CRISIS ANALYTIC ASSESSMENT METHOD

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ABSTRACT

The responsibility of the companies and HR specialists has been valorised as the business competition has become sharp-edged. The recruiting sector of Human Resource Management has developed and specialised a lot. Fortunately beyond the specialisation some pieces of research deal with the correspondence between HR sectors. This paper intends to be one of them.

Most of the papers published on this field look for the best selectional form. Lots of studies examine the validity of interviews and assessment centers. According to the researchers, assessment center prevails against interview. However, what about some interviewers who can predict the performance in the position of the candidates better than others, even if those use assessment center, structured interview, behaviour description interview or other method? Is it only a methodological question?

This paper summarises the literature on validity of selectional forms, and additionally suggests a new approach to implement techniques. The novel method modifies the possible goal of the suitability report of candidates by giving tools to bring the necessary competencies to the surface and describes the concerning crises of the applicants. As far as the theory is concerned, the further performance of the candidate is not a static state, not only a momentary status report, but an interactive process that includes the candidate, the superior, and the position generates the necessary crisis. Consequently, the applicants' performance depends on these members of the process. The method not just identifies the level of the candidates' necessary competencies, but it tells their mobility level and mobilization method, or discloses the blocks that make them staying potentials. This is the most wanted outcome of any selectional method: differentiating potentials and competencies, predicting the manifestation of the potentials and pointing out its way. A qualitative survey is introduced in this paper on the validity of the crisis analytic interview and assessment center, so we can compare the results to the common validity of these selectional forms, the increased predictive factor, but we also can analyse something more, like the candidate's further development. The outcome of the crisis analytic assessment method can be far more complex by improving the candidates' maturity, especially in the critical competencies.

Keywords: crisis analysis, selection, assessment, development, performance prediction

TERMS USED IN THE PAPER

Task orientation - Target orientation: an attitude that represents the focus of efforts during the work. If one understands only the exact task but does not understand its aim, he needs a dedicated leader; he is not independent in work. At a higher level of development worker can organize his or her own tasks due to understanding the target of the task and the aim of the position.

Strategic thinking: an ability to understand and implement long-term goals to the operative routine. The ability to concentrate on the future and the relationship with the present. Strategic goals justify the present time problem solving.

Operative thinking: concentrating on present time problem solving.

Operative leader - Strategic leader: Several times the strategic leader sets up the targets, operative leaders are responsible for implementation and organize the "how". "Know what" vs "know how".

Defense mechanism: unconscious emotion-focused coping strategies. In this paper: due to not fitting the expectations some people choose regression in role to avoid stress instead of developing in his or her new role. For example one tries to cope with the situation as it would mean professional challenges instead of identifying the situation as a leadership one.

Regression: interpreting the situation at a lower level of maturity.

Operative whirling: the large quantity of ad-hoc tasks make one unable to meet the strategic challenges due to less time and less concentration, which leads to further lack of time in projects. Strategic leaders find the way to refuse a significant part of operative whirling by delegation or something else.

Political thinking: the maturity step usually beyond strategic role. This means the ability to find sponsors for initiative instead of fighting with someone by arguments, networking instead of assuming common interests, understanding the hidden, unveiled reasons of management decisions instead of accepting only the professional reasons.

Applicator role: usually a beginner role of a person in work who receives exact tasks. He or she is task-oriented. Usually shifts the contradicted situations and decisions off. He or she needs strict leadership.

Conceptual role: one understands tasks in a wider context, able to receive complex objectives, understands the aims of processes, target-oriented.

Frustration of professional or strategic role: one is blocked to step on a higher or more conceptual level of role and one is frustrated to live his or her engagement to this role due to the stress factors of the environment such us authoriter superior.

Personality development: among several approaches I will choose Erikson's[1] one, because it provides a very good context to understand crisis that develops us.

KAM: key account manager (sales position)

Extrinsic, intrinsic motivation: self-generated motivation or the motivation that comes from outside, especially from the superior.

Project managerial challenge – a few of the project management skills are highlighted in this paper such as leading a team of colleagues without dedicated authority, not from superior position.

INTRODUCTION

Recently increased attention has been given to assessment forms, especially to assessment centers, even from scientific and company environments. Several results[2] emphasize the advantages of assessment centers as a deepest way to summarize the difference between the candidates. However, this turns the companies preferring AC-s compared to other selection methods. Apart from other reasons it is due to AC is inevitably the most expensive[3] one and it is dedicated to the most selected candidates. According to my research AC is one of the best method to indicate not just the difference between the candidates but the most important actual crises and their dynamics in personal development. It is useful if we use the method with developmental aims (development center). However, we have the same opportunity to find these crises during the interview – certainly not with the same method to detect.

One of the basic personality development approaches belonged to Erikson[4] introduced eight stages of self-development during life. Each stage sets up a crisis that has or doesn't have good solutions. Crises that are not won by the person blocks the further development. He says that even different expectations of the environment, even different career models have these stages and their dynamics are the same. Of course the dramatic content is changing as the background and the situation changes. Although Erikson focused on the whole life we can recognize analogies of how crises function within a certain stage. The existential part of life mostly belongs to the fifth eriksonal stage. This is Identity vs Role confusion. The point of this stage is that the person among other areas of life needs to find his or her identity in profession – if we concentrate on work – but only after trying the optimal quantity of opportunities. To successfully win this stage's crises there must be a developmental link between these career opportunities.

