

Soft skills in university education: a real experience. *"Behave yourself!" Soft Skills Development Student Program* at the Department of Economics and Business Studies, University of Genoa

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Abstract

Soft skills are getting more and more important in companies' talent supply rush. Increasing global competition, growing digitalization, fast developing technologies, are just some of the reasons why the labour market strives for employees possessing and showing that special "alchemy" of social and communication competencies, personality traits somehow, and emotional intelligence. Though highly regarded, soft skills seem to be a long way from a clear-cut arrangement, and the same applies for their learning and development. University courses rarely provide soft skills devoted programs, while the business world would claim for fully equipped newly hired graduates, thus highlighting a potential gap to fill.

On this basis, the Department of Economics and Business Studies (DIEC) of University of Genoa gave life to two *Soft Skills Development Student Programs (Soft Skills Development I and II)* in 2019. Both programs are provided in the present academic year as well. The paper provides a fast overview of cognitive and motivational frameworks for soft skills learning and development. Then it describes the DIEC experience with the "Behave Yourself!" Program, in terms of methodology, contents, and process. Finally, it summarises main achievements and the ongoing improvement process.

Keywords: Soft skills, Learning and development, Human resources management.

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1. Introduction

Though there is no doubt competencies and skills at any level are core elements of human development and crucial to perform at work and fulfil in life, their full comprehension is still difficult somehow, especially when we leave the landscape of hard-technical skills and enter the soft skills universe.

Soft skills have been defined with many terms and descriptions. Wikipedia (2020) defines them as *"a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character or personality traits, attitudes, career attributes, social intelligence and emotional intelligence quotients, among others, that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills"*.

The DISCO II Portal (European Dictionary of Skills and Competences) classifies them within the *"non domain specific skills and competencies"*, outlining three main sub groups including *"managerial and organisational skills"*, *"personal skills and competencies"*, and *"social and communication skills and competencies"*.

In some way, soft skills set against a concept of competency exclusively based on cognitive ability. Indeed, from 1973 onwards, the word *"intelligence"* itself and the related assessment tests (and IQ tests, especially) have been under attack. *"If you want to know how well a person can drive a car [...] sample his ability to do so by giving him a driver's test."* McClelland stated, while there's apparently no way to assess or test people's ability to drive in *"potential"*, as a personal attribute. McClelland attacks intelligence and tests because he considers them biased by class status, and because they seem to predict success in studies only, while they are useless for predicting future job success.

So, something beyond intelligence must be taken into account. Unfortunately, McClelland adopted the term *"competence"* without defining it, and surprisingly linking it to expressions such as *'vocational success'* and *'superior on the job performance'*, thus considering *"competence"* somehow *"involved in clusters of life outcomes"*.

Those competencies which don't seem to be directly related to a specific task (as it happens with *"hard"* skills) may be defined *"soft"* and clustered in many different ways. Main families (Boyatzis, 1982) include communication and leadership, organisation and problem solving, stress management and self-regulation.

With the progress in research and in empirical evidence, it became more and more clear that soft skills are related to human emotions and behaviours. Salovey and Mayer (1990) and Goleman (1995) used the expression *"emotional intelligence"* to describe human ability to recognize, understand and manage own emotions and to recognise, understand and influence the emotions of others.

This kind of intelligence becomes a competence (Goleman, 1998) when it shows off as a *"learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work."*

According to Boyatzis (2008) *"a competency is defined as a capability or ability. It is a set of related but different sets of behaviour organized around an underlying construct, which we call the "intent". The behaviours are alternate manifestations of the intent, as appropriate in various situations or times."* And *"emotional intelligence is observed when a person demonstrates the competencies that constitute self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills at appropriate times and ways in sufficient frequency to be effective in the situation"* (Boyatzis, Goleman, and Rhee, 2000).

Soft skills may rely on relationship-based competencies mainly, but it is also true that Goleman clearly states that everyone still remains responsible for her/his own actions, decisions and results. Letting awareness and action interact with intra-personal and inter-personal competences, "response-ability" arises and gives life to the soft skills clusters of self awareness, social awareness, self management and relationship management (Kingsley, 2015).

