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**Guidebook**  
2024



# SDL4NEETS

**SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING COMPETENCIES  
DEVELOPMENT FOR NEET-YOUTH**

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*This project has been funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them."*

# WELCOME

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our guide, which has been compiled based on the experience of developing an intervention method aimed at fostering self-directed learning skills in young people who are neither in education nor employment (NEET). We all have our own attitudes toward learning, shaped by our past learning experiences. It is likely that many of us have had learning experiences where we were given answers to questions we never asked ourselves. But what are my own questions about the world? What are my own interests? Who am I, and where do I want to go next? These are essential questions that arise for all of us, regardless of our role or the time in our lives.

Young people who are in formal education or working in institutions that value learning can answer these questions through development discussions and reflecting on their learning processes. The world of education is increasingly moving towards the development of self-directed learners.

Which interventions support the development of self-directed learning competencies in NEET youth? How do the self-directed learning competencies of NEET youth change as a result of the intervention? These were the questions that our project process sought to answer.

### **Kerli Kõiv**

Board member / project coordinator  
NGO International Experiential Learning  
Network



# CHAPTER 1

## SDL4NEETS PROJECT

### Section 1.1

#### About the Project

### Section 1.2

#### About Project partners

### Section 1.3

#### NEET Youth





## SECTION 1.1


# ABOUT THE PROJECT

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In 2021, 13,1% of the European Union (EU) population aged 15–29 were young people not in education, employment and training or as NEETs (Eurostat, 2022). **NEET stands for "Not in Education, Employment, or Training."** It's a term commonly used to describe young people, typically aged between 15 and 29, who are not engaged in any form of education, employment, or vocational training. NEET individuals may face various challenges in accessing opportunities for personal and professional development, and they often represent a concern for policymakers and society due to the potential implications for

their future prospects and the economy. Efforts are often made to support NEET individuals in re-engaging with education, training, or employment opportunities (Eurostat, 2022).

The **NEET rate out of EU** is even higher. While the probability of becoming NEET has been reported to decrease in correlation with the increase of educational level (Mascherini & Ledermaier, 2016; OECD, 2016), education is crucial to avoid the NEET status. Participation in lifelong learning is crucial to be educated, developing new skills and adapting to rapid changes in society, including global crises and their resulting effects.



**During our research with NEET youth to better understand the background and characteristics of the NEETs we have found that NEETs are associated with lower personal and social well-being, and they often describe themselves as having few ‘soft’ skills and not feeling optimistic about their chances of ‘getting ahead in life’ (Goldman-Mellor et al., 2016).**

Also employers criticise the lack of basic skills that some young people have when they leave the education system, as well as their under-developed life skills. Empowering each person and ensuring their motivation to learn is important not only for the individual and the family, but for the whole society.

**The question is “How to change it?”** It needs a change in attitudes to learning and skills.

Self-directed learning (SDL) is the concept of competence where learners are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, diagnose gaps in their learning, frame their own goals and resources for learning, implement appropriate learning strategies and evaluate learning outcomes.

**The question is how to help them develop these skills?**

**Kõiv et al (2022)** analysed different services which could support SDL for NEETs and found that youth work has great potential offering open access to learning experiences that support SDL competencies and the characteristics of SDL are most similar to the nature and principles of youth work. SDL has become more relevant over time, which is also reflected in the educational guidelines of Europe, including Estonia, due to the growing value of lifelong learning. European Commission (2020) also recommends for NEETs interventions that prepare them for the changes. Understanding that SDL is an important competence for NEETs for positive view of future, for coming back to lifelong learning and the youth work as the best tool to develop SDL competence has convinced the implementers of this project that youth work needs a new evidence-based intervention that can be applied

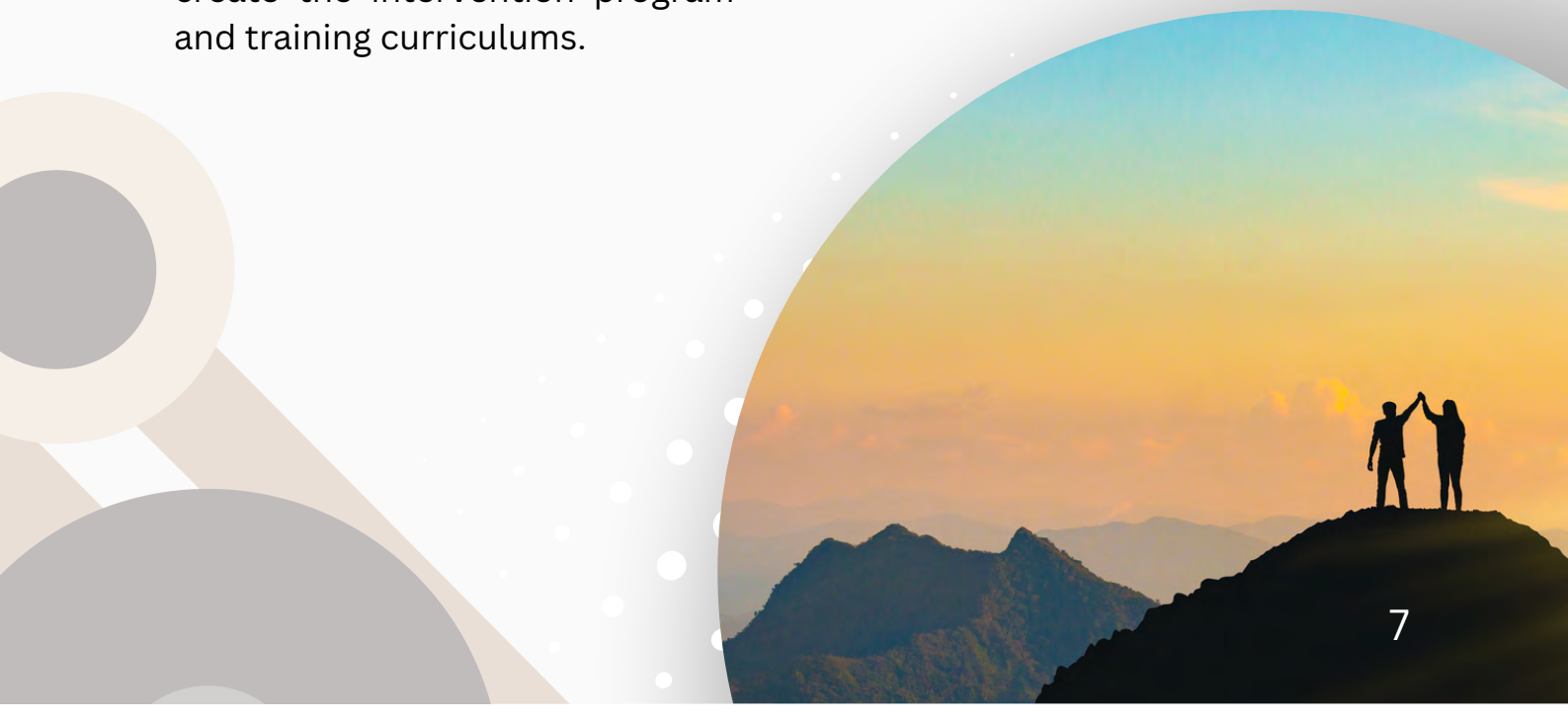
in different cultural spaces and that supports the development of NEET youth's SDL skills to bring youth back into education and working life.

Our project worked so as to be able to better understand the needs of the NEET youth and how to support them in their life long learning through SDL.

**The innovative aspects of the project consist of the following:**

- a new intervention program for NEETs, which has been missing until now, to develop their competencies;
- SDL as a complex competencies concept for intervention through youth work activities;
  - integration of the research, experiences and practice;
- an evidence-based intervention program created in an international partnership;
- multidisciplinary teamwork to create the intervention program and training curriculums.

The project creates new value for non-formal learning through an innovative and new evidence-based intervention, which is still lacking in the field. There is a lack of research and interventions that focus on how to consciously develop the skills of NEET youth. Students' self-directed learning skills are supported in everyday school life, but very little attention is paid to how to teach these skills to young people who have dropped out of school. This project offers an innovative approach to this situation. This is where youth work has a great role and potential. The complex intervention program is an important innovative direction of this project. Creating an intervention in cooperation between four countries and an organisation with a different focus of experience and knowledge is an innovative strategic approach.



## SECTION 1.2

# ABOUT PARTNERS

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The partners making up this consortium are **four partner organizations** coming from four different parts of Europe. The countries are **Estonia, Malta, Turkey and North Macedonia**. The organizations that are actually representing these countries are the following:

### **Estonia: NGO International Experiential Learning Network**

NGO International Experiential Learning Network (IELN) is a nongovernmental and non-profit organization based in Estonia. **The main mission of IELN is to bring theory and practice of experiential learning in one network.** International Experiential Learning Network consists of NGO's, institutions, trainers, teachers and researchers from (Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Greece, North Macedonia, Turkey, Spain, Cyprus, Malta) 12 countries. IELN NGO is responsible to establish, govern, coordinate and sustain this network. IELN NGO has a special cooperation protocol with Institute for Experiential Learning from the USA. IELN has its own Pool of Trainers and Pool of Researchers.



The primary target group for IELN NGO comprises youth, specialists, and educators engaged in youth-related activities. The organisation places a high value on community networking, with the aim of empowering individuals and fostering the Exchange of experiences and ideas.

The IELN NGO possesses extensive expertise in non-formal education, community work, and the engagement of diverse target groups within the community to address problems and challenges. Its strength lies in the integration of new ideas, solutions, and innovations at both local and International levels.



