** LLP Grundtvig MISSIONGATE  **

**Entrepreneurship in the course of life – a guide to inspiration and renewal in the working life**

Research on existing methods “How to find your mission in life” by Raoul Knobbout, trainee PCT

**1. Title**: “Ondernemen in de levensloop – Een route naar inspiratie en vernieuwing in het werkleven” (*Entrepreneurship in the course of life – a guide to inspiration and renewal in the working life)*

Authors: Jos van der Brug and Kees Locher

Language: Dutch

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**2. Content description**

The book consists of two parts: a workbook and background reading. In the workbook the method of the authors is described. In this part 37 assignments are presented. The book is written in such a way that it can be completed without professional trainers. The reader –or participant- is however encouraged to find two to five fellow participants. The other group members fulfill the trainer role. According to the authors, it is a workshop in book-form (p.5). The book is especially suitable for persons who are facing a troublesome situation in their working life. The method helps participants to rearrange these situations and articulate what they really want (p.6).

To ascertain that fellow participants have appropriate skills to provide support, the book also consists of skills-parts. In these sections appropriate techniques are described that can be used in the workshop. Fellow participants become better trainers in this way.

In the final part background information is presented. This provides further theoretical depth and gives interesting examples from the arts. Using work from famous painters Rembrandt and Cézanne, parts about personal crises become clearer.

**3. Summary of the method, introduction**

People are encouraged to do the method together with others. Although the method is essentially individualistic, it is still beneficial to talk about your emotions, experiences, and more. People describe their emotions and stories much more complete and accurate when talking to others. The assumption is that when you have to communicate your visions, they become much more explicit.

The book does not mention professional help. The reader should find peers who working on the same problems and who can be trusted. Trust is important in choosing fellow participants since it is essential for a positive atmosphere during the session, allowing participants to be confident and open. This is a necessary condition because in this workshop sessions tend to become quite emotional and about a person’s inner self. Hiding answers because of peer pressure and other group processes would make the workshop useless. The ideal group consists of about three to six participants (p.10).

In its essence this method is about articulating your inner voice. The aim of almost all sessions in the book is to express how the participant really feels about his career and his future. For example, by using colors and creativity, participants are taught to show how they feel about their current work situation (p. 36). Participants are encouraged to make a drawing using just color and while trying to focus on their current work situation. The authors believe that doing this will result in meaningful drawing that says something about emotions attached to the current work situation. This is drawing is then presented to the other participants and discussed.

**4. Basic Assumptions of the method**

One assumption is that people are able to determine their career to a great extent. The method relies on thinking about suitable scenarios and than realizing them. This implies freedom in one’s choices: a person can actively determine his life instead of passively following life. This is also included in the title of the book: entrepreneurship implies an active approach.

A second assumption is that emotions and intuition are often the most suitable advisors a person has. The method relies on intuition and emotions; it encourages people to freely express themselves. These emotions are then used to choose between options.

**5. What is meant in the method or book by ‘finding your mission in life’?**

A specific definition of ‘finding your mission in life’ is not given in the book. This is much more a book about career counseling. Although attention is also given to other aspects of life besides work, the emphasis lies on the working life.

Mission in life is however mentioned at some points in the book. It is called ‘themes in life’, meaning that most people have a certain reoccurring question or struggle in life. Participants identify and use their themes in various assignments and are also encouraged to think about the role of this theme in the future. This is as close as the authors get towards explaining mission in life.

**6. Trainer profile to support (un)employed persons in ‘finding their mission in life’**

As mentioned before, this method does not work with professional trainers. Instead, fellow participants become trainers. In order to ascertain appropriate skills and knowledge of these ‘trainers’, frequent sections on trainer skills are included. These sections are centered on a specific skill. In addition, every assignment ends with a section on methodological instructions. These too are in fact about skills. Knowledge is presented throughout the entire book but especially in the final part. All background reading is in fact knowledge.

**6.1. Skills (of trainers) to support (un)employed persons in:**

-Motivation in finding their new mission in life:

Motivation is enhanced by including various feedback-assignments (e.g., p.37). In these sections, the participant focuses on results attained at this point. By focusing on the answers already found, motivation of participants is enhanced. By doing this people realize that the method is already yielding some results. Participants realize that they are doing something useful and that continuing with the approach makes sense. The link between assignments and end result is shown.