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[1] Erikson (1965)
[2] Krause and Gebert (2003);
  Livens et al (2003)
[3] Thornton et al. (2000)
[4] E. H. Erikson (1965)

Although the eriksonal stages presuppose the success of the previous one, this rule is not so strong in career development context with the crises I have examined, due to there are many ways of career. The vertical progress is only one of them.

The main focus of researchers is on the predictive validity factor of selection methods. Jones and his colleagues[5] showed that a well-established assessment center has a better predictive validity if the assessors use the written and subjective comments than using only the numerical evaluation. This could make us feel that the static state of the competence of the candidates may be not enough to understand the hidden or the presently manifesting potentials. Sometimes the assessors detect the potential, but they can find evidence that some kind of dynamics precludes the manifestation of the given skill. This could be key question if we use the method as a development center but also very useful for selection to understand the candidates.

FOCUS ON INTEGRATION

Over the last 30 years many studies have searched the competence factors that were necessary for the applied position and the best way to assess them. According to some results[6], there was a significant difference between a well-established AC and a structured deep interview as we could detect the manifestation or the potential of these skills and competences. My study focuses not on the difference between the two selection way – I also find AC better method for predict the validity, but I also agree with the results of the studies that have found AC one of the most expensive method[7]. After all, I concentrated on and tried to identify some kinds of developmental crises inside this stage. I think analyzing these crises could answer not only the questions about the existence of the certain competences but it can point out and describe the process as they are developing through the experience.

Pattern

I have examined two different groups. The first group contains 36 candidates selected to the final interview. The candidates applied answering advertisement or received head hunting calls.

The other group contains 26 employees from a multinational FMCG company. They applied for career consultancy. The interview's style with the two patterns was certainly different, but I have consciously searched for crises during the work to describe theses' dynamics and the current state in both groups. The most informative answers to identify token crises are given to the questions that ask descriptions of how to fit the different expectations in the current and the previous positions. The two patterns have surely different authenticity, because the candidates intend to win the position so they have strong interest to show all crises have

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[5] A.Jones et al (1991)
[6] A. Jones et al (1991)
[7] Krause and Gebert (2003)

been won – as they believe. Of course the method how we need to question it in interviews must be different. However, this distortion effect exists in AC-s as well. Fortunately due to its longer duration and its playful atmosphere candidates could feel a little bit more comfortable to forget the assessors' direct purpose. Although the other group whose participants have their own development purposes with the sessions so it is not much easier to detect these crises. Even though they don't have a direct intention to hide their frustrations during the work, what's more the sessions starting points are these challenges with a hard emotional content, employees are not fully conscious about their psychological blocks. So the method is just different, not easier.

Since the top 3 candidates' patterns are after a selection process, they have shown less deviation on experience and represented more won battles. As my purpose was not to compare the two patterns one with the other, but find as many relevant crises as possible; I didn't separate them at the summary.

How to detect crises

After all, the most important purpose of this paper is to point out the method that we can implement in interviews and ACs. To answer this the first thing is to emphasis what we have to look for. First of all, let's see what crises were detected in the patterns and how these function:

Description of detected crises

Maybe it would be very comfortable if we could find crises hierarchically linked to each other. There are four crises where we can declare some hierarchy if we think about a classical career development as a vertical progress, but I can show exceptions so the hierarchy would be relevant only to better recognize them but not to better understand the essence of them.

We can see the repartition of typical crises among position groups in figure 1. On the one hand the chart shows the number of crises, at the other hand we can also see the percentage of crises among the given kind of positions. The basis of position kind's declaration was the applied position in the group of candidates and the current position in the group of consultation participants.

Crisis groups	Associates (11)	Senior associates	Operative leader	Middle manager, strategic	Top managers (5)

MAGYARORSZÁG MEGÚJUL

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		(16)	(8)	manager (22)	
Ego identity vs role diffusion	5 45%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Task vs target orientation	10 91%	12 75%	1 9%	4 2%	1 20%
Operative vs strategic	0 0%	6 38%	5 63%	16 72%	2 40%
Strategic vs political	0 0%	0 0%	3 36%	4 18%	3 60%
Subjective vs objective	2 18%	4 25%	3 36%	7 32%	3 60%
Creative vs analytical	0 0%	2 13%	1 9%	3 14%	0 0%
Theoretical vs practical	0 0%	1 6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Passive or aggressive vs assertive	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

Figure 1: Identified crises among top 3 candidates and career consultation participants[8]

Kind of hierarchical crises:

- Ego identity vs confusion of roles (eriksonal fifth stage)
- Task vs target orientation
- Operative vs strategic thinking
- Strategic vs political thinking

In this pattern I have also found nonhierarchical crises that could influence others and relevant concerning career:

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[8] Percental figures are rounded numbers

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- Creative vs analytical
- Theoretical vs practical
- Passive vs aggressive vs assertive
- Subjective vs objective

How the crises function

Ego identity vs confusion of roles (eriksonal fifth stage)

The person needs to find his or her identity. The optimal progress of this stage is that after a few trials one can find his or her identity and any further development following a logical direction. According to Erikson, there are two different bad ways of closing this stage. The first one if the individual closes this stage too early without enough real trials. For example, there are several doctors in the family retroactively from three generations. Sometimes there is no question about the career; the child accepts the given script. The second one if the person always tries new opportunities without final decision-making and engagement. Erikson calls this confusion of roles[9].

