

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 15 (2011) 947–951

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCES-2011

The role of EMENTORING and social media for developing the entrepreneurship competences

Catalin Martin^{a*}, Magdalena Platis^b, Laura Malita^c, Monica Ardeleanu^d^aRomanian Institute for Adult Education, Timisoara, Calea Bogdanestilor nr. 32A, 300389, Romania^bUniversity of Bucharest, Bucharest, Bd. M.Kogalniceanu no.36-46, 050107, Romania^cWest University of Timisoara, Romanian Institute for Adult Education, Timisoara, Calea Bogdanestilor no. 32A, 300389, Romania^dUniversity of Bucharest, Bucharest, Bd. M.Kogalniceanu no.36-46, 050107, Romania

Abstract

The emerging needs of a post-crisis society, the prospective studies at European level about “The new skills for new jobs”, the strategy documents for Europe 2020 shows that new sectors will appear, new skills are needed and among them, all have in common the entrepreneurial and ICT skills as basic ones. As demonstrated in the OECD Innovation Strategy, entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, risk-taking behavior, creativity, etc, will be crucial competences in the economy of the future.

© 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Keywords: entrepreneurship, skills, competence, labour market, eMentoring, CReBUS project

1. Introduction – the European framework for the strategy “New skills for new jobs”

As Europe moves towards a more services-oriented economy focused on ICT and “green” technologies, its workforce needs to adapt to new requirements and develop new skills. This reality determined the adoption of a new initiative – “New skills for new jobs” – which proposes a series of actions to match skills with vacancies, to organise skills assessments on a permanent basis, to pool the efforts of Member States and other international organisations, and to develop better information on future needs. The two objectives of this initiative are to help ensure a better match between skills and labour market needs and to improve the Member States' capacity to assess and anticipate the skills needs of its citizens and companies.

The New Skills for New Jobs strategy adopted by EU is composed of four strands: (1)improving the monitoring of short-term trends on the European labour market and develop several tools and services to promote job guidance and mobility and to address skills mismatches; (2) helping to develop better information on skills needs in the EU in the medium and long-term, with regularly updated projections of future labour market trends and analysis of skills needs by sector, taking into account business needs and the employment impact of the transition towards a low-carbon economy; (3) improving our understanding of global challenges related to skills and jobs through cooperation with third countries (notably US, China, Canada, India) and international organisations (OECD and ILO); (4) helping Member States, regions and others involved in skill upgrading and matching by mobilising

* Cătălin Martin. Tel.: +40725.225.247; fax: +40356.816.532.

E-mail address: catalin.martin@irea.uvt.ro

existing Community policies (such as the strategic framework for cooperation in education and training) and European funds in line with these objectives.

By adopting the Resolution of 15 November 2007 on the New Skills for New Jobs - 2007/C 290/01¹, The Council invited the Member States and the Commission to:

(1) Equip people for new jobs within the knowledge society, in particular through: (a) the raising of overall skills levels, giving priority to the education and training of those with low skills and other people most at risk of economic and social exclusion including early school leavers and young people with low levels of educational attainment, older workers, long term unemployed, women trying to return to the labour market, migrants and people with disabilities; (b) providing and encouraging initial and continuing education and training for skills and competences of the highest quality, even excellence, in order to maintain and strengthen their capacity for innovation and utilization of research, which is required for greater competitiveness, growth and employment; (c) the promotion of excellence as regards skills in R&D and innovation, through inter alia the development of innovation clusters, involving enterprises as well as education and training and research institutions, and the Euro-skills 2008 initiative; (d) the implementation of measures which aim at matching identified skills needs and filling potential gaps; (e) supporting jobseekers by providing them with vocational guidance and a personal training plan, which should identify the competence modules required to move to new jobs where there are skills gaps; (f) disseminating information on the skills and competences needed for new jobs through EURES, the national employment services and the European and national networks on guidance.

