occupational community, virtual community and other networks, and that have been growing in importance in the present work environment (Frese, 2000; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). It is about sharing responsibilities, knowledge, experiences, feelings, credits, failures, goals, etc (e.g., Chapman & Martin, 1996). In this regard, employee energy is both directed towards the performance of the group as a whole

and deployed for own interests. Important prerequisites are social capital and social skills. Besides participation and performance, corporate sense is assumed to enhance innovation given the added value of group interaction.

Finally, in the light of the fifth dimension, being *balance*, nowadays, working life is characterised by strongly competing demands and organisational paradoxes. *Balance* enables employable workers to align all the contradictory needs of organizations and the individual workers him or herself, such as being flexible while at the same time being committed, the need to both specialize and despecialize, and to deal with home-work balance.

Leadership as a determinant for employability

Transformational leadership (Bass, 1995, 1998) stands out as an important predictor for employability because of: 1) *idealized Influence*, that is, setting high values and/or moral standards and giving a good example in that sense and gain admiration for it; 2) *Inspirational motivation*, comprising the conveying of a (moral) vision of what the organization stands for and evoking enthusiasm for it; 3) *Intellectual stimulation*, referring to stimulating creativity and innovative ideas in workers; and 4) *Individual consideration*, that is, having eye for and pay attention to the individual (career) developmental needs of the worker.

If there is one leadership style, that has the potential to stimulate the employability and career development of workers, it would be the transformational leadership style (see Van der Heijden & Bakker, 2011). Birasnav, Rangnekar, and Dalpati, (2011) propagated training managers transformational leadership behavior, since “this behavior contributes to human capital creation by which an organization achieves competitive advantage” (p. 106). Earlier studies are exemplary for assuming relationships between transformational leadership and employability or career potential outcomes. For instance Piccolo and Colquitt, (2006), demonstrated relationships between transformational leadership and task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (through core job characteristics being

the mediator). Transformational leadership appears to be positively related to a number of desired organizational outcomes, such as organizational productivity, (leader) effectiveness, supervisor-rated performance, employee job satisfaction, and commitment as well (see e.g., Judge & Bono, 2000; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Nemanich & Keller, 2007). Based on the theoretical outline given above, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H1 We expect transformational leadership to be positively related with both self-rated and supervisor-rated employability

Personality, as an intervening factor in the relationship between transformational leadership and employability

Early studies already investigated relationships between the personality of the leader (using the Big Five dimensions of neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness) (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and transformational leadership, and reported significant effects for agreeableness, openness, and extraversion (Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge & Bono, 2000). Furthermore, personality dimensions have been found to correlate with maximum transformational leadership performance (such as assessment centres) or typical transformational leadership performance (such as a basic training situation) (Ployhart, Lim, & Chan, 2001).

The individual profile of a specific worker, depending upon his or her personality, may or may not match with the leadership style of the leader, and is assumed to interact with one another in explaining employee outcomes, such as employability. In Jung and Avolio (1999), leadership style and followers' cultural orientation appeared to interact in predicting performance in group and individual task conditions, while in Kamdar and Van Dyne, (2007) personality and social exchange relationships (LMX), appeared to interact in predicting task performance and organizational citizenship behavior.

Managers (or leaders) are a typical group of workers that also deserve attention with regard to their employability. Workers that achieved a managerial position, are thought to be highly employable, and excel on more than one level, such as intelligence, emotional intelligence, resilience, work-life balance, etc (e.g., Judge, Colbert & Ilies, 2004; Moore, 2007). We believe managers to have a different personality profile than workers without a managerial position, meaning scoring different on all personality dimensions of the big Five. We expect that for workers without a managerial function transformational leadership style is a stronger predictor for employability in comparison with workers in a managerial job, needing more guidance as their own career development is concerned.

Likewise, managers attain higher ratings of career success than followers (i.e. salary, promotions, e.g., Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Several studies demonstrated relationships between the “Big Five” personality dimensions (neuroticism, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness) and objective and subjective career success measures (e.g., Seibert, & Kraimer, 2001).). On an explorative basis we will look into the relationships between the dimensions of personality, transformational leadership and self-rated and supervisor-rated employability for workers with and without a managerial position.

Methods

Sample and procedure

Respondents were from a large Dutch firm that produces building materials (data gathering in 2002). Two nominally identical versions of the questionnaire were used: one employee version (the self-rating version) and one supervisor version, for validity enhancement reasons (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). The supervisors filled out a questionnaire that contained amended items worded to express the extent of employability of their respective employees. Nearly all employees were included in the study and were asked directly by their supervisors

to participate. Questionnaires were limited to a maximum of three employees per supervisor for practical (time restrictions) and reliability reasons (Van der Heijden, 2000).

The selection of employees was restricted to those with at least middle educational levels of functioning, in order to provide data that could be generalized for future use in organizations. It was necessary to allow for the possibility that current workers, might not be comparable with employees hired by companies in, say, 20 years (see also Van der Heijden, 2005). Our final research sample consisted of 314 employees and 334 immediate supervisors (i.e., comprised 290 pairs). The employees worked in numerous types of jobs at middle and higher educational levels. For the employees, 83.3% were male, 84.8% of them were married or cohabiting, 11.2% were single, and 3.9% were divorced at the time of the study. Regarding their education level, 0.8% had only a primary education, 40.9% had a high school degree (or recognized equivalent), 30.8% had basic vocational education (or recognized equivalent), 15.3% had a BA, and 2.2% had an MA.

Measures

Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden's (2006) multi-dimensional measurement instrument was used to evaluate *employability*. It included five scales measuring: (1) occupational expertise (15 items); (2) anticipation and optimization (8 items); (3) personal flexibility (8 items); (4) corporate sense (7 items); and (5) balance (9 items). The instrument concerns a domain-independent operationalization. Examples were: "By virtue of my experience with him/her, I consider him/her ... competent to be of practical assistance to colleagues with questions about the approach to work" (ranging from "not at all" to "extremely") (*occupational expertise*), "(S)he is ... focused on continuously developing him/herself" (ranging from "not at all" to "a considerable degree") (*anticipation and optimization*), "(S)he adapts to developments within the organization ..." (ranging from "very

badly” to “very well”) (*personal flexibility*), “(S)he manages to exercise ... influence within the organization” (ranging from “very little” to “a very great deal”) (*corporate sense*), and “The time (s)he spends on his/her work and career development on the one hand, and his/her personal development and relaxation on the other are . . . evenly balanced” (ranging from “not at all” to “a considerable degree”) (*balance*). The item sets for the employees and the supervisors are nominally identical and all scored on a six-point rating scale. All employability measures demonstrated good internal consistencies, with Cronbach’s α ’s ranging from .78 to .90 for the self-ratings, and from .83 to .95 for the supervisor ratings (Table 1).

Five of the nine original subscales of *the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire* (Alimo-Metcalf & Alban-Metcalf, 2001) were used in our study, given their assumed predictive validity regarding employability enhancement. The anchors for each item for all five subscales ranged from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (6). (1) the Concern subscale (13 items) is focused on "genuine interest in staff as individuals; values their contributions; develops their strengths; coaches, mentors; has positive expectations of what their staff can achieve"; (2) the Empowerment subscale (6 items) is focused on the employer’s ability to [trust] staff to make decisions/take initiative on important matters; [delegate] effectively; [develop]s staffs' potential"; (3) the Openness subscale (9 items) is described as "open to criticism and disagreement; consults and involves others in decision making; regards values as integral to the organization"; (4) the Encouragement subscale (8 items) "encourages questioning traditional approaches to the job, encourages new approaches/solutions to problems, encourages strategic thinking"; and (5) the Support subscale (9 items) is described as "supportive when mistakes are made, and encourages critical feedback of him- or herself and the service provided.". All transformational leadership scales demonstrated good internal consistencies, with Cronbach’s α ’s ranging from .82 to .95. (see Table 1).

Personality was measured using the 60-item short version of the thoroughly validated Dutch translation (Hoekstra, Ormel, & De Fruyt, 1996) of the NEO Five Factor instrument (Costa & McCrae, 1992). All items were scored using a five-point rating scale ranging from: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, to (5) strongly agree. Example items were: ‘I am not a worrier’ (for *Neuroticism*) (12 items), “My life is fast-paced” (for *Extraversion*) (12 items), “I often enjoy playing with theories or abstract ideas” (for *Openness to experience*) (12 items), “I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them” (for *Agreeableness*) (12 items), and “I have a clear set of goals and work toward them in an orderly fashion” (for *Conscientiousness*) (12 items). All personality scales demonstrated reasonable internal consistencies, with Cronbach’s α ’s ranging from .60 to .73. (see Table 1).

Highest educational qualification, age of the employee and age of the supervisor were used as control variables. According to Ostroff and Atwater (2003), gender of the supervisor effects compensation levels but not performance ratings. Therefore, we have not included this demographic into our study. As far as transformational leadership is concerned, differences between male and female leaders are small (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003), and, moreover, in our study the percentage of female leaders was low (only 5% female supervisors).

Results

The transformational leadership – employability relationship

We used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test our hypothesis’, using the maximum likelihood method, with the AMOS computer program (Arbuckle, 2003). Transformational leadership was included as an exogenous factor, and self-reported and supervisor-rated employability were included as latent endogenous factors (see Figure 1). The SEM analysis was conducted using the mean scores of

the scales, instead of the scale items. Previous results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden et al., 2009) supported the suggested factor structure of employability. In the analysis, the measurement errors of the parallel dimensions (supervisor and employee version) were allowed to correlate.

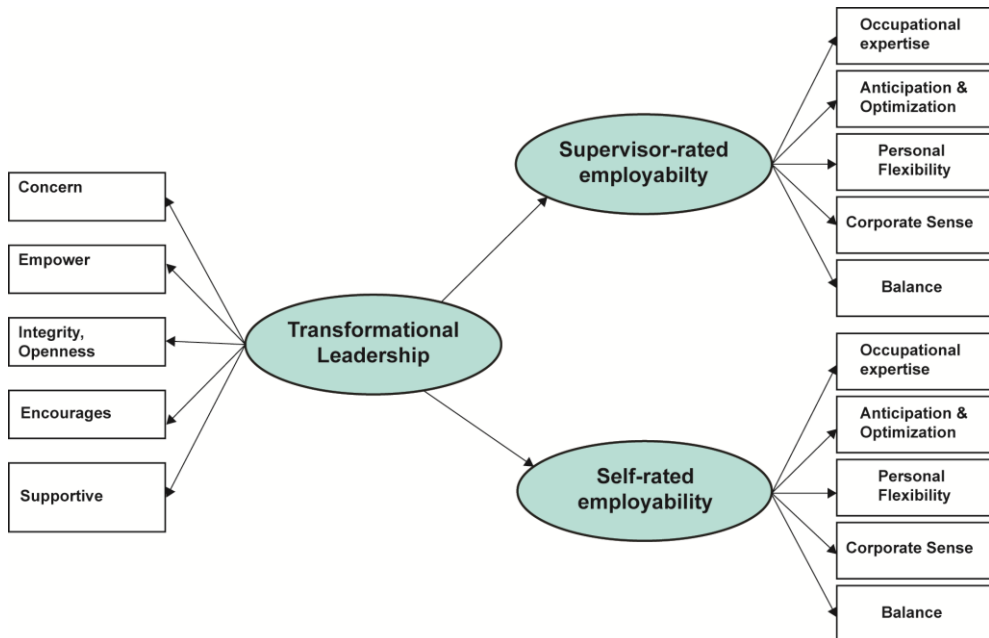


Figure 1 A social innovation model of employability, enhanced by transformational leadership

To test the fit between our proposed model and the data, the traditional χ^2 value, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Normed Fit Index (NFI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were calculated. As a rule of thumb, a CFI $\geq .90$, NFI $\geq .90$, and a RMSEA $\leq .08$ indicate a reasonable fit between the model and the data.