IELN NGO has successfully conducted numerous training sessions and seminars for adults and young people, focusing on experiential learning. The team members predominantly have backgrounds in international work, youth work, education or social work, and they bring expertise in working with children and youth, supporting their learning processes, and collaborating in multicultural teams.



The **contact person and coordinator** of the projects is **Kerli Kõiv**. She is an educational science PhD student and junior researcher in the Institute of Education at the University of Tartu, Estonia. She is working also as an educational innovator in the Development Centre of Võru County. She has worked as service quality manager in the NEET-youth support program in Estonia. Her primary research interest is self-directed learning competencies measurement tool and intervention methods for youth in NEET-status. She has an MA in educational innovation, MA in social work and social policy and BA in sociology, social work and social policy from University of Tartu.

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## Türkiye: Experiential Training Center Association

Experiential Training Center Association is a non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in 2009 in Türkiye to develop experiential learning and disseminate it in every fields of education and learning on National and Global wide.

**Experiential Training Center Association** conducts research in the fields of formal education, vocational education, non-formal education and corporate education, design and implement programs and combine these studies with the onsite implementations.. It carries out projects through the partnerships established with national and international organizations and the networks involved i.e.International Experiential Learning Network (IELN), Anna Lindh Foundation Network, Global Compact, National Voluntary Committee (UGK) and Civil Society Education Platform ( STEP)

Since the day it was founded, Experiential Training Center has touched the lives of hundreds of young people, teachers and Civil Society Organisation workers; cooperated and carried out projects with institutions from many countries of the world.



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## Malta: Prisms Malta

Prisms is a group of experienced youth workers that in 2008 came together with the aim of creating an NGO that caters for the requirements of young people and those working with young people. Prisms aims to empower people with the skills, tools, information and values necessary for personal growth and to be active participants within society. Prisms provides to the necessities of the people it works with through innovative non-formal methods of education so as to reach their needs in a holistic manner.

Prisms focuses on coaching and mentoring, online tools, mental wellbeing, inclusion and disability through the following objectives:

### Young people

- **Context out:** Prisms strives to connect with young people in their environment. Our youth workers reach out to the young people to understand their living situation, at which point they are in their lives and their key relationships with others,
- **Needs-analysis:** At the basis of all of our activities lies a person-centred approach that enables us to connect with a purpose. Prisms listens to the young people and their life experiences and together with the young person they identify the needs to be addressed,
- **Empower:** Prisms believes that every person has potential and through a positive relationship with the young person, it challenges them to set achievable goals for their growth



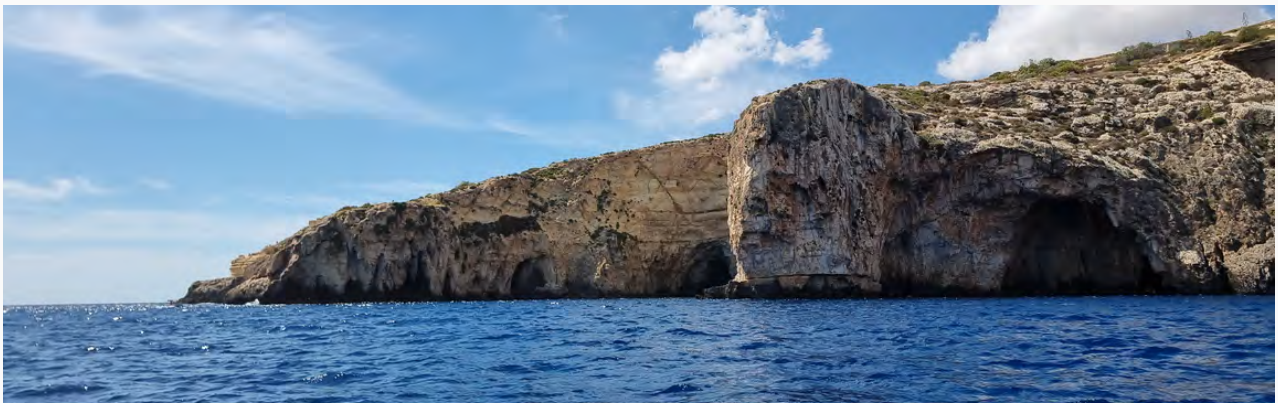
## Youth workers

**Prisms focuses on both the personal and professional development of youth workers.** We believe that the general wellbeing of the youth worker is pivotal as they serve as role-models for young people. Developing their intra and inter personal skills enables the youth worker to engage better with the young people they work with. Prisms provides tools to the youth workers to be more self-reflective and identify areas for growth, Linked with the above, on a professional level, Prisms offers innovative tools and methods on how the youth workers can reach, connect, engage and empower young people

## Target groups

Prisms has two main target groups:

- Young people aged between 13 and 35 years old
- Youth workers, youth leaders and other professionals that work with young people. There is no particular age range for this target group



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## North Macedonia: CEFE Macedonia

CEFE Macedonia had its initial formation by CEFE trainers which met and participated in CEFE Training of Trainers in 1997 in Macedonia. The main motivation of forming this association of citizens was/is to promote entrepreneurship mind-set and spirit. CEFE Macedonia was officially established in 2008 in Skopje, Macedonia as a non-profit, non-partisan organization.

The **mission** of the organisation, is that of increasing business competences of economical actors in the society. The vision is to raise entrepreneurial culture and increased employment.

Basic instrument of our operation is the CEFE methodology (Competency based Economies, Forming of Enterprises), which uses action oriented tools and simple learning methods with the aim of developing and improving the management and personal entrepreneur's skills in the context of: revenue increase, opening of new jobs and sustainable economic development.

### Goals of CEFE Macedonia are the following:

- to organize trainings and workshops in the field of entrepreneurship, and raise the awareness of self-employability;
- to offer business knowledge for expansion of already existing companies;
- to collect and elaborate expert literature in the field of methodology for training of adults and youth;
- to collect and disseminate the comprehensive knowledge for the CEFE methodology and to enable constant development of CEFE tools;
- to facilitate, coordinate and implement projects in sustainable economic development;
- to encourage regional and international cooperation and exchange;
- constant Institutional/Organizational Development





CEFE Macedonia has signed Memorandum of Understanding and collaboration with CEFE International [www.cefe.net](http://www.cefe.net) and is part of the global CEFE Network introduced in 100 countries.

We use the global CEFE know-how on this topic and we closely collaborate with other CEFE centers in South Americas, MAGREB region, Middle East, South East Asia, Balkans and Central and South Africa.



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# SECTION 1.3

## NEET-YOUTH

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NEET Youth are defined as : **“Young people aged 18-24, not in employment and not in any education and training”** (Bruno et al., 2014)) According to the research done by the Commons Library in 2022, the coronavirus outbreak has particularly impacted the labor market status of young people, “with a large fall in employment and a rise in unemployment amongst 16-24 year olds”.



### The Needs of NEET Youth:

One of the needs that should be addressed when it comes to the NEET Youth (among many other), is basic the need to find their own path in life, and to be able to provide for themselves according to their wishes and preferences, so there are no detrimental consequences for their mental and physical health. Key factor, when it comes to NEET Youth and their needs, is to find a way how to fulfil their needs in sync with their way of thinking and their likings, which is proven to be correct through the research that has been already done on this topic. **“The NEETs show motivation, or possibly more likely, can become motivated for working towards their goals – if their motivational orientations are triggered. Here, motivation is constructed, dependent on changeable contexts as well as individual preferences and prerequisites”**. (Lamscheck-Nielsen, 2020)

This clearly shows that NEET Youth's needs should be fulfilled through the trainings, workshops or lectures that are adjusted to their preferences. Otherwise, we would be repeating the same mistake as the traditional educational system already did (and is built upon): we would be having the same approach to a different types of young people, that has different learning styles and different preferences in general when it comes to what they would like to do in life. Our educational system has already shown us that this approach is not feasible for everyone.

**“It was found that all NEETs have dreams that can be transformed into goals, which over time can be within realistic reach. The pathways to their goals are to a certain degree unpredictable, but not coincidental. The young people are more likely to accept and engage in elements on their pathways, such as educational courses or individual-specific learning activities if they make sense for them. Therefore, the NEETs should be involved in co-designing their own pathways. The elements on the pathways must lead to subgoals on their pathways.”**

*(Lamscheck-Nielsen, 2020)*





## How can youth workers help the NEET youth when working with them?

First we need to have in mind that NEET youth who are neither in employment nor in education or training, are at risk of becoming socially excluded – individuals with income below the poverty-line and lacking the skills to improve their economic situation. It is always a good idea to adopt the approach that takes into consideration their personal preferences. We can do this by using non-formal methods of education. By using these methods, we can approach NEET youth from a different perspective of a non-traditional education. Based on our two-weeks long educational camp in Macedonia (SDL4NEETS project, Struga, December 2023), we could clearly see that these youth crave connections, and they crave knowledge, but only if that knowledge will come in a form adapted to their preferences and likings.

Also, what needs to be tackled while working with NEET youth is their relationship with their families and other external factors. Studies has shown that these type of relationships have a huge impact on NEET youths:

**“Overall, the findings indicate that education and family-related variables have a crucial influence on NEET youths. The most critical indicators were education level, work experience and skill, physical and mental health, marital status, poverty and social inequalities, living situation, parents' income, education, and job status. In addition, the review identifies various knowledge gaps concerning pertinent risk factors. More research to address these gaps and evaluate each risk factor's influence on NEET youth is advised”. (Rahmani & Groot, 2023 )**

Also, professionals working with NEET youths needs to be aware of the potential mental health issues that NEETs could have: Previous systematic reviews and meta-analyses have concentrated on NEET youth demographics and particular determinants. For example, Gariépy et al. (2022) investigated the association between NEET status and youth mental health and substance use problems. This study emphasized that mental health issues at a young age increase the risk of becoming NEET.