A good solution of this stage could be the basis for further working crises. There are interesting programs used by international companies to adjust this balance between the two extremities such as rotation to widen the employee's perspective or mentoring or project opportunities to deepen the insight of him or her. In my pattern there was one example of this in the career consultancy group. To the question about naming the ambition she gave an abstract answer and nominated tools such as education and training.

Task vs target orientation

We can set up two different forms of engagement according to some approach[10]. These are the target and the task orientation. The first one evokes proactivity and independency in work. The second one makes the worker receive only exact commands. The employee is committed only to finish the task without standing for the result of it. If a person is target oriented he or she will better understand the whole process and the reason for acting. There are several implementer positions at companies where result orientation is not expected. The crisis point when an associate appointed to the first position where decisions or proactivity are expected during the work. At first, the worker's defense mechanism makes him delegate back the responsibility to the superior by asking him or her to make the decision instead of him, i.e. the employee. There are two typical reasons for this regression. One is the stress itself that reduces the risk taking. The other is the frustrated unconscious feeling that he or she was successful until this new challenge with the routine, accustomed effort. The employee usually tries to use the same skills and competences. The typical attitude of this stage is "Give me a definite task and I'll give you the definite output! Protect me from intermediate decisions.". The good solution of this crisis is to step out

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[9] Erikson, Erik, H. (1956)
[10] Yeo, R. K. (2006)

from the comfort zone and develop a new attitude, tolerating the contradicting information and the complexity of the duties, to be able to make decisions from the view of target and its criteria.

Operative vs strategic thinking

As the employee is getting more experienced, he or she is able to manage his or her own process in its complexity. At this level the person can be target oriented, but all the actions have a present time context. He or she is a present time problem solver. One can realize the relationship with other processes, but only in the short run. His or her attitude can be typified as "Give me a definite target and I organize the completion; protect me from target setting.". There might be problems with the priority setting as well. One may realize the importance of dealing with the long term actions that has greater effect on the success, but some urgent problems appear – as always. Due to the latest habit the temptation wins and the leader turns over his or her time schedule. If the leader doesn't stand against the operative whirling he or she won't have enough opportunity to get a new practice in strategic thinking. The good solution of this crisis is to be able to think of a longer period. One can influence and organize the present action from the perspective of the possible or planned future. He or she can set up the priority on the strength of the impact to the future. The winner attitude is: "Let's use conceptual consciousness instead of increasing headless present effort.".

Strategic vs political thinking

Around the middle management level the expert can be committed for long term goals, has a very deep insight in business and several processes attached to the strategic goals. One can set up long term goals, because he or she can feel or calculate the future trends and the possible reactions of the market to his or her strategic action. That's why one can be a good strategic planner. If he or she wants to be more effective with initiating projects and want to be a partner or member of the top management, the crisis is to recognize that there is something else what influences the decisions of upper management beyond professional and strategic factors. There are hidden reasons behind the veils which are rarely discussed, but sometimes have stronger effect to the upper decisions than the professional arguments. The political level has a different language as well. The best outcome of the crisis is to be able to speak this language. That's why project managers have to find a sponsor or sponsors for the projects, because if there is any conflict with other managers, the sponsor speaks this language and can use his ascendency. The pure professional or strategic arguments are not enough. It counts who says them. The essential attitude of the crisis is "Give me a vision, I can set up what is worthy of achieving, I possess and manage the resources to win, but please protect me from labyrinthine, hidden interests inside the company.". To win this crisis one needs to learn the rules of lobbying, managing the power of upper management and the special interests (not always tightly belonging to the work) as well.

Creative vs analytical

The list of detected nonhierarchical crises of this pattern starts with a balance question. The present or future time problem solving can happen with two different mindsets. Basically there are characters with the first or the latter, but as the expectations are increasing the way of development improves the other part of the personality. On the one hand, if you are analytical your sharp criticism can demotivate the creative team members; on the other hand if you are creative your ideas bleed to death in practice without precise planning. The task of this crisis is to synthetize the two sides. It is not easy if we think about a classic problem solving process. It is useful to define the target first, and one can list the opportunities of ideas. Further to this you can plan or work out the promising ones and check them. In the creative part the analytical comments reduce the number and originality of the ideas; in the following part you should not skip the critical remarks to be able to avoid mistakes or wrong choice from solution opportunities. One of the possible winning strategies of this crisis if one can separate in time these two approaches, but implements them to the process. Others can engage themselves to either thinking mode, but as a manager collects different thinking members to the team and they utilize them in appropriate time of the cooperation. People who stick in this crisis can easily block themselves or other team members by trying to meet the double expectation simultaneously.

Theoretical vs practical

I don't know how much this crisis is common; I have detected it in this pattern the first time. This candidate had a lot of experience as a consultant, in addition with successes. In his current position he was expected to execute his job in practice, but had a lot of difficulties with practical methods. Due to the fact that he had had successes in strategic planning his defense mechanisms regressed him to this thinking mode instead of acting. We can link this situation to the basic eriksonal ego identity stage, and maybe it is the outgrowth of an early closing to strategy without enough practical experience. If he had planned his career, it would have been the best to "rotate" himself to a practical position earlier to be able to synthetize the missing experience.