The model for the total sample appeared to have a reasonable fit ($\chi^2 = 418.58$, $df = 127$, $CFI = .91$, $NFI = .88$, $RMSEA = .09$, see Model 1, Table 2 for specific outcomes). The significant structural paths showed that transformational leadership was indeed positively related to supervisor ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$) and employee ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$) ratings of employability, herewith providing support for Hypothesis 1. The proportion of explained variance in this model was .23 for supervisor-rated employability and .04 for self-rated employability.

Table 2. Goodness of Fit Indices for Proposed Models

Model	χ^2	<i>df</i>	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
(1) TL-> employability/ all workers	418.579	127	.91	.88	.09
Null	3388.382	171	.00	.00	.25
(2) TL-> employability/ Management/no management	571.473	255	.90	.84	.07
Null	3492.731	342	.00	.00	.18
(3) TL-> employability/ Management/no management Personality included	699.83	374	.91	.83	.05
Null	4116.82	552	.00	.00	.15

Difference between managers and non-managers as regards the predictive value of transformational leadership for employability

We first used linear regression aimed to investigate whether managers scored significantly different on the personality dimensions of the big five (Costa & McCrae, 1992), controlling for age, and educational qualification (see Table 3). Having or not having a managerial function appears to be significantly related to neuroticism ($\beta = .17, p < .01$), with lower scores for managers in comparison with employees without a managerial position. Furthermore, whether or not a worker has a management function is also significantly related to extraversion ($\beta = -.20, p < .01$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$), with higher scores for managers for both personality dimensions. As far as openness and agreeableness were concerned, we did not find significant relationships between type of position (managerial or not).

To investigate the role of personality in the transformational leadership-employability relationship for both managers and workers without a managerial function, we first performed a SEM analysis testing our model of the transformational leadership - employability relationship, adding work role (i.e., managerial function or not) into the model as a moderator (see Model 2, Table 2, and Figure 2). The model had a satisfactory fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 571.47, df = 255, CFI = .90, NFI = .84, RMSEA = .07$.

More specifically, for the category of employees without managerial activity, the significant structural path showed that transformational leadership was positively related to supervisor ratings of employability ($\beta = .35, p < .001$), while the relationship appeared not to be significant for employee ratings. The proportion of explained variance (R square) in this model was .26 for supervisor-rated employability and .02 for self-rated employability.

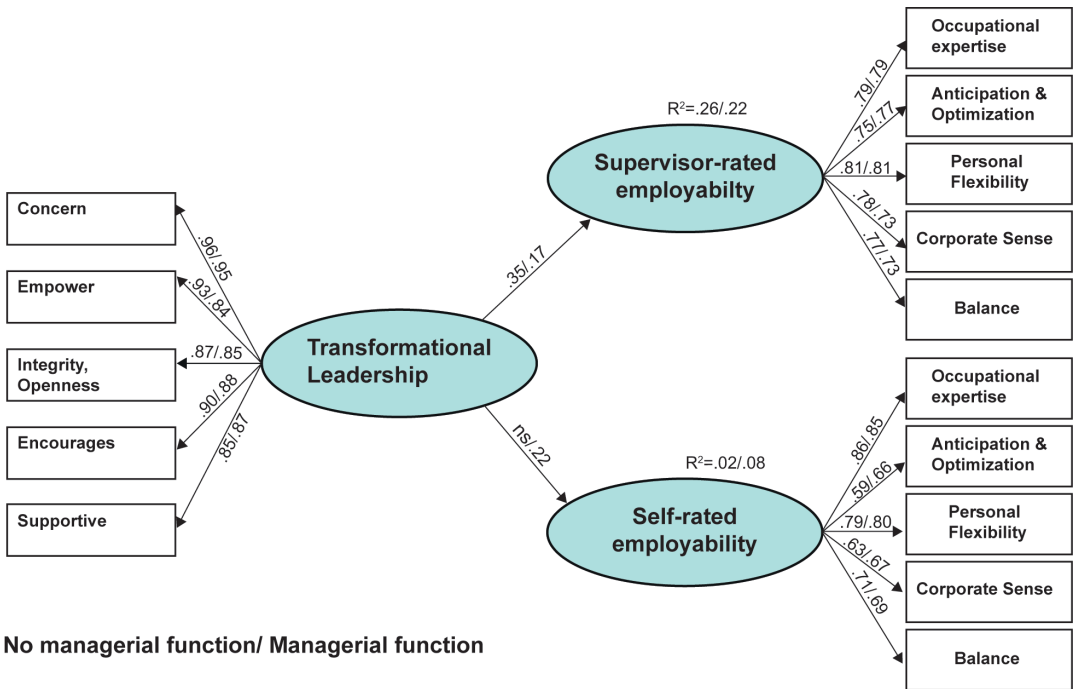


Figure 2 Employability enhanced by transformational leadership, for workers with and without managerial function

For the category of workers having a managerial position, the significant structural paths showed that transformational leadership was positively related to both supervisor ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) and employee ($\beta = .22, p < .01$) ratings of employability. The proportion of explained variance in this model was .22 for supervisor-rated employability and .08 for self-rated employability.

We also tested this model, including personality as a control factor, (see Model 3, Table 2, and Figure 3). In this case, the model had an even more satisfactory fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 699.83, df = 374, CFI = .91, NFI = .83, RMSEA = .06$. As regards supervisor ratings of employability in the non-managerial category, the regression coefficient of the significant structural path (from Transformational leadership) nearly stayed the same ($\beta = .31, p < .01$); whilst the path in the managerial category was not significant anymore. Moreover, the significant

structural path (from Transformational leadership) to employee ratings of employability in the managerial category changed into a trend ($\beta = .12, p = .07$).

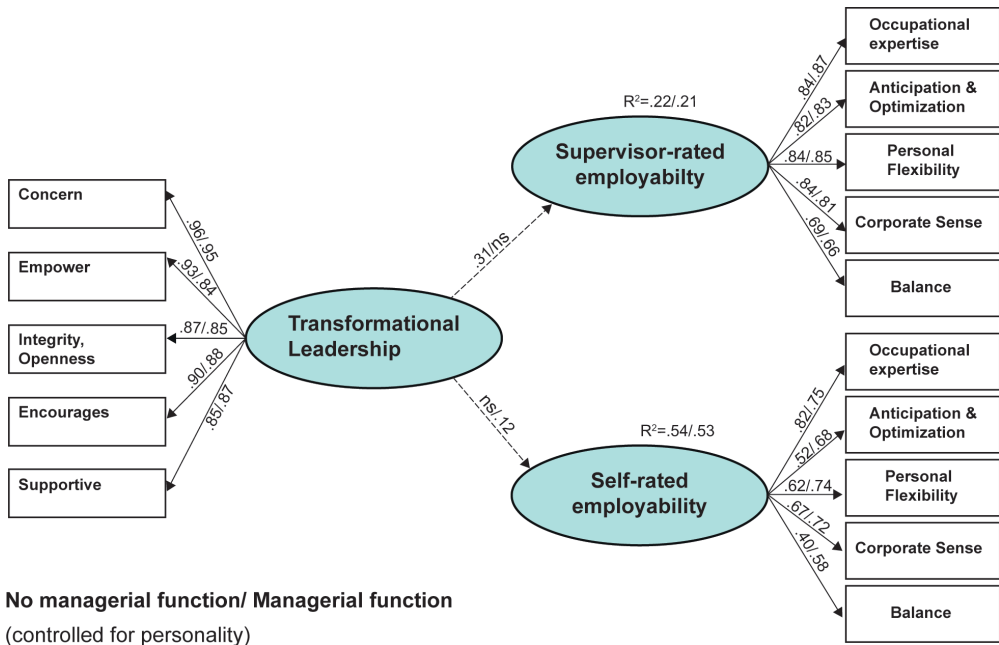


Figure 3 Employability enhanced by transformational leadership, depending on work role (e.g., managerial role) and personality

These outcomes imply that we did find some support for our assumptions that for workers without a managerial function transformational leadership style is a stronger predictor for employability in comparison with workers in a managerial job, when including personality (at least for the supervisor ratings). It appears as if the group of workers in a managerial position is less dependent on transformational leadership as a determinant, yet more dependent upon their personality, in case we want to better understand their employability (or career potential). The proportion of explained variance in this model was .22 for supervisor-rated employability and .54 for self-rated employability for the category without managerial activity, while

it was .21 for supervisor-rated employability and .53 for self-rated employability for the category with managerial activity.

Discussion

We have found positive and significant relationships between transformational leadership and employability, both for employees, as well as for managers. Managers do score significantly different as regards personality (neuroticism, etc). When we controlled for personality, not all of the previously found positive and significant relationships between transformational leadership and employability subsisted, suggesting a compensating mechanism between transformational leadership and personality.

We argued that categories of employees, such as the ones with a managerial job versus the ones without a managerial position do differ, in terms of personality, and in that sense, there is also a difference to what they need for their employability development. Certain workers need more encouragement, and guidance to fully develop their employability, that is to say, a transformational leader, whilst others (such as managers), are more self-reliant in that sense. With these outcomes, we may conclude that social innovation, in our particular case, lifelong employability enhancement, may be stimulated by certain leadership competencies.

Our study design comprised a cross sectional approach and therefore future longitudinal research is necessary to investigate causal relationships between transformational leadership, personality and employability. Another fruitful approach might be looking at combinations of personality dimensions, so-called personality profiles (Semeijn & Van der Heijden, 2012), and their predictive value in studying the impact of leadership style upon career outcomes. Furthermore, a broader inclusion of personal characteristics, such as age, gender, emotional intelligence, coping style etcetera may contribute to our understanding of possible ways to increase the amount of explained variance. Likewise, job-related

characteristics, such as career history patterns, may be taken into account in models aimed at predicting employability and social innovation at work. Finally, organizational factors, such as mentorship, training and development opportunities, just to mention but a few, may be important explaining variables to take into account.

Practical implications of our study are that obtaining more knowledge about the interplay of possible individual, job-related and organizational factors, leads us to gain more insight about what categories of workers (with or without a managerial position) benefit, in particular, from more transformational leadership. In terms of individual career development practices, our outcomes should be translated into increased attention for aligning leadership style to meet the requirements of all types of employees across the life-span.

Employability of workers, as mentioned in the introduction section of this chapter, is a typical example of social innovation. We advocate for an increasing awareness amongst leaders for their understanding that they do play a key role in increasing their workers' employability. If we miss out on these opportunities, the social implications are that workers are less employable than they could have been, with all of its possible consequences, both on the level of the individual career, and as a result, implying consequences at an organizational level too.

