

A Process-oriented Pedagogical Model for developing key competences through Flexible Learning

ABSTRACT

The process of transformation of any country into a knowledge society demands fundamental changes in the content and process of vocational courses and adult education. Along with skills traditionally forming the core of domains like Hospitality services, new competencies are demanded to keep abreast of developments in the respective fields and to address the evolving needs of students and workers in a constantly changing job market. As part of the philosophy of the newly developed Institute for Hospitality education in Gozo, Malta, a technology-intensive programme in flexible learning was developed to promote new competencies and cater for the various training needs of different categories of learners and workers from a local community. A DVD-based learning and training management system is being developed integrating various digital tools to facilitate customised learning according to the special needs of youths and adults. Besides the technological component, a number of 'Reaching out' services are being designed to promote specific task, personal and social competencies. These services target students who need to upgrade their entry requirements before enrolling in formal training courses. They also target women planning to re/enter the job market together with workers that need specific on-the-job training or who are considering changes in their career paths. This programme exploits mobile learning technologies to address educationally disengaged and disaffected or young people with social problems in an attempt to help them acquire basic personal and social skills. A process-oriented pedagogical model underpins this system categorising targeted competencies along the domain, technology and community dimensions and across three pedagogical levels. Competencies in the domain of hospitality services are developed through interactions with a standardised expert knowledge platform, through the use of task-related tools and through apprenticeship with domain experts. The technology dimension categorises ICT-related competencies that will be developed by integrating various tools for knowledge acquisition, building and sharing, for communication and for group management. The programme also emphasises the development of competencies along the social dimension by providing opportunities to participate and contribute to local contiguous and also on-line communities. Besides this experiential level, each of these three major dimensions has a metacognitive component through which learners manage their own interactions along the domain, technology and community dimensions. The three pedagogical levels categorise interactions in any of the dimensions according to level of learner competence. The basic, novice level includes all the interactions through which knowledge and skills are acquired in the process of satisfying the need for career-related competence. At an intermediate level, more competent learners develop social competencies through sharing their experience and participating in communities of practice driven by the need for relatedness. The highest pedagogical level addresses the need of highly competent or expert individuals for self-actualisation by providing opportunities for contributing and mediation to the learning community. Through learner analysis, a competence profile is developed that will determine the skills to be included and adjustment of the pedagogical level. Customised interventions will employ different instructional events, settings and strategies involving the DVD-based learning

management system within a blended approach. This approach will be piloted with identified target learners to evaluate the underlying pedagogical model, the standardised expert knowledge platform, the technological component, and the effectiveness and feasibility of the whole system.

Keywords:

Competencies, Technology-intensive learning management systems, Instructional design, pedagogy, Process-oriented models, Adult education, Vocational training.