Passive vs aggressive vs assertive

The classic conflict solving behaviors[11] can be understood in the context of a working crisis, but mostly in connection with other crises. If we think about the strategic vs political crises one has to initiate projects to achieve high objectives, even driven by extrinsic or intrinsic motivation. He or she has to lobby for the project, confront with several members of upper management. It does matter to choose the right behavior to succeed. Passivity would mean an operative regression and frustration about initiate. Aggressive behavior will cause prejudice and leadership gap. A good solution of this crisis is to be able to represent one's interest, but conform to management's interests simultaneously or politically find mentors or sponsors to fight for us. Apart from this pattern's example this crisis can be imagined in several different situations.

Subjective vs objective

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[11] McCann, J. T. (1988)

The ability to think objectively can be relevant in any stages of career development. Sometimes this skill can be linked closely to self-esteem. It is not usual to find this competence among selectional processes' criteria, because it is not easy to measure. As a consequence, it has a moral aspect, it is not difficult to prove ourselves to be moral in decisions. Even in interviews or ACs. Being objective is something more that can be detected in selectional forms. The elements of it can be:

- stress resistance during contradicting information,
- stress resistance in case of difficult reception of initiatives,
- resist against operative whirling in the midst of functional and cross functional expectations,
- able to practice and think playfully without thinking regression even at high risk

We can detect one or more areas where stress makes the candidate think regressed because of stress. If we use the interview or the AC in selection orders we can describe the applicant's coping strategy and its effect on the job. In case of developmental usage the mentor or the employee gets grabbing points to improve.

What kind of questioning technique is applied

The technique is different if we use it for developmental and selection purposes such as represented in the two groups of the current pattern. The goal of the assessors is to identify these or similar crises and understand how the candidate improve to win it.

Interviews

- Asking to describe the authority and scoop of activities.
  - o The answer can indicate the perspectives and attitudes which can inform about the hierarchical crises.
- Asking to describe successes and failures
  - o Not rarely the successes belong to a maturing process, sometimes the challenge makes the candidate exceed his or her comfort zone. The description informs us about the regression or improvement. Without the opportunity of regression there is no crisis. An authentic reference for a higher level of solution indicates the won crises. Sometimes assessors need to check if the self-esteem builds in the success in a right way. The attribution[12] of success can show differences according to control attitude[13]. There are some examples for the candidates meet the extra expectation, he or she is successful, but the regression still exists as he or she aims to go back to comfort zone. Recognizing the

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[12] Covington, M. V., & Omelich, C. L. (1988)
[13] Rotter, Julian B. (1975)

unknown skill does not widen the comfort zone. It belongs to subjective vs objective crisis as well.

- Signs for the meeting with a crisis.
  - The most informative answers describe a frustration – it is a necessity of crises – that makes one to create the conditions of his job. Employees often need to have a deeper insight and wider perspective for that. We should find the items allude to regression or improvement.
- Stress to authority exceeding
  - Higher responsibility means higher insight. If this deeper understanding is new it causes stress. Assessors should find the signs of regression or stress resistance. The coping strategy can be the most informative.
  - Asking about the role of duty of the superior can inform us about this insight. Before meeting the crisis applicants cannot describe this with insight. They describe the boss's higher responsibility stereotypically but without practical experience.
- Defense mechanisms about a role
  - Improvement of a crisis changes the applicants identification with their roles. The defense mechanism mostly belongs to the actual challenge (current or desired position) that can lead to regression or development.
  - Understanding that all the frustrating factors are parts of the game means accepting the role; and it initiates the improvement of the crisis.
- Career consultancy, personal progress discussions with the leader
  - The method is different because the employee and his or her superior have (or should have) an intimate relationship. The leader is mostly aware of the subordinate's weaknesses, potentials and possible ambitions. In practice leader collects evidence during the year about these crises, but in this conversation he needs to identify and nominate them. In this case the employee has no interest to hide his or her limits, but the awareness and the consciousness are never as high as from the leader's point of view.
  - The performance appraisals could focus on the same crises and role regressions. The most informative conversations analyses the interpretation of achieving or failing the personal objectives.

Assessment centers, development centers

As mentioned, assessment centers mostly follow other selection forms, such as interview. If the assessors have preliminary information about a suspicion of a crisis they can check it by choosing relevant tasks or group games to see these on the job. For that they need to create the similar stress, demands and challenges to the applied position as possible. Anyway, the given position and its job description inform us about the required won crises, so we need to focus on these at establish the AC. It can contradict with a conservative AC rule to keep the time

schedule anyway. If assessors happen to find a situation game or task that models the wanted crisis, I suggest giving more time to participant to better understand the candidates and seeing the developed outcome of the crisis.

So the most important part of the technique is to know what possible crises should be searched for. Even the interviews and ACs are not suitable for crisis analysis if applicants have the permission to give stereotype answers. If assessors get such answer they should accept it but ask more. The best question is that the candidate can answer with using all the resources he has. Too easy question is not enough. The candidates' usual feedback shows that they better knowing themselves after the session but it was not easy.