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Table 1. Means, Standard deviations, Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach's α , on the diagonal), and Correlations between the Model Variables, N= 314 employees and 334 immediate supervisors

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
(1) Age Employee	41.10	9.15	-																						
(2) Highest Educ. Qual. Employee	2.77	0.85	-.28																						
(3) Age Supervisor	42.94	7.94	.11	-.00																					
<i>Personality</i>																									
(4) Neuroticism	2.05	.42	-.03	-.13	-.09	(.71)																			
(5) Extraversion	3.54	.42	-.06	.09	-.02	-.40	(.66)																		
(6) Openness	3.02	.45	-.09	.13	-.02	-.16	-.33	(.85)																	
(7) Agreeableness	3.78	.34	.16	-.03	.09	-.26	.17	.20	(.60)																
(8) Conscientiousness	4.04	.34	.04	.08	.08	-.33	.31	.11	.31	(.73)															
<i>Transformational Leadership</i>																									
(9) Concern	4.14	.83	.02	-.06	.04	-.13	.16	.04	.01	.11	(.95)														
(10) Empower	4.33	.79	.01	-.02	.08	-.21	.21	.05	.02	.18	.83	(.83)													
(11) integrity, openness	4.37	.67	-.03	-.01	.13	-.17	.13	.03	.05	.14	.81	.74	(.85)												
(12) Encourages	4.08	.50	-.03	-.03	-.11	.18	.02	.00	.09	.86	.80	.75	(.91)												
(13) Supportive	4.11	.63	.06	-.06	.04	-.12	.12	.03	.06	.12	.81	.73	.77	(.82)											
<i>Employability Supervisor</i>																									
(14) Occupational Expertise	4.39	.68	-.17	.08	.24	-.13	.05	-.06	.05	.17	.15	.20	.20	.09	.14	(.95)									
(15) Anticipation & Optimization	3.52	.71	-.30	.18	-.22	-.23	.17	.03	.00	.13	.13	.19	.18	.10	.11	.69	(.89)								
(16) Personal Flexibility	3.93	.65	-.33	.13	.13	-.24	.16	.01	.06	.09	.19	.21	.24	.17	.15	.71	.75	(.88)							
(17) Corporate Sense	3.93	.72	-.09	.09	.26	.17	.13	-.07	.05	.13	.11	.18	.14	.12	.10	.77	.67	.70	(.85)						
(18) Balance	4.18	.55	-.13	-.03	.12	-.30	.15	-.15	.03	.10	.16	.19	.23	.13	.12	.60	.55	.58	.50	(.83)					
<i>Employability Employee</i>																									
(19) Occupational Expertise	4.78	.42	.05	.03	.08	-.44	.25	.23	.16	.50	.08	.15	.09	.07	.11	.26	.22	.21	.22	.18	(.90)				
(20) Anticipation & Optimization	3.72	.65	-.13	.18	-.05	-.30	.42	.27	.03	.32	.20	.21	.15	.23	.15	.05	.21	.19	.10	.09	.42	(.81)			
(21) Personal Flexibility	4.43	.49	-.16	.18	.04	-.41	.38	.36	.18	.27	.11	.12	.12	.12	.08	.17	.32	.39	.24	.12	.59	.49	(.79)		
(22) Corporate Sense	4.14	.71	.08	.08	.15	-.39	.45	.20	.13	.30	.18	.28	.17	.27	.15	.22	.28	.26	.37	.21	.55	.53	.54	(.83)	
(23) Balance	4.30	.51	.02	-.03	.05	-.42	.24	.09	.09	.31	.20	.22	.22	.18	.15	.19	.14	.10	.13	.06	.29	.45	.35	.34	(.78)

Note: Correlations between .06 $\leq r \leq .08$ are significant at $p < .05$ while correlations $r \geq .09$ are significant at $p < .01$.

Table 3 Regression analysis, standardized coefficients

Dependent variable	Neuroticism			Extraversion			Openness			Agreeableness			Conscientiousness		
	β	R ²	ΔR^2	β	R ²	ΔR^2	β	R ²	ΔR^2	β	R ²	ΔR^2	β	R ²	ΔR^2
Predictor/step	At step	Final		At step	Final		At step	Final		At step	Final		At step	Final	
Age	-.03	.02	.00	-.06	-.07	.00	.09	.13*	.01	.16**	.17**	.03**	.04	.04	.00
Educational qualification	-.13*	.09	.02	.08	.04	.01	.01	.17**	.15*	.04**	.03**	.00	.10	.07	.01
Management	.17**	.05**	.03**	-.20**	-.20**	.05**	-.07	-.07	.04**	.01	.03**	.00	-.14*	-.14*	.03*
Overall	F=4.46	d.f.s	3,287	F=4.86	d.f.s	3,287	F=3.98	d.f.s	3,287	F=2.61	d.f.s	3,287	F=2.97	d.f.s	3,287

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

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Employability and self-regulation in contemporary careers

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Abstract

As they have become increasingly boundaryless, contemporary careers are often depicted as ones wherein workers are employable, proactive, and self-regulative. Reorganization and technological innovations are only some of the developments that contemporary careers face. An often agreed upon definition of employability is: being able to gain and maintain work, both within and across organizations. The employability concept is characterized for its shifts in meaning throughout time, depending on changing labor market conditions and government policies. In addition, several scientific contributions emphasize different aspects of employability. The concept of self-regulation can bridge the gap between several employability theories, in the sense that different employability approaches (different contexts) are all results-oriented, that a performance orientation and a learning orientation are both relevant and that they assume the deployment of strategies and the removing of obstacles to get to the result. This chapter deals with employability approaches in some frequently occurring work situations: the unemployment context, the organizational context, and the reorganizational context. Furthermore, practical implications for career counseling, and guidance for contemporary careers—wherein employability and career self-management fulfill important roles—are provided.

1. Introduction

Contemporary careers, are often depicted as ones wherein workers are employable, self-regulative, proactive, and eager to learn. They experience horizontal career moves beside vertical ones, and move easily between departments and organizations. In reality, not all careers do have a boundaryless or protean character. Changing organizations and functions often correlates with factors such as educational level, type of education, line of work, niche, function specific developments, and other work and socio-economic contextual factors. In contemporary careers though, in general, workers do meet a larger array and multiplicity of changes, and as a result will have to take responsibility to frequently reevaluate and make adjustments to their careers (self-steer, called self-management or self-regulation) (King 2004; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012).

Some of the challenges that contemporary workers face nowadays (e.g., Rousseau, 1997) are reorganization, frequent technological innovations, telework, job rotations, aging and dejuvenization. Employability seems to be an answer. In several publications, employability has been associated with the capacity to get and hold on to employment, both within and across organizations (e.g., Finn, 2000; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Rothwell & Arnold (2007) developed and validated a perceived employability measure that reflects the self-valuation of employability within and outside the person's current organization, based on one's personal and occupational attributes (p. 40). Although formulated from an individual gain perspective, employability also has been regarded to be advantageous for organizations, since employable individuals are flexible, (e.g., Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van Dam, 2004), implying a win-win situation.

In this chapter, an overview of theories on employability and self-regulation are presented, including operationalizations and validated measurement instruments, for different contemporary career contexts. The concept of self-regulation has been proven useful in several domains, such as work and organizational psychology,

education science, sports psychology and health science. In addition to a positive relationship with results (e.g., work performance, transfer of training), self-regulation has been found to be positively related to health and wellbeing (e.g., John & Gross, 2004). In the first section, a self-regulation approach to employability is presented, the second section proceeds with employability approaches in some frequently occurring work and career environment situations including some employability operationalizations and instruments, and in the final section, special attention is paid to practical implications for career counseling and guidance.

2. Self-regulation approaches to employability

Various theories and definitions of employability, that have surfaced since the emergence of the concept, around 1955, have neatly illustrated its multidimensional or variegated character (e.g., Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Changing labor market conditions and government policies have brought shifts in its meaning, and several authors have emphasized different aspects of the concept (e.g., Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). One criticism of the employability concept is that it is fuzzy: that it has too many meanings (e.g., Nauta, 2011; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). In the literature we find different elaborations of employability depending on the context such as the unemployment context, the organizational context, the organizational change context, and the new entrants context. In that sense employability can be defined as: how to function as effectively, efficiently and healthily as possible within a given (un)employment context (now and in the future).

The first similarity between the employability and self-regulation concepts is that they are both outcome or results-oriented, Porath and Bateman (2006) quote effective self-regulation as “the ability to flexibly apply as many different resources and skills as necessary to achieve a goal”. In their opinion both dispositional (e.g., Lee, Sheldon, & Turban, 2003) and situational components are

important to this process, that is not about stable personality traits but “manageable behavior”. Self-regulation can bridge the gap between several employability theories, in the sense that different employability approaches (that emerged from studying the concept within different contexts) are all results-oriented (and in that sense concern: bringing about or adapting to change). In one case the result is the acquisition of a job, in the other case high production, a high quality product or service or an increase in assignments and clients, an adaptation in an organizational change context or graduation -all manifestations of career success.

Self-regulation is of an agentic nature and concerns motivational processes that steer the allocation of resources with regard to the attainment of certain goals, both concerning on and off task activities, and consists both of cognitive as well as emotional aspects (e.g., Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996; Lee et al., 2003; Sokol & Müller, 2007). Employability could be regarded a career-related elaboration of Baumeister and Heatherton’s (1996), feedback-loop model, in which self-regulation consists of three ingredients: 1) standards, 2) monitoring and 3) bringing about change (operate phase).

Several initiatives in work and organizational psychology describe comparable processes. The future work self (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012), a mental representation of oneself in the future regarding hopes and aspirations in relation to work, seems to be positively related to a person’s proactive career behavior. The study provides initial evidence that the clearer a person’s vision is, the more likely they are to be motivated toward proactive behavior.

In King’s model of career self-management (2004) (a contemporary update of Crites’ model of vocational adjustment (1969) or career development), career self-management consists of behaviors aimed at increasing perceived control over one’s career. It accounts for the motives behind why people engage in career self-management, the possible career and life outcomes (occupational health and well-being, promotions, fulfillment, career satisfaction, etc.) and the so-called coping

strategies employed to overcome career obstacles (called work adjustment mechanisms by Crites).

A second similarity between the concepts of employability and self-regulation with regard to attaining results (and thus employability), is that performance orientation (prove or avoid) and learning orientation are both relevant, because of permanent organization and market changes. Porath and Bateman (2006, p. 185) define self-regulation as “processes that enable an individual to guide his or her goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances, including the modulation of thought, affect, and behavior”. According to the approach–avoidance framework of Elliot & Trash (2002), ‘performance prove’ and learning orientations, focusing on the possibility of success, are both positively related to performance. A ‘performance avoid’ orientation, that is focusing on the possibility of failure, is negatively related to achievement (e.g., Creed, King, Hood, & McKenzie, 2009; Porath & Bateman, 2006; VandeWalle, Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1999).

A third similarity between the concepts of employability and self-regulation concerns: the deployment of strategies and the removing of obstacles to get to the result (e.g., King, 2004). Goal setting, effort and planning, feedback-seeking, proactive behavior, emotional control, and social competence are mentioned as SR tactics (e.g., Porath and Bateman ,2006; VandeWalle et al., 1999). Furthermore, Abele and Wiese (2009) distinguish between general SR strategies (from Baltes & Baltes, 1990, selection optimization and compensation) and specific career SR strategies, and demonstrate their relationship with career success.

In relation to the aforementioned, employability and self-regulation also have an important link to coping. When strived for goals are not met, plans have to be adapted and disappointments have to be handled. In the proactive coping theoretical framework of Aspinwall and Taylor, (1997), the concept of proactive coping is an overlap between coping and self-regulation. Proactive coping actually entails the elimination of stressors *before* they have the chance to develop.

Proactive coping is conceptualized as five stages: resource accumulation, attention recognition, initial appraisal, preliminary coping and ‘elicit and use feedback’.

Career adaptability, a more proactive variant of career resilience (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012), is defined by Savickas (1997, p. 254) (building on Super and Knasel (1981) as “the readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions” - and also bears resemblance to employability, implying self-regulatory processes.

In the following sections, we will look more closely into employability approaches in some frequently occurring work situations: the unemployment context, the organizational context, and the reorganizational context. Without aiming to be exhaustive, examples of more elaborate employability measurement instruments for those specific contexts will be given.

3. Employability within an unemployment context

The employability focus in an unemployment context is on the qualities and competences that the unemployed individual must have, to regain employment. McArdle et al. (2007) tested Fugate’s person-centered psycho-social construct (2004), an approach in which the employability of an individual can be evaluated apart from their employment status. According to Fugate, Kinicki, and Ashforth (2004), employability is highly relevant in an unemployment context. Specifically, they suggest that employable individuals are “(a) less likely to be psychologically harmed by job loss, (b) more likely to engage in greater job search, and (c) more likely to gain high quality re-employment” (McArdle et al., 2007, p no 249). Employability (adaptability, career identity, human, and social capital) was found to be positively related to job search, re-employment (although a less strong relationship), and self-esteem.

Koen, Klehe, and Vianen (2013), tested a positive relationship between employability and job search intensity and finding re-employment in long-term

unemployed persons, thereby extending the application of the concept of employability beyond only working persons.

