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SWORD - School and Work Related Dual Learning

Soft skills in vocational school

Implementation of a learning model

SWOT analysis

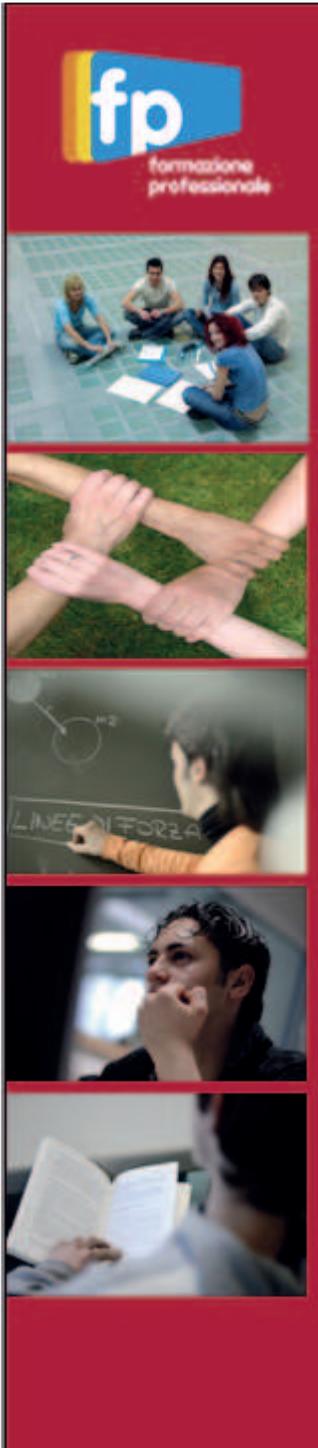


Hamburg April 2017



Content of the presentation

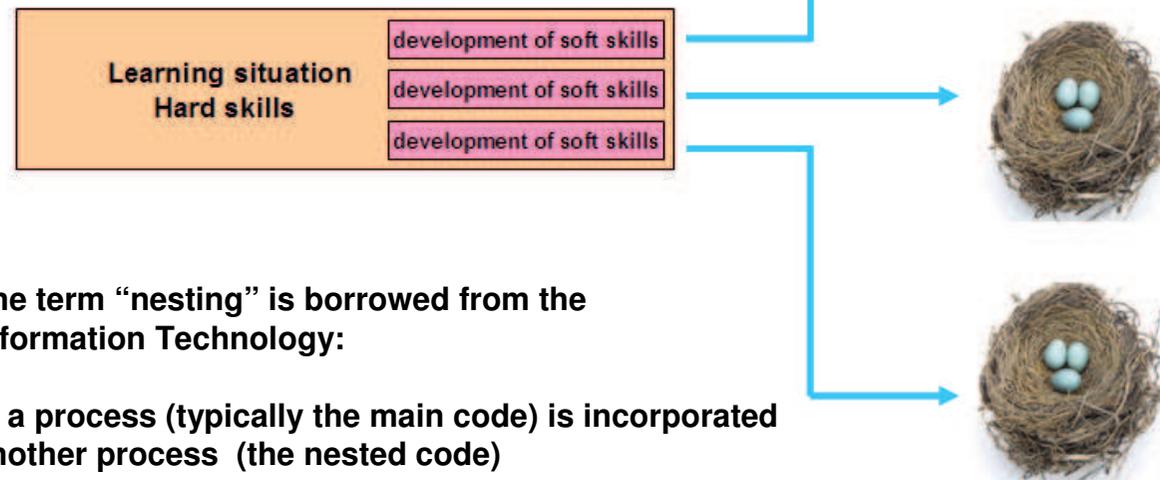
- I remember (in short) the main project objective
- SWOT analysis: implementation of a learning operational model for soft skills
- Some reflections on the elements highlighted in the SWOT analysis



The main project objective:

design a soft skills learning model to use in the vocational schools of the Province of Bolzano

Our proposed model is based on the “nesting” concept



The term “nesting” is borrowed from the Information Technology:

in a process (typically the main code) is incorporated another process (the nested code)

In the main learning process (hard skills oriented) is incorporated the soft skills learning process (the nested learning process)