(2) Continue work on the validation of learning outcomes and the transparency of qualifications, in particular by: (a) developing the validation of learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning at the national level in line with the Council conclusions of May 2004 (1), the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the existing or future European systems for credit transfer and accumulation in higher education and vocational education and training; (b) further developing Euro-pass as an instrument for the implementation of the EQF and taking into account progress made in the setting up of national systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

(3) Address funding and quality issues through: (a) the use of structural funds in support of this initiative, as well the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development; (b) the improvement of the quality and relevance of vocational education and training at all levels through the implementation of the quality assurance principles set out in European reference tools and the involvement of social partners.

In order to properly implement the strategy, the Member States should know what sort of qualifications and skills will be needed. In general, higher education levels will be required from the working population, as more and more jobs will require high and medium education levels. First, there will be a need for higher and broader sets of skills across different levels of occupation. Across sectors, generic skills such as problem-solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, ability to work in a team, linguistic skills and digital competences are more and more valued on the labour market. Second, a general rise in educational attainment levels implies that employers will adapt recruitment criteria and that a growing share of low-skilled jobs will be filled by workers with a medium level of qualificationⁱⁱ.

2. The role of eMentoring for acquiring competences on the labour market

The labor market has reached in the latest years an unprecedented dynamism. The changes, both at national and international level, aimed not only at the legal and social aspects – with a special view over the social protection – but particularly at the matter regarding the entering of the human resources on the labor market.

Within this context the piles of Lisbon strategy – growth, innovation, occupancy and social cohesion, found as common ground the employability criteria. More than that, the learning outcomes at university level were structured, in the context of Bologna process, as competencies, meaning academic knowledge, social and personal competencies and also skills and qualifications.

The role of mentorship, and particularly of the e-mentorship in creating competencies for the labor market, is indisputable. The main concepts that characterize the mentorship are: (1) Mentoring → considered as a process of transferring information and creating skills from experienced persons to beginners; (2) The Mentor → recognized as a person capable to offer guidance and to gradually help the other person to initiate in a professional area; (3) Mentoring relationships → reflect a collaboration on a limited period of time, between a person called mentor and a beneficiary, in this relationship the first supports the latter to follow the predefined objectives.

The practice in the professional activities and especially in the academic activities knows various forms of mentorship → traditional, among equals, friendly, in team, consultant, and upside-down, virtual. Among these forms, the electronic mentorship, also known as tele-mentoring, permits an easy manageable relation, that can exist at any time and any place. The role of e-mentoring can be represented as in figure no. 1.

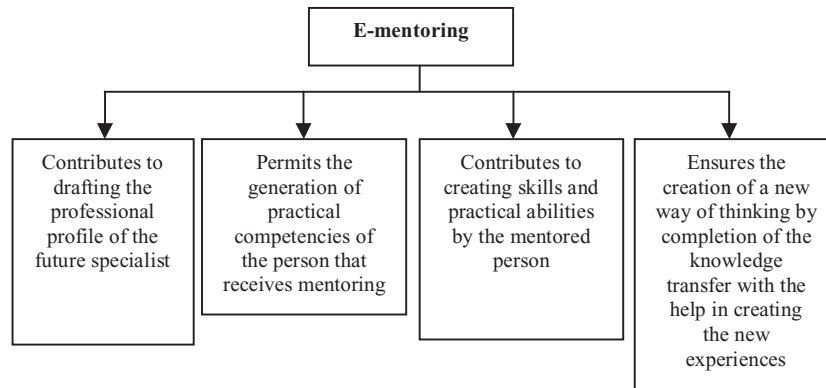


Figure 1: The role of e-mentoring

As a result, the understanding of the mentoring mechanism in terms of professional exigency and competitiveness on the labor market represents a scientific challenge, but also a practical emergency.

3. The CReBUS context

The CReBUS project – “Creating a business in the digital age - developing entrepreneurship competencies for young Europeans through eMentorship” includes 7 partners from 5 European countries: Romanian Institute for Adult Education (IREA – Romania), University of Bucharest, Faculty of Business and Administration (UB - Romania), Bit Media eLearning Solution (Austria), Association Documenta (Spain), University of Latvia (Latvia), Centro Studi Cultura Sviluppato (CSCS - Italy) and University of Craiova (Romania).