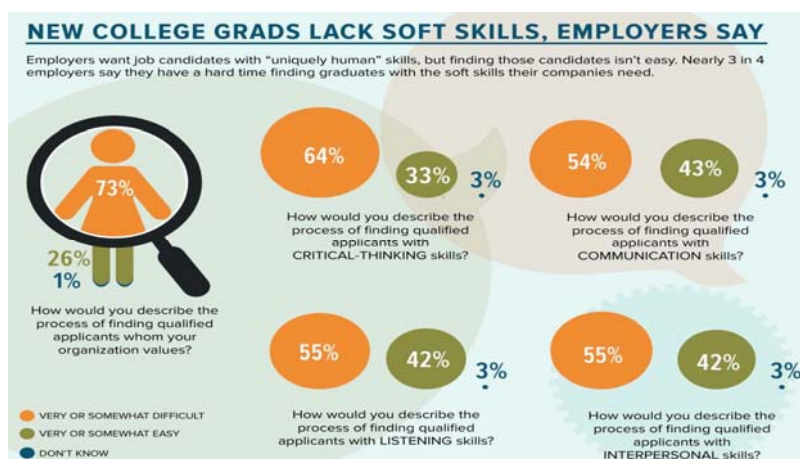
Soft skills may be hard to define, but this doesn't seem to be the main point. What really matters - at least for this paper's purpose - is that they make the difference between being effective or not, and between achieving success or not for any individual. This is probably the reason why organisations and companies take soft skills in highest account and why everybody should long-life develop and improve them, definitely.

2. Soft skills: the new employers' headache?

In its 2019 report on global skills shortage, SHRM, the Society for Human Resource Management, found out that 83% of respondent employers *"had trouble recruiting suitable candidates in the past 12 months"* and that 75% of them *"believe there is a skill shortage among applicants"*. The top missing soft skills, according to this survey are problem solving, critical thinking, innovation and creativity, the ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity, and communication.

Dana Wilkie, Employee Relations Editor at SHRM, also outlines that in the same survey 51% of respondents said that *"education systems have done little or nothing to help address the skills shortage"*.

Figure n. 1 - Infographics published by SHRM, October 21, 2019



For the worldwide e-learning provider Udemy, the top 10 soft skills for 2019 in the workplace were conflict management, time management, stress management, communication, company culture, customer service, emotional intelligence, personal productivity, storytelling and, finally, change management.

Though almost 50% of the listed items do not seem to satisfy the requirements academic literature determines to define a human ability as "soft skill", the overall trend and meaning remain valid and clear.

A LinkedIn 2016 survey showed that communication, organisation and teamwork were the top in-demand soft skills. In 2020 they are expected to be creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability and emotional intelligence.

No matter how soft skills are listed and defined, organisations perceive an evident shortage of them, and point out a gap in university education.

Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic and Becky Frankiewicz of ManPower Group (in Harvard Business Review, January 2019) claim that *"universities could substantially increase the value of the college degree if they spent more time teaching their students critical soft skills"*, but they also argue that *"when employers attach value to university qualifications, it's often because they see them as a reliable indicator of a candidate's intellectual competence. If that is their focus, why not just use psychological assessments instead, which are much more predictive of future job performance, and less confounded with socioeconomic status and demographic variables?"*

Stewart, Wall, and Marciniec (2016) think *"there are multiple perspectives one could take to explain the gap between the levels of perceived soft skills graduating students possess"*. And they tend to consider that *"[...] students are adequately evaluating their level of soft skills, but are either failing to convey to employers that they possess the skills or the employers are failing to signal to the students that the skills are valued"*. Their study, based on a survey on (the limited number of) 214 graduating students, confirmed that *"the majority of college graduates are confident in their soft skills competencies. However, the soft skills in which college*

graduates feel competent are the same that employers feel the graduates fall short of possessing."