**The main role of the youth workers, youth leaders, mentors and other professionals that are working with NEETs, is to guide them and help them to systematize and to simplify their current issues: “The roles of the professionals include systemizing and simplifying the complexity of the individuals’ problems, helping them to organize, plan and stay on their pathways.”**

In particular, there is increasing attention to supporting transitions of the young peoples’ pathways. The fragile transitions occur between educational and work phases, as well as between phases in the young person’s personal life (their first own home, broken or new relationships, bodily changes etc.). (Lamscheck-Nielsen, 2020)

The complexity of their problems demands increased interaction between the professionals working with them and other key persons in their life. That could be parent/s, their friends, mentors, etc. And in the end, we need to remember three key factors of any training or mentoring process while working with NEETs:

- **Our approach needs to be adaptable /adjustable** (to their needs and preferences)
- **Youth workers/mentors/other professional needs to be reliable** (be a stable figure in NEETs lives)
- **Everything that we do / facilitate needs to be Innovative**

Thus the youth workers have a very important role when it comes to the niche of the group of NEET Youth and there is a lot that the youth workers can actually offer to this group of young people.



# CHAPTER 2

## METHODOLOGY OF LEARNING

### Section 2.1

#### Self-Directed Learning

### Section 2.2

#### Experiential Learning and Learning Styles

### Section 2.3

#### Reflection as a Tool in SDL



## SECTION 2.1

# SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

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**Self-Directed Learning** (SDL) is an approach to education that places the responsibility and control of learning squarely on the learner. Unlike traditional educational models where the educator serves as the primary source of information and direction, SDL empowers individuals to take charge of their own learning journey. It's a process where learners actively seek out resources, set their own goals, and evaluate their progress. SDL acknowledges that individuals have unique learning styles, interests, and motivations, and it allows for a more personalized and flexible approach to learning.

One of the key features of SDL is the recognition that learners progress through various stages of self-directedness. These stages can be conceptualized as levels or phases, each representing a different degree of autonomy and control over the learning process. A widely accepted model that illustrates these stages is the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS), developed by Dr. Long H. Guglielmino in 1978 (Guglielmino, 2007). According to this model, individuals move through four main stages: dependent learner, interested learner, involved learner, and self-directed learner.



Dependent learners are typically at the early stage of their learning journey. They rely heavily on external sources such as teachers, textbooks, and structured curricula to guide their learning. They may lack the confidence or skills to take initiative in their learning and often require significant direction and support from others. As they progress to the interested learner stage, individuals begin to demonstrate a greater curiosity and willingness to explore new ideas or topics. They may start to seek out additional resources beyond what is provided in the classroom and show a growing interest in self-directed learning.

The involved learner stage marks a significant transition towards greater autonomy and self-regulation. Individuals at this stage actively engage in their learning process, taking more responsibility for setting goals, planning their studies, and monitoring their progress. They may seek feedback from peers or mentors and demonstrate a willingness to experiment with different learning strategies. While they still may rely on external guidance to some extent, they are increasingly capable of making independent decisions about their learning. Finally, individuals who reach the self-directed learner stage demonstrate a high level of autonomy and self-regulation in their learning. They are confident in their ability to identify learning needs, set meaningful goals, and pursue knowledge independently. Self-directed learners take initiative in seeking out learning opportunities, whether through books, online courses, or hands-on experiences. They are motivated by a genuine interest in the subject matter rather than external rewards, and they continuously reflect on their learning experiences to improve and grow.



**In summary, the levels or phases of self-directed learning represent a continuum of increasing autonomy and self-regulation. While some individuals may progress through these stages more quickly than others, the ultimate goal of SDL is to empower learners to become independent, lifelong learners who are capable of adapting to the demands of an ever-changing world. By embracing SDL, individuals can take control of their education, pursue their passions, and achieve their full potential.**

SDL is increasingly recognized as a crucial skill in the 21st century, aligning with the demands of modern workplaces and societies. As the pace of technological advancements accelerates and global challenges become more complex, individuals who possess the ability to take initiative, adapt to change, and continuously learn are better equipped to thrive in diverse environments. SDL goes beyond mere acquisition of knowledge; it cultivates essential competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-regulation, which are integral to success in today's interconnected world.



**In the context of 21st-century skills, SDL is closely linked to the concept of "learning to learn." In an era where information is readily accessible and constantly evolving, individuals must develop the capacity to identify relevant information, evaluate its credibility, and apply it effectively in various contexts. By taking ownership of their learning process, self-directed learners acquire the skills needed to navigate through vast amounts of information, discerning what is valuable and applicable to their goals.**

Furthermore, SDL fosters creativity and innovation, which are essential for addressing complex challenges and driving progress in the 21st century. Through self-directed exploration and experimentation, individuals develop the ability to think outside the box, generate novel ideas, and pursue unconventional solutions to problems. By encouraging curiosity and embracing failure as an opportunity for growth, self-directed learners cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset that is essential for success in today's rapidly changing landscape.





SDL promotes a culture of lifelong learning, which is essential for personal growth, fulfilment, and well-being. In an era where traditional career paths are evolving and individuals are expected to navigate multiple transitions throughout their lives, the ability to learn autonomously and continuously is paramount.

**Self-directed learners are better equipped to embrace change, seize opportunities, and pursue their passions, leading to greater satisfaction and fulfilment in both personal and professional domains.**

Furthermore, self-directed learning fosters a sense of agency and empowerment, enabling individuals to take control of their own lives and destinies. In a world where external factors such as socioeconomic status, access to resources, and systemic barriers can impact opportunities for success, self-directed learning provides a pathway for individuals to transcend limitations and achieve their full potential. By empowering individuals to define their own goals, chart their own paths, and overcome obstacles, self-directed learning promotes equity, inclusion, and social mobility.





**In conclusion, self-directed learning is not only a valuable skill for individuals but also a cornerstone of success in the 21st century.**

By cultivating autonomy, critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability, self-directed learning prepares individuals to thrive in diverse environments and navigate through the complexities of the digital age. As societies grapple with rapid change and uncertainty, self-directed learners are poised to lead the way, driving innovation, fostering collaboration, and shaping a brighter future for all. The importance of young individuals becoming self-directed learners, particularly for NEET youth, cannot be overstated. For NEET youth, who often face significant barriers to accessing traditional educational opportunities or entering the workforce, developing self-directed learning skills can be transformative. By becoming self-directed learners, NEET youth gain the ability to take control of their own learning journey, regardless of their current circumstances. This empowers them to overcome challenges, seize opportunities for personal and professional development, and ultimately improve their prospects for success. First and foremost, self-directed learning equips NEET youths with the essential skills and mindset needed to navigate through the challenges they encounter. By fostering autonomy, resilience, and problem-solving abilities, self-directed learning enables NEET individuals to overcome obstacles and adapt to changing circumstances effectively. Whether they are seeking to re-enter education, explore vocational training programs, or pursue entrepreneurial endeavors, the ability to learn independently empowers NEET youths to chart their own paths and seize opportunities for personal and professional growth.





Moreover, SDL offers NEET youths a sense of agency and ownership over their learning journeys, which can be particularly empowering for individuals who may have felt marginalized or disempowered by traditional educational systems.

**By taking responsibility for their own learning and setting their own goals, NEET individuals reclaim control over their futures and develop a sense of purpose and direction.**

This sense of agency not only motivates NEET youths to pursue their aspirations but also instills a greater sense of self-worth and confidence in their abilities to succeed. Furthermore, self-directed learning fosters a culture of lifelong learning and continuous improvement, which are essential for NEET youths to thrive in today's rapidly changing world. As they develop the skills and habits of self-directed learners, NEET individuals become better equipped to adapt to new challenges, acquire new knowledge and skills, and remain relevant in the workforce.

**By embracing self-directed learning as a means of personal and professional development, NEET youths can break the cycle of disengagement and marginalization, unlocking pathways to success and fulfillment in their lives.**

## SECTION 2.2

# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND LEARNING STYLES

### 2.2.1. Foundational Scholars of Experiential Learning





## Alice Y. KOLB

**Alice Kolb is the President of Experience-Based Learning Systems (EBLS) a research and development organisation devoted to research and application of experiential learning in organisations worldwide.**

EBLS has developed many experiential exercises and self-assessment instruments including the latest Kolb Learning Style Inventory 4.0. The EBLS program of research on Experiential Learning Theory continues in collaboration with an international network of researchers, practitioners and learning partners. As President of EBLS, she facilitates research and practice initiatives of the international network. She was a co-developer of the Kolb Learning Style Inventory 4.0 and was the leader of the team that developed the Kolb Educator Role Profile, an inventory designed to help educators apply experiential learning principles in their work. Her research focus on creating learning spaces conducive to deep learning led to her paper “Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education” published in the Academy of Management Learning and Education and “Learning to play, playing to learn: A case study of a ludic learning space,” published in the Journal of Organisational Change Management. She recently published a book titled Becoming an Experiential Educator: Principles and Practices of Experiential Learning with David Kolb

**She and David received the 2008 “Educational Pioneers of the Year Award” from the National Society for Experiential Education.**



## David A. KOLB

**David A. Kolb is the Chairman of Experience Based Learning Systems (EBLS), an organisation that he founded in 1981 to advance research and practice on experiential learning.** EBLS has developed many experiential exercises and self-assessment instruments including the latest Kolb Learning Style Inventory 4.0 and the Kolb Educator Role Profile, an inventory designed to help educators apply experiential learning principles in their work. The EBLS program of research on Experiential Learning Theory continues with an international network of researchers, practitioners and learning partners. He received his BA in psychology, philosophy and religion at Knox College and his Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Harvard University. He was a professor of organisational behaviour and management at the MIT Sloan School of Management and at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University where he is currently an Emeritus Professor of Organisational Behaviour.