The components of employability (Fugate et al., 2004) *adaptability* and *career identity* were positively related to job search intensity one year later, and the *social and human capital* and *career identity* components were important factors contributing to re-employment success.

Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz (2001) demonstrated the relationship of antecedents to job search and employment outcomes as a motivational self-regulatory process. The antecedents were personality, generalized expectancies, self-evaluations, motives, social context, and biographical variables. Two dimensions of personality: extraversion and conscientiousness were rather strongly related to job search. The antecedents were even stronger related to job search as they were to employment outcomes. They found that job search effort and job search intensity were related to employment success. Differences were also found for job losers, new entrants and employed individuals, for instance job search behavior was more positively related to employment success in job-to-job seekers than in new entrants or job losers.

Although several studies focused on the relationship of job search intensity and re-employment, (e.g., Creed, et al., 2009), one wasn't always found, thus urging future studies to focus on the quality of job search instead. Saks (2005) presents an integrative self-regulatory (process) model of job search predictors, behaviors, and outcomes. In this model, self-regulation - which includes job search self-efficacy, perceived control, goal-setting, and job search behaviors - functions as a mediator between individual, biographical variables, and situational variables, and employment outcomes and employment quality.

But the focus in an unemployment situation should not solely be on job-seeking (a performance orientation). With regard to a learning orientation, job seekers need to expand or broaden their horizon, in the sense that they need to follow some kind of training, education or do unpaid work to get experience in a

certain field, or perhaps they can do an internship (or settle for less with a less attractive job, only to stay on top of (labor) market developments, preferably also contributing to broadening of knowledge and experience). (e.g., Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven & Prosser, 2004). It should be recognized that the job search process is a learning experience in itself, offering possibilities to improve networking skills, personal presentation skills, and self-knowledge, and discover portfolio gaps, and acquire knowledge about the current job market and one's particular niche of interest.

The emotion regulation or the coping part of unemployment (caused either by job loss or prolonged unemployment) is improvable with interventions. As an example, Caplan, Vinokur, Price and Van Ryn (1989), created a job-seeking training including anticipating setbacks, developing functional responses and skills to setbacks and positive social reinforcement. They demonstrated higher quality re-employment (earnings, job satisfaction) or higher job seeking motivation from this intervention.

4. Employability within an organizational context

Employability within an organizational context focuses on the qualities and competences that the employed individual must have, to retain employment. In the competence-based approach to employability (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006), an elaboration of the resource-based view of the firm, employability is not only a precursor for employee results (e.g., performance, career outcomes), but also for organizational outcomes (e.g., Fugate et al., 2004). Organizations can reach a *human resource advantage* over other firms by selecting and retaining competent workers and investing in them with appropriate HR policies and practices (Boxall, 1999).

Jiang, Lepak, Hu, and Baer (2012), looked into the effects of three dimensions of HR systems—skills-enhancing, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-enhancing—on organizational outcomes. It appeared that proximal

firm outcomes human capital and motivation were important mediating variables between these HR systems and more distant firm outcomes such as voluntary turnover and operational and financial outcomes. Likewise, Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, and Ketchen, (2011) found in their meta-analysis of 66 studies, that human capital has a strong relationship with organizational performance, especially when not easily tradable in labor markets and when (non-profit) operational performance measures are used.

In the competence-based approach to employability (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006), employability implies a lot of flexibility and broadening alongside expertise development (occupational expertise complemented with more generic competences: anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance, see page 475-476 for the validated measure). Workers need to find their balance between moving along with organizations in the process of adapting to changing environments, and staying protean (staying in control of career). Employability in this sense entails a continuous monitoring of one's competences compared to certain performance standards of the organizational (changing) environment, coupled with (developmental) actions.

Competences can be regarded as self-directed actions of individuals: the perfect and integrated execution of a whole series of different tasks within a certain (occupational) domain (Mulder, 2001; Onstenk, 1997; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006), that are a result of personal motivation, capacities, both function and domain specific and unspecific knowledge and skills, attitudes and personality. Some scientific research contributions have focused on the employability competence level (resulting level); others however have focused on the level of personal attributes (ksa's) as a precursor, leading to employability competences. Employability and self-regulation, beyond metacognition (about knowledge states and deductive reasoning) entail complex interactions between social, motivational, and behavioral processes (e.g., Fugate et al., 2004; Zimmerman, 1995). Employable self-regulating workers, are also able to handle emotional processes

and other obstacles (fatigue, stressors, distractions) (Zimmerman, 1995). It is a good example of why being able to graduate with the highest grades (or having a very high IQ), has less predictive value than estimated on how successful a person is later in his/her career.

5. Employability within a reorganizational context

Contemporary organizations, go through frequent restructuring, delayering and downsizing - aimed at improving their efficiency, productivity and competitiveness (Cascio, 1993; Freeman & Cameron, 1993), thereby relying heavily on the employability of workers. Besides being able to deal with increased feelings of job insecurity (due to involuntary job employee reductions) and being able to cope with emotions, survivors have to work more efficiently and with more flexibility. They have to be more creative and innovative, and perform new tasks for which they have no formal education or practical experience (i.e. Hamel & Prahalad, 1994)

Wittekind, Raeder, and Grote (2010) performed a longitudinal study to investigate predictors of *perceived* employability in a situation of organizational change, stemming from the idea that the cognitive appraisal of the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) determines the amount of stress experienced. Potential involuntary job loss could lead to lower levels of organizational commitment, performance, job satisfaction, or decreased health and wellbeing (Wittekind et al., 2010). They found that education, support for career and skill development, current level of job-related skills, and willingness to change jobs were significant predictors of perceived employability, which they define (p. 579) and operationalize (p. 572) as “a person’s perception” of his/her chance of finding alternative employment”.

An important part of self-regulation, particularly in reorganization situations, is emotion regulation. An important reorganization failure is the lack of attention for the workers to adapt to the intended organizational changes. A supportive and

righteous climate that takes into account the emotions of the employees while adapting to organizational changes, is not seldom overlooked (Kimberley & Härtel, 2007).

According to a study into the HR perception of survivor syndrome in a downsizing firm (Sahdev & Vinnicombe, 1998), emotions such as fear and guilt are common. This study concludes that stress increased and motivation decreased. According to the life-span theory of control, stressful events with regard to career-related goals, also have the potential to contribute to a decline in control strivings, especially in cases of urgency, with regard to developmental deadlines, thereby impairing motivational processes (Poulin & Heckhausen, 2007). As such they have the power to explain negative results from stressful events such as decreases in job performance, etc. Both primary control (control directed at the external world) as well as secondary control strategies (control directed towards the self) are deployed for goal pursuit.

The Fugate and Kinicki (2008) dispositional approach to employability (including a reliable and validated measure, p. 512) has been developed from the perspective of organizational change. “Dispositional employability was defined as a constellation of individual differences that predispose individuals to (pro)active adaptability specific to work and careers.” Fugate and Kinicki (2008) argue that individual dispositions become more important in shaping behaviors and performance in organizations, due to organizational environments becoming more malleable. The dimensions openness to changes at work, work and career proactivity, career motivation, work and career resilience, optimism at work and work identity, all bear witness to elements of proactive self-regulation, such as self-monitoring and self-evaluating, setting goals and desired states for changing, as well as self-regulation tactics in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, Fugate and Kinicki (2008) found their dispositional approach to employability to be positively related to positive emotions related to changes and affective commitment to changes - ultimately seeming promising with regard to

control coping with organizational change which entails both actions and cognitive reappraisals. In Fugate, Kinicki, and Prussia (2008), negative organizational outcomes such as sick time used, intentions to quit, and voluntary turnover were predicted by negative appraisal, emotions and control and escape coping (in that order).

6. Practical implications for career counseling and guidance

To stimulate the contemporary workforce towards greater employability and self-regulation, contemporary career counseling and guidance should focus on the development of career self-directedness (Verbruggen, 2010). Second, contemporary career counseling and guidance in contrast to traditional career counseling, should focus on long-term instead of short-term career decisions. Furthermore, career guidance should be available to workers at each step of their career, and all groups of workers (both organizational career management as well as external career counseling), in contrast to traditional career counseling (f.i. not only school leavers and new entrants but also experienced and older workers)

To stimulate career self-management, addressing career attitudes and career insight (aspirations) and career self-management behaviors (networking, creating visibility) are important (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Career insight, which can be improved during career counseling, has the potential to increase perceived employability. In Vos and Soens (2008), career insight fully mediated protean career attitude and career outcomes (perceived employability and career satisfaction). They also found a positive relationship between protean career attitude and career self-management behaviors.

Likewise, Verbruggen and Sels (2008), found improved career self-directedness in career counseling clients (within a span of at least 6 months), partly and significantly through increasing self-awareness and adaptability in the counseling process. Also the suspected positive relationship between increased

career self-directedness and employer-independent action was found in the form of increased training participation and job mobility.

It seems as though workers with a protean career attitude and who score high on career self-management, profit more from career counseling and guidance than workers that are not as actively and consciously involved in their careers, although this high involvement also might have a negative side effect. Since careers do not evolve in a vacuum, dispositional and environmental factors also play an important role in career goal progress, making workers vulnerable to disappointments. However, Verbruggen and Sels (2010) tested Lent and Brown's social cognitive model of wellbeing in the work domain, and found that clients with higher career goal self-efficacy at the end of counseling, on average, encountered less external barriers, and realized more career goal progress and higher career goal self-efficacy beliefs half a year after the counseling. These factors in turn all contributed to a higher level of career satisfaction.

In contemporary dynamic career and work environments, there is a need for more up-to-date and modern career counseling and guidance theoretical models and practices, wherein individuals are studied within their ever-changing contexts with major roles for personal flexibility and adaptability and lifelong learning (Savickas et al., 2009). Current models reason too much from stable careers. Savickas et al, (2009) propose 'life designing' interventions, which take into account personal life alongside one's working life (see also Ebberwein et al, 2004; King, 2004). It entails a focus shift from test scores and profile interpretations to stories and activities (Savickas et al, 2009). Organizations, no longer able to provide structure to careers, from a career constructionist theoretical point of view, the personal life story (including past, present and future work roles) should fulfill that function now.

7. Chapter Summary

This chapter deals with employability approaches in some frequently occurring work situations: the unemployment context, the organizational context, and the reorganizational context. Furthermore, practical implications for career counseling, and guidance for contemporary careers—wherein employability and career self-management fulfill important roles—are provided.

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7

Conclusions and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

One of the main purposes of this PhD thesis was to provide a clear definition and to develop a valid and reliable and domain-independent measurement instrument for employability at the individual level, within an organizational context, and to test its relationship with career outcomes. Furthermore, we aimed to extend this measurement instrument with employability enhancing practices, taking into account aging, and career development/maturing. In doing so, we investigated the impact of informal learning with the following three-level categorization: the content level of the job, the level of the supervisor and the larger organizational level, which together can be regarded as the informal learning climate of an organization. Furthermore, we looked briefly at employability enhancement that was not necessarily restricted by the organizational context, during which we found the concept of self-regulation helpful. Besides the potential of furthering scientific research on employability measurement and employability enhancement of workers at different life and career stages, such an instrument is intended to be of practical value for organizations, in order to make estimations about the employability levels of their workers and about which areas are eligible for improvement. Realizing and optimizing certain employability enhancing practices should be a task set out by SHRM to positively influence firm outcomes besides the career development of individual workers at different life and career stages.

After a summary of conclusions of the different studies in this PhD study, and the overall conclusions (followed by a table summarizing the research gaps that were the starting point for our studies, the research questions and the results), we will discuss the limitations of our study, the theoretical implications and suggestions for future research and the practical implications.

7.2 Reflection upon the outcomes

The main research question of this thesis was as follows:

How to 1) define, 2) measure and 3) enhance employability and career outcomes within an organizational context, taking into account different life and career stages?