One might argue that rather than a gap in skills and education, universities, organisations and graduates have a gap in mutual communication and comprehension.

3. Soft skills development: an overview

"As automation and artificial intelligence dramatically change the nature of work, employees must fine tune the social and emotional abilities machines cannot master" McKinsey says (2019). Its 2018 global survey shows that *"reskilling at scale is a concern and priority for 80 percent of C-suite executives worldwide, [...] with the development of soft skills a key element"*.

If a unique definition and classification of soft skills seems unattainable, the same can be said for their development. We all agree that soft skills have to be developed, but when it comes to "how", the debate rises again.

At historical level, an important source for understanding how soft skills can be developed today (which also contributes to the methodology Genoa's DIEC chose for its current soft skills development student programs) dates back to 1967, when Peter Drucker started talking about "knowledge workers", stating that (1999) *"the most valuable asset of a 21st-century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity"*. Despite what knowledge workers are or are not, the way these people should be managed and how they can (or, better, have to) develop their competencies is crucial.

Drucker (1999) has no doubt regard this: knowledge workers have to be managed, motivated and developed carefully if organisations want to assure their productivity, and there are six major factors organisations have to watch out:

1. defining tasks;
2. fostering autonomy: *"we impose the responsibility for their productivity on the individual knowledge workers themselves. Knowledge Workers have to manage themselves"*;
3. promoting continuing innovation and personal responsibility on its development;
4. enhancing learning and teaching;
5. defining productivity in terms of quality of output;
6. considering employees as human capital asset: *"knowledge-worker productivity requires that the knowledge worker is both seen and treated as an "asset" rather than a "cost." It requires that knowledge workers want to work for the organisation in preference to all other opportunities"*.

If we accept Drucker's challenge that knowledge workers manage themselves, we also have to suppose they should motivate and develop by themselves, at

least as an attitude, while organisations should simply create a proper environment where this such *self-development* can deploy.

In 1990 Locke and Latham supplied a possible way to set a proper environment for self-development with their goal-setting theory, as *"a theory of motivation that explains what causes some people to perform better on work-related tasks than others"*, assuming that *"goals are the primary source of an individual's motivation"*.

First developed to study employees' behaviour and performance in work environments, today the use of goal-setting has expanded to different situations, especially leadership development, negotiation development, creativity and entrepreneurship, education, and soft skills development and self-development as well.

Goal-setting theory states that goals are essentially linked to tasks and task-related performance. Specific and challenging goals with a good related feedback contribute to higher and better performance. Especially, specific, clear and measurable goals lead to greater output and better performance. Individual motivation comes from the willingness to work towards attainment of goal. From this point of view, the more the goal seems to be difficult or particular, the higher motivation is. Goal setting theory assumes that if people are committed to a goal, they won't leave it, or, at least, they will consider deeply whether leaving it or not; in fact *"it is virtually axiomatic that a goal that a person is not really trying for is not really a goal and therefore cannot have much effect on subsequent action."* (Latham and Locke, 1991 and 2013). Commitment on goal also depends on how open, known and understood the goal itself is.

If we consider skills, and soft skills above all, as "triggers" together with motivation, for individual action to take place to reach a goal, goal-theory may constitute an interesting source for a soft skills development program. In fact, one limitation of goal-setting theory is that too difficult or complex goals may stimulate risky or unproductive behaviours and this risk grows if the individual lacks skills and competencies to perform actions essential to the goal itself.

Goal-setting theory is inextricably linked to Bandura's social learning theory (1971) and, especially, to his concept of self-efficacy (1977). Learning, and the same can be considered for skills development to some extent, is a cognitive process which takes place in a given social context. Learning relies on the possibility for any individual to observe a behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour. This evokes the importance of role models or "skills champions" in any soft skills development program, as they allow what Bandura calls "modeling", that is learning through observation. Reinforcement (and feedback) also plays a role in learning, though it is not the only or main trigger. Social learning depends on how individuals either succeed or fail at dynamic interactions within groups, and promotes the development of individual skills, the perception of self and the acceptance of others. For social learning theory people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling.