Doing the workshop with fellow participants is also motivating. Whenever a participant is experiencing a lack of motivation, he is likely to receive support from the rest of the group.

-Outplacement processes for persons, motivating them to find their new mission:

Not much of the tasks are outsourced to others in this book. Sense making and articulation of emotions are important and the authors stress that it is essential that these should be done without external influences. It is about the personal perceptions of the participant, that is, without paying attention to opinions, emotions and perceptions of others. Some things are however outsourced to fellow participants. By asking for more information about an imagined scenario, the scenario becomes more complete for the participant (e.g., p. 172). Another role for fellow participants is sense making. Whenever somebody in the group has made a drawing about his or her current emotional state, other participants are encouraged to interpret and characterize the image (e.g., p.70).

-Finding new (volunteer) work:

This is not mentioned in the book. The method focuses on articulating emotions and expressing one’s feelings about a working situation. Participants are guided towards development and realization of a specific scenario. This, however, is an individual exercise. Fellow participants are actually encouraged not to intervene in this process. The scenario should be free of influences of others in order to reflect the true inner will of the participant.

Summary of required skills of trainers:

Trainers are considered to have a variety of skills. To ascertain this, the book includes various parts about these skills. Some of these are:

* Interpreting and characterizing (p.40). This skill refers to the ability of appropriately interpreting drawings and other forms of creative emotional expression produced. This is mainly a conversation task, which might help participants to better understand their own emotions.
* Research on personal past (p.90). The ability to correctly help a fellow participant in researching his past might help somebody to better understand phases and themes in life. In fact, this is about finding mission in life.
* Conversations and feedback (p.110, p.198). This helps ‘trainers’ give appropriate feedback and make conversations in which the participant is encouraged to fully reveal his or her own emotions, perceptions and scenario’s. Techniques discussed here help to ensure a safe and open conversation.
* Research on preferred future (p.156). This is about helping participants in scenario writing. This technique is further elaborated upon in section 7.

**6.2. Knowledge (of trainers) to support (un)employed persons in:**

-Motivation to find their new mission in (working) life:

Knowledge of trainers is presented in the book itself. All participants should read the book, so knowledge is not limited to trainers only. Participants have the same knowledge, also because knowledge sharing between fellow participants is encouraged.

Knowledge is motivating because it provides more insight in the specific actions. It enables participants to see the interconnectedness of assignments and enables them to establish a link to real-life examples. This is motivating for participants.

An example this motivating knowledge is presented on page 252. As mentioned before, this book is mainly written for persons experiencing a type of personal crisis. Such a personal crisis typically manifests itself with an inability to choose and to express one’s emotions clearly. It is typically a vague feeling; the participant feels that there is something wrong, but she is not able to specify what. The book states that such a crisis is quite normal and typically manifests itself at a certain age. A typical age, for example, is 28. At 28, most people feel that they either have matured too early, or that they need to work towards a stable relationship, a steady job or establishing a family (p.258). From page 252 until 262, two famous painters are introduced. The authors argue that Rembrandt and Cézanne have both experienced such crises at multiple times in their working life. This can be extracted from their paintings and known facts about them.

A participant is likely to be motivated by this knowledge. In a way, the authors show him that he is not alone, but that his personal crisis is quite normal. It also gives hope, by showing that life goes on after such a crisis. This knowledge might give a person the strength and the motivation to overcome a personal crisis and to perceive the workshop as a method for achieving this.

All knowledge presented in the book can help to motivate participants. By better understanding current issues and by placing this into a broader context, participants perceive current issues as temporary. They might begin to understand that solutions can always be found. Another function of knowledge in the book is to increase understanding about the method presented. This enables participants to better understand the necessity of some assignments. A perceived relation between task (assignment) and end goal often enhances motivation.

-Outplacement processes for persons, motivating them to find their new mission in life:

This is not mentioned in the book.