The project was selected for funding in 2010 through Lifelong Learning Programmes, transversal action KA3-ICT. It started in November 2010 and is going to be completed in October 2012. The main objective of CReBUS is to develop a training system in order to facilitate the development of entrepreneurship competencies for young graduates between 18-35 years old, using WEB 2.0. Bringing business closer to the young generation that succeeds harder to find a job, and enabling them to set up their own business is a viable solution to overcome the unemployed or migrant status they are exposed. By using dedicated WEB 2.0 applications and eMentorship network, it can be facilitated the transfer of good practices and experiences from the people who succeed in different types of business to young European entrepreneurs. Other specific objectives are: to create a new online learning environment to support the development of the entrepreneurial competences for young people and graduates; to evaluate the training needs and learning interests of the young entrepreneurs; to identify the interest domains for starting a business from youngsters that are going to graduate; to define a curriculum for developing entrepreneurial competences, using web 2.0 learning opportunities; to develop an online community and a social network; to exploit the potential of project outcomes; to develop the ICT competences of the students; to increase the employability rate of young graduates; to develop logic and critical thinking.

On the eTutor platform we will try to put together the target group of the project (young entrepreneurs between 18-35 years old, students from faculties of education sciences and administration, graduates of human sciences and administration/business between 22-32 years old, representatives of employers, unions and SMEs, chambers of commerce) in order to promote and encourage the entrepreneurship spirit among the students. They will be mentored by the entrepreneurs in what is to be done, what they should know, what competences are necessary for starting a business in nowadays economic and social context. The target group will be reached and involved in this

project by using: Facebook, contacting business magazines in order to get in touch with smart and openness entrepreneurs, contacting Chambers of Commerce, contacting different NGOs, participating to different dissemination events, job fairs, and contacting career counseling centers which may be interested in using the project products.

The most important product of the project will be a training pack which will consist from a booklet (with examples of good practices, recommendations, exercises, business applications, case studies, data about policy measures for young entrepreneurs), an online guide for quick starting a business (which will include a step-by-step structure about how to create a business in a very short time, case studies, national policies or strategies about how to include new media in your business) and a DVD (with the electronic version of the booklet and the guide for quick starting business). More information and details about the project, products, reports and further activities can be obtained from www.crebus.eu.

4. Web 2.0 & social media in the CReBUS project context

We are now for a couple of years in the Web 2.0 era, which means the second generation of Internet tools and applications. What is it characteristic to the Web 2.0 tools and applications are the openness to the users: they are able to use those tools and applications in a more participative way, being capable to read and even to create and write digital content. Thus, they had become *producers* of the web content. How? By every active online action they had create digital content: i.e. by every tag they are associate to a digital content (i.e. a picture in a social network), by every post/comment they are writing in a blog area, by every digital content they are likening and sharing with other similar users etc.

Moreover, this Web 2.0 environment is also characterized by social interaction. Through the social media components, interaction, communications and collaborations are possible in a manner that the web has not yet offered. By using social networks, wikis, blogs and other applications (without to mention also the well-known chat and forums applications) open to facilitate interactions among the users, they are connecting and they can interact and collaborate one by one or even several at a time.

The user active participation is also demonstrated by statistics. According to Nielsenⁱⁱⁱ (2010), in June 2010: social media networks and blogs consume nearly 25% of peoples time online; the world spends 110 billion minutes on social media networks and blog sites; the number of people who are visiting social media sites has increased by 24% over the last year and the average visitor spends 66% more time on these sites than they did a year ago (6 hours in April 2010 versus 3 hours 31 minutes last year). Moreover, messaging, commenting, blogging, sharing and “liking” now fill up 22 percent of all time spent online each month, according to the same statistics.

Who is behind those statistics? According to Pew Internet^{iv} survey (2010) “nearly three quarters (73%) of online teens and an equal number (72%) of young adults use social network sites”. If we will take into consideration the Facebook^v statistics, we’ll see that 60% of Facebook users are also young adults (29% are 18-25 years old, 26% are 26-34 years and 18% are 35-44 years). Why are those statistics important for the CReBUS project? On the one part because of the main components of the target group: young entrepreneurs between 18-35 years old and students/graduates. For those people, during the CReBUS project lifespan we intend to train them in order to develop and enhance entrepreneurship competences, by using Web 2.0 environments.