**He is best known for his research on experiential learning and learning styles described in the new Second Edition of *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*.**

Other books include—*The Experiential Educator: Principles and Practices of Experiential Learning*, *How You Learn Is How You Live: Using Nine Ways of Learning to Transform Your Life*, *Conversational Learning: An Experiential Approach to Knowledge Creation*, *Innovation in Professional Education: Steps on a Journey from Teaching to Learning*, and *Organisational Behaviour: An Experiential Approach*. In addition, he has authored many journal articles and book chapters on experiential learning available at [www.learningfromexperience.com](http://www.learningfromexperience.com) David has received several research awards and four honorary degrees recognizing his contributions to experiential learning in higher education.

## 2.2.2. How did the Experiential Learning Theory come about?

Kolb based his theory on six basic propositions:

**1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.** Although punctuated by knowledge milestones, learning does not end at an outcome, nor is it always evidenced in performance. Rather, learning occurs through the course of connected experiences in which knowledge is modified and re-formed. To improve learning in higher education, the primary focus should be on engaging students in a process that best enhances their learning – a process that includes feedback on the effectiveness of their learning efforts. “...education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience: ... the process and goal of education are one and the same thing.”

**2. All learning is relearning.** Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the students’ beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested, and integrated with new, more refined ideas. Piaget called this proposition constructivism—individuals construct their knowledge of the world based on their experience and learn from experiences that lead them to realise how new information conflicts with their prior experience and belief.

**3. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.** Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. These tensions are resolved in iterations of movement back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking.



**4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.** Learning is not just the result of cognition but involves the integrated functioning of the total person— thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving. It encompasses other specialised models of adaptation from the scientific method to problem-solving, decision making and creativity.

**5. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment.** In Piaget’s terms, learning occurs through equilibration of the dialectic processes of assimilating new experiences into existing concepts and accommodating existing concepts to new experience. Following Lewin’s famous formula that behaviour is a function of the person and the environment, ELT holds that learning is influenced by the characteristics of the learner and the learning space.

**6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge.** In ELT, knowledge is viewed as the transaction between two forms of knowledge: social knowledge, which is co- constructed in a socio-historical context, and personal knowledge, the subjective experience of the learner. This conceptualization of knowledge stands in contrast to that of the “transmission” model of education in which pre-existing, fixed ideas are transmitted to the learner.




## 2.2.3 Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory is based on the works of the predominant scientists of the 20th century, such as Dewey who uses experience as a base of learning, Lewin who emphasises the importance of individual effectiveness in the learning process, and Piaget who does not see intelligence only as an innate trait but qualifies it as a result of the interaction between people and the environment.

Experiential Learning is a holistic approach which covers all four (feeling, reflecting, thinking, acting) dimensions of learning.

***David A. Kolb,  
the founder of experiential learning theory,  
defines learning as a process in which  
"experience is transformed into knowledge".***



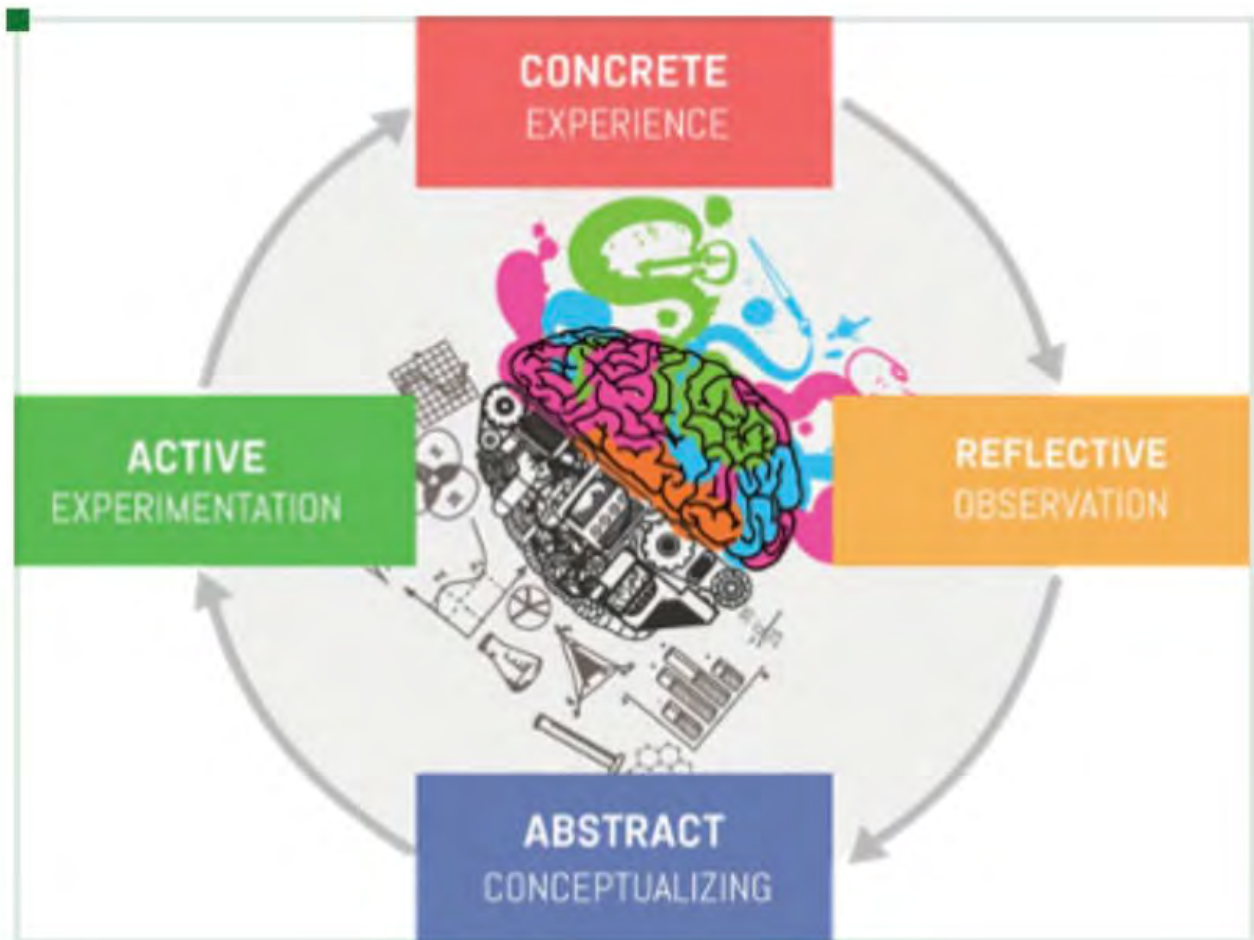


## From Experience to Knowledge

We all learn from our experiences. This learning process, which started in infancy and then in childhood, actually continues in our youth and adulthood. We try to push our boundaries, get new skills, and overcome our challenges.

### **Every experience gives us an experience.**

We reflect on this experience, analyse it, and observe our own experience and the experiences of others. These analyses and observations give us new insights and ideas. This implements new ideas, and we naturally get a new experience from this application. This cycle, which is the natural learning process of man, is integrated into the educational processes by the leading scientists of the 20th century.



## 2.2.4 Kolb Learning Styles

Learning style describes the unique ways individuals spiral through the learning cycle based on their preference for the four different learning modes. Because of one's genetic makeup, particular life experiences, and the demands of the present environment, a preferred way of choosing among these four learning modes is developed.