This main research question was divided into the following sub-questions and addressed in the following studies:

1. How can employability be defined and measured within an organizational context? Is employability associated with career outcomes? (Study 1)
2. Which HR practices have the potential for organizations to enhance employability and career success? Do these practices vary for workers in various age categories? (Study 2)
3. What is the contribution of workers' perceptions of the informal learning climate of organizations to workers' employability? What is the role of different life and career stages in the relationship between the perceived informal learning climate and employability? (Study 3)
4. What is the role of transformational leadership as regards enhancing the employability of workers? Do specific characteristics of workers such as personality and managerial function play a role in this respect? (Study 4)
5. What are the similarities between self-regulation and employability in different labour market contexts? (Study 5)

Study 1: A competence-based and multidimensional operationalization and measurement of employability (Chapter 2)

In Study 1 a reliable and valid multidimensional and domain-independent measurement instrument for supervisor ratings and self-ratings of employability of

individual workers in their organizational context was developed. In this study employability, following a competence-based approach (elaboration of the resource-based view of the firm, Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994), was defined at the individual level as ‘the continuously fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences’ (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006), implying long-term performance by the process of adaptation and learning.

We found evidence from both (Strategic) Human Resource Management theory (Guest, Michie, Conway, & Sheehan, 2003; Huselid, 1995) and career theory (Cheng & Ho, 2001; Miles & Snow, 1996), to point in the direction of the importance of a broad competence package (Felstead & Ashton, 2000). Employability was broken down into five (domain-independent) dimensions, two flexibility components (anticipation and optimization; personal flexibility) and one social component (corporate sense) in addition to occupational expertise (following the extensive work by B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden, 1998; 2000). Balance was added, taking into account different elements of employability that are sometimes hard to unite and need fine tuning.

Investigating content validity, convergent and divergent validity and criterion validity supported our theory, which states that employability involves: 1) occupational expertise, 2) anticipation and optimization, 3) personal flexibility, 4) corporate sense and 5) balance. The measurement instrument consists of both supervisor ratings and self-ratings and is as a result less sensitive to common method bias (Doty & Glick, 1998). In additional analyses, we demonstrated predictive validity for both objective and subjective career successes.

Besides having the potential to contribute to future scientific research on employability enhancement, the instrument has practical relevance. As regards future strategy planning of a company, it can be used for recruitment, staffing and career mobility and development practices. The instrument presented here also has high practical value both for managers (aimed at improving existing evaluation

methods used for assessing their subordinates) and for employees (in providing thorough suggestions aimed at improving their career development).

Study 2: In search of suitable age management practices for lifelong employability and career success. (Chapter 3)

In Study 2, potential factors of age management were explored, specifically with regard to the development of specific and broad competences (employability) and thereby possibly also career success. The learning value of the job, an age-related HRM policy (the role of the supervisor stimulating career development), and organizational learning opportunities (in this publication mentioned as learning climate factors) could be of importance for different objective career outcomes (promotions within organization, promotions in entire career and gross income per month) and subjective career success. Moreover, certain age management practices could be related to certain career success factors via certain dimensions of employability.

Only the relationship between opportunity to develop (one of the learning climate factors) and gross income per month was mediated by employability, more specifically corporate sense. This relationship was a negative one, possibly explained by the occurrence of a trade-off between a more interesting organizational experience or more income. Workers with more learning opportunities within the organization, leading to more competence development, may possibly stay longer in positions with lower salaries.

The career success factor that demonstrated a greater relationship with potential age management factors, was subjective career success (but not always positive). Both age-related HRM policy and learning value of the job were positively related to subjective career success. The factors team and opportunities to develop were negatively related to subjective career success. Although difficult to explain, a more intense team experience may possibly lead to a less important individual career experience, and more opportunities to develop may also be

experienced as *too* much pressure to develop. More profound and longitudinal studies are necessary to gain more insight into these relationships.

Furthermore we found that a better team learning climate matched promotions within the organization. Promotions throughout the career accompanied positive learning values of the job and fewer opportunities to develop within that organization. Furthermore, we found no interaction effects of these potential age management practices with age, leading us to conclude that these HR practices are stimulating in the case of all age categories.

Study 3: Informal learning climate perceptions as determinant for lifelong employability

An empirical study among European ICT professionals (Chapter 4)

In this study we investigated the role of age in the relationship between perceptions of informal learning climate and self-rated and supervisor-rated employability among European ICT (Information and Communication Technology) professionals. The psychological climate for informal learning was operationalized into three indicators, namely the perceptions that employees have of the learning value of their job, the extent of age-related supervisory practices, and the proportion of organizational learning opportunities. The first result is that with the increasing age of the employee, the perceived extent of the informal learning climate appeared to decrease, until various career and life stage variables: (ICT) professional tenure, general perceived health, length of supervision (in months) and work role (i.e., managerial function) were added to the model (and thereby increasing the amount of explained variance). The second result is that our Structural Equation Model showed a strong positive relationship between informal learning climate on the one hand and self-reported and supervisor-rated employability on the other. Thirdly, an explorative bootstrapping-based test suggested that older workers with managerial functions benefit less from an informal learning climate for self-reported and supervisor-rated employability in

comparison with older workers without managerial functions. The results in this study justify taking a life-span perspective (Kanfer, & Ackerman, 2004) on learning in organizations and stress the importance of approaching each worker as an individual in that respect. The findings from this study also have important implications for performance and development practices aimed at increasing lifelong employability.

Study 4: Employability and social innovation: The importance of and interplay between transformational leadership and personality (Chapter 5)

The purpose of this chapter was to draw attention to employability as an important social innovation that potentially thrives with transformational leadership, partly depending on certain personal characteristics such as managerial role and personality. We found that transformational leadership was positively related to employee and supervisor ratings of employability. Furthermore, there was some indication that transformational leadership enhances employability in some situations, demonstrating differences between categories of workers with and without a managerial function. When testing different research models this was confirmed, since the research model that took into account workers both with and without a managerial function and that incorporated personality as a control variable, demonstrated the highest fit (SEM). Moreover, it appeared that after checking the contribution made by personality, only the positive relationship between transformational leadership and supervisor ratings of employability, remained for the workers without a managerial function. An explanation could be that workers with a managerial position are less dependent on transformational leadership as a determinant, but more dependent on their personality as far as their employability (or career potential) is concerned. This group of workers demonstrated some significant differences in personality from workers without a managerial function. It may well be that the workers with a managerial function are more self-reliant as opposed to workers without a managerial function, who need

more guidance and encouragement (i.e. a transformational leader) for their employability development. These findings advocate increased attention for SHRM to align leadership style with the requirements of all types of employees across the lifespan. Worker characteristics such as personality, work role (e.g., managerial role) and other lifespan factors must always be taken into account for a customized approach, given the uniqueness of each and every employee.

Study 5: Employability and self-regulation in contemporary careers (Chapter 6)

Since contemporary careers are characterized by a variety of working relationships, interruptions, and sometimes even career switches, individual employability cannot always be measured in terms of being a member of the organization. In this chapter, similarities between the concepts of self-regulation and individual employability were explored in a theoretical literature study, within different labour market contexts such as the unemployment context, the organizational context and the reorganizational context. The concept of self-regulation is able to bridge the gap between various employability theories, in the sense that 1) different employability approaches (different contexts) are all result-oriented, 2) a performance orientation and a learning orientation are both relevant and 3) they assume the deployment of strategies and the removing of obstacles to arrive at the result.

With regard to the unemployment situation, employability is found to be positively related to job search, re-employment and self-esteem. Besides job search intensity, the quality of job search is important. Job seekers need to expand or broaden their horizon, in the sense that they need to follow some kind of training or education or do unpaid work to gain experience in a particular field. Interventions may be beneficial in emotion regulation support, in order to increase the chances of higher quality re-employment or higher job-seeking motivation. Emotion regulation is also an important element in reorganizations. Cognitive (re)appraisal

is of influence on the level of stress, possibly impairing motivational processes. According to Fugate and Kinicki (2008) their dispositional approach to employability was positively related to positive emotions related to changes and affective commitment to changes. Fugate and Kinicki (2008) argue that individual dispositions become more important in shaping behaviours and performance in organizations, due to organizational environments becoming more malleable.

For contemporary career counselling and guidance to stimulate employability, it should focus on 1) the development of self-directedness, 2) long-term instead of short-term career decisions and 3) workers of all career phases and all types of workers. To stimulate career self-management, it is important to address career attitudes and career insight (aspirations) as well as career self-management behaviours (networking, creating visibility) (De Vos & Soens, 2008). Career counselling and guidance require modernizing and updating according to Savickas et al, (2009): because organizations are no longer able to provide structure to careers, the personal life story should now fulfil that function.

Overall conclusions

Overall, we succeeded in developing a valid and reliable measurement instrument useful for scientific future research as well as HR practice, by choosing a competence-based approach, where employability is defined as “the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences” and by demonstrating its predictive validity for career outcomes. We also produced several employability enhancing practices for workers on the content level of work, the supervisor level and the broader organizational level, where attention is drawn to the perceived informal learning climate of organizations that take different life and career stages into account. Future longitudinal studies are necessary in order to obtain greater insights into the exact relationships between these concepts, as well as to test the mediator function of employability. Since contemporary careers are not characterized by employees remaining in one organization only, but by several

career moves, the concept of self-regulation was incorporated to refer to bridging different labour market situations/ organizations.

Table summary

Research gap	Research questions	Results	Chapter
<p>No agreement on the definition of employability (on the individual level) and lack of research about the associations with career outcomes</p>	<p>How can employability be defined and measured within an organizational context? Is employability associated with career outcomes?</p>	<p>*Employability is a multidimensional concept, consisting of professional expertise, anticipation and optimization, personal flexibility, corporate sense and balance. *Employability is positively associated with both objective and subjective career outcomes.</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>An age management policy is ideally a policy that is focused on attaining and exploiting a diverse workforce with regard to age. Older workers have less access to HR practices, such as training and development, despite their need to update and their ability to learn. Which HR practices have the potential to stimulate career success via employability of all age groups?</p>	<p>Which HR practices have the potential for organizations to stimulate employability and career success? Do these practices vary for workers in various age categories?</p>	<p>*Age-related HRM policy, learning climate factors and learning value of the job are related to career success outcomes of workers, but not always positively *Opportunity to develop is negatively related to gross income per month via employability (as mediator) *Age-related HRM policy, learning climate and learning value of the job are positively or negatively related to the employability and career success of workers of all ages (no interaction effects of these factors with age)</p>	<p>3</p>

<p>We have greater knowledge on the impact of training or formal learning climates on employability, but less so on the role of informal learning climates of organizations in stimulating workers' employability</p>	<p>What is the contribution of workers' perceptions of the informal learning climate of organizations to workers' employability? What is the role of different life and career stages in the relationship between the perceived informal learning climate and employability?</p>	<p>* with increasing age of the employee, the perceived extent of the informal learning climate appeared to decrease, until various career and life stage variables: (ICT) professional tenure, general perceived health, length of supervision (in months) and work role (i.e., managerial function) were added to the model (and thereby increasing the amount of explained variance). * Age was related significantly and positively to both self-ratings and supervisor ratings of employability * We found a strong positive relationship between the informal learning climate on the one hand, and self-reported and supervisor-rated employability, on the other</p>	<p>4</p>
<p>Transformational leadership is believed to have the potential to advance the employability and career development of workers, compared with more instrumental or transactional forms of leadership. Following knowledge about associations of TL with personality, it is necessary to simultaneously gain insight into the role of the personality of workers in this TL-employability relationship</p>	<p>What is the role of transformational leadership as regards enhancing the employability of workers? Do specific characteristics of workers such as personality and managerial function play a role in this respect?</p>	<p>*Transformational leadership is positively related to self-rated and supervisor-rated employability, depending on worker role (manager yes/no) and personality. The results indicate that workers with a managerial function might rely less on transformational leadership but more on their personality for their employability development</p>	<p>5</p>
<p>Lack of connection concerning the employability of workers between different labour market contexts</p>	<p>What are the similarities between self-regulation and employability in different labour market contexts</p>	<p>The concept of self-regulation is able to bridge the gap between various employability theories, in the sense that different employability approaches (different contexts) are all result-oriented, that a performance orientation and a learning orientation are both relevant and that they assume the deployment of strategies and the removing of obstacles to get to the result.</p>	<p>6</p>

7.3 Limitations of the study

In the following subparagraphs, we will discuss the disadvantages of our cross-sectional design and the generalizability of our study.