Thus, in a new but familiar environment, we intend to provide to the target group the possibility to develop and enhance ICT and entrepreneurship skills and competences, which are considerate among the employability skills listed in the “new skills for new jobs” Europe 2020 strategy.

Therefore, one of the main aims of the CReBUS project is the main people of the target group (students and graduates) to develop ICT skills: the use of multimedia, technology to retrieve, assess, produce, present and exchange information and to communicate and participate in networks via the Internet. Thus, students and graduates should develop an awareness of the opportunities given by the use of Internet and communication via new media:

email, video conferences (i.e. Skype), network tools and differences between the real and the virtual world. Participating in networks has an important role to broaden horizons, by taking part in communities for cultural, educational, social and professional purposes. Moreover, the participants will learn also to write (carefully) for an audience, to read and think critically and in a creative and innovative way, they will also learn to ask, receive and give feedbacks etc. from peers and from other stakeholders: business and young entrepreneurs between 18-35 years old, representatives of employers, unions, and SMEs, chambers of commerce etc.

On the other part, by using dedicated Web 2.0 applications and platforms (i.e. eTutor learning management platform), we intend to combine different pedagogical approaches: eMentorship network along with a blended learning strategy in order to develop entrepreneurial competences and to facilitate the transfer of good practices and experiences from people who succeeded in different types of business to young European entrepreneurs.

In addition, it will be developed also a Facebook (which already contain many plugins which could be useful for the project purposes) group in order to attract and disseminate information about the project to as many people as possible. Therefore, by the Facebook group will be also creating a connection with other social groups (from Facebook) interested in entrepreneurship education.

5. Conclusions

The labour market, the day by day activities, the new economic and social changes ask for new competences which should be developed. A better match between skills and labour market could be realized in a more realistic and complex manner, bringing at the same table universities, enterprises, stakeholders and policy makers, because each one has an important role in this cycle. Digital and entrepreneurship competences are one of the most important if you want to overcome the unemployed status. Of course, if you are entrepreneur you can be employee and employer in the same time, you are generating business, you can help the economy to have an ascendant trend. The role of the universities is to develop not only competences, but also mentality, because you can meet a great opportunity, or if you have a good idea, but you don't have the basic information about how to put in practice. This project will try to respond to all that questions from the students from educational sciences and administration and to develop a complex training kit, which will bring innovation and a more complex development among students interested in starting a business in this web based era.

References

- European Commission (2007), *Key competences for lifelong learning. European reference framework*, Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Communities
- European Commission (2009), *New Skills for New Jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*, Luxembourg: Office for official publications of the European Communities
- Ezechil Liliana (2009) *Mentor's Guide*, Paralela 45 Publishing House, Pitești, p. 7.
- Malita L. (2008), *Web 2.0 in Aula: A Challenge for Students, Teachers and Universities*, The 4th International Scientific Conference eLearning and Software for Education, Romania <http://adlunap.ro/else/papers/080.-682.1.Malita%20Laura%20-%20Web%202.0%20in%20Aula.pdf>
- Platis M. (2010), *Universitatea antreprenorială și dezvoltarea personală continuă*, published in the volume of The 3rd National Conference of Adult Education, Timisoara, Romania
- Robert A. Baron, Scott A. Shane (2006), *Entrepreneurship: A process perspective*, Thomson Learning, USA, p.3-22

ⁱ Official Journal of the European Union, C290, volume 50, 04.12.2007, p.1-3

ⁱⁱ *New Skills for New Jobs: Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs*, MEMO/08/791, 16.12.20078, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/791&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (visited 15.12.2010, 10.48)

ⁱⁱⁱ http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/social-media-accounts-for-22-percent-of-time-online/ (visited 10.12.2010, 12.55)

^{iv} <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx?r=1> (visited 11.12.2010, 20.55)

^v <http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/01/04/december-data-on-facebook%E2%80%99s-us-growth-by-age-and-gender-beyond-100-million/> (visited 10.12.2010, 13.32)