STEPPING OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

INTO ACTION

TAKING THE INITIATIVE

LEARNING GOALS

- TAKING RESPONSIBILITY
- WORKING INDEPENDENTLY
- TAKING ACTION

OTHER RELEVANT COMPETENCES

- TAKING THE INITIATIVE
- PLANNING & MANAGEMENT
- LEARING THROUGH EXPERIENCE
- VALUING IDEAS
- CREATIVITY
- VISION
- ETHICAL & SUSTAINABLE THINKING
- MOBILISING RESOURCES
- MOTIVATION & PERSEVERANCE
- MOBILISING OTHERS

PIETE Teaching Compendium

1. Out of the Comfort Zone

1.1. Overview

Was there ever a time in your life where you really wanted to do something but you decided to not because of self-doubts, given unfavourable circumstances, huge efforts, lack of time, resources or skills? Well, with the present module, this will not happen again. In this module, students will step out of their comfort zones, being no more hesitant to fulfil their intentions. Students will learn to recognize when something needs to be done, and to do it out of their own free will and personal drive.

1.2. EntreComp Competence – Taking The Initiative

This module addresses the competence *'Taking The Initiative'*. Taking the initiative means initiating processes that create value, taking up challenges acting and working independently to achieve goals, sticking to intentions and carry out planned tasks (Bacigalupo et al., 2018). Other competences tackled are *'vision'*, *'motivation & perseverance'*, *'mobilizing resources'*, *'planning and management'*, *'learning through experience'*, *'valuing ideas'*, *'creativity'*, *'ethical and sustainable thinking'*, *'motivation and perseverance'*, and *'mobilizing others'*,

1.3. Learning Goals

1. **Taking responsibility**: students can take responsibility in value-creating activities.
2. **Working independently:** student can initiate value-creating activities alone and with others.
3. **Taking action:** students actively face challenges, solve problems and seize opportunities to create value.

1.4. Teaching / Learning Methods

This module foresees the following learning and teaching methods:

- Diary keeping
- Practice project
- Individual learning & self-paced learning

1.5. Activity

The present module builds on the idea of realizing a wish/idea/plan, which has been on the to-do list of students for ages but was never realized before (e.g. learning to playing the piano). The module will be facilitated through individual and self-paced learning and is therefore well suited for online education, especially asynchronous teaching.

The module starts with an introduction by the educator (online via video or live online seminar) to inform students about the tasks they have to fulfil. The module builds on individual and self-paced learning, and includes a practice project, where students collect practical experiences over a period of time (approx. 4 – 8 weeks). The experiences and progresses made during the practice project must be kept in a diary. An online diary is recommended for this purpose. Recommendations for online diary tools can be found here. Students must submit a diary entry each week for at least four weeks, where they record their progresses. Diary entries should be designed creatively and lively, including photos, graphics, videos, recorded screencast and video clips etc.

1.6. Role of the Educator

The role of the educator is the role of an observer in this module. He/she must be experienced in online teaching and has to evaluate the progresses of students made each week.

1.7. Contents

The students themselves can choose the contents on which they would like to elaborate on. This could be a project, which was postponed for a long time (e.g. apartment rearrangement or clearing out), the implementation of an idea (e.g. starting a blog about food/lifestyle etc.), one did not have the courage to pursue before, the fulfilment of a long cherished dream (e.g. learning to play the piano). It can also be to organize a so called 'make a difference day', where in small groups the students brainstorm about a need or a problem in their community. They then present their ideas how to address the problem. The class then chooses one idea, which they would like to follow and organize a 'make a difference day' for example elderly people.

Ultimately, everything that is not prohibited is permitted! This is actually also the first challenge and hurdle for the students, as they are not told what to do, but have to come up with their own projects, which fosters the competence 'taking the initiative' from the beginning.

The student has to share her/his project plans with the educator and peers. For this, a forum discussion is recommended, where each student shortly introduces him/herself to and explains her/his intends and why she/he wants to pursue them.

Taking the initiative is the link between thought and action. Showing initiative fosters teamwork and cooperation. Taking the initiative means being proactive instead of reactive. It is about thinking ahead and taking action. Taking initiative also means going beyond normal responsibilities to make things happen. It is about the ability to see something that needs to be done and the desire to make things better than they were before or to improve ways, concepts and processes of doing things. Therefore, it is important to encourage students to take initiative and support them in doing so.

Taking the initiative can be fostered following these tips (see Muguku, D. [n.d.]):

- Cultivate initiative:

The ability to show initiative is important for both private and professional life. Taking the initiative is about doing and making. It is about learning to ask the right questions, to talk about topics that need to be addressed, to have the courage to speak up and to draw attention to flaws, to reach out for people that are struggling and to offer help.

Taking the initiative strengths the decision making skills as well as the analytical skills by analysing different approaches or actions. Taking the initiative also helps to identify and use opportunities.

- Developing initiative:

It starts by knowing what you want to achieve in your private and professional life, what you need to do as well as what are you willing to do and how fast you want to achieve your goals. It is important to learn how things work and to figure out efficient ways of working. It is beneficial to look at colleagues and people who are successfully taking initiative. Take the opportunity to talk to them, learn about their thinking processes and learn how they execute ideas and achieve goals. Let people hear your input and try to offer good ideas, suggestions or recommendations.

It is important to think long term, to learn how different things are interrelated and try to connect them.