7.3.1 Cross-sectional designs

As our research was based on cross sectional designs, our assumptions about the directions of the relationships between our concepts can still be called into question. More longitudinal studies are gradually being undertaken that include the concepts under study in this thesis: HR practices and policies that stimulate employability and career success. In a longitudinal study (Wittekind, Raeder & Grote, 2010), support for career and skill development was one of the predictors of perceived employability. In a longitudinal study using comparable concepts, (Braun, Sheikh & Hannover, 2011) self-ratings of competences acquired during university studies accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in different measures of vocational success five years later.

Longitudinal studies also need to meet certain design requirements and cannot prove particular longitudinal associations, only make them plausible (Taris & Kompier, 2003). Taris and Kompier (2003) warned about the risks of attrition effects (a selected group drops out, resulting in restriction of the range of the variables of interest) and test effects (for instance, losing interest during the course of the study or becoming more sensitive to particular questions). “The extent to which causal inferences may be made from longitudinal studies depends on the following four conditions: temporal ordering of the focal variables, the strength of the statistical association between them, theoretical plausibility of the presumed causal relationship, and exclusion of plausible rival hypotheses for this relationship.” (p. 1)

Another approach to studying employability and career successes of individual workers across different life and career stages would be retrospective qualitative studies. Workers themselves may look back on certain life and career

phases and explain which aspects of career and learning experiences increased (or decreased) their employability and career success. These experiences might be of an organizational or other nature (e.g., home work balance; career switches) and might provide organizations with fresh viewpoints and clues to enable them to mould their employability policies. Another possible study design would be for firms to experiment with certain learning climate enhancing HR practices or policies (such as task enrichment, training and guiding managers for (transformational) leadership of higher quality, providing better team learning experiences, etc.) and to measure if these were positively related to the increased employability of their individual workers (and subsequent firm outcomes).

7.3.2 Generalizability of the study

In this study we made use of 2 samples from 2 different sectors or industries: the construction sector and the information technology sector. In the meantime other studies have been undertaken that make these results more generalizable with regard to different sectors and industries as far as the general notion of the importance of the perceived informal learning climate for the employability of individual workers is concerned. Some examples are a higher educational setting (Van der Heijden, Boon, Van der Klink & Meijs, 2009) and using a population of politicians (Froehlich, Beusaert, Segers, & Gerken, 2014) although these studies did not always tested exactly the same learning climate factors.

Furthermore, the research took place in the following seven European countries: Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom. However, we believe that these research results also have relevance for other parts of the world and other countries. We will have to await future research that may demonstrate the generalizability of causal relationships between the perceived learning climate, employability and careers success.

Our first sample comprised a large company (with all the workers included) and our second sample consisted of small and medium sized enterprises: the size of

the majority of companies (the selection being made on the basis of the regional concentration of key industry sectors within manufacturing, services, and ICT software services and supply; Van der Heijden, Scholarios, Bozionelos, Van der Heijde, Epitropaki, & the Indic@tor consortium, 2005).

7.4 Theoretical implications and suggestions for future research

A reliable and valid instrument has been developed that is suitable for advancing scientific research on informal learning climates and employability. It is an instrument that consists of both self-ratings and supervisor ratings and in that respect is less subject to common method bias (Doty & Glick, 1998). With regard to the theoretical implications of our study, we will now deal consecutively with: the informal learning climate - employability relationship (from the viewpoint of age), the employability - career success relationship (from the viewpoint of age), age-related stereotyping of employability, employability and career development of managers (or leaders), and employers' and SHRM roles.

7.4.1 The informal learning climate - employability relationship (from the viewpoint of age)

The project results indicate that the way individual workers perceive the informal learning climate of an organization accounts for a substantial degree of variance in their employability ratings, both in this research project and others. Froehlich, Beausaert, Segers, & Gerken (2014) also demonstrated significant relationships between the formal and informal learning climate and aspects of employability. In future studies, to be able to obtain an even more complete picture, factors such as learning intention and learning capacity also need to be included. We did not find overwhelming evidence on the mediating role of employability between perceived informal learning climate factors and career successes. Future longitudinal studies are therefore needed that may shed more light upon this issue.

As regards individual age-related HR practices, we advocated an approach that was not tailored to specific age groups but tailored to individuals (taking into account their life stage and career phase on an individual basis), as we did not find any interactions with age in the relationship between individual age-related HR practices, employability and career outcomes. We have already alluded to Super's life-span approach to career development (1990) in which the course and sequence of certain career stages were related to the individual's personality and life circumstances rather than to the person's chronological age." Taneva, Arnold & Nicolson (2014) carried out research into what organizational support older employees expected for their production and well-being, and it was basically tantamount to what younger workers would also expect, for example: meaningful and interesting work, job autonomy and (fair) performance evaluation, compensation, recognition and respect, and opportunities for development and training.

I-deals, or ideosyncratic deals (Rousseau, 2005) can be used as a tool by organizations and workers to negotiate on what they need in order to maintain and increase their employability, and thereby also for the organization's goals (a slightly different job content, a more stimulating approach from the supervisor concerning career development, extra time off or covering of development costs etc., could be issues for negotiation). Bal & Jansen (2015) explain how individual agreements (i-deals) are able to motivate (older) workers, since older workers become more heterogeneous in their work related needs and demands as opposed to younger workers. Certain practices and policies regarding i-deals could be formalized in the sense that organizations need to give all the workers (both strong and weaker performers) equal time and opportunity to negotiate, thereby preventing workers who are highly employable being offered good employability deals very easily while workers who are less employable are not (see also the Mattheus effect: p. 314 Van der Heijden, Nauta & Scheentra, 2013; 'the weaker get

weaker over time, while the stronger get stronger'). More research is necessary on how to optimize such policies and practices regarding i-deals.

7.4.2 The employability–career success relationship (from the viewpoint of age)

In this study and others (e.g., De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011) we found relationships between employability and career success measures. This study's results point in the direction of different relationships of different employability dimensions with different career objective and subjective success outcomes (and not always positive ones).

We expect to explain negative relationships between some employability dimensions and career success outcomes in the sense that some employability dimensions have the potential to positively influence firm outcomes, while at the same time they may harm individual outcomes. Further research is necessary to address these assumptions and to find out exactly which mechanisms cause which exchange between (positive or negative) firm and individual worker outcomes. The goal is to strive for a new equilibrium in which levels of employability enhancement will be advantageous for both organizations and individual workers or lead to solutions to overcome these problems. The resource-based view of the firm offers a framework for theorizing on and practising a balance between the interests of the organization and the employee (Boxall, 1999).

As regards the factor age in the employability - career success relationship (Van der Heijden, De Lange, Demerouti & Van der Heijde, 2009), a negative relationship was found between supervisor ratings of employability and ratings of objective career success for older workers and a positive one for the younger group. In general, employers tend to retain workers who are highly employable, although young workers switch jobs more often (with the accompanying steps up the ladder). Furthermore, younger workers potentially have more visible career successes to achieve, while workers may, at a certain age more easily reach a plateau (e.g., Godshalk & Fender, 2015). In future longitudinal studies,

employability and career success outcomes should be combined with not only the opportunities for but also the realization of external (or internal) mobility (e.g., Feldman & Ng, 2007), to measure the exact relationship between these concepts over time and to find out what might work for certain life and career stages.

According to Abele and Spurk (2009), subjective success outcomes have a strong potential to influence objective career success over time (stronger than the other way around). These, too, therefore have to be included in longitudinal studies. All the employability dimensions used in this study were positively correlated with subjective career success (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Van der Heijden, Scholarios, Bozionelos, Van der Heijde, Epitropaki, & the Indic@tor consortium, 2005), with the implication that employability could still have a positive impact on objective career successes via subjective career success as a mediator (to be studied in longitudinal studies).

7.4.3 Age-related stereotyping of employability

Further research is also necessary to monitor whether older workers receive lower supervisor ratings of employability or certain competences like personal flexibility. In the IT sample (Chapter 4) supervisor ratings of some employability dimensions (occupational expertise, anticipation and optimization) decreased with age (see also Van der Heijden, Scholarios, Bozionelos, Van der Heijde, Epitropaki, & the Indic@tor consortium, 2005). However, in this research, supervisors did not rate older workers' employability as lower, as we expected in IT jobs, when including other career phase or life stage variables in the research model. Besides chronological age, aspects of functional age, organizational age, psychosocial age and lifespan age have to be included (Sterns and Doverspike, 1989). Certain age-related stereotypes also obviously need to be taken into account, depending on the context, such as: work area, line of work, organizational structure, etc

Various studies still report age - related stereotyping with regard to employability related issues. The qualitative study of Taneva, Arnold & Nicolson

(2014) into the analysis of older workers' perceptions of stereotypes, successful aging strategies and HRM practices, yielded a list with both positive stereotypes (e.g., more loyal to the organisation; more consistent, reliable and resilient) and negative stereotypes (e.g., more rigid; less (or not) open to innovation), according to both older workers and human resource managers. Positive stereotypes are often in line with managerial roles. An important conclusion of their study is that older workers will experience greater advantage /disadvantage depending on the job/job area in which older workers are stereotyped positively or negatively, which skills are highly valued in that job/job area. Further research into suitable job and work areas (besides the managerial role) for more mature workers is indicated.

Although obviously it is not necessarily entirely negative in the case of older workers, Taneva, Arnold & Nicolson (2014) clearly point to some problem areas for older workers, such as recruitment and training and development. According to their study, there is insufficient awareness amongst HR managers that this is an important issue. In an empirical study to retain older workers for health care organizations (Veth, Emans, Van der Heijden, Korzilius & De Lange, 2015), development practices (focused on advancement, growth and accomplishment, and achievement of new and challenging levels of functioning) were highly valued by older workers. The appreciation of maintenance practices (for retainment), which were more prevalent for older workers, was largely because of its developmental aspects and not because of its maintenance aspects. Additional scientific research is necessary to ascertain what might be useful HRM/SHRM initiatives on how to decrease age-related stereotypes regarding recruitment and development practices.

7.4.4 Employability and career development of managers (or leaders)

Managers are a special group with their own needs as regards their employability and career development. Not much is known about the career development of managers (or leaders), although informal learning also seems to play a substantial role, greater than formal learning (Hirsch, 2004; McCall, 2004). A large proportion

of scientific research into the career development of managers focuses on female managers. As regards career development for managers, both organization-led and self-managed talent development programmes are among the possibilities, with a partnership being middle ground. Because of the individualization of the (modern) career, organizations need to take into account “the growing importance of the individual perspective on the career and an acknowledgement of the diversity of this perspective” (Sturges, 2004 p. 265). In the process of matching individual needs with organizational requirements, Lankhuijzen (2002) introduces the concept of a psychological career contract. When organizations support the self career management of managers, these managers are more likely to remain with the organization; when deploying a broader range of HRD activities, managers enlarge their employability (Lankhuijzen, 2002). More research is needed into what managers need for their career development that differs from workers without a managerial function, especially when their careers are advancing and when they are growing older. In the research by Bown-Wilson and Parry (2013), different categories were discovered in career orientation among older managers (1) further promotion; (2) stick to path (3) slow down and (4) switch to different occupation. This is in line with Bal’s argument (2015) in favour of more highly differentiated career development choices for workers when they age, even within the manager group, thereby implying another argument in favour of individualization of HR policies and practices.