Self-efficacy is defined (Bandura, 1994) as *"people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence*

over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes."

Bandura considers self-efficacy crucial for personal growth, as it *"enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being"*, and *"people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided [...]. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them"*.

According to Bandura, people's beliefs about their efficacy can be developed by four main sources of influence:

1. mastery experiences, because a "resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort";
2. vicarious experiences provided by social models;
3. verbal persuasion of possessing the capabilities to master given activities;
4. reduction of people's stress reactions, in order to "avoid people's misinterpretations of their physical states".

Another important aspect of Bandura's self-efficacy model is the existence of an individual "locus of control" (1997), that is a personality attribute which makes people feel in control (internal locus of control) or not (external locus of control) of the environment which surrounds them. Those who have an internal locus of control seem to respond better to modeling and one might argue that they also have a higher disposition to self-develop their soft skills, rather than being stimulated by rewards, or involved in education or corporate learning and development programs. In this respect, Applebaum and Hare (1996) suggested human resources management professionals to take in serious consideration *"the changeable aspect of self-efficacy beliefs"* exploring the *"potential to influence directly task performance through increasing self-efficacy beliefs"*.

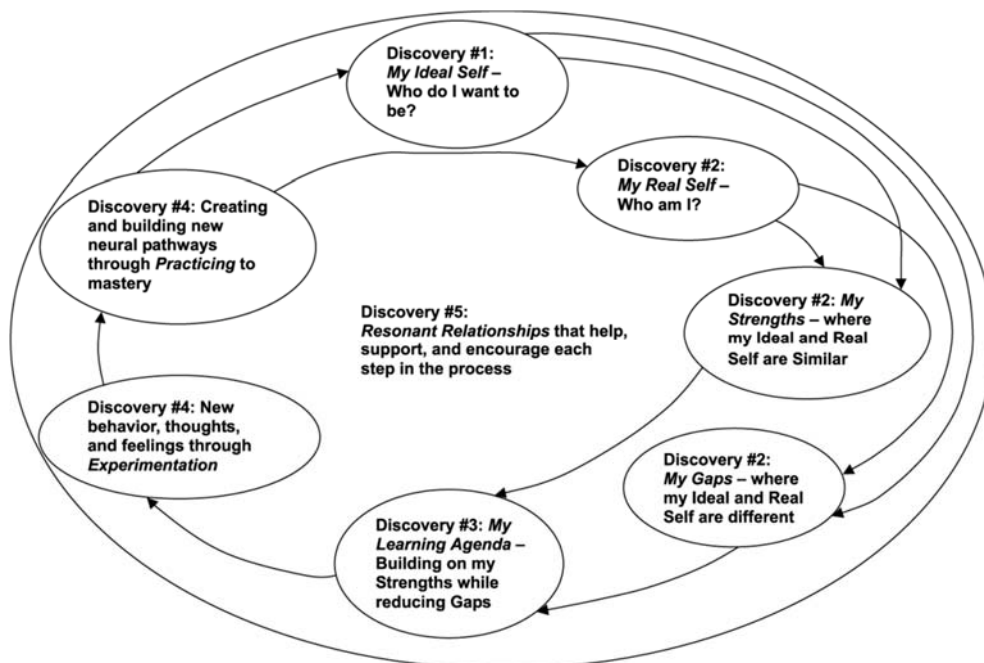
With his intentional change theory, Boyatzis (2006) adds a further piece to the puzzle of self-efficacy and its potential relation with soft skills development and self-development, explaining that people can change their behaviours if they contact enough their inner willingness to do it. At the same time Boyatzis admits that this "intention" is not easy to deploy, as intentional change itself is clearly a complex system. *"At the individual level, Intentional Change Theory describes the essential components and process of desirable, sustainable change in one's behaviour, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. The "change" may be in a person's actions, habits or **competencies** [bold character added]. It is "desired" in that the person wishes it so or would like it to occur. It is "sustainable" in that it endures – lasts a relatively long time."*

The basis of intentional change theory, which enables self-directed learning in individuals, rely on what Boyatzis calls "the five discoveries":

5. the ideal self and a personal vision;
6. the real self and its comparison to the ideal self resulting in an assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses, in a sense a personal balance sheet;
7. a learning agenda and plan;

8. experimentation and practice with the new behaviour, thoughts, feelings, or perceptions;
 9. trusting, or resonant, relationships that enable a person to experience and process each discovery in the process.
- People pass through these discoveries in a cycle that repeats as the person changes.

