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June 20-22, 2018
Valencia, Spain

Defining a taxonomy of employability skills for 21st-century higher education graduates

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Overview

- The Skill Up project
- Theoretical framework
- Methodology
- Findings
- Closing remarks



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The Skill Up project



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A European Project

Skill **[up]**

Matching
graduates' skills
and **labour world**
demands through
authentic **learning**
scenarios

<http://skill-up-project.eu>



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

KA2

Cooperation for innovation and
exchange of good practices

Strategic partnerships in the field of
education, training and youth



ERASMUS+ CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

- Deep economic crisis and high youth unemployment.
- Skills gaps and low employability of graduates.
- Growing requirement for high skilled jobs.
- Need for closer links between higher education and the world of work.

Aim of the project

- To enhance employability skills of new graduates by means of improving the connection between higher education curricula and the demands of the labour market.

Outputs of the project

- **Examples of good practices** in matching graduates' skills and labour market demands in the partner institutions.
- **A set of indicative principles and guidelines** on how to enhance new graduates' employability skills on HE and VET settings from the perspective of authentic learning.
- **A MOOC in Career Counselling and Guidance** with emphasis in e-Counselling.
- **A virtual platform (Hub)** to bring together employers representatives, academic staff, and career counsellors to better prepare students for work.

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Theoretical framework



A COMPETENCE-CENTRED APPROACH TO EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

- [...] *a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke, 2006).*

Employability # employment

-European
Comission (2014)
-- Rychen and
Salganik, (2003)

A critical position

- To truly prepare and empower graduates to enter the labour market, it is important to discuss issues beyond the values of corporate managers such as employee rights, explorations of personal values, and critical analysis. Otherwise, we risk encouraging graduates "to believe that becoming and staying employed requires turning themselves into "products" (Waltz, 2011: 4).

**-Brown et al.
(2002)**
-- Waltz (2011)
-- Reid (2016)

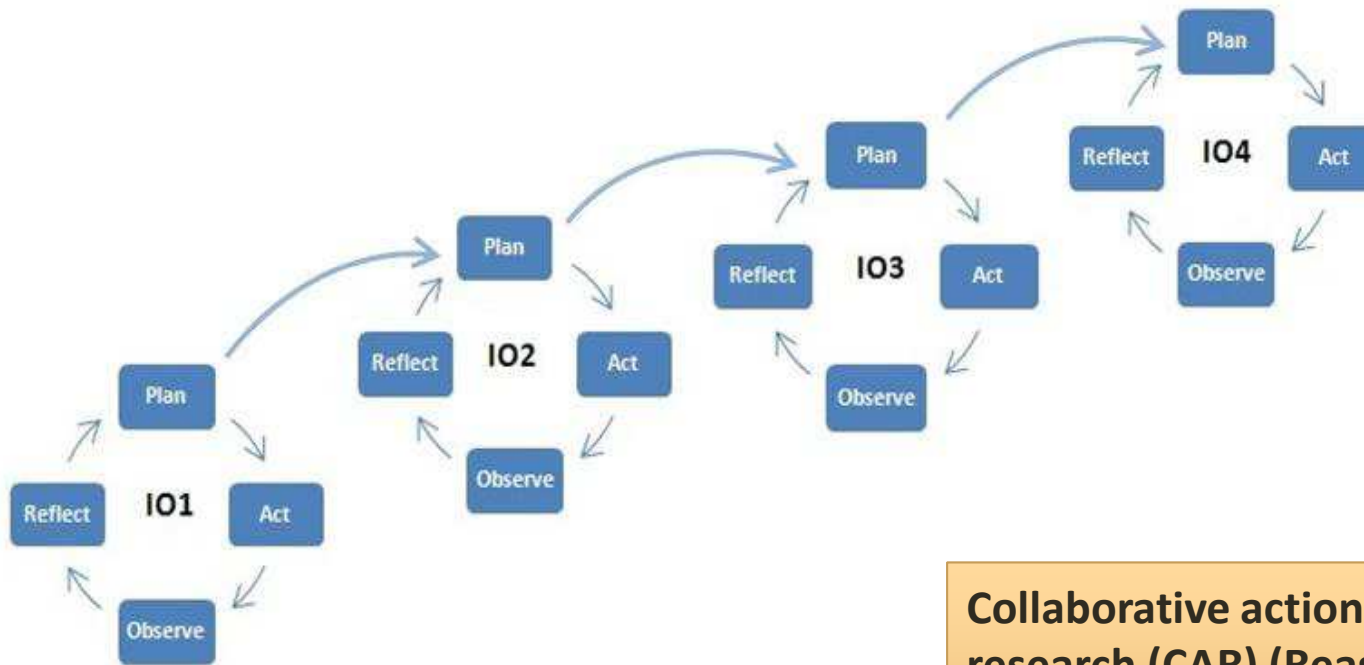
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Methodology