CONCLUSION

In this paper a novel method for assessment was suggested. This method says that the assessors should look for the typical crises of the career development. The trend of the crisis on the one hand depends on the current stage of career; on the other hand there are idiosyncrasies of the participants. Only the non-stereotypical answers can give authentic information so the assessors need to walk around the question properly. The method helps to predict the performance and the personal development and gives tools to leaders to coach the candidates.

In this paper I have analyzed 36 candidates for different positions and 26 employees who applied for career consultancy. The analysis of the pattern indicates that different kinds of crises can be found. Some of these are grouped in hierarchic order, some others relate differently to the others. These crises can be very useful to better understand at first the process of career improvement, at second the current state that can add useful information for meeting or not the expectation of the position. And finally it can be useful to predict the further improving process and the performance. Besides that understanding the state and the completion level of the crises helps to decide between candidates applying positions, it can provide grabbing points to current or next superiors for personal progress and development efforts. Mentoring people through their crises pays in higher performance and greater engagement.

Analyzing the patterns shows trends of crises. In a larger pattern it is possible to find further crises. Some of them could be categorized into these trends, but hopefully we can find rare or individual crises. This is why this pattern did not contain wide forms of jobs and workers, such as associates before retirement, mothers getting back to work after maternity leave etc., and there can be further trends of crises that were not indicated in this study.

For assessment reasons crisis analysis makes assessors' judgment not only a quantitative data, but furthermore a qualitative description. This can be an input to developmental purposes and further prediction tools to assessment aims.

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Political thinking: the maturity step usually beyond strategic role. This means the ability to find sponsors for initiative instead of fighting with someone by arguments, networking instead of assuming common interests, understanding the hidden, unveiled reasons of management decisions instead of accepting only the professional reasons.

Applicator role: usually a beginner role of a person in work who receives exact tasks. He or she is task-oriented. Usually shifts the contradicted situations and decisions off. He or she needs strict leadership.

Conceptual role: one understands tasks in a wider context, able to receive complex objectives, understands the aims of processes, target-oriented.

Frustration of professional or strategic role: one is blocked to step on a higher or more conceptual level of role and one is frustrated to live his or her engagement to this role due to the stress factors of the environment such us authoriter superior.

Personality development: among several approaches I will choose Erikson's[14] one, because it provides a very good context to understand crisis that develops us.

KAM: key account manager (sales position)

Extrinsic, intrinsic motivation: self-generated motivation or the motivation that comes from outside, especially from the superior.

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[14] Erikson (1965)

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Project managerial challenge – a few of the project management skills are highlighted in this paper such as leading a team of colleagues without dedicated authority, not from superior position.

INTRODUCTION

Recently increased attention has been given to assessment forms, especially to assessment centers, even from scientific and company environments. Several results[15] emphasize the advantages of assessment centers as a deepest way to summarize the difference between the candidates. However, this turns the companies preferring AC-s compared to other selection methods. Apart from other reasons it is due to AC is inevitably the most expensive[16] one and it is dedicated to the most selected candidates. According to my research AC is one of the best method to indicate not just the difference between the candidates but the most important actual crises and their dynamics in personal development. It is useful if we use the method with developmental aims (development center). However, we have the same opportunity to find these crises during the interview – certainly not with the same method to detect.

One of the basic personality development approaches belonged to Erikson[17] introduced eight stages of self-development during life. Each stage sets up a crisis that has or doesn't have good solutions. Crises that are not won by the person blocks the further development. He says that even different expectations of the environment, even different career models have these stages and their dynamics are the same. Of course the dramatic content is changing as the background and the situation changes. Although Erikson focused on the whole life we can recognize analogies of how crises function within a certain stage. The existential part of life mostly belongs to the fifth eriksonal stage. This is Identity vs Role confusion. The point of this stage is that the person among other areas of life needs to find his or her identity in profession – if we concentrate on work – but only after trying the optimal quantity of opportunities. To successfully win this stage's crises there must be a developmental link between these career opportunities.

Although the eriksonal stages presuppose the success of the previous one, this rule is not so strong in career development context with the crises I have examined, due to there are many ways of career. The vertical progress is only one of them.

The main focus of researchers is on the predictive validity factor of selection methods. Jones and his colleagues[18] showed that a well-established assessment center has a better predictive validity if the assessors use the written and subjective comments than using only

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[15] Krause and Gebert (2003);
 Livens et al (2003)
[16] Thornton et al. (2000)
[17] E. H. Erikson (1965)
[18] A.Jones et al (1991)

the numerical evaluation. This could make us feel that the static state of the competence of the candidates may be not enough to understand the hidden or the presently manifesting potentials. Sometimes the assessors detect the potential, but they can find evidence that some kind of dynamics precludes the manifestation of the given skill. This could be key question if we use the method as a development center but also very useful for selection to understand the candidates.

FOCUS ON INTEGRATION

Over the last 30 years many studies have searched the competence factors that were necessary for the applied position and the best way to assess them. According to some results[19], there was a significant difference between a well-established AC and a structured deep interview as we could detect the manifestation or the potential of these skills and competences. My study focuses not on the difference between the two selection way – I also find AC better method for predict the validity, but I also agree with the results of the studies that have found AC one of the most expensive method[20]. After all, I concentrated on and tried to identify some kinds of developmental crises inside this stage. I think analyzing these crises could answer not only the questions about the existence of the certain competences but it can point out and describe the process as they are developing through the experience.

