

An operational model for the development of soft skills for young people who are preparing for the transition from school to work.



## Contents

An operational model for the development of soft skills for young people who are preparing for the transition from school to work.....	3
1. Proposal for the implementation of a practical model for the development of soft skills in vocational training.....	5
Strength (+).....	5
Weaknesses (-) .....	6
Opportunities (+).....	7
Threats (-) .....	7
2. Use tools of observation and evaluation of learning related to soft skills in school and in the company .....	8
Strength (+).....	8
Weaknesses (-) .....	9
Opportunities (+).....	10
Threats (-) .....	10

## **An operational model for the development of soft skills for young people who are preparing for the transition from school to work.**

### **Overview**

The topic of how to support the development of soft skills is very important for those working in the vocational school and has the task of defining what learning support in training, how to prepare students to work, how to assess the effectiveness of what it is learned.

In the paths of the vocational school the soft skills issue is in the background respect to the actions designed and implemented to promote the learning of technical and professional skills (hard skills). In some educational programs are planned actions that respond to this need but have not yet entered a stable and structured manner in the planned curricular training. The goal of this project is to formulate an initial proposal for a practical model for supporting learning and the development of soft-skills in students who are engaged in their Professional Training preparation in view of the transition between the education system and the workplace

The reference themes in our exploration:

- ⇒ how we can combine oriented education to the development of hard skills with an educational action aimed at the development of soft skills
- ⇒ how we can support meaningful learning in educational actions for development of soft skills
- ⇒ what tools to use to evaluate the student's growth path in reference to the learning of soft skills with special regard to actions taken at work
- ⇒ what kind of proposal can be made in relation to a practical model for the development of soft skills that can be experienced in vocational school

In accordance with the pilot experimentation we highlighted two aspects that we believe central and were analyzed according to the SWOT methodology.

1. a proposal for the implementation of a practical model for the development of soft skills in vocational training
2. use tools of observation and evaluation of learning related to soft skills in school and in the company

## 1. Proposal for the implementation of a practical model for the development of soft skills in vocational training

References to content: **final report document**

Reference to guiding principles: **High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles**

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

### Strength (+)

- The vocational school is in direct relation with the companies with which it has a continuous exchange of information
  - ⇒ the needs of the labor market are a reference for educational activities
- Vocational school operates supporting meaningful learning through authentic and real situations tasks
  - ⇒ the learning sustained at school are inspired by the work based learning
- Teachers have a deep knowledge of soft skills necessary for a particular profession
  - ⇒ all teachers before being teachers were professionals in their field
- Teachers work in teams and promote a synergistic approach to the competence
  - ⇒ the hard and soft skills are developed in an integrated way
- The paths of vocational training have a duration compatible with a progressive development plan of soft skills
  - ⇒ the training courses are of three or four years. An appropriate period to support a gradual development of soft skills

## Weaknesses (-)

- To implement integrated training actions (hard and soft skills oriented) are required more time than the current ones
  - ⇒ It could be a problem reported to the respect of training programs
- Rigidity of the school timetable plan for teachers
  - ⇒ the school day is typically built on school subjects
- It requests a detailed training design with an explicit description of the educational actions
  - ⇒ the training project must represent a basis for teaching and not a formality to be satisfied
- Difficulty inserting the actions for soft skills in those aimed at hard skills
  - ⇒ It must be made a deep analysis on teaching practices
- High level of collaboration and sharing of objectives in teaching staff
  - ⇒ the teaching team has to have a vision and a common working method
- The information regarding the student's learning in enterprises should be strengthened
  - ⇒ It goes invested time and resources to these activities

## Opportunities (+)

- awareness by companies that soft skills are central to any type of profession
  - ⇒ greater attention to the issue
- possess soft skills appropriate in view of increased employability
  - ⇒ the issue of how to promote the employability of young people is a strategic
- companies believe that some basic soft skills can be acquired already in school
  - ⇒ vocational schools have a responsibility in this perspective
- companies have with the vocational school a systematic cooperation in the field of youth training
  - ⇒ this aspect is a prerequisite to the success of initiatives like this
- training (hard and soft skills) can have continuity in the apprenticeships
  - ⇒ Vocational schools also form apprentices. This ensures a continuous training process at work

## Threats (-)

- The common idea is that soft skills can be acquired and developed only in enterprise
  - ⇒ this vision can weaken the role assigned to vocational school
- It does not exist as hard skills for a framework of formal competence for different professional profiles
  - ⇒ the lack of a formalization can make the implementation of new teaching models harder
- The staff in the company does not always have the time needed to be devoted to the monitoring of learning referred to the hard skills and soft skills of the trainees students
  - ⇒ It can be difficult to determine if the students have been learning in the company
- Consider the issue of soft skills only a temporary fashion and not a priority
  - ⇒ the risk is a superficial approach to the subject

## 2. Use tools of observation and evaluation of learning related to soft skills in school and in the company

References to content: **final report document**

Reference to guiding principles: **High-performance apprenticeships & work-based learning: 20 guiding principles**

- **Principle 4:** Systematic cooperation between VET schools or training centers and companies
- **Principle 17:** Ensuring the content of VET programmes is responsive to changing skill needs in companies and society
- **Principle 19:** Ensuring fair, valid, and authentic assessment of learning outcomes

### Strength (+)

- Students need regular feedback of their learning outcomes
  - ⇒ to know at what point the student is in the learning process is a fundamental aspect for the learner
- Teachers have the need to monitor the learning of students in school and in the company
  - ⇒ know how and what students learn is a key aspect for teachers
- The use of common tools of observation and evaluation promotes practices based on collaboration and sharing work methods
  - ⇒ The teamwork is a necessary condition for an integrated view of the competence
- The design and construction of common tools of observation and evaluation allows for comparison and discussion of the evaluation implicit models
  - ⇒ valuation models must be explicit and shared



## Weaknesses (-)

- The traditional approach to the summative evaluation can curb alternative approaches (diagnostic evaluation)
  - ⇒ the diagnostic evaluation is usually taken as an operational perspective
- It needs a good balance between training and observation and evaluation activities
  - ⇒ Observation requires adequate space
- Valuation models of teachers are often diversified
  - ⇒ It must find an agreement on the meaning of the evaluation
- The systematic use of observation and diagnostic evaluation tools takes more time than the summative evaluation approach
  - ⇒ the impact on the school time should be carefully considered

### Opportunities (+)

- Concretely acquire soft skills appropriate to the needs of the profession
  - ⇒ is the main common objective (school and company)
- Establish and maintain an ongoing relationship with companies in the sector
  - ⇒ It is a mutual growth factor (school and company)
- Share a common approach with companies working in the field of evaluation
  - ⇒ It is an operational coherence requirement

### Threats (-)

- Companies tend to have little time to devote to the observation of students
  - ⇒ the culture of professional growth is diversified
- The objectives of the companies are mainly focused on production issues rather than on those of the training
  - ⇒ the times are driven by the production
- The use of observation tools in the company (evaluation grids) requires a substantial support from the school's internship referents.
  - ⇒ companies themselves tend to underestimate the role of the learning feedback