- Seeking more responsibilities:

Taking the initiative includes identifying areas where you can contribute above your normal tasks. It is about to have an eye for what is important and necessary for a specific situation, task or problem. Try to identify specific work-related tasks and projects that you can do and ensure that you are willing to work on these tasks, without affecting your regular tasks.

- Tackling challenges and solving problems:

It is important to have a clear understanding of the problem in order to find helpful solutions. The following questions are important for solving a problem:
  o   What is the problem?
  o   When did it happen?
  o   Why did it happen?
  o   What solutions have been developed and tried before?
  o   What solutions worked and which ones did not?
  o   How much time is left to solve the problem?

Be aware that not all solutions may work. Taking initiative also has to do with failure. However, failure is nothing negative, as it can pave the way for new opportunities.

- Do not be afraid taking the initiative:

Some people do not take initiative due to a fear of presenting their ideas, fear of criticism, self-doubt, a lack of faith in their abilities and think that someone else should and

could do it better. It is crucial to overcome all these doubts and fears, because there are no reasons why not taking the initiative and step beyond one's own shadow.

- **Action orientation:**
Start planning and then taking action.

- **Ambition:**
Know and be aware what you want to progressively achieve and deliberately take steps that bring you closer to your goals.

- **Collaboration:**
Work and cooperate with others, be part of a teamwork or of a community to bring forward your initiative.

- **Be curious:**
It is crucial to be interested in how things work and trying to find a way to make things and processes better.

- **Determination:**
Be persevering even when it is tough or when it takes a long time to reach the desired result.

- **Goal-orientation:**
It is important to set targets for yourself and to actively work on your goals. Let yourself be inspired by your goals.

- **Good communication:**
Be aware of your communication skills. This includes strong listening skills, talking skills, as well as the ability to writing and expressing thoughts in a logical organized and persuasive manner.

- **Humility:**
Keep in mind to value other people's ideas and opinions. Their ideas and suggestions could help you to understand certain tasks and issues. Respect others and concern for others and their feelings.

- **Open mindedness:**
You can learn from anyone and any situation. Be open to new methods of doing things.

- **Optimism:**
Be optimistic and think of possibilities and potential benefits.

- **Be organized:**
Taking the initiative requires good planning skills and good time management skills.

- **Passion:**
Have the passion for your goal and try to contribute positively to the task. Have the desire to make a difference.

- Thinking big:

Always try to have the big picture in mind and think about how your efforts can benefit the goal, being creative and innovative.

- Flexibility and the willingness to change:

When your ideas and assumptions do not work as expected revise them and look for new ways. It is important to have the willingness to keep improving.

- Maintain the enthusiasm:

The level of enthusiasm affects the degree of initiative you take and how self-motivated you are willing to do more. Enthusiasm and love for what you do take you and your ideas further. Enthusiasm is also inspiring other people, stimulates creativity and promotes collaboration.

In summary it can be said that taking the initiative is taking the first step to make things happen by initiating processes that create value, taking up challenges, acting and working independently to achieve goals, sticking to intentions and carrying out planned tasks.

1.8. Implementation/Integration, Extent, ECTS

The format of this module is ideal for extra-curricular and over-curricular formats as it enables students to also deal with topics outside of the curriculum. This module is also well suited for winter and summer schools, where students have the possibility to deal with taking the initiative in more detail.

The module on taking the initiative can also be offered as an elective module. Students who are interested in the topic have the opportunity to work on their initiatives.

Nevertheless, the module on taking the initiative can also be adapted for online teaching. When implementing the module as an online teaching module, it requires interactivity and direct exchange between the teacher and the students.

For this module, a maximum of 2 ECTS can be accredited, depending on the scope of the module and the workload.

1.9. Evaluation

The module on taking the initiative embraces personal initiatives and an analysis of the self and one's environment. Since such reflections are hard to evaluate but should also be free of judgement, following ethical and moral considerations, the evaluation of this module might differ from other evaluations. The students should present and discuss their initiative and their experiences in class. The students will reflect on their achievements via self-assessment activities to measure their own progress and make decisions about how to move forward. The students will elaborate an individual reflection paper on taking the initiative. Therefore, the evaluation should be limited to 'passing/non passing', whereas a traditional evaluation in

terms of grade points is not recommended. Instead of ECTS points, a digital badge could be awarded for the successful participation in this module.

1.10.　　　References

Bacigalupo, M., O'Keeffe, W., McCallum, E., McMullan, L., Weicht, R., & Price, A. (2018). EntreComp into action. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union; EUR 29105 EN; doi:10.2760/574864. Retrieved September 9, 2020 from https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/entrecomp-action-get-inspired-make-it-happen-user-guide-european-entrepreneurship-competence

Lohyňová, K. (2017). EntreLearn: Entrepreneurial learning toolkit for teachers. Retrieved September 10, 2020 from
http://files.eun.org/I-LINC/entrelearn_entrepreneurial_learning_toolkit_for_teachers.pdf

Muguku, D. (n.d.) 17 tips on how to take initiative at work. [Blog post]. Retrieved September 7, 2020 from https://www.thriveyard.com/17-tips-on-how-to-take-initiative-at-work/

Stauffer, B. (2019, May 23). How to teach initiative to high school students. Retrieved September 9, 2020 from https://www.aeseducation.com/blog/how-to-teach-initiative-high-school