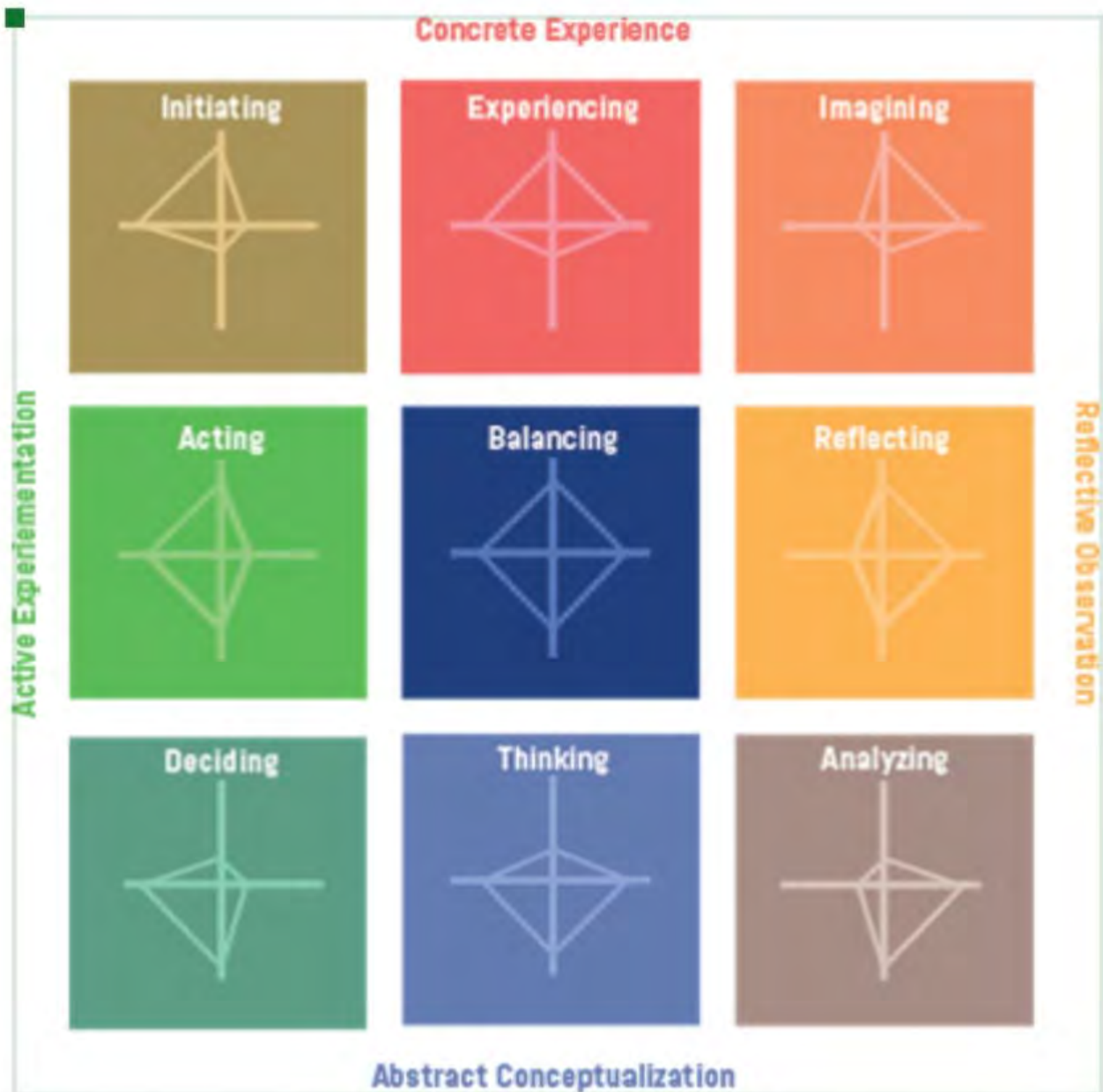
Data from empirical and clinical studies over the years have shown that the original four learning style types—Accommodating, Assimilating, Converging, and Diverging— can be refined further into a nine-style typology that better defines the unique patterns of individual learning styles and reduces the confusions introduced by borderline cases in the old four style typology.



**With feedback from users, Kolb first began noticing a fifth “balancing” style describing users who scored at the centre of the Learning Style grid.**

The new KLSI (Kolb Learning Style Inventory) 4.0 introduces these nine style types by moving from a 4 pixel to 9-pixel resolution of learning style types. The learning style types can be systematically arranged on a two-dimensional learning space defined by Abstract Conceptualization-Concrete Experience and Active Experimentation-Reflective Observation.

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## SECTION 2.3

# REFLECTION AS A TOOL IN SDL

---

Reflection can be defined as the process of thinking deeply or carefully about something, often one's experiences or actions. It involves deliberate contemplation, analysis, and evaluation of past events or decisions in order to gain insights, understandings, and lessons that can inform future actions. Reflective thinking, therefore, is a cognitive process that involves examining and making sense of one's thoughts, feelings, and experiences in order to learn and grow. Reflective thinking is characterized by several key features.

**Firstly**, it is an active and intentional process that requires individuals to engage in critical examination of their experiences rather than simply recalling them passively.

**Secondly**, reflective thinking involves metacognition, or thinking about one's own thinking process. This means considering not only what happened but also why it happened, what could have been done differently, and what lessons can be drawn from the experience.

**Lastly**, reflective thinking is iterative and ongoing, with individuals continually revisiting and refining their reflections as they gain new insights and experiences. Reflective thinking can take various forms, including self-reflection, peer reflection, and group reflection.

Self-reflection involves introspective examination of one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions, while peer reflection involves sharing and discussing experiences with others in a supportive and constructive manner.

Group reflection, on the other hand, involves collective analysis and evaluation of shared experiences within a group or team setting.



**The importance of reflective thinking lies in its ability to promote deeper understanding, critical thinking, and self-awareness.**

By engaging in reflective practices, individuals develop the capacity to examine their assumptions, biases, and beliefs, allowing them to approach situations with greater clarity and objectivity. Reflective thinking also fosters lifelong learning by encouraging individuals to learn from their mistakes, build on their successes, and continually improve their practice. In the context of self-directed learning, reflection and reflective thinking serve as powerful tools for enhancing the learning process. Self-directed learners are responsible for setting their own goals, identifying learning resources, and monitoring their progress, making reflection essential for evaluating the effectiveness of their learning strategies and adjusting them as needed. By reflecting on their experiences, self-directed learners can identify areas of strength and weakness, set new learning goals, and develop action plans to achieve them. Moreover, reflection allows self-directed learners to make connections between their learning experiences and real-world contexts, deepening their understanding and application of knowledge. Through reflective thinking, self-directed learners can integrate new information with their existing knowledge, identify patterns and trends, and draw meaningful conclusions that inform their future actions. Ultimately, reflection and reflective thinking empower self-directed learners to take ownership of their learning journey, become more self-aware and adaptive, and achieve greater success in reaching their learning goals. In self-directed learning, reflection plays a pivotal role in facilitating deeper learning and personal growth. As self-directed learners navigate through various learning experiences, reflection allows them to make sense of their journey, identify areas of progress, and pinpoint areas for improvement. Through reflective practices, self-directed learners can assess their learning strategies, identify obstacles or challenges, and develop strategies to overcome them. By actively engaging in reflection, self-directed learners cultivate a habit of continuous learning and self-improvement, which is essential for success in self-directed learning environments.



Furthermore, reflection enables self-directed learners to develop metacognitive skills, which are essential for effective self-regulation and goal setting.

**By reflecting on their learning process, self-directed learners become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses as learners, allowing them to adapt their strategies accordingly.**



Additionally, reflection fosters a deeper understanding of the learning material by encouraging self-directed learners to think critically about the content, make connections to prior knowledge, and apply concepts in new contexts. Overall, reflection serves as a catalyst for growth and development in self-directed learners, empowering them to take control of their learning journey and achieve their academic and personal goals. SDL can be effectively enhanced through various reflection-based strategies and activities, particularly for NEET youths. As individuals who may face barriers such as limited access to formal education or employment opportunities, NEET youths can benefit greatly from developing self-directed learning skills. By empowering them to take ownership of their learning journey and pursue educational and vocational goals independently, self-directed learning not only equips NEET individuals with essential skills but also fosters a sense of agency and self-efficacy. In this regard, implementing reflection-based strategies tailored to the needs and circumstances of NEET youths can be instrumental in promoting their engagement, motivation, and success in self-directed learning endeavors. The following strategies outline how reflection can serve as a powerful tool for enhancing self-directed learning for NEET youths:

## **Goal Setting and Action Planning:**

Encourage NEET youths to set specific and measurable goals to foster self-directed learning.

Goals can be short or long-term and should align with the individual's learning objectives. Subsequently, help them create action plans outlining the steps needed to achieve these goals. Breaking down larger objectives into manageable tasks enhances clarity and accountability, empowering NEET youths to take ownership of their learning journey.

## **Reflective Journaling:**

Introduce reflective journaling as a regular practice for NEET youths to document their learning experiences, insights, and challenges. Provide prompts or guiding questions to encourage thoughtful reflection on their progress, learning strategies, and areas for improvement. Regularly reviewing and revising journal entries allows NEET individuals to track their growth, identify patterns in their learning process, and make informed adjustments to their approach.

## **Peer Collaboration and Feedback:**

Facilitate opportunities for NEET youths to collaborate with peers in learning activities and projects. Encourage peer-to-peer discussions, group problem-solving tasks, or collaborative research projects where NEET individuals can exchange ideas, share resources, and provide constructive feedback. Peer collaboration not only enhances social interaction but also promotes a sense of shared responsibility and accountability, fostering a supportive learning community.



## Skill-Building Workshops and Training:

Offer workshops or training sessions focused on developing essential skills for self-directed learning, such as time management, organization, critical thinking, and self-assessment. Provide hands-on activities, interactive exercises, and practical tools to help NEET youths cultivate these skills in a supportive environment. By equipping them with the necessary tools and strategies, you empower NEET individuals to become more independent and proactive learners.

## Mentorship and Guidance:

Pair NEET youths with mentors or coaches who can provide guidance, support, and encouragement as they navigate their self-directed learning journey. Mentors can offer valuable insights, share personal experiences, and provide constructive feedback tailored to the individual's needs and goals. **Regular check-ins and mentorship sessions create opportunities for reflection, goal setting, and accountability, helping NEET individuals stay motivated and focused on their learning objectives.** In conclusion, reflection serves as a powerful tool in SDL, particularly for NEET youths. By encouraging individuals to engage in reflective practices, we empower them to take ownership of their learning journey, develop essential skills, and cultivate a growth mindset. Through reflection, NEET individuals can gain deeper insights into their learning process, identify areas for improvement, and set meaningful goals to pursue. Moreover, reflection fosters self-awareness, critical thinking, and metacognitive skills, which are essential for success in today's dynamic and fast-paced world. As educators, mentors, and supporters, it is imperative that we provide opportunities for NEET youths to engage in reflective activities and incorporate reflection into their learning experiences. By harnessing the power of reflection, we can empower NEET individuals to become lifelong learners, confident decision-makers, and active contributors to their communities and societies.