Figure n. 2 - Boyatzis's theory of self-directed learning



Source: Boyatzis (2006)

In this respect, coaches and professional trainers know very well how practice and repeated cycles of development help people and employees to expand their self-awareness on their level of possession of specific soft skills, widening their real possibility to adjust or radically change those behaviours which impede, or slow down, a complete professional development, and ultimately the attainment of most important professional and personal goals.

Despite these theories, evidences and recommendations, the corporate world is still concerned about managers' commitment in developing employees' skills. Companies should invest on a "workforce that can adapt to changing environments and acquire the skills necessary to be successful in the future. And that's where we are falling short" (D.W. Ballard in *Harvard Business Review*, November 2017). Training and development still consistently "emerges as one of the areas employees are least satisfied with and lack of opportunity for growth."

It seems that organisations don't value enough the power of self-development when it comes to soft skills. However, academic researchers and worldwide consultancy firms keep on highlighting the importance of development tools and practices which actively involve people these tools are addressed to. Just for instance, the Korn Ferry Institute (2015) suggests Human Resources departments to develop soft skills in their younger employees mainly by creating a feedback culture, encouraging mentoring, boosting organisational and self-awareness, and allowing time to reflect. And what are these if not typical characteristics of a proper environment for self-development?

4. *"Behave Yourself!" Soft Skills Development Student Program of Genoa's DIEC*

At the end of academic year 2017/2018 the Department of Economics and Business Studies (DIEC) of the University of Genoa decided to give concrete answers to the addresses and suggestions provided by the Advisory Boards of Companies, which accompany its Master Degrees development, as regards the perception of soft skills shortage in newly hired graduates.

A dedicated working group was created with representatives both from DIEC and corporations to choose those soft skills which were highly requested by the world of work *and* important for DIEC students enrolled in university courses, at the same time.

The working group came to identify 6 main soft skills:

1. (Verbal) Communication
2. Leadership
3. Negotiation/ conflict management
4. Problem solving
5. Teamwork
6. Time management

At the beginning of the academic year 2018/2019 DIEC enriched its educational offer with *"Behave Yourself!"*, a comprehensive Soft Skills Development Student Program organized in two different learning workshops:

- Soft Skills Development I, addressed to 50 students at their third year of DIEC bachelor degree courses,
- Soft Skills Development II, addressed to 100 students (70 in the second edition of the workshop) at their first year of DIEC master degree courses in Administration, Finance and Control (AIF), Financial Intermediaries Economics (EIF), and Management (MAN).

Each workshop took place in the November-May period, with 27 hours of learning. Students who decided to enrol were selected on a first-come, first-served basis and on assessment of merit. In the present academic year *"Behave Yourself!"* is still on-going, with a second edition started in November 2019.

Figure n. 3 - Logo of Behave Yourself! DIEC Soft Skills Development Student program



4.1 Methodology and program

"Behave Yourself!" may be defined a *guided self-development program*. It aims at delivering students a light but complete self-development method which can be used stand alone for a long time, even after the end of the workshop itself, and of university education. As a matter of fact, once a student dives in the methodology, he or she understands this can be applied to many soft skills and to different situations in his or her life, as a student now and as a young professional later on.

At the same time, it is clear that students may find difficult to develop their skills on a complete self-development basis, thus guidance and support is assured by the professor during classroom lessons. This is why 12 of the 27 workshop hours are held in standard classroom lessons, with the lecturer acting as both teacher and coach.

