

## **Training models for new curricula: a comparison between Break-in the Desk and Aspire 2 Create projects**

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Defining a new curriculum is a quite tough purpose to reach because it involves the analysis of the market needs (and society ones), the identification of the suitable training model (based on the target, the needs and the technical and timing availability), efficient contents and a well structured framework in order to guarantee the recognition of the new skills and competences.

Referring to training models and recognition aspects, in Universities is usually offered a formal education based on lessons following the national rules about the needs, contents and recognition methodology to adopt. But when we approach to a new curriculum, instead of referring to the national frameworks, we have to define the tailored one plus a structured way to make it acceptable to the national system educations.

In recent years Universities are trying to innovate their curricula to promptly reply to the new needs of the job market by integrating some new skills and by recognizing the non-formal and informal learning methods.

Based on the direct experience I introduce you two projects: Break-in the Desk and Aspire2Create.

Break-in the Desk is a three year project (Strategic Partnership – VET sector) for artists and creatives, that aims to define a new curriculum focused on designing and developing artistic intervention in businesses and Public Administrations and to develop a web platform to facilitate the matchmaking between businesses proposing challenges to be solved by artists through a tailored intervention.

The new curriculum has two main parts: the entrepreneurship competences and those related to the artistic intervention, or break-in actions as we used to say.

The training path we elaborate respects this division in order to facilitate those artists and creatives that already have some of the skills requested.

The entrepreneurship skills have the objective to strengthen the awareness of a personal entrepreneurship approach applied to a specific practice. In fact, this learning module is suitable to any kind of artists, creatives and also cultural managers, producers and so on. The main tool we elaborate is the Creative Project Canvas, a version of the Business Model Canvas tailored for the arts and cultural sectors. The Business Model Canvas is useful to plan, evaluate and schedule the production of a new product or service and is composed by 9 sections: Key Partners, Key Activities, Key Resources, Value Proposition, Customer Relationships, Channels, Customer Segments, Cost Structure, e Revenue Streams. Through the questions related to each section, the new product is evaluated from many points of view. The Creative Project Canvas has 9 sections but we decided to change completely the approach and terms. Instead of putting at the centre the product, the Creative Project Canvas has the human relationships, the aims and the feelings of the artist that is going to create his/her work of art. That's clear since the name of the Canvas and the sections. The aim is to elaborate a framework useful to create sustainable artistic and cultural projects, to evaluate new and old projects and manage the production, especially for teams. The questions involve also the impact of any aspect of the project in the project itself, the artist, the team, the family and other people around the artist.

The training is collected in a manual that we called "Work Play Book". The artist starts from a description of himself/herself, define an idea and work on it through the "Idea Design Process", as we call it, in order to have a defined project and be ready to continue with the Creative Project Canvas. Then there's a section dedicated to how to pitch the project and a Self-assessment phase on entrepreneurial competences and a Reflection questionnaire about entrepreneurial thinking, useful to continue the process to the evaluation phase at European Qualification Framework level 4.

The second part of Break-in the Desk training is focused on artistic intervention and it is still in progress. The training approach is the same with the integration of a good reference that is the *Training Artists for Innovation*. We started from their definition of the main skills required for artistic intervention: 1. Artistic core (Solid artistic experience, Feeling secure in explorative processes, trust the process, Courage the question the prevailing premise, Artistic mindset, artistic thinking, artistic way of perceiving life, Ethics and values live accordingly to your own values, not the values that are put on you by people in the organisation, Artistic freedom, Authenticity); 2. Personal aspect (Motivation, interest and involvement, Empathy, Open-mindedness,

flexibility, Self-confidence, Not self-centred, Maturity, Ability to think critically, Respect for business people, Resilience, Stamina); 3. Knowledge (About the organisation, Understanding of its position and needs, About techniques and organisational behaviour, Process management and facilitation, How to use artistic thinking in organisations, Marketing, How to set up a contract); 4. Functional skills (Communication and listening skills, Translation/facilitator skills, Analytical skills, Research skills, Management skills/project and team work, To a certain extent entrepreneurial skills). And we've been inspired by their programme, composed by 7 competences: Contextual Competencies, Artistic Competencies, Social Competencies, Pedagogic Competencies, Research Competencies, Project Management and Marketing.