# CHAPTER 3

## INTERVENTION

### Section 3.1

#### Intervention model



# SECTION 3.1

## INTERVENTION MODEL

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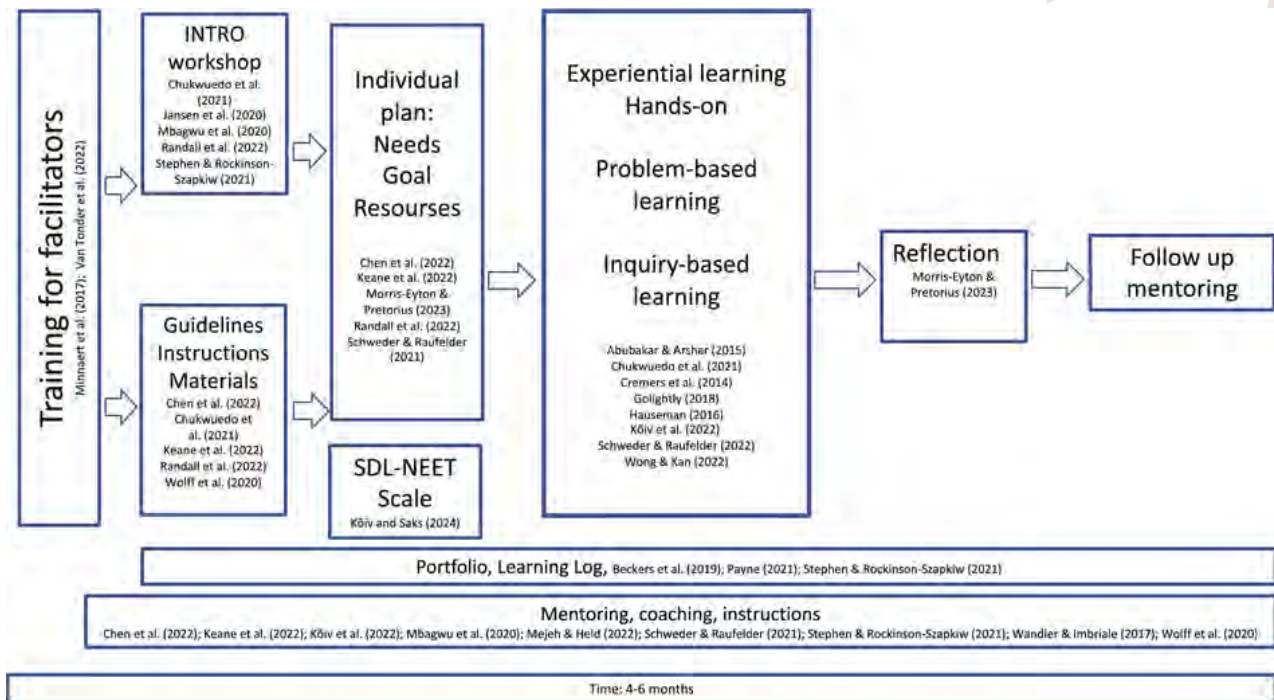
The model of the intervention is described in the article:

Kõiv, K., Saks, K., Gencil, I. E., Güven, K. M., Azzopardi, A., Todoroska, V., & Petkovska, E. (2024, August). An intervention model for developing self-directed learning skills in NEET-youth: a literature review. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, p. 1433484. Frontiers Media SA.

[Read from here](#)



## INTERVENTION IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING MODEL (Kõiv et al, 2024)



### The intervention was divided into following activities:

1. Training course for mentors
2. Intro workshop for youth
3. Individual mentoring: Individual goal setting
4. 16 days in NorthNorth Macedonia
  - 4.1. Learning to learn and personal portfolio
  - 4.2. Future planning
  - 4.3. Learning contract
  - 4.4. Inquiry-based learning using experiential learning approach - group works
  - 4.5. Reflection (every day, mid-term and final)
5. Follow up mentoring

Worksheets templates are found as APPENDIX.



# CHAPTER 4

## THE RESULTS

### Section 4.1

#### Research Methodology

### Section 4.2

#### Learning outcomes

### Section 4.3

#### Tips for facilitators



## Section 4.1: Research methodology

### THE SAMPLE

**4 mentors, 32 NEET-youth as experiment group and 26 NEET-youth as control group was involved to the intervention.**

For the analysis of program effectiveness, three methods were used:

- **pre-, post- and follow-up test by the SDL-NEET Scale (Kõiv & Saks, 2024)**

#### **Read more about the scale:**

Kõiv, K. & Saks, K. (2024). Development of an instrument to measure NEET-youth self-directed learning skills. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 29(1), 2306256.

[Read from here](#)



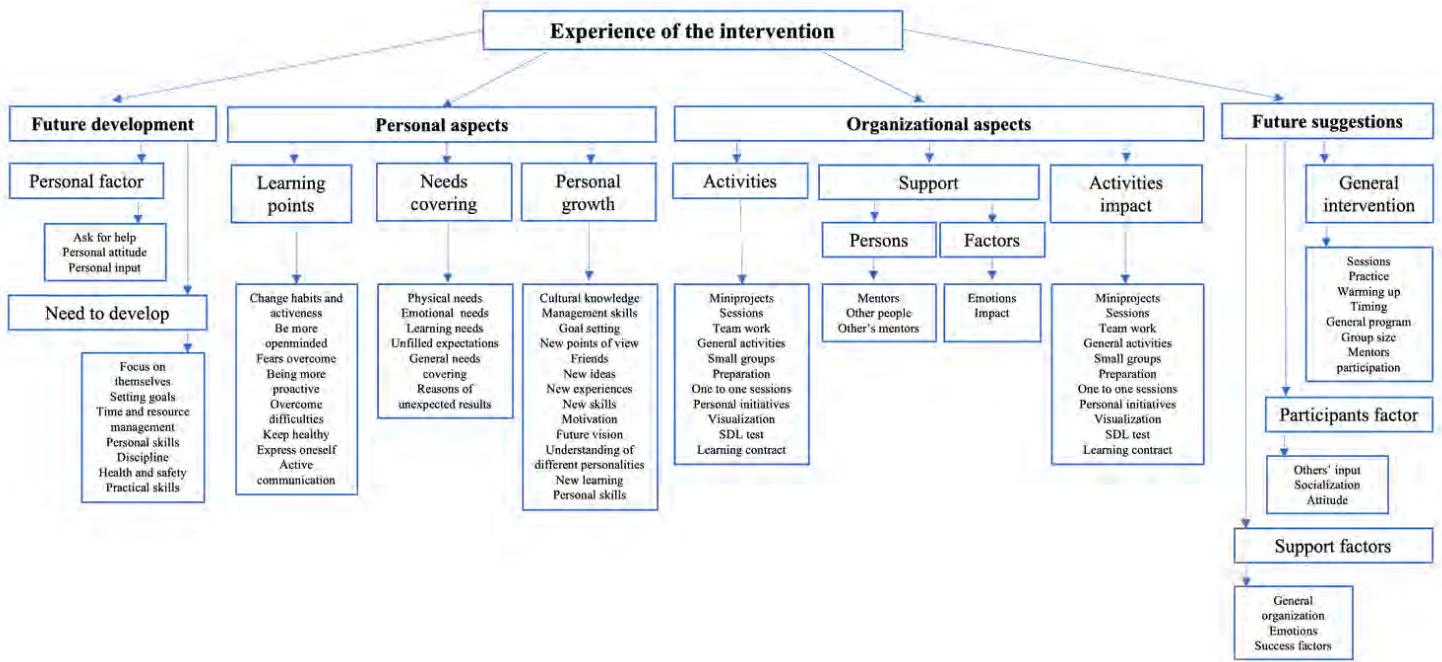
- **interviews with mentors and youth;**
- **reflections.**