Pattern

I have examined two different groups. The first group contains 36 candidates selected to the final interview. The candidates applied answering advertisement or received head hunting calls.

The other group contains 26 employees from a multinational FMCG company. They applied for career consultancy. The interview's style with the two patterns was certainly different, but I have consciously searched for crises during the work to describe theses' dynamics and the current state in both groups. The most informative answers to identify token crises are given to the questions that ask descriptions of how to fit the different expectations in the current and the previous positions. The two patterns have surely different authenticity, because the candidates intend to win the position so they have strong interest to show all crises have been won – as they believe. Of course the method how we need to question it in interviews must be different. However, this distortion effect exists in AC-s as well. Fortunately due to its longer duration and its playful atmosphere candidates could feel a little bit more comfortable to forget the assessors' direct purpose. Although the other group whose participants have their own development purposes with the sessions so it is not much easier to detect these crises. Even though they don't have a direct intention to hide their frustrations during the work, what's more the sessions starting points are these challenges with a hard

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[19] A. Jones et al (1991)
[20] Krause and Gebert (2003)

emotional content, employees are not fully conscious about their psychological blocks. So the method is just different, not easier.

Since the top 3 candidates' patterns are after a selection process, they have shown less deviation on experience and represented more won battles. As my purpose was not to compare the two patterns one with the other, but find as many relevant crises as possible; I didn't separate them at the summary.

How to detect crises

After all, the most important purpose of this paper is to point out the method that we can implement in interviews and ACs. To answer this the first thing is to emphasis what we have to look for. First of all, let's see what crises were detected in the patterns and how these function:

Description of detected crises

Maybe it would be very comfortable if we could find crises hierarchically linked to each other. There are four crises where we can declare some hierarchy if we think about a classical career development as a vertical progress, but I can show exceptions so the hierarchy would be relevant only to better recognize them but not to better understand the essence of them.

We can see the repartition of typical crises among position groups in figure 1. On the one hand the chart shows the number of crises, at the other hand we can also see the percentage of crises among the given kind of positions. The basis of position kind's declaration was the applied position in the group of candidates and the current position in the group of consultation participants.

Crisis groups	Associates (11)	Senior associates (16)	Operative leader (8)	Middle manager, strategic manager (22)	Top managers (5)
Ego identity vs role diffusion	5 45%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Task vs target orientation	10 91%	12 75%	1 9%	4 2%	1 20%
Operative vs strategic	0 0%	6 38%	5 63%	16 72%	2 40%

Strategic vs political	0 0%	0 0%	3 36%	4 18%	3 60%
Subjective vs objective	2 18%	4 25%	3 36%	7 32%	3 60%
Creative vs analytical	0 0%	2 13%	1 9%	3 14%	0 0%
Theoretical vs practical	0 0%	1 6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Passive or aggressive vs assertive	1 9%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%

Figure 1: Identified crises among top 3 candidates and career consultation participants[21]

Kind of hierarchical crises:
- Ego identity vs confusion of roles (eriksonal fifth stage)
- Task vs target orientation
- Operative vs strategic thinking
- Strategic vs political thinking

In this pattern I have also found nonhierarchical crises that could influence others and relevant concerning career:
- Creative vs analytical
- Theoretical vs practical
- Passive vs aggressive vs assertive
- Subjective vs objective

How the crises function

Ego identity vs confusion of roles (eriksonal fifth stage)

The person needs to find his or her identity. The optimal progress of this stage is that after a few trials one can find his or her identity and any further development following a logical direction. According to Erikson, there are two different bad ways of closing this stage. The first one if the individual closes this stage too early without enough real trials. For example, there are several doctors in the family retroactively from three generations. Sometimes there is no question about the career; the child accepts the given script. The second one if the person always tries new opportunities without final decision-making and engagement. Erikson calls this confusion of roles[22].

A good solution of this stage could be the basis for further working crises. There are interesting programs used by international companies to adjust this balance between the two

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[21] Percental figures are rounded numbers
[22] Erikson, Erik, H. (1956)

extremities such as rotation to widen the employee's perspective or mentoring or project opportunities to deepen the insight of him or her. In my pattern there was one example of this in the career consultancy group. To the question about naming the ambition she gave an abstract answer and nominated tools such as education and training.

Task vs target orientation

We can set up two different forms of engagement according to some approach[23]. These are the target and the task orientation. The first one evokes proactivity and independency in work. The second one makes the worker receive only exact commands. The employee is committed only to finish the task without standing for the result of it. If a person is target oriented he or she will better understand the whole process and the reason for acting. There are several implementer positions at companies where result orientation is not expected. The crisis point when an associate appointed to the first position where decisions or proactivity are expected during the work. At first, the worker's defense mechanism makes him delegate back the responsibility to the superior by asking him or her to make the decision instead of him, i.e. the employee. There are two typical reasons for this regression. One is the stress itself that reduces the risk taking. The other is the frustrated unconscious feeling that he or she was successful until this new challenge with the routine, accustomed effort. The employee usually tries to use the same skills and competences. The typical attitude of this stage is "Give me a definite task and I'll give you the definite output! Protect me from intermediate decisions.". The good solution of this crisis is to step out from the comfort zone and develop a new attitude, tolerating the contradicting information and the complexity of the duties, to be able to make decisions from the view of target and its criteria.