**7. Used method (of trainers) to support (un) employed persons in:**

-Finding their new mission in (working) life and phases in this method:

The method described in this book is clearly divided in seven phases. In this part these phases are described and explained (p.5)

The first phase is called ‘what is currently on my mind’. This is an introducing yet essential part. Participants are encouraged to formulate a question regarding their current life situation. This question is the starting point for the method, or the theme of the workshop. It should only be one question, because in this way participants are encouraged to think about the core problem that is currently bothering them. An example of such a formulated question is “How do I make a more conscious choice regarding my work-life balance?” (p.19). During the book, the authors work towards a method of solving questions like these. They do not provide a quick answer, but teach participants a method to find an answer themselves.

In the second phase, the participant is encouraged to think about his current situation. It is called “where do I stand?” (p.35). This is partially done in a creative way, and partially in a narrative way. The creative way stimulates participants to express their emotions about their current working situation (p. 36). Participants should focus at impulsively using colors and simple forms to express themselves; it is clearly not about creating a work of art. After drawing, the group of participants discusses it together with the maker of it. In this conversation the drawing is characterized: this helps the creator to express his or her deepest emotions. The conversation afterwards is also beneficial because it might cause the creator to develop new insights about his or her character, emotions and current situation.

An example of such a characterization is: “the tension between the fresh, young-looking light spots and the black border with a stripe through the middle on the other hand. There is also tension between the fiery spark left and the surrounded area right”. This helped the participant in question to formulate his issue: he had the feeling that he was surrounded on all sides in his working situation (p.44). This example clarifies how characterization of creative expressions can be done and how it can be beneficial for making emotions explicit.

Apart from the creative part, this phase is also about story telling. Participants are encouraged to talk about their current work situation. They are asked to tell stories about their first and (imagined) last working situation, their customers and their role in the organization. These stories are also characterized by fellow participants. In this phase the superior of the participant (if available) is also asked to give his or her opinion about the participant. This crosschecking helps to ensure accuracy of the described situation.

The third phase is called “what has developed me?” The same techniques described in phase two are used, but instead of aimed at the current working situation it is aimed at the entire life of the participant. By telling stories and characterizing them, the participant develops an understanding about themes and phases in his life. This might be a very emotional and deep process, making the participant think about his life as she has never done before. The interaction with fellow participants might help to connect events and develop an understanding of the deeper processes that have shaped life until now.

This is a sense-making process, urging the participant to think about his inner values. Why did he do the things in this way? Which deeper themes motivated him to behave in the way he did before? In this process, the participant should not strive towards a quick or simplified answer. He is actually quite unlikely to ever find one (p.93). The process, however, helps towards a better understanding of inner values and choices made. Later in the method, this knowledge can be used to make more accurate plans for the future.

Interesting in this part is the attention given to stages in life (pp. 98-100, pp. 227-239). For every age group, typical perceptions of work, threats and necessities are given. For example, around the age of 20, a typical perception of work is “a possibility to test yourself”. A typical threat is fanaticism, while it is often necessary to strive towards a broad orientation in the working life. This information helps the participant to characterize his or her own life story because some of the points mentioned are likely to be recognized. It can act as a reminder.

The fourth phase is called ‘who am I?’ In this phase the participant is encouraged to use the insights gained in steps two and three to formulate values and overarching themes. Participants have to think about the results of all prior assignments and talk about these things. Not many new things are discussed in this phase, it is about repeating and discussing prior insights. Are your insights already changed during the workshop? Are you more able to clearly formulate personal themes and values? By thinking about these subjects again, the understanding about them deepens. Fellow participants are more active in this phase, critically asking for more details and more specifications. The findings of participants become more explicit in this way (pp. 106-140).

In the fifth phase, the participant is encouraged to think what he or she wants. It is called ‘what do I want?’ and it about possible directions for the future. Most people only have a vague idea about their true intentions for the future. In this phase, these intentions are made explicit and formulated into a specific scenario for the future.

The starting point is again a creative assignment. However, instead of expressing emotions about current or past situations, it is now aimed towards the future. By expressing and characterizing emotions about the future, the participant obtains a better view on his or her personal feelings about the future.

After the assignment about expression, results and answers formulated in phase four are used to match current and past issues with the future. How does the participant aim to resolve his central question in the future? (p. 146). The participant is encouraged to think about scenarios. Questions, themes, emotions and values are not longer discussed but are used as starting point for these scenarios. Scenarios should be as realistic as possible.