Both the development method and the specific contents and tools are designed to enhance students' motivation to develop themselves *through* their soft skills growth; they are invited to work on personal short-term or medium-term goals, and on the measurement of their achievements, as key indicators of their effective learning and development. This link to personal goals is simply necessary to make results visible and understandable to everyone and to allow learning to be experienced directly also – and especially - in everyday life.

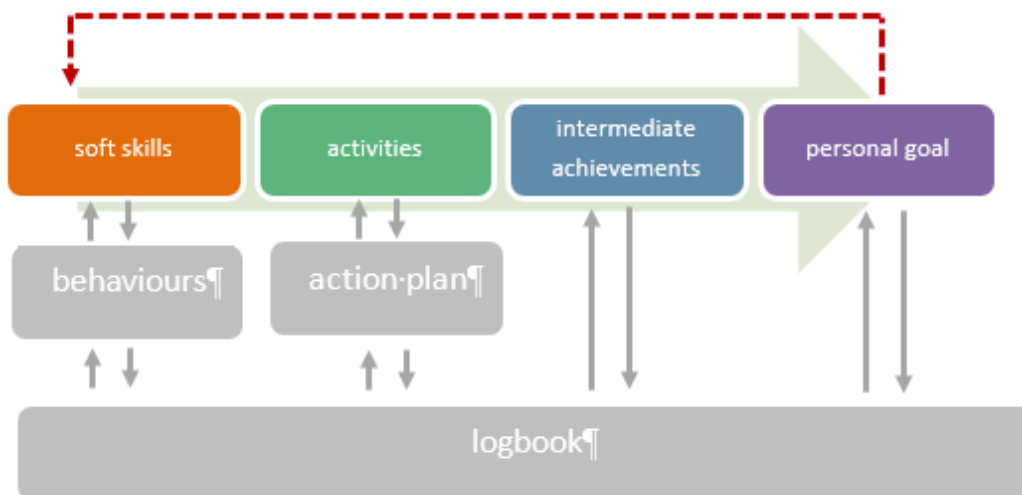
The development kit provided by the program includes:

- a small digital handbook, summarizing the fundamental steps students have to follow to fulfil their development path and maximize their achievements;
- learning materials used during workshop lessons on four selected soft skills;
- self-assessment and observation grids of soft skills and related behaviours;
- a personal logbook (excel agenda) to record personal development activities and achievements;

- exercises and "training situations" - 15 hours of distance learning - to test individual learning and seize the opportunity to develop their soft skills in everyday life.

In short, "Behave Yourself!" methodology mainly sources from goal-setting theory, from Bandura's social learning and self-efficacy models, and from some of the most well-established patterns used in executive and career coaching (or in similar professional development paths). It aims at shaking the foundation of students' habits and possible beliefs about their aspirations, together with their patterns of personal achievement, supporting students in improving a *response-able* attitude. In fact, during the kick-off lesson students get in contact with the methodology and are supported to think over a goal they rate very important for them in the next 6 months. In most cases this refers to their programs in study and exams, but any other concrete and attainable goal works as well. Once the goal is defined, students understand that they can reach it with a proper use of their soft skills also. Thus, while they engage and commit themselves to achieve their results, they stress, and – partially as a consequence - develop those soft skills which are critical to reach that particular goal. Thinking over a personal goal helps assuming the responsibility of it. Responsibility calls for actions to be done to achieve that goal. Activities are made possible by skills. And, finally, soft skills translate into and are shown through (positive) behaviours. In short, "Behave yourself!" helps students to identify and develop those behaviours which mostly affect the level of possession of a given skill, by providing them with some theoretical background, and tools for training themselves in everyday life.