Managers also have an important task in stimulating the employability and career development of individual workers, a task that is not always recognized. Because of this role, managers need extra time and training to further enhance/perfection their career coaching role. Ideally, they would then become transformational leaders and move beyond *Individual consideration*, (having an eye for and paying close attention to the individual (career) developmental needs of the worker), which entails motivating and stimulating individual workers at several

levels, such as setting and conveying high moral standards and encouraging innovative and creative ideas.

7.4.5 Employers' and SHRM roles

Scientific research is also necessary on employers' attitudes and prejudices and on how organizations are able to make contributions to the employability of the (greying and dejuvenized) workforce on a more sustainable and long-term basis, instead of a short-term and narrow-focused basis. De Prins, De Vos, Van Beirendonck and Segers (2015) proposed 'sustainable career management' as a subsection of HRM in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) perspective, in which short-and long-term employee needs can be more easily balanced.

Since organizations now employ people on a more flexible and short-term basis, and the flow of workers between organizations has increased, investing in the employability and career development of all of their workers on an individual basis is not such a bad option. Owing to the disappearance of certain jobs due to computerization and robots, even more people will have to switch their careers. It is most important to safeguard all human capital at all levels of the organization and to prevent the draining of human capital, both for younger and older workers. For older workers, this entails the replacement of a depreciation model by a conservation model in which not only younger but also older workers are treated as long-lasting valuable organizational assets (Van der Heijden, De Lange, Demerouti & Van der Heijde 2009; Yeatts, Folts, & Knapp, 2000).

Job security should ideally be replaced by 'employability and career development security' (e.g., Kluytmans & Ott, 1999; Kanter, 1989). "Many modern employer-employee relationships, however, are characterized by a lack of job security, meaning that employability has become an essential part of a new type of psychological contract under which employees engage in high levels of job performance and flexibility despite low levels of job security. If expectations towards individual workers are elevated (more flexibility, more entrepreneurship,

more employable, etc.), these have to be met by employers with reciprocity for the establishment of mature and sustainable working relationships. Employees certainly expect an employer's support in advancing their employability (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte & Alarco, 2008, p. 491).” Besides increased flexibility of workers, employers also need to become more flexible: examples of this are possibilities for flexibility in working hours, flexibility in task content, flexible retirement, flexibility in combining career and care, etc.

7.5 Practical implications

The enormous amount of scientific knowledge, which individual workers, (increased employability and objective and subjective career successes), as well as organizations (increased internal and external flexibility, innovation potential and sustained competitive advantage) could take advantage of, is not always followed by practice (see for instance on the experience of (HR) managers, Kruijt, 2013). According to Kruijt (2013) different factors are to blame, such as the effects of the recession, no sense of urgency (future seems far away), no integral business plans, the necessary mind shifts (no easy task!), the position of HRM in the organization, the presence of certain taboo subjects such as burnout, etc. The latest insights, which are abundant, point to a mutual responsibility perspective regarding sustainable careers (De Vos & Van der Heijden, 2015). The practical value of the multi-dimensional instrument, some practical recommendations for organizations to arrive at a sustainable employability policy and how to achieve a sustainable career for individual workers will now be addressed in succession.

7.5.1 A multi-functional tool

A reliable and valid instrument has been developed that is suitable to use within organizations for several objectives. Monitoring of the competences of the organization's personnel on a general level (organization, department, team, etc), may aid in decisions concerning strategic planning relating to both hard (e.g.,

financial) and soft outcomes (commitment, sick leave, engagement, etc), and more specifically to issues of recruitment, staffing, and Human Resource Development and mobility decisions. Domain independency of the instrument makes it suitable to be used for different lines of work and sectors.

On an individual basis, the instrument can be also used as a tool for performance interviews, personal development plans, career development, etc. Besides mapping their competences and employability, individuals are able to map elements of their learning experiences that need more attention or fine-tuning with the measurement instrument that we used to study perceptions of informal learning.

7.5.2 The organization and SHRM: towards a sustainable employability policy

Results indicate that Human Resources should combine a strict performance management policy with more softer career development policies: what does the individual need in order to grow and to flourish careerwise? For an organization to be attractive to employees, it should provide lifelong learning opportunities: opportunities to improve existing knowledge and skills and to develop new ones (Spieß, Geldermann, Hofmann, & Woschée, 2002). Organizations also need a broader outlook on employability and the career development of their personnel. When *all* organizations make the necessary investments in the competences of their personnel, on a regular basis, not discriminating between workers with tenure and more flexible workers, they also act in eachother's interests (regarding the in and outflow of personnel).

The word employability implies one-way traffic: to what extent can the employer use the employee? The advice is that all workers (whether young, old, hired or employed, superfluous, non superfluous, etc.) should receive time and money for their employability and career development. The companies that follow such a strategy are at the forefront of social innovation. This could also be organized on a tripartite basis: financed partly by the organization, the worker and the government. Employers should also return the offer: besides increased

flexibility of workers, organizations need to offer flexibility to workers to meet their career goals and motives. Practices such as gradual retirement should become more commonplace, etc.

In De Lange and Van der Heijden (2013), organizations present various methods to contribute to a so-called sustainable employability policy, that will be profitable for individual workers' productivity, health and well-being in the long term as well as for a company's goals, profits and flexibility (sustained competitive advantage). With a long-term perspective (instead of a focus solely on short-term organizational goals) organizations must realize the importance of the subject of sustainable employability and invest on a continuous basis. Some of the most essential elements of such a sustained employability policy that are dealt with in De Lange and Van der Heijden (2013) are: 1) make it a shared responsibility between the organization and the individual workers (individual workers must be entrepreneurs of their own employability and career development); 2) prepare by investing in awareness of the importance of the subject for all parties before implementing particular practices and methods; 3) invest in good communication (to become aware of different perceptions of different parties); 4) involve all ranks of the organization; 5) provide enriched work experiences; 6) invest in the task of the supervisor with regard to how he/ she can best stimulate the individual workers' employability; 7) pay equal attention to individual workers at different life and career phases (in that sense a sustainable employability policy equals a diversity policy); 8) pay attention not only to the employability and career development of workers but also to their vitality; and 9) pay attention to combating negative age-related stereotyping.

It is to be expected that large firms as well as small firms will have specific advantages and disadvantages in planning or executing such employability policies. It will be especially difficult for small enterprises (who often do not even have an HR manager or HR department) to plan or execute such employability policies in view of a lack of resources. However, larger companies may also have their

difficulties, for instance having difficulty reaching an integral policy. In the future, research is necessary on how the planning and implementation of employability policies can best be realized taking into account company size.

7.5.3 The individual worker: towards a sustainable career

In their new Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers, De Vos and Van der Heijden, (2015, p. 7), define sustainable careers as “*the sequence of an individual’s different career experiences, reflected through a variety of patterns of continuity over time, crossing several social spaces, and characterized by individual agency, herewith providing meaning to the individual*”. Individual workers must take their responsibility for accomplishing challenging work assignments in which they are able to develop themselves optimally and in this way remain employable. Ever emerging career concepts such as self-regulation, entrepreneurship, protean career, agency, proactivity are indicative of such a development. Individuals may undertake various initiatives to realize this, including not only communicating career wishes to and negotiating (i-deals!) with the organization they work for, but also proactively taking other initiatives such as taking a sabbatical, corporate volunteering initiatives (Fleisher, Khapova & Schipper, 2015), taking a career coach, switching jobs, and so on, to sharpen and reset their career direction and goals.

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Abstract

One of the main purposes of this PhD thesis was to come up with a clear definition and to develop a valid and reliable and domain independent measurement instrument for employability at the individual level, within an organizational context. Furthermore, we aimed to extend this measurement instrument with employability enhancing practices, in the light of aging and career furthering/maturing. A competence-based approach to employability, being an elaboration of the Resource-Based View of the firm, was found to be a useful perspective, for theorizing on and practicing balance between the interests of organizations and employees. In this RBV perspective, employability is advantageous for both career and firm outcomes, and organizations can reach sustained competitive advantage (over other firms) with a combination of attracting and retaining competent workers and adequate HR policies and practices of investing in them. This fruitful combination is called *human resource advantage*.

In our competence based approach, employability was defined as “the continuous fulfilling, acquiring or creating of work through the optimal use of competences” (Van der Heijde & van der Heijden, 2006, p. 453). We found evidence from both (Strategic) Human Resource Management theory and career theory, to point into the direction of the importance of a broad competence package. Employability was elaborated into five (domain-independent) dimensions, two flexibility components (anticipation and optimization; personal flexibility) and one social component (corporate sense) besides occupational expertise. Balance was added, taking into account different elements of employability that are sometimes hard to unite and need fine tuning. We also demonstrated the measurement’s instrument predictive validity for career outcomes.

Workers who are aging, who are advancing in their careers, need attention for their continuous career development to stay employable (maintain their labor market value), just as much as younger workers who are at the beginning of their careers. Employee competences are treated as valuable assets that must be nourished, extended, elaborated on, renewed, replenished etc. We explored age-related HRM practices that were stimulating for employability and career success of workers of all ages (learning value of the job, age-related supervisory practices, time, team style, opportunity for learning). Eventually this resulted in a measurement instrument to study perceptions of the informal learning climate within the organization and their relationships with employability and career success. The employability and perceptions of informal learning climate instruments together, can be put to use by organizations to stimulate and facilitate the process of employability of their workers, of all ages and career and life stages.

Individual workers need individual non-normative approaches, depending on their life and career stage. Workers with a leading or managing position also appear to be a special group (career stage), as regards their employability. For employability and career policies to be mature and sustainable, a perspective of mutual responsibility between organisations and individual workers is necessary. The individual worker also stays partly responsible to steer and self-regulate his/her own career and maintain his /her employability.

Samenvatting

De employability van werknemers stelt organisaties in staat hun fluctuerende vraag voor numerieke en functionele flexibiliteit het hoofd te bieden. Er zijn heldere definities en instrumenten nodig om dit proces te faciliteren. Voor individuele werknemers, zijn professionele expertise en employability nodig om werk van hoogwaardige kwaliteit te leveren gedurende de gehele loopbaan (en daarmee ook voor andere loopbaanuitkomsten zoals salaris en arbeidstevredenheid), en zo te zorgen voor continuïteit van werk en ontwikkeling.

In toenemende mate is professionele expertise niet meer genoeg om positieve werkuitkomsten te garanderen gedurende de gehele loopbaan. Echter een gevarieerder en op meerdere plekken inzetbaar competentie-pakket is nodig. De oorzaak hiervoor is te vinden in veranderingen in de aard van het werk, veroorzaakt door automatisering en kennisintensivering, globalisering, groei van de dienstensector en in de laatste jaren in toenemende mate ook robotisering. Werknemers die wat ouder zijn lopen meer risico op de concentratie van kennis en ervaring. Het blijkt dat organisaties beduidend minder investeren in de ontwikkeling van competenties als werknemers een bepaalde leeftijd bereiken.

In principe is de waardering voor het professionele functioneren van veertigers en vijftigers hoog, zolang hun functie onmisbaar blijft voor de organisatie. Ze worden echter ongeschikt geacht voor anderssoortige functies en in die zin als immobiel aangemerkt. Eenmaal werkloos vinden ze ook moeilijker een nieuwe functie. De vraag is of dit komt door een verlaging in employability met de leeftijd (achteruitgang competenties?) of door leeftijdsstereotypering. Ook zouden verschillende leef fase- of loopbaan fase factoren of andere contextuele arbeidsmarktfactoren mee kunnen spelen zoals (beroeps)sector of locatie.

Dit proefschrift heeft twee belangrijke doelstellingen: ten eerste het ontwikkelen van een betrouwbaar en valide meetinstrument om employability te kunnen meten bij individuele werknemers vanaf het mbo + niveau (om te kunnen generaliseren

naar toekomstig gebruik in organisaties). Ten tweede, willen we de relatie tussen mogelijk stimulerende HR praktijken en employability en loopbaansucces onderzoeken, terwijl we tegelijkertijd kijken naar de factor leeftijd. We zullen dit doen aan de hand van een 5-tal studies. Uiteindelijk hopen we dat dit ons naast aanbevelingen voor verder wetenschappelijk onderzoek tevens inzichten oplevert voor de (S)HRM praktijk.