Operative vs strategic thinking

As the employee is getting more experienced, he or she is able to manage his or her own process in its complexity. At this level the person can be target oriented, but all the actions have a present time context. He or she is a present time problem solver. One can realize the relationship with other processes, but only in the short run. His or her attitude can be typified as "Give me a definite target and I organize the completion; protect me from target setting.". There might be problems with the priority setting as well. One may realize the importance of dealing with the long term actions that has greater effect on the success, but some urgent problems appear – as always. Due to the latest habit the temptation wins and the leader turns over his or her time schedule. If the leader doesn't stand against the operative whirling he or she won't have enough opportunity to get a new practice in strategic thinking. The good solution of this crisis is to be able to think of a longer period. One can influence and organize the present action from the perspective of the possible or planned future. He or she can set up the priority on the strength of the impact to the future. The winner attitude is: "Let's use conceptual consciousness instead of increasing headless present effort.".

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[23] Yeo, R. K. (2006)

Strategic vs political thinking

Around the middle management level the expert can be committed for long term goals, has a very deep insight in business and several processes attached to the strategic goals. One can set up long term goals, because he or she can feel or calculate the future trends and the possible reactions of the market to his or her strategic action. That's why one can be a good strategic planner. If he or she wants to be more effective with initiating projects and want to be a partner or member of the top management, the crisis is to recognize that there is something else what influences the decisions of upper management beyond professional and strategic factors. There are hidden reasons behind the veils which are rarely discussed, but sometimes have stronger effect to the upper decisions than the professional arguments. The political level has a different language as well. The best outcome of the crisis is to be able to speak this language. That's why project managers have to find a sponsor or sponsors for the projects, because if there is any conflict with other managers, the sponsor speaks this language and can use his ascendency. The pure professional or strategic arguments are not enough. It counts who says them. The essential attitude of the crisis is "Give me a vision, I can set up what is worthy of achieving, I possess and manage the resources to win, but please protect me from labyrinthine, hidden interests inside the company.". To win this crisis one needs to learn the rules of lobbying, managing the power of upper management and the special interests (not always tightly belonging to the work) as well.

Creative vs analytical

The list of detected nonhierarchical crises of this pattern starts with a balance question. The present or future time problem solving can happen with two different mindsets. Basically there are characters with the first or the latter, but as the expectations are increasing the way of development improves the other part of the personality. On the one hand, if you are analytical your sharp criticism can demotivate the creative team members; on the other hand if you are creative your ideas bleed to death in practice without precise planning. The task of this crisis is to synthetize the two sides. It is not easy if we think about a classic problem solving process. It is useful to define the target first, and one can list the opportunities of ideas. Further to this you can plan or work out the promising ones and check them. In the creative part the analytical comments reduce the number and originality of the ideas; in the following part you should not skip the critical remarks to be able to avoid mistakes or wrong choice from solution opportunities. One of the possible winning strategies of this crisis if one can separate in time these two approaches, but implements them to the process. Others can engage themselves to either thinking mode, but as a manager collects different thinking members to the team and they utilize them in appropriate time of the cooperation. People who stick in this crisis can easily block themselves or other team members by trying to meet the double expectation simultaneously.

Theoretical vs practical

I don't know how much this crisis is common; I have detected it in this pattern the first time. This candidate had a lot of experience as a consultant, in addition with successes. In his current position he was expected to execute his job in practice, but had a lot of difficulties with practical methods. Due to the fact that he had had successes in strategic planning his defense mechanisms regressed him to this thinking mode instead of acting. We can link this situation to the basic eriksonal ego identity stage, and maybe it is the outgrowth of an early closing to strategy without enough practical experience. If he had planned his career, it would have been the best to "rotate" himself to a practical position earlier to be able to synthetize the missing experience.

Passive vs aggressive vs assertive

The classic conflict solving behaviors[24] can be understood in the context of a working crisis, but mostly in connection with other crises. If we think about the strategic vs political crises one has to initiate projects to achieve high objectives, even driven by extrinsic or intrinsic motivation. He or she has to lobby for the project, confront with several members of upper management. It does matter to choose the right behavior to succeed. Passivity would mean an operative regression and frustration about initiate. Aggressive behavior will cause prejudice and leadership gap. A good solution of this crisis is to be able to represent one's interest, but conform to management's interests simultaneously or politically find mentors or sponsors to fight for us. Apart from this pattern's example this crisis can be imagined in several different situations.

Subjective vs objective

The ability to think objectively can be relevant in any stages of career development. Sometimes this skill can be linked closely to self-esteem. It is not usual to find this competence among selectional processes' criteria, because it is not easy to measure. As a consequence, it has a moral aspect, it is not difficult to prove ourselves to be moral in decisions. Even in interviews or ACs. Being objective is something more that can be detected in selectional forms. The elements of it can be:

- stress resistance during contradicting information,
- stress resistance in case of difficult reception of initiatives,
- resist against operative whirling in the midst of functional and cross functional expectations,
- able to practice and think playfully without thinking regression even at high risk

We can detect one or more areas where stress makes the candidate think regressed because of stress. If we use the interview or the AC in selection orders we can describe the applicant's coping strategy and its effect on the job. In case of developmental usage the mentor or the employee gets grabbing points to improve.

