

SKILL GENERATOR ASSESSMENT GAME

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Abstract

The project „Skill Generator Assessment Game“ (SGAG) is an Erasmus+ strategic partnership which aim is to develop the crucial soft and social skills of the VET schools students and thus to increase their chance to find a job and to contribute to the general struggle with unemployment. The project is financed by the European Commission and runs from October 2015 to September 2017 in partnership with institutions from Czech Republic (the coordinator of the project), Romania, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Greece. The partners aim at developing an ICT-based education tool simulating real life situations in order to support apprentices/VET students to enhance and foster transversal skills needed by the current labour market.

Keywords: Skill; gamification.

Due to the current labour market changes, there is a clear tendency towards the broadening of the required skills portfolio at all occupational levels, linked to “non-routine” tasks. For example, ICT professionals have to develop skills in marketing or management; services workers have to develop customer-oriented skills and digital literacy or tourism services professionals have to look for new ways to attract interest by potential clients. In many knowledge-intensive sectors, managerial skills and scientific reasoning are in fact more and more frequently needed. This reflects the growing demand from employers for transversal key competences.

Beside the regular entrepreneurial courses focused on economy, business planning, financial management etc. it is crucial for the young people to develop transversal skills, promoting ones creativity, innovativeness, ability to work in team or communication skills. The transversal skills are crucial for employees themselves as well. There are many youngsters choosing self-employment as an alternative option to the regular employment. Young people still in education or training have not yet acquired the necessary knowledge and experiences or skills needed to decide whether the self-employment is suitable as their future career.

The absence of soft and social skills is often the reason of failure of the VET school leavers when applying for a job. The future employers of the VET students press the VET schools to provide students with these social and soft skills such as communication, team work or stress-management.

A study published by the University of Genoa, IT, states that generally employers are

quite unsatisfied by the lack of transversal skills in newly hired graduates. The research also elaborates on the fact that, due the growing complexity of enterprises, multidisciplinary job assignments and more in general complexity of society, those skills have to be fostered at an early stage of the education path.

In addition, more and more companies are choosing more sustainable managerial styles, and they require their employees to be update to such practices.

Partners of the project carried out a study in each of the project partner's country among VET providers and employers, in order to suit the project activities directly to the needs of apprentices/VET students and their future employers.

The common problems in the countries participating in the project are as follows:

- There is a general lack of materials dedicated to transversal skills development. The ones existing are not very appealing for young students, as they deal with skills that are not immediately expendable.
- Teachers have no time to prepare themselves and/or adapt the materials to their needs.

Both problems can be solved using ICT which is more appealing to the students and less time consuming, as they can practise the game within the homework exercises, while the teachers can just use the module that fits their needs. Based on the study, the transversal skills for this project were chosen. Such as time management, the use of sustainable business model, communication, problem solving and team work. Both sides have ensured the need for a project as the present one and future potential cooperation were established.

During the project, the partners will create an e-course to provide educational materials on the skills needed by the market, a digital serious game, used as practical application of the information gained, and a scoring system, used as an assessment method. The platform hosting those tools will be available for apprentice and VET students, teachers, counsellors and other professionals working with young adults.

The form of digital game was chosen in order to shorten the generational and technological gap between today's students and teachers. The two groups (most likely) grew up in a different 'technological environment'. This form is more attractive for students and hence more motivating.

The platform will include modules focused on each of the transversal skill (time management, use of sustainable business model, communication, problem solving and team work) both in the supporting materials/e-course and in the ICT game. The game will serve as self-evaluation tool for students who are, based on their score, able to decide which course suits their needs the best. The game is simulating real life situations faced by today's students. Young adults can relate to the game figures and go through the game intuitively. The structure and rules of the game makes it easier to understand and let the student focus on developing each of the skills in depth, as it enables students to see the outcome of their choices and consequences, and impact on their environment.

As indicators to be followed are:

- Delivering a Story outline
- Creating s Story board
- Developing the Game

The storyboard will consist of the narrative of good practices accompanied by comprehensive guidance on methodological approach and transferable tools. This output will promote information to interested stakeholders and will be the main tool to guide and support the replication/adaptation of the model in dissemination activities. The model will focus on a set of skills selected as the most needed, few others may be added while the development is underway. Some of these skills were chosen as main topics of the game:

- Time management
- Communication
- Problem solving
- The use and aims of sustainable business / entrepreneurship
- Team work

The ICT experts will start suggesting the best technological options for the game support and delivery. The model proposed encourages non-formal learning that combines the use of a serious game for education purpose. The development of the methodology also includes preparation activities for the dissemination phase and will result in an electronic guide made available freely on the project website, allowing potential users to replicate/adapt the practices proposed.

Together with the game, the e-course creates the main outputs of the project.

The whole training path aims at support the target group to enlarge their knowledge on transversal skills (problem-solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, and more generally, “non-routine skills”).

Using this model will prepare young students (VET and apprentices) to be better prepared when facing a job interview, when dealing with different tasks at the workplace and above all enhance transversal skills for their professional careers and as EU citizens as well.

Before the pilot testing, the partners will internally evaluate the contents and the platform usability, for final adjustments and technical issues detection. The training then will be tested in each country and feedback will be gathered in order to update and finalize the methodology and its contents that can be used by anyone.

Each local partner will select the participants and ensure smooth running of the pilot, thanks also to the promotional events conducted with local key stakeholders (see local event further below). Local partners will also be in charge with gathering feedback from the participants, which will later be shared with the other partners in order to compile the final methodology.

Relevant and technical information are added to the e-guide used to support participants

The expected impact on the participants, participating organizations, target groups and other stakeholders is based on the aims and objectives of the project. The expected impact on all stakeholders starts with a better overall understanding of the needs of potential employers of the VET school leavers concerning social and soft skills of their future employees.

The main impact on the target group lies in the improvement of the students’ transversal skills which will consequently lead to higher chances of these VET students/apprentices

to find a job. The participating teachers will build their capacities by adding the digital skills level and innovative material usage into their teaching methods. The impact on the participating schools will reflect in their improved teaching methodologies with an enlarged stress on including soft and social skills into curriculums.

References

Application Form „Skill Generator Assessment Game” - KA2 - Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices-Strategic Partnership for vocational education and training.