Studie 1: Een competentie-gerichte en multidimensionele operationalisatie en meting van employability (hoofdstuk 2)

In de eerste studie hebben we het begrip employability gedefinieerd en geoperationaliseerd, vanuit een competentie-gerichte benadering binnen een organisatiecontext. De competentie-gerichte benadering is een uitwerking van de Resource Based View of the Firm, waarbij competenties dienen als een van de mogelijke middelen om organisatiedoelen te behalen en concurrentievermogen te behouden. Competenties zijn echter ook middelen voor individuele werknemers om loopbaansucces te behalen en daarom is er sprake van een win-win situatie. Employability wordt gedefinieerd als: het continu vervullen, verwerven of creëren van werk door het optimale gebruik van competenties. In het employability concept wordt professionele expertise aangevuld met de meer brede competenties anticipatie en optimalisatie, persoonlijke flexibiliteit, organisatiegevoel en balans.

Naast inhoudsvaliditeit, convergente en divergente validiteit hebben we ook aandacht besteed aan de predictieve validiteit voor zowel objectief als subjectief loopbaansucces. Het instrument bestaat zowel uit een supervisor als medewerkers versie, en is dientengevolge minder gevoelig voor ‘common method bias’. Het kan voor wetenschappelijk vervolgonderzoek worden ingezet naar het stimuleren van employability in organisaties. Op praktisch niveau kan het instrument voor meerdere doeleinden in de organisatie worden ingezet: de organisatie kan ten behoeve van strategische planning hiermee een indruk krijgen van de employability niveaus van haar werknemers; op het team-, afdelings- of organisatieniveau, ten

behoefte van beleid rondom recruitment, loopbaanontwikkeling en mobiliteit. Ook op het individuele niveau kan het nuttig zijn als het ingezet wordt voor beoordelingsgesprekken en persoonlijke ontwikkelplannen of persoonlijke employability plannen (loopbaanontwikkeling).

Studie 2: Op zoek naar potentieel geschikte personeelsinstrumenten voor levenslange employability en loopbaansucces. (hoofdstuk 3)

Ondanks de toegenomen afhankelijkheid van organisaties van oudere werknemers dankzij vergrijzing en ontgroening, wordt er nog steeds niet genoeg aandacht besteed aan hun employability en loopbaanontwikkeling. Er zijn nog steeds vooroordelen (of er is te weinig besef van het belang) over onder andere de capaciteiten en de motivatie om te leren van oudere werknemers. Eettelijke studies toonden al aan dat prestaties niet zonder meer afnemen met de leeftijd en dat ouderen eventuele lichamelijke of cognitieve achteruitgang gemakkelijk kunnen compenseren met factoren als ervaring en motivatie. Individuele verschillen in prestatie blijken bovendien groter te zijn dan verschillen tussen verschillende leeftijdsgroepen.

Een duurzaam employabilitybeleid is idealiter een beleid dat streeft naar een leeftijdsdivers werknemersbestand dat de brede ontwikkeling van alle werknemers, jong en oud, stimuleert. Het is niet alleen gericht op de korte termijn en het huidige werkdomein, maar houdt rekening met toekomstige ontwikkelingen op arbeidsmarktgebied en het werkveld. Het ideale beleid is toegankelijk voor alle leeftijden, gecombineerd met aandacht voor individuele verschillen: verschillende leefphasen en loopbaanfasen zijn immers niet gebonden aan bepaalde leeftijden.

In deze studie werd de potentie van een aantal employability en loopbaansucces bevorderende factoren onderzocht. Employability werd onderzocht als mogelijke mediërende factor tussen ondersteuning van de loopbaanontwikkeling door de supervisor, de leerwaarde van de functie en verschillende leerklimate factoren (tijd, team en ontwikkelmogelijkheden), en loopbaansucces. Er werden inderdaad

verschillende interessante verbanden gevonden tussen deze factoren en employability en loopbaansucces. Er waren geen interactie-effecten met leeftijd, hetgeen onze hypothese bevestigde dat deze factoren als personeelsinstrumenten voor alle leeftijden kunnen worden ingezet.

Study 3: Percepties van het informele leerklimaat als determinant voor levenslange employability. Een empirische studie onder Europese ICT professionals (Chapter 4)

In het onderzoek naar hoe werknemers het leerklimaat van organisaties ervaren en wat de relatie is met hun employability, is veelal de focus gelegd op trainingen en opleidingen, die formeel zijn geregeld. Er is weinig empirisch onderzoek naar de rol van percepties van informeel leerklimaat voor employability en loopbaanontwikkeling, terwijl het grootste deel van leren en ontwikkelen binnen organisaties juist op informele wijze plaatsvindt. In dit onderzoek werd dit onderzocht bij een groep Europese ICT professionals, waarbij percepties van informeel leerklimaat werden gemeten op drie niveaus 1) de leerwaarde van de functie 2) de directe supervisor die leren en ontwikkeling ondersteunt en stimuleert en 3) verdere ontwikkelingsmogelijkheden binnen de organisatie die buiten de onmiddellijke reikwijdte van de functie of het stimuleren door de directe supervisor vielen. Ons onderzoek toonde aan dat, zoals gehypothetiseerd, inderdaad met het toenemen van de leeftijd het informele leerklimaat als minder stimulerend werd ervaren door werknemers. Echter werd dit verband ongedaan gemaakt door verschillende levensfase factoren (ervaren algemene gezondheid) en loopbaanfase factoren (lengte werkervaring in ICT sector, lengte supervisie en werkrol: wel of geen manager) aan het onderzoeksmodel toe te voegen. Het negatieve veronderstelde verband tussen leeftijd en beoordelingen van employability door de direct leidinggevende werd niet gevonden (i.v.m. leeftijdsstereotypering) en het positieve veronderstelde verband tussen leeftijd en beoordelingen van employability door de werknemer zelf werd wel gevonden. Als we naar de aparte

dimensies van employability kijken vinden we echter wel een paar negatieve verbanden. Of er wel of niet leeftijdstereotypering wordt gevonden zal ook mede afhangen van de functies en de sector die bestudeerd worden. Zoals verwacht was er een positief verband tussen ervaren informeel leerklimate en employability (zowel beoordelingen door de direct leidinggevende als door de werknemer zelf) en werden er substantiële hoeveelheden variantie verklaard in het onderzoeksmodel. Managers kwamen als aparte groep uit de bus, in de zin dat ze op het eerste gezicht minder last leken te hebben van een mindere leerklimateervaring met het ouder worden, echter op het tweede gezicht lijken ze minder te profiteren van de leerklimateervaring voor hun employability ontwikkeling dan oudere werknemers zonder managementfunctie. Deze bevindingen pleiten voor een zogenaamde 'lifespan' benadering van employability en loopbaanontwikkeling in organisaties, d.w.z. dat er niet blindelings op de leeftijd moet worden afgegaan maar dat er altijd naar het complete plaatje moet worden gekeken wat betreft levensfase en loopbaanfase factoren. Deze bevindingen zijn van belang voor het SHRM beleid m.b.t. employability en loopbaanontwikkeling binnen organisaties.

Study 4: Employability en sociale innovatie: Het belang van en de wisselwerking tussen transformationeel leiderschap en persoonlijkheid (hoofdstuk 5)

In deze studie is gekeken naar de belangrijke sociale innovatie employability en het belang van transformationeel leiderschap daarvoor. Transformationele leiders (mens-gericht) stimuleren en motiveren hun werknemers voor bepaalde te behalen doelstellingen en om het beste uit zichzelf te halen, in tegenstelling tot de transactionele leiderschapsstijl (taak-gericht) waarbij geen aandacht is voor persoonlijke ontwikkeling. In deze studie hebben we zoals verwacht een positief verband gevonden tussen transformationeel leiderschap en employability (zowel beoordelingen door de direct leidinggevende als door de werknemer zelf), echter

een en ander hangt ook af van een aantal persoonlijke kenmerken. Werknemers met een managementfunctie blijken te verschillen van werknemers zonder managementfunctie op de factor persoonlijkheid. Managers scoorden significant lager op neuroticisme, en significant hoger op extravagantie en openheid ten opzichte van medewerkers zonder management functie. Het model waarbij werknemersrol (manager of geen manager) en persoonlijkheid geïncorporeerd werden had de hoogste fit (Structural Equation Modeling). Het bleek dat vooral werknemers zonder management functie gevoelig bleken voor het transformationeel leiderschap van hun leider wat hun employability betrof, (beoordeeld door hun supervisor). We denken dat managers minder afhankelijk zijn van het transformationeel leiderschap van hun leider voor hun employability ontwikkeling en daarvoor meer op hun eigen persoonlijkheid leunen. Deze bevindingen pleiten weer voor een ‘lifespan’ benadering in de zin dat steeds gekeken moet worden naar de unieke situatie van de werknemer (loopbaan- en levensfase). SHRM wordt aangeraden het transformationeel leiderschap goed af te stemmen op de individuele eigenschappen van de werknemers. Werknemers zonder management functie zijn afhankelijker van het transformationeel leiderschap van hun leider voor hun ontwikkeling dan werknemers met een managementfunctie.

Study 5: Employability en zelf-regulatie in moderne loopbanen (hoofdstuk 6)

Omdat moderne loopbanen tegenwoordig meer gekenmerkt worden door meerdere dienstverbanden, onderbrekingen en soms zelf loopbaan switches, kan employability niet altijd worden gemeten binnen de organisatiecontext. Zelf-regulatie impliceert een actieve rol met betrekking tot motivationele processen betreffende het sturen van de allocatie van bronnen voor het bereiken van bepaalde doelen. In dit hoofdstuk werden overeenkomsten tussen de concepten zelf-regulatie en employability verkend in een theoretische literatuurstudie, binnen verschillende arbeidsmarktcontexten zoals de werkloosheidscontext, de organisatiecontext en de

reorganisatiecontext. Het concept zelf-regulatie kan de kloof tussen verschillende employability theorieën overbruggen in de zin dat 1) verschillende employability benaderingen alle resultaatgericht zijn 2) een prestatiegerichte benadering en een leeroriëntatie beide belangrijk zijn en 3) ze het inzetten van bepaalde strategieën en het weghalen van obstakels veronderstellen om tot het resultaat te komen.

Conclusie

Over het geheel genomen kunnen we concluderen dat organisaties veel kunnen putten uit wetenschappelijk onderzoek ter verbetering van het informele leerklimaat, voor het vergroten van de employability van hun medewerkers en daarmee waarschijnlijk ook hun eigen organisatie-uitkomsten positief kunnen beïnvloeden. Dit geldt voor alle leeftijden. Organisaties kunnen o.a. kijken naar de taakhoud van werknemers, de stimulerende rol van de (direct) leidinggevende en zaken als ‘genoeg tijd voor ontwikkeling en ‘mate waarin het team ruimte biedt aan ontwikkeling’. Hierbij dient tevens rekening te worden gehouden met de individuele werknemer en zijn/haar behoeften gezien loopbaan- en levensfase. Het betekent ten eerste geen standaard beleid (non- normatief) voor alle oudere werknemers (zoals allen met pensioen met 67 jaar). Managers vertegenwoordigen ook een loopbaanfase, met specifieke kenmerken rond ontwikkeling. Om beleid rond employability en loopbanen volwassen en duurzaam te laten zijn, is een perspectief van wederzijdse verantwoordelijkheid (organisaties en individuele werknemers) en van lange termijn i.p.v. korte termijn denken van belang. De individuele werknemer behoudt dus ook een stuk eigen verantwoordelijkheid en de eigen regie wat betreft het sturen van zijn/ haar eigen loopbaan, en het behoud van zijn/haar employability.

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