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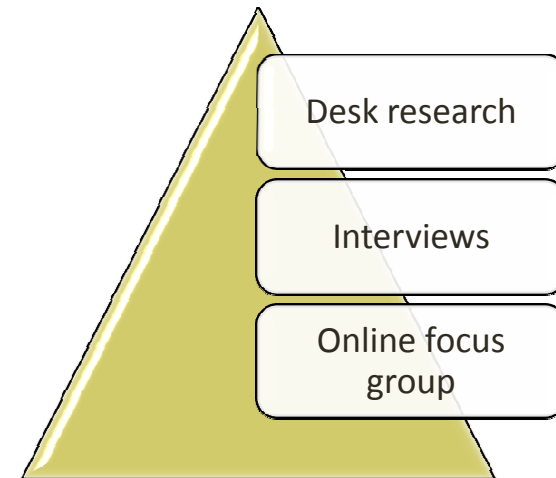
The four cycles of the Skill Up project



**Collaborative action
research (CAR) (Reason
and Bradbury, 2001)**

The first cycle

- Build the concept of employability skills of HE graduates.
- Define a taxonomy of employability skills required to promote graduates' employability in the 21st century.
- To identify to what extent the skills graduates are currently acquiring in HE institutions match the skills demanded by the labour market.
- To identify good practices in the partner institutions in order to develop students' employability skills from the perspective of authentic learning.



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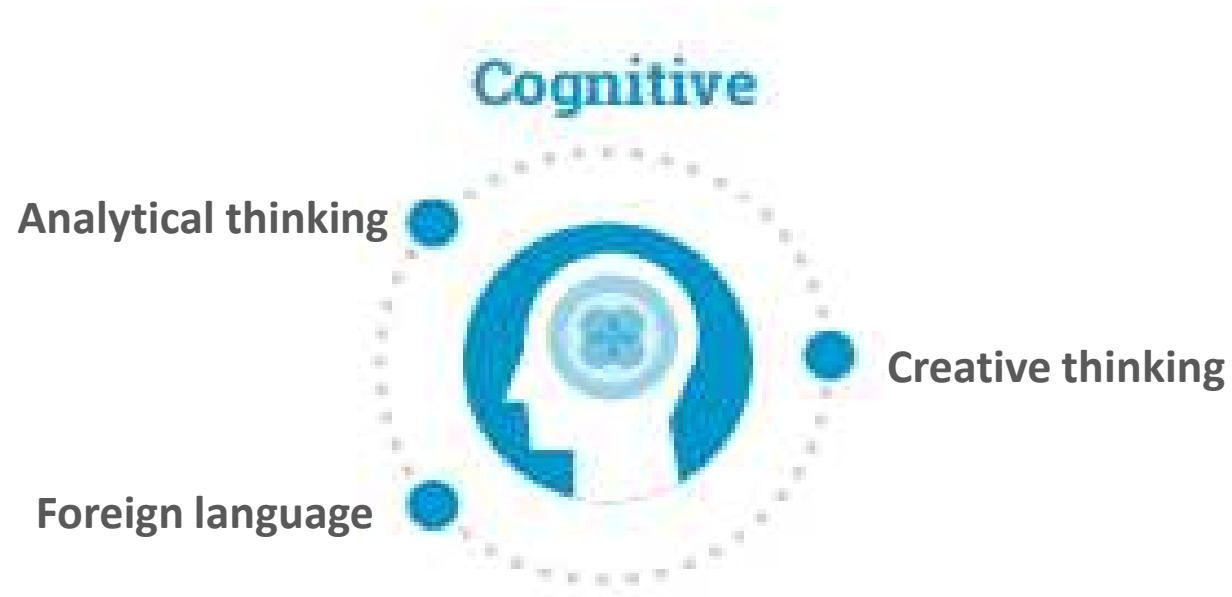
Findings



What are the skills that favor new graduates employability?

- Soft or transversal skills
 - Cognitive
 - Methodological
 - Social
- Subject-specific

Soft skills



Soft skills

Methodological



Soft skills



Closing remarks

- The taxonomy is not a definitive list but a starting point for carrying out a more in-depth analysis.
- It is embedded in a wider framework designed in the first phase of the project.
- The taxonomy considers the skills that are vital for success in the workplace and that should be developed mainly throughout HE.
- The skills are not only attributes of the new graduates but something that need to be permanently renewed throughout professional lives.

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Thank you!

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