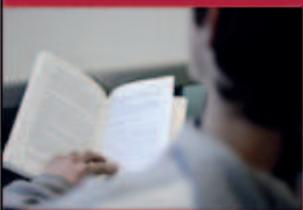


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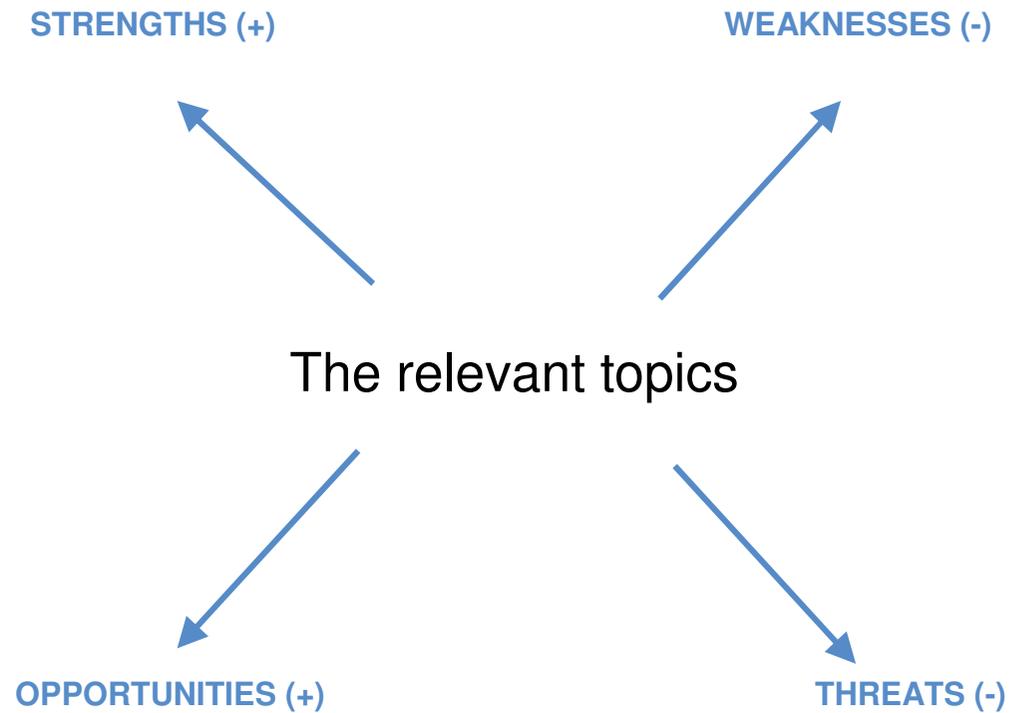
Our proposed approach

- learn soft skills through authentic tasks
- developing soft and hard skills together (as parallel process)
- completed the learning of soft skills during the practice phase in enterprise



SWOT analysis

Implementation of an operative soft skills learning model
in the vocational school





SWOT ANALYSIS: STRENGTHS (+) INTERNAL FACTORS

■ The vocational school supporting learning through authentic and real situations tasks

> the learning sustained at vocational school are inspired by the Work Based Learning

this means:

- short distance between learning and work
- student and companies needs can coincide

■ Teachers have a deep knowledge of soft skills necessary for a specific profession

> all teachers before being teachers were professionals in their field

this means:

- training responds to the needs of companies
- this is not a “scholastic approach” to the competence

■ Teachers work in teams and promote a synergistic approach to the competence

> hard and soft skills are developed in an integrated process

this means:

- a meaningful learning view
- a holistic approach to the professional competence



SWOT ANALYSIS: WEAKNESSES (-) INTERNAL FACTORS

- **The learning model requires a detailed design.
All actions (hard- soft oriented) should be described explicitly**

> a detailed design is the basis for educational actions and not only a formality to be satisfied

this means:

- enhance the learning design skills of teachers
- more time is needed for the design phase

- **Rigidity of the teachers school timetable**

> the school curriculum is based on a vision for disciplines and not for skills

this means:

- it is formally complicated implement a model based on skills

- **Implement integrated training actions (hard and soft skills oriented) requires more time**

> It could be a problem to the respect the institutional curricular program

this means:

- it is necessary redesign (in part) the curriculum (a reduction of the number of covered topics)



SWOT ANALYSIS: OPPORTUNITIES (+) EXTERNAL FACTORS

■ Awareness by companies that soft skills have a central role to any type of profession

> attention to the soft skills issue

this means:

- the enterprises welcome school initiatives in direction of the developing of soft skills
- the enterprises cooperate with the school during the internship

■ Awareness of young students and families that possess appropriate soft skills increases the employability chance

> attention to the soft skills issue

this means:

- students consider useful to acquire soft skills

■ The training (of hard and soft skills) can have continuity in the apprenticeships

> this ensures a continuous training process at work

this means:

- the training process can be improved in the apprenticeship path



SWOT ANALYSIS: THREATS (-) EXTERNAL FACTORS

- **The idea that soft skills can be acquired and developed only in the enterprise (at work)**

> this vision can weaken the role of the vocational school on this issue

this means:

- only the work can be an opportunity to do practical experience useful to develop soft skills

- **Currently does not exist as for hard skills a framework of formal competence related to soft skills for the different professional profiles**

> the lack of a formalized soft skills framework can make the implementation of new learning models difficult

this means:

- the development of soft skills can take at this time only an experimental form

- **Consider the issue of soft skills a temporary fashion and not a competence priority**

> the risk is a superficial approach to the subject

this means:

- the risk of an extemporaneous approach and therefore ineffective



To conclude:

the most critical elements for implementing the model highlighted by SWOT analysis



- today our school curriculum is based on a vision for disciplines and not for skills (the vocational school system has some rigidity in this field)
- the learning design phase is often underestimated (this is considered a formality to be satisfied)
- we do not have the formalization of an institutional framework for soft skills as for hard skills
- remains in some cases the idea that soft skills can be acquired and developed only in the enterprise at work (the underlying vision is that work is the only context in which to make meaningful experiences)



References to the 20 guiding principles “High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning”

- systematic **cooperation between VET schools** or training centers and **companies** (Principle 4)
- finding the **right balance between** the **specific skill needs** of training **companies** and the general **need to improving the employability** of apprentices (Principle 7)
- **promoting** the **permeability between VET** and other educational and **career pathways** (Principle 11)
- **ensuring** the **content of VET programmes** is **responsive to changing skill needs in companies and society** (Principle 17)
- **ensuring** fair, **valid, and authentic assessment of learning outcomes** (Principle 19)



thanks for your attention