Multiple scenarios should be created, just as long the participant thinks he has created enough. All scenarios should be shared with the group and described in great detail. Describe, for instance, the color of the carpet of your imagined workplace, describe the way how you enter the building, how your greet your colleagues (that is, do you even have colleagues?). Describe the way you start your day, how you picture that day. Describe how you come home, and how you look back on such a day. Discuss this scenario with fellow participants and use insights from phases before. How does this scenario match you core values? Does this scenario help you find a solution to the question formulated in phase one? This process of imagining and describing your future should be repeated until you have chosen a preferred scenario. This is the point where you become emotionally satisfied with the scenario and start to enjoy thinking about it. At this point it is clear that you need to stop imagining.

This technique is used to provoke emotions about your future. In a way, the participant uses insights from the prior phases and the scenario-technique in order to express his emotions about the future. His or her inner voice is articulated.

Phase six is called “what am I going to do?” The preferred scenario from phase five is modified into a real-life action plan; steps are taken to realize the scenario. It is a shift from an imagined future to a realistic plan, ready for implementation.

The time horizon for this definite scenario is three years. In this way, the scenario is as realistic as possible while at the same time leeway for change is created (p.176). The implementation plan should be as complete as possible, containing at least:

* What you are going to do
* When, with who, and how?
* What you want to achieve?
* What the effects on others and yourself will be? How will your social environment react?

It is also necessary to work on a contingency plan: what if the first plan does not work? Is there an alternative? (p.193)

The final phase is called “learning by doing”. This is a finalizing step, aimed at reflection on the workshop and asking yourself and fellow participants whether the original question is already resolved. This step needs to be taken after the first steps of the implementation plan are taken and when its first implications emerge.

The second part of this phase is geared towards generalization of the method. The book argues to repeat the process from time to time; creating scenarios and implementing them in order to stay satisfied during your career. This is also the part in which the title of the book becomes clear (p.180). Entrepreneurship in the course of life prescribes that initiatives towards new situations are sometimes needed. Similar to an entrepreneur that will lose his business when he does not take initiatives from time to time, the course of life needs initiatives too. The course of life can be influenced from time to time, eventually coming closer to an ideal situation.

-Outplacement processes for persons, motivating them to find their new mission

This is already mentioned in section 6.1.

**8. Motivation**

Not much is specifically written about motivation in this book. Therefore, only some remarks can be made about it.

**8.1. Definitions of motivation**

Motivation is not defined, neither explicitly nor implicitly

**8.2. Definitions of motivational factors**

Motivational factors are also not defined

**8.3. Models of motivation used or referred to**

None

**8.4. What motivates (un)employed people to find a new mission in life?**

Although the authors do not explicitly state this, some remarks can be made about it. Motivation is enhanced throughout the method by feedback sessions. By showing the results to the participant from time to time, motivation is enhanced. The method is working in the perception of the participant; it brings him closer to answering his formulated questions. This is intrinsic motivation; the participant is motivated by her own actions.

Extrinsic motivation is also not specifically described, but might result from working in a small group. Whenever one participant is demotivated for a specific task, his group members can act as powerful motivators. This is a form of peer pressure

**8.5. How does the trainer handle this kind of motivations?**

Also not explicitly mentioned in the book, but probably by using this peer pressure in an active way. Concrete actions are, for example, calling a fellow participant who lost interest and telling that his group members are still working on it and are, in fact, already experiencing results.

**9. Target group**

The book is targeted at, in general, people with a troublesome working life. It is perhaps more suitable for people who have issues with expressing themselves in a traditional way; the use of a workgroup, the multitude of creative assignments and some remarks about Buddhist’ spirituality (e.g., karma and reincarnation, p.75) might cause discomfort for some readers. Judging from the language used and the examples described, the targeted group is:

-University level

-Age 40-49

-Employed

**10. European context**

The book is written from a universalistic perspective. Because of its focus on expression, creativity and articulation of a participant’s inner voice, it is probably suitable for all countries. It does not rely on a specific culture or other determinants.

One assumption might however limit its generalizability. The scenario-technique assumes a certain freedom of choice, that is, a participant must have the ability to act upon his scenario. Social mobility is a requirement. If a participant is limited by the circumstances in his country, he is not likely to successfully implement his scenario. For example, when a country is experiencing a high level of unemployment, participants are not always able to choose a job. A participant is likely to simply choose for the first available job instead.