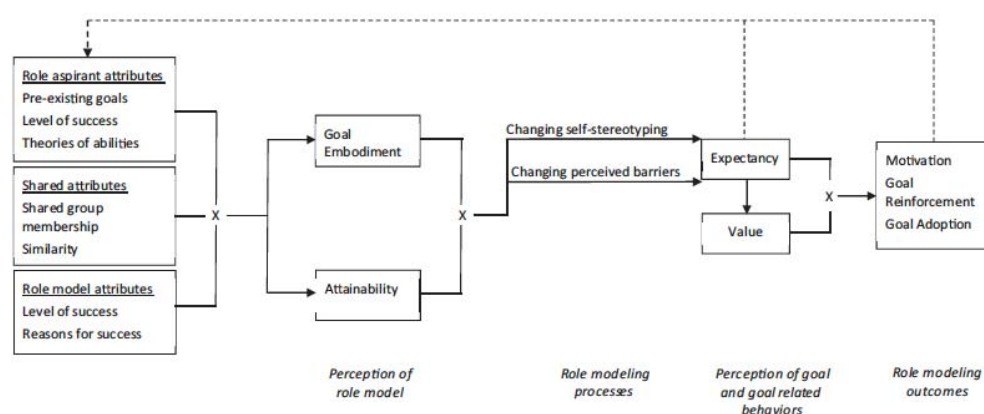
Figure n. 4 - Conceptual operation framework of DIEC- Behave Yourself!



DIEC soft skills development program also invites students to learn how to look for and follow “champions”, that is *role models*, as examples of best behaviours and soft skills possession. A *role model* is a person other people look up to in order to help determine appropriate behaviours. Positive *role models* offer a range of helpful or useful behaviours students may imitate and emulate to develop their skills and achieve their desired results. The term *role model* comes from sociologist Robert K. Merton (1957), and his work on social groups. According to Merton, people tend to model sets of behaviour demonstrated by people who occupy certain roles in society.

Morgenroth, Ryan, and Peters (2015), attempting to work out a *motivational theory of role modelling*, highlight three main functions of *role models*, as providers of inspirational models, representations of the possible, and inspirations, thus impacting on people’s motivation and skills development, as “*role models can of course also impact upon performance, either through the acquisition of skills in their function as behavioural models, or through increased motivation in all three of their functions. Both skills and motivation are thus contributing to enhanced achievement*”.

Figure n. 5 - An illustration of the Motivational Theory of Role Modeling.



Source: Morgenroth, Ryan, and Peters (2015),

The workshop also invites students to consider their workshop colleagues as peers they can interact and exchange with to work on their personal behaviours, asking for a proper feedback. Instructions to set and manage a peer coaching process is one of the tools students receive during the development program.

During classroom lessons students discover in depth – skill description, check list of related behaviours, self-assessment grid - four main soft skills out of the above mentioned six. The four soft skills are different in the two learning workshops, in view of the specific needs of students in the two different cycle degree studies. In

addition, the four soft skills have been reinterpreted and tailored, focusing on specific aspects ready-to-use for students.

The following table shows the specific soft skills the two workshops centre on, and their main focus:

Table 1: Addressed soft skills in Behave Yourself! DIEC Soft Skills Development Student Program

Behave Yourself! Workshop	Education cycle	Soft skill	Focus on
Soft Skills Development I	third year of bachelor degree courses	Effective Verbal Communication Fundamentals	Active Listening and techniques for asking questions
		Time Management	Defining personal priorities and developing plans and programs
		Teamwork	Team lifecycle and related behaviours to adopt for team effectiveness
		Problem Solving	Operational problem setting techniques, primarily applied to personal development plan
Soft Skills Development II	first year of master degree courses in AIF, EIF, MAN	Advanced Verbal Communication	Clarification techniques and complete feedback process
		Negotiation	Recognizing and managing stress in relationships with imbalanced power
		Leadership	Followership as anteroom of personal and professional leadership
		Self-valuing (in Communication skills family)	Showing personal value, competencies and skills in job interviews

The *self-valuing* soft skill deserves few words of further explanation. At a general level, the real breadth of the skill gap corporations and universities fear in young graduates is not completely clear today. Indeed, as also highlighted in chapter 2, a more or less known percentage of the perceived skill gap might rely on a partial difficulty – both of corporations, students and education system – to describe and assess needed and owned skills. While recruitment processes are often accurate in large firms and multinationals, the same isn't always that sure when it comes to SMEs. Job descriptions are not always necessary or available, and the same can be said for skills need analysis, recruitment specialists and, also, for well-established practices in addressing and encouraging specific organisational behaviours. In short,

not all organisations seem to have developed a complete job system allowing them to identify those hard and soft skills they really need, and, thus, they should assess in job candidates.