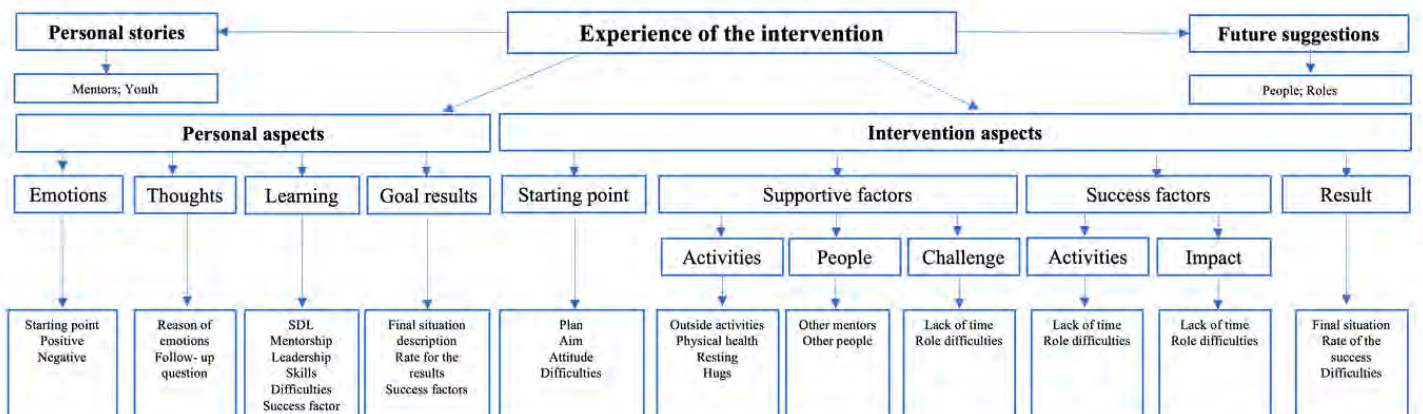
## Section 4.2: Learning outcomes

### EXPERIENCE:

Themes and codes emerging from interviews about the SDL intervention: YOUTH



Themes and codes emerging from interviews about the SDL intervention: MENTORS





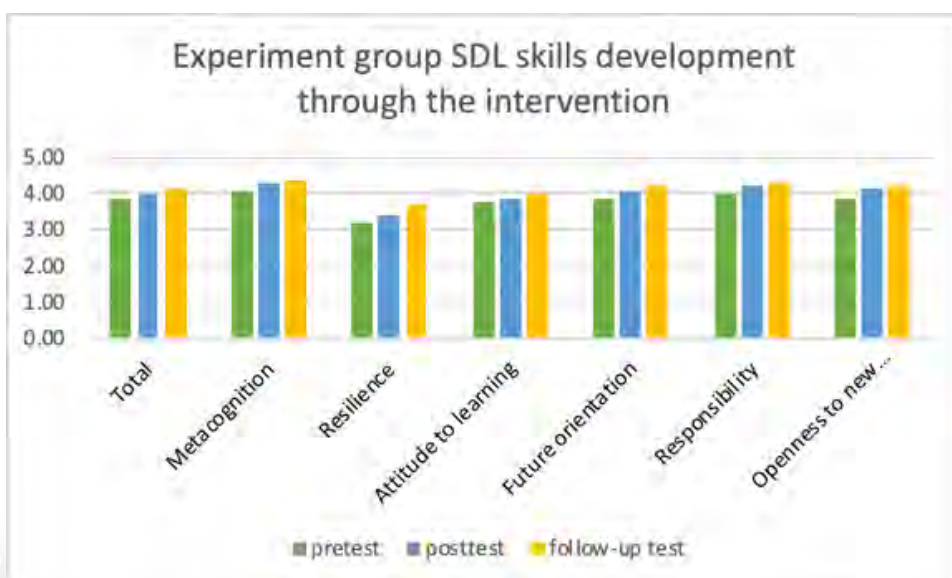
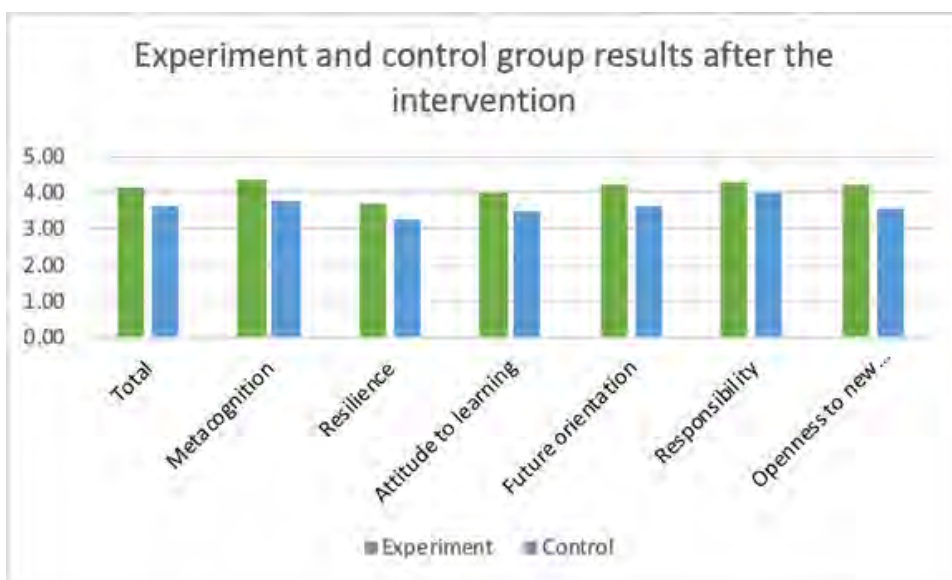
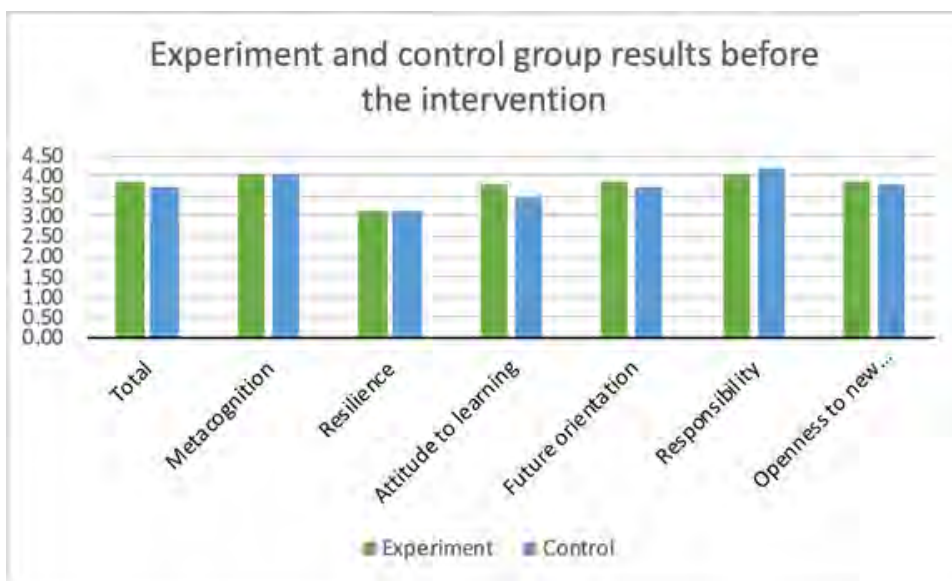
**READ MORE ABOUT EXPERIENCES:**



Read from here



## EFFECTIVENESS:



The project confirms the success of SDL intervention program in enhancing SDL skills, learning readiness and fostering ongoing self-improvement.





Scientific overview of the process and results:



[Read from here](#)



## Section 4.3: Tips for facilitators

- Visuals about task instructions in the beginning
- Transition from one to another task should be clear, use warming up questions or information between different tasks
- Analyze your timeframe, do not try to do all the learning tasks in the short time
- Use statistics material
- Use creativity and give participants freedom to use their creativity
- Open the circle and close it
- Task build up empathy to target group. All also some statistics.
- Ask feeling about the those target group.
- Abstract about NEETs – facts, meaning, statistics.
- If there are people who do not anything of the topic, open it at first.
- Use storytelling, personal stories.
- Use visuals, pictures.
- Use music, but relate it to the topic
- Let people focusing to their own personal tasks, challenges, dreams.
- As facilitator do not move too much around the room.
- Feedback is the gift
- Use the myths to explain SDL
- Use different examples (stories) to show what is SDL or not
- Create connections with previous sessions and exercises
- Put people to move or stand together during their tasks
- Do not use green colour on writing
- Analyze how much people are standing, listening, talking, give different movements
- Highlight the definitions.
- Use interesting presentations.
- Set clear output to your session.
- Do not read the materials but talk about it.



- Do not give task comparing if you have less time. Ask task find the definition and thereafter discuss in groups about differences.
- One by one discussions are good
- Pay attentions to the time you give for pair discussions
- Keep activities energy balanced, dynamic.
- Use natural energizers if there is place for it (dancing)
- Think about that it is may be material participants already knows
- Begin with visuals about task instructions to engage participants from the start.
- Ensure clear transitions between tasks. Use warm-up questions or provide additional information to smoothly shift from one task to another.
- Analyze your timeframe; avoid trying to solve all learning tasks in a short amount of time.
- Incorporate statistical material to support learning objectives.
- Encourage creativity. Give participants the freedom to express their creativity within the tasks.
- Start (open) and end (close) the session with purposeful activities or discussions to create a sense of completeness.
- Design tasks to build empathy towards the target group. Include statistics to provide a comprehensive understanding.
- Solicit participants' feelings about the target group to foster a deeper connection and understanding.
- Provide an abstract on NEETs, including facts, meaning, and statistics, to give participants a well-rounded view of the topic.



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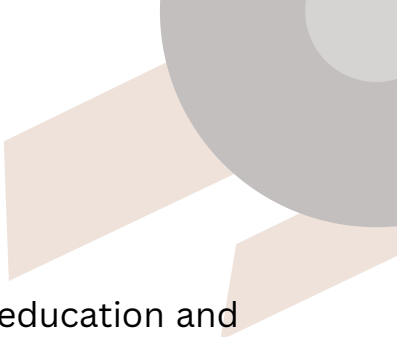
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# APPENDIX 1

## Personality Passport

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Picture:</b>	
<b>Country:</b>		
<b>Age:</b>		
<b>Life Motto:</b>		
<b>Hobbies &amp; Interests</b>	<b>Hidden Talents</b>	<b>Favourite Foods</b>

## APPENDIX 2

The diagram features a central white silhouette of a human figure. Four colored boxes are connected to the silhouette by lines:

- A red box labeled "Name & age" is connected to the top left of the head.
- A teal box labeled "Country:" is connected to the top right of the head.
- A red box labeled "Hobbies & Interests" is connected to the left side of the torso.
- A teal box labeled "Hidden Talents" is connected to the right side of the torso.

Each box has a white interior for text entry.