The philosophy of Break-in the Desk curriculum is to gain the competencies required to navigate cross-cultural conversations that promote high-value creative outputs for both parties through collaborative cross-sector relationships. These high-value creative outputs include problem-solving, innovating, re-configuring processes, and synthesising aesthetic-cultural engineering with business-cultural engineering.

With this aims, philosophy and needs, the training model have to consider the non-formal and informal education in the programme. We believe that is not efficient to design a formal education programme to reach the needed learning goals, that's why we're structuring a blended solution able and flexible to accept and recognize competences and skills acquired in many ways. I confess that is not so easy to dialogue with the national education systems but we've found a common ground that gives us the confidence to continue in this way.

A previous project, in fact, give us this chance: Aspire2Create.

Aspire2Create is an international project for trainers in the cultural and creative industries funded with the support from the European Commission (Life Long Learning Programme). The core element of Aspire2Create is the transfer of the Euro Aspire Validation framework, an innovative non-formal validation framework that is a map to the European Qualification Framework tailored for the creative industries sector.

These projects are quite different from each other but very useful to propose two kind of methodology.

Aspire2Create framework can be used for three key profiles (Apprentice, Competent Worker and Expert) in order to understand which are the required competences, to

schedule the learning agenda to acquire necessary skills and to identify transferable skills. The aim of the framework is to introduce a process to define, organize and recognize the competences in the job market for artists and professionals of the Creative and Cultural Industries. In fact, in this sector is very huge to demonstrate all the skills and competences had and gained with the practices especially within and with businesses and clients, with the result of lacks of opportunities, misunderstandings and to be a professional with high skills not certificated.

The framework could be used to reach the certification as Cultural Learning Practitioner and/or Creative Entrepreneur Adviser level 5 or 7 (referring to the European Qualification Framework). The first profile is related to the Cultural sector (it could be in the Cultural Heritage field and in any other sector of the Humanities) and the second one refers to artists, creatives and professionals that contribute in innovating and supporting businesses with cultural and creative approaches, methodologies and solutions.

Let's analyse the process. After enrolling, the candidate can access to the programme, tools and guidelines available online in the learning environment and is associated to a mentor in order to prepare his/her portfolio that can consistently demonstrate each of the required competences. The process has 9 stages: 1. Meet the mentor and have an overview of the validation process; 2. Prepare a validation portfolio of materials that demonstrate the competences (the portfolio can include audiovisuals, photos, blogs, websites, reviews, articles, witness testimonies and references (those materials must be strictly related to the practice, activities and competences gained during the last 2-3 years), the portfolio will be reviewed by two peers plus and an external moderator to monitor and record all the aspects; 3. Self-assessment tool useful to upload the validation portfolio and link each material to the related competence, even more than one, and add more information to guide the peer reviewers; 4. Peer reviewer checks; 5. The first peer reviewer matches the assessment with the second peer reviewer, if both reviewers agree that the portfolio consistently demonstrate the competences at the appropriate level the candidate can continue the process, if not he/she has to integrate the evidences; 6. Submission of two critical reflection on the professional practice as a self awareness statement that identifies the strength and development needs and a value statement that identifies the impact and influence of the values on the practice (the two critical reflections have to be uploaded as a video or text files); 7. Professional dialogue between the candidate and the two peer

reviewers with a length of 30 minutes (45 if there's an interpreter) focused on prepared follow-up questions useful to examine the professional contribution in more depth; 8. Candidate receive the peer reviewer report written by the two peer reviewers; 9. Certification recognition at the appropriate level.

As one of the candidates that successfully finished the process, we'll see in depth the stages through my personal experience.

Aspire2Create finished last year so we're continuing working on it in order to define with the national education systems the suitable association in order to adopt the framework in Higher Education programmes. In United Kingdom we've found an initial agreement thanks to the collaboration between Collage Arts and the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework and we've started to do the same in Italy. In fact, our aim is to establish a common ground with the national education system in order to facilitate the integration of Break-in the Desk programme too and any further learning new curricula we will work on.