Soft skills significance: The technical path within the Italian NQF

Manuela Bonacci
Labour market challenges

The complexity of the global labour market
Previously unknown working tasks and processes
New professional profiles
Transformation and consequent instability of jobs
Qualification mismatch and skills mismatch
Obsolete/inadequate qualifications and/or skills and competences.

It is no longer sufficient to be exclusively specialized technical skills, hard skills or job-related skills

But it is crucial to develop those skills which support the individual in better addressing the needs and changes of individual's personal and professional life.

transversal skills, soft skills non job-specific skills
There are many definitions and classifications of this wide group of skills.

A skills set necessary to have a positive impact on daily life, to reach informed decisions, solve problems, and know-how to relate positively and constructively with others.

Mainly they refer to skills considered:

- **transferable** to from one job to another or from one context/system to a different one
- **non-job specific** (compared to hard, job-related, technical skills);
- **transversal** / cross-sector (in terms of aptitudes and adaptability)
- **key** / **core** in relation to employability of individuals and competitiveness of enterprises;
- more intangible, difficult to quantify and measure;
- useful and recognized by the labour market.
Within the education and training system, soft skills are considered necessary to prepare students to better face their future working life and to be active citizens. Soft skills play a key role to improve relationship in working contexts, to develop proactive attitudes, teamwork skills, and problem solving.

In working contexts soft skills are important to improve working scenarios by profiting of cognitive, social, emotional and relational ability as a predictive professional performance and translates it into positive and efficacious working actions.

For individuals soft skills may be key factors to solve problems. Ethics and tolerance allow individuals to manage the stress caused by dysfunctional relationships and to adopt behaviors that are appropriate to share norms and values. Relational skills increase the ability to work in a team and to cooperate in achieving goals, etc.
Soft skills – an Italian experience

The identification of this skills set is problematic for:
- the wide range of existing classifications, categorizations and taxonomies
- the selection of the most suitable and adequate or appropriate skills to cover national requirements

Within the development of the Italian National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the certification system we experienced the identification of “soft skills”.

- Creativity
- Communication skills
- Initiative
- Helpfulness
- Capacity for teamwork
- Ambition
- Sociability
- Determination
- Willingness to learn
Descriptor: «SKILL»: explicit dimensions

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<td>“the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as <strong>cognitive</strong> (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and/or <strong>practical</strong> (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)”.</td>
<td>&quot;ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems; to express the technical, application or relational to components for the exercise of the competence; they are <strong>cognitive</strong> (in relation to the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and <strong>practical</strong> (including manual skill and the use of methods, materials, tools).&quot;</td>
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## EQF: skills descriptor

### Implicit dimensions

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<th>Wideness and specialization of skills</th>
<th>Complexity of the task/problem</th>
<th>Development of knowledge and creative solutions</th>
<th>Rules, tools, methods and materials (use/application)</th>
<th>Context/field</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>basic skills, wide range of skills, advanced, specialized</td>
<td>simple task, routine problems, specific problems, unpredictable problems ...</td>
<td>Creative solutions to abstract problems Research/Innovation Extend existing knowledge ...</td>
<td>Using simple rules, Applying basic methods, tools material, ...</td>
<td>Work or study Different fields Specialized fields</td>
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<tr>
<td>COGNITIVE</td>
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<td>PRACTICAL</td>
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Extension of the descriptor

Objective

The mission of the national qualifications system is to identify groups of skills and competences which are typical of a wide range of occupational profiles and thus easily transferable from one job to another or from one context to a different one.

The qualifications system need to be able to support:
- individuals in their employability and
- enterprises in their competitiveness.

Satisfy Labour Market demands to sustain competitiveness

Provide appropriate skills and competences to improve employability
• 78% of industries and services considered soft skills as important as job-related ones (in terms of job assumptions planned for 2015)

• Another 8% considered soft skills even more important.

In total the share regards the 86% of workforce recruitments. Rising to 89% in the case of young people with a tertiary degree.

However, for young people to participate in a series of integrative, highly-formative experiences – during their learning pathways - can be an added value.

Thus implementing forms such as school-work alternation (Italian dual system), Youth Guarantee programme, traineeship experiences and apprenticeship contracts may support the future labour market.
The main reference point for the National Qualifications Framework is an online tool:

The **Atlas of labour and the repertory of qualifications** available on line

Thank you for your attention

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A paper on these issues will be published