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[24] McCann, J. T. (1988)

What kind of questioning technique is applied

The technique is different if we use it for developmental and selection purposes such as represented in the two groups of the current pattern. The goal of the assessors is to identify these or similar crises and understand how the candidate improve to win it.

Interviews
- Asking to describe the authority and scoop of activities.
  - The answer can indicate the perspectives and attitudes which can inform about the hierarchical crises.
- Asking to describe successes and failures
  - Not rarely the successes belong to a maturing process, sometimes the challenge makes the candidate exceed his or her comfort zone. The description informs us about the regression or improvement. Without the opportunity of regression there is no crisis. An authentic reference for a higher level of solution indicates the won crises. Sometimes assessors need to check if the self-esteem builds in the success in a right way. The attribution[25] of success can show differences according to control attitude[26]. There are some examples for the candidates meet the extra expectation, he or she is successful, but the regression still exists as he or she aims to go back to comfort zone. Recognizing the unknown skill does not widen the comfort zone. It belongs to subjective vs objective crisis as well.
- Signs for the meeting with a crisis.
  - The most informative answers describe a frustration – it is a necessity of crises – that makes one to create the conditions of his job. Employees often need to have a deeper insight and wider perspective for that. We should find the items allude to regression or improvement.
- Stress to authority exceeding
  - Higher responsibility means higher insight. If this deeper understanding is new it causes stress. Assessors should find the signs of regression or stress resistance. The coping strategy can be the most informative.
  - Asking about the role of duty of the superior can inform us about this insight. Before meeting the crisis applicants cannot describe this with insight. They describe the boss's higher responsibility stereotypically but without practical experience.
- Defense mechanisms about a role

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[25] Covington, M. V., & Omelich, C. L. (1988)
[26] Rotter, Julian B. (1975)

- Improvement of a crisis changes the applicants identification with their roles. The defense mechanism mostly belongs to the actual challenge (current or desired position) that can lead to regression or development.
- Understanding that all the frustrating factors are parts of the game means accepting the role; and it initiates the improvement of the crisis.
- Career consultancy, personal progress discussions with the leader
  - The method is different because the employee and his or her superior have (or should have) an intimate relationship. The leader is mostly aware of the subordinate's weaknesses, potentials and possible ambitions. In practice leader collects evidence during the year about these crises, but in this conversation he needs to identify and nominate them. In this case the employee has no interest to hide his or her limits, but the awareness and the consciousness are never as high as from the leader's point of view.
  - The performance appraisals could focus on the same crises and role regressions. The most informative conversations analyses the interpretation of achieving or failing the personal objectives.

Assessment centers, development centers

As mentioned, assessment centers mostly follow other selection forms, such as interview. If the assessors have preliminary information about a suspicion of a crisis they can check it by choosing relevant tasks or group games to see these on the job. For that they need to create the similar stress, demands and challenges to the applied position as possible. Anyway, the given position and its job description inform us about the required won crises, so we need to focus on these at establish the AC. It can contradict with a conservative AC rule to keep the time schedule anyway. If assessors happen to find a situation game or task that models the wanted crisis, I suggest giving more time to participant to better understand the candidates and seeing the developed outcome of the crisis.

So the most important part of the technique is to know what possible crises should be searched for. Even the interviews and ACs are not suitable for crisis analysis if applicants have the permission to give stereotype answers. If assessors get such answer they should accept it but ask more. The best question is that the candidate can answer with using all the resources he has. Too easy question is not enough. The candidates' usual feedback shows that they better knowing themselves after the session but it was not easy.

CONCLUSION

In this paper a novel method for assessment was suggested. This method says that the assessors should look for the typical crises of the career development. The trend of the crisis on the one hand depends on the current stage of career; on the other hand there are idiosyncrasies of the participants. Only the non-stereotypical answers can give authentic

information so the assessors need to walk around the question properly. The method helps to predict the performance and the personal development and gives tools to leaders to coach the candidates.

In this paper I have analyzed 36 candidates for different positions and 26 employees who applied for career consultancy. The analysis of the pattern indicates that different kinds of crises can be found. Some of these are grouped in hierarchic order, some others relate differently to the others. These crises can be very useful to better understand at first the process of career improvement, at second the current state that can add useful information for meeting or not the expectation of the position. And finally it can be useful to predict the further improving process and the performance. Besides that understanding the state and the completion level of the crises helps to decide between candidates applying positions, it can provide grabbing points to current or next superiors for personal progress and development efforts. Mentoring people through their crises pays in higher performance and greater engagement.

Analyzing the patterns shows trends of crises. In a larger pattern it is possible to find further crises. Some of them could be categorized into these trends, but hopefully we can find rare or individual crises. This is why this pattern did not contain wide forms of jobs and workers, such as associates before retirement, mothers getting back to work after maternity leave etc., and there can be further trends of crises that were not indicated in this study.

For assessment reasons crisis analysis makes assessors' judgment not only a quantitative data, but furthermore a qualitative description. This can be an input to developmental purposes and further prediction tools to assessment aims.

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