# Learning Contract

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Goal \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Indicator (s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Theme** (music/singing; reading/books; (visual) art/handicraft;  
nature/animals; sport; food; travel; hiking/walking; gaming; dancing;  
movies; varia)

Priority 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Priority 2 : \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures :

Me : \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor : \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 4

### Erasmus+ Project

Topic : \_\_\_\_\_

Where? : \_\_\_\_\_

How many days? When? :

\_\_\_\_\_

Which kind of activities?  
(Should be included in the program)

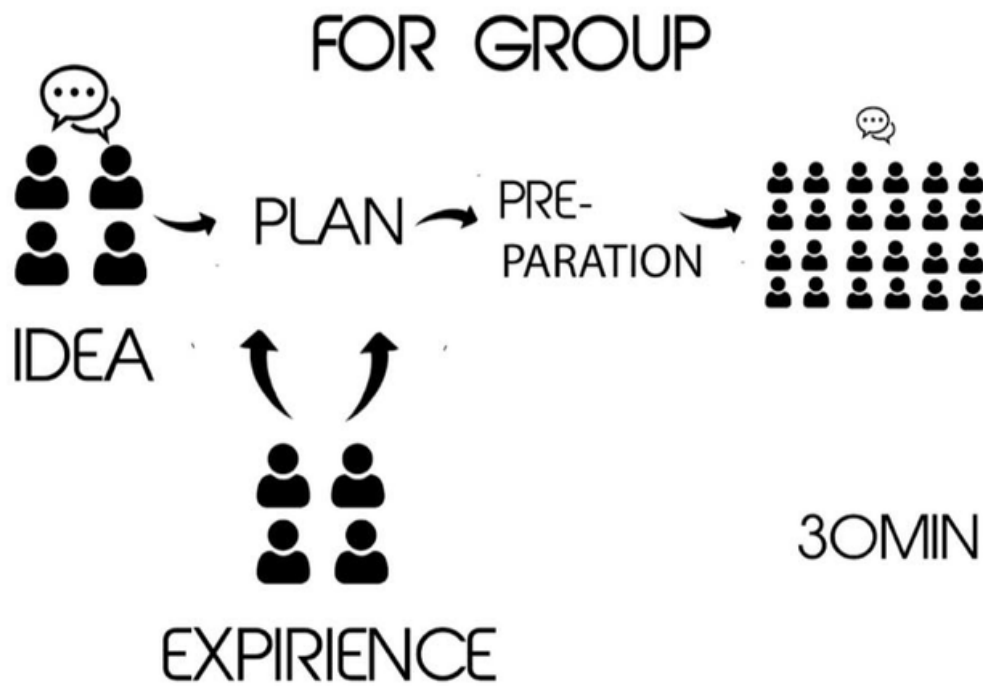
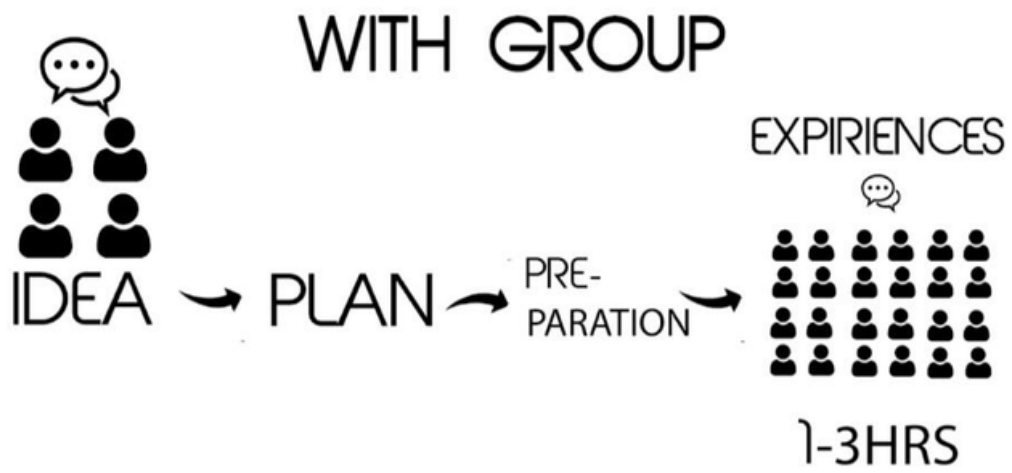
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# APPENDIX 5



New form? → Only if mentor Has approved it

# APPENDIX 6. Mentoring Manifesto

## Mentoring Manifesto

The Mentoring Manifesto summarizes the core principles of collaboration between mentors and mentees. It should serve you as guidelines.

### Guidelines for being a good mentor

- Be authentic, direct and listen carefully.
- Be specific with feedback.
- It is okay not to know the answer – don't make things up.
- Request feedback.
- Make distinctions between opinion and facts.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Allow teams to make their own decisions, it is ultimately their decision not yours.
- Be supportive and optimistic.
- Your opinion matters, take it seriously.
- Challenge them and make them think about things they might be overlooking.
- Respect your mentees time - they're busy too.

### Guidelines for being a good mentee

- Respect your mentor's time. It's given for free.
- Always show up on meetings on time.
- Set your goals straight and communicate them clearly.
- Pay attention to advices and recommendation by mentors, but remember it's your venture, you make the decisions, you have the ultimate responsibility.
- Stay open, have trust and ask everything you would like to know or understand.
- Hold sensitive information in confidence.



# APPENDIX 7. Mentoring meetings

**Mentorship Meeting Outcomes** (filled by mentors after each meeting)

## Key Outcomes

- Your Name Surname: \*
- Your Mentee's Name: \*
- Meeting Type\*
- Learning Goals
- Career Goals
- Back to Education Strategy
- Feedback Meeting
- Openness to new opportunities
- Problem Solving Skills
- Personal attitudes improvements
- Other Type of Meeting
- I don't know
- Date of Meeting\*
- End Time of Meeting\*:HH MM
- Start Time of Meeting\*:HH MM
- Agreed Milestones\*

On what milestones until your next meeting have you agreed with the mentee?

- Tools & Resources\*

In case, the mentor suggested specific resources such as tools, models, videos, papers, etc, what did he/she suggest?



## Additional Information (optional)

### ● Suggested Experts

In case, the mentor suggested specific experts, who did he/she recommend?

### ● Next Meeting Date

For which date and time have you scheduled the next meeting? (in case it is scheduled already)

### ● Further Notes

Anything else, you would like to capture from the meeting?

### ● Files - Any files you would like to share?



# APPENDIX 8. Mentee evaluation form

Mentee Evaluation Form						
(Completed by mentor after the mentoring process ends)						
Mentor's Name _____			Time period _____			
Mentee's Name _____						
Questions		Answers				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My mentee was accessible and available.						
My mentee communicated regularly with me.						
My mentee was concerned about education and career related problems and worked to remove all deficiencies.						
My mentee contacted me regularly if there was a need to improve education or career performance						
My mentee demonstrated reasonable interest /concern toward me in my quest to offer assistance.						
My mentee's behaviour and attitude were generally right and courteous.						
My mentee learned at least one important lesson about professional or life development in general, from me.						
Overall my mentee participated in most mentoring activities.						
I anticipate an extended future relationship with my mentee.						
Mentor's signature _____			Date _____			

# APPENDIX 9. Goal setting worksheet (Morisano, 2010)

<b>The Aim</b>	The first step aim is to get participants thinking about what their desired futures might look like. Contemplating the desired state of an imagined future can be an important motivator in goal pursuit, especially when it is compared with current reality.
<b>Guide</b>	Upload this file to Drive and fill it there, if needed add additional columns. Discuss with participant with this questions, ask them to fill this questionnaire, use visualisation if needed.

**1st step** Think about these topics and write down shortly your thoughts. Do not spend more than 15 minutes to fill it. (1-2 minutes for each)

- (1) Your ideal future
- (2) Qualities you admire in others
- (3) Things you could do better
- (4) Your school and career futures
- (5) Things you would like to learn more about
- (6) Habits you would like to improve (i.e. Related to school, work, relationships, health)

**2nd Step** Examine the result of their fantasizing about the future and to extract seven or eight specific goals that could be pursued to realize the desired state. For each goal provide an identifying label as well as a brief description of the goal itself. The identified goals had to be clear and specific

The Goal	Key word/term	Brief description my your own words
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

**3rd Step** Evaluate the goals by ranking them in order of importance, detailing specific reasons for pursuit and evaluating the attainability of each goal within a self-specified time frame.

Ranking the goals in order of importance	Why it is important for you?	What time frame is realistic to achieve this goal?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		

**4th Step** Write about the impact that achieving each goal would have on specific aspects of their lives and the lives of others (family, friends, ect)

The impact of the goals to others	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

[Link to the worksheet file](#)





# APPENDIX 10. Mentor evaluation form

Mentor Evaluation Form (filled by mentee at the end of the mentorship process)

Your feedback will be used in order to improve the quality of the mentors in their work with young people and the quality of the process.

## Key Feedback

Your name and surname

Name of the mentor you are evaluating\*

Meeting Type (mark all relevant)\*

Learning Goals

Career Goals

Back to Education Strategy

Feedback Meeting

Openness to new opportunities

Problem Solving Skills

Personal attitudes improvements

Other Type of Meeting

I don't know



How would you rate the sessions with him/her?\*

5 - Very good / helped me a lot

4 - good

3 - worked

2 - not so good

1 - did not help me at all

Additional Feedback (optional)

What worked well in the collaboration with the mentor?

What didn't work well in the collaboration with the mentor?

Anything else you would like us to know?

Any files would you like to share?

APPENDIX 11 - 14. Training for mentors about  
SDL intervention



[Read from here](#)



APPENDIX 15. Training for facilitators/mentors:  
training of trainers



[Read from here](#)





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