On the other side, students (and quite often also employees at any organisational level) have poor education and practice both in describing their competencies and soft skills, and in self-assessing them. The present weak dissemination of soft skills development programs in Universities, together with the increasing depersonalisation of the professor-student relationship, affecting natural role modeling, closes the circle.

In respect of this, the ability to describe, illustrate, and show off own soft skills is a soft skill itself, and just like any other skill it can be learnt and developed; it seems obvious that students would strongly benefit from learning paths, development tools, experiences, coaching, mentoring, role modeling, and any other possible and available aid allowing them to have full awareness of themselves.

"Behave Yourself!" includes 15 hours of self-development activities, consisting of distance learning exercises and instructions with different purposes:

- develop and maintain students' motivation during the 7-month program;
- figure out and describe goals;
- train specific behaviours which may raise the four skills level;
- foster students' attitude to think over their skills and ask for feedback from their neighbouring social environment.

Of course fifteen hours is the minimum time students should invest to do all the exercises once and complete the development program formally, but since the very beginning they are made aware that appreciable changes and real achievements only come with more consistent and steady exercise, and it is no coincidence that "It's up to you" is the slogan opening and closing all classroom lessons.

4.2 First outcomes and continuous improvement features

At half May 2019 115 DIEC students crossed the finish line of the first edition of *"Behave Yourself!"*, 50 of them having completed the *Soft Skills Development I* workshop and 65 the *Soft Skills Development II* workshop. Students obtained their certificate of participation to the program, with full description of soft skills trained and time invested. In DIEC's intention, the certificate should constitute a plus in students' curriculum, to be shown or highlighted during future job interviews, though it is not a proficiency certificate in strict sense.

A final satisfaction questionnaire was carried out in students who attended the two workshops. 55% of students in workshop I and 53% of students in workshop II rated the development program "very interesting"; as a whole, 95% of the students in the two workshops rated them "interesting" or "very interesting". The highest ranked soft skills were time management for students in workshop I and negotiation and self-valuing for students in workshop II. Additionally, 98% of students in the two workshops appreciated the scheduling on the entire academic year, rather than in one semester.

Few students enrolled in the program, showing some difficulties in their study career, became more aware of their personal hardships, and were additionally addressed to Genoa's University student counseling services benefitting of them, and ending up the program successfully.

During the academic year run DIEC monitored participation to the workshop classroom lessons and students' access to distance learning sources and tools, to test the ground and eventually adjust the ongoing program.

The workshops lecturer supplied DIEC faculty board with two formal intermediate feedback meetings, to share information and work out, from the faculty side, possible strategies to further stimulate students beyond the participation into the program.

At the beginning of November 2019 the second edition of the two workshops started, with some new features to assure the best learning for students:

1. reduction of maximum number of students admitted to workshop II from 100 to 70. Of course, development and self-development paths are more effective if carried out in small groups. At the same time, it is DIEC's strong will to encourage widest participation of students to such learning programs. Considering that some students didn't attend first edition of workshop II effectively, 70 seems to be a good target number of participants;

2. introduction of the rule of compulsory attendance to workshop classroom lessons, in order to foster the sense of self-responsibility the development program wants to inspire in students;

3. introduction of three *team coaching sessions* of 2 hours each, in addition to the 27 hours of workshop I. These additional free enrolment sessions are addressed to those students who are getting passionate of the workshop methodology, or want to train at the highest levels, or feel the need for extra help. During the *team coaching sessions*, open to 20 participants at a time, students can better focus on their goals, using the lecturer and the group of colleagues as valuable resources; they can discover new attitudes and behaviours and further develop soft skills through an assisted compilation of an individual development plan.

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