



Grant Agreement no. UK/11/LLP-LdV/TOI/419

S-CUBE

Using Online Role-Play to Promote Soft Skills Development for Social Enterprises

Lifelong Learning Programme 2011

Leonardo da Vinci

Transfer of Innovation

Social Enterprises and Soft Skills

Training Methodology Report

Start Date:

Duration:

WP3: Methodology Definition & Application Scenarios

WP Leader: PU

Project coordinator organization name: Plymouth University

Partners organization name: Università di Napoli, Federico II (Italy), Cork Institute of Technology (Ireland), GePros (Germany).

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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Self-Reflection Process

The overall aim of the S-cube project is to spread the use of on-line role play for providing a training experience to enhance the soft skills of individuals working within social enterprise settings. Up to seventy participants across

3 countries (UK, Ireland, and Germany) will be involved in to an integrated process comprised of assessment, trialling and evaluation phases, as described below (fig.1).

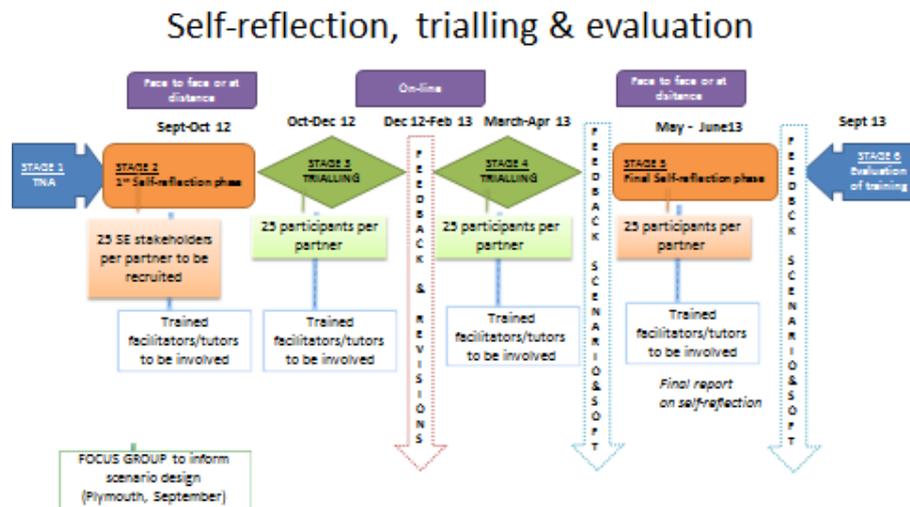


Fig. 1: Overall S-cube methodology process

Specifically the whole process comprises the following stages:

- Self -reflection stage (before the on line trialling)
- Two sessions of online trialling
- Final self- reflection stage (after the on line trialling)
- Evaluation of the trialling stage

- *SELF-REFLECTION* (See stage 2 in fig.1)

Facilitators will brief participants and share the objectives of the self-reflection and trialling processes with. A 'Pre-Trial Briefing Document' will be issued to all participants (see Appendix). It will be highlighted that many social enterprises recognise the importance of nurturing the actual and potential contributions of employees and are interested in maximising the value that each individual can add to an organisation. The self-reflection process will allow participants to identify particular strengths related to their soft skills alongside areas for potential enhancement. They will be reassured that they will be involved in a non-judgmental process, as the attention is focused on how they can best apply personal strengths, also considering that the final aim of the project is to assess the effectiveness of the S-cube product for training within organisations.

At this stage participants will be asked complete the following:

- A. Self-reflection questionnaires
- B. Open-ended qualitative questions

The surveys that we will use are self-report questionnaires, instead of "personality evaluation questionnaires". This means that they can help individuals learn more about themselves (although any survey of this nature can only provide partial insight). For the purposes of this project, the initial self-reflection, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, provides a picture of an individual against which the impact of the S-CUBE trial can be measured through a further terminal self-reflection (ie. stage 5 in Figure 1 above).

The self-reflection instruments can be found in the Appendix.

A. Self-reflection questionnaires

The two surveys are comprised of a widely used questionnaire based on the Johari Model and a general soft skill survey based on the Competency Model.

- Johari Model

The Johari questionnaire allows survey participants to reflect on various areas relevant to this project, specifically self-awareness, personal development, group development and understanding of relationships.

- Soft Skill Questionnaire

This self-assessment questionnaire has been designed according to the Competency Model of the soft skills that emerged from the TNA (WP2).

B. Open-ended qualitative questions

The aim of these questions is to add to the information gathered by the two assessment tools with more qualitative input about personal motivations for participating in the trial and perceptions regarding the value of e-learning for soft-skills development.

- *TRIALLING* (See stages 3 and 4 in fig. 1)

After the self-reflection phase participants will engage in two cycles of trialling within a specific learning scenario. It is envisaged that for each scenario test, there will be approximately 25 participants from each of the three countries involved in the trial. For each trial event, 5 participants will engage in the online role-play. This number of participants was chosen as it can bring about the emergence of group dynamics within the role-play and render evaluation by observation possible. Moreover the same scenario will be adopted in each of the host social enterprises so that a full comparative analysis can be more readily achieved. This can help to ascertain similarities and/or differences between how the product is experienced in the 3 nations where it is being trialled. Two experienced facilitators will manage the dynamics of each scenario trial. They will undertake orientation training on how to facilitate an S-cube online role play session. After the first trial, feedback will be gathered from participants regarding the effectiveness of the learning scenario and the software usability. This will be achieved via an online survey. So as to attain a comparative analysis of all trials in each country, an evaluation protocol with clear guidelines will be followed by each partner in order to have comparable results. Using the feedback derived from this process, changes will be made to the scenario and software as deemed appropriate. Observations from S-Cube facilitators will also inform revisions made. Recordings of each role-play session will assist facilitators in their evaluation of the S-Cube trials.

The second phase trials will then follow with the same structure as the first trial.

- *FINAL SELF-REFLECTION (See stage 5 in fig. 1)*

A debriefing process will follow the initial scenario trials where the perceived effectiveness of the scenario design and delivery mode will be evaluated. This feedback will inform the subsequent revisions to the scenario make-up and facilitation.

After the second phase of trials, an adapted version of the self-reflection surveys used before trial 1 will be completed by participants. Changes in the self-assessed soft skills of participants will be measured at this juncture. By comparing 'before' and 'after' data, an assessment of the impact of the S-cube trial on participants can be undertaken. This will form one element of the overall evaluation of the trial (see below).

- *OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE S-CUBE TRIALS (See stage 6 in fig. 1)*

In addition to the self-assessed impact of the trial on the soft skills of participants (see above), further evaluation will take place during this stage. This will draw on an online survey focussed on the learning effectiveness of the scenarios and the usability of the S-cube software. In addition, facilitator observations and qualitative feedback from trial groups will help to inform the final evaluation of the trials.

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<http://www.businessballs.com/johariwindowmodel.htm>

APPENDIX



Pre-Trial Briefing Document

Thank you for your participation in the trial of S-CUBE. The purpose of this briefing document is to:

- Provide some background information on the S-CUBE project;
- Tell you about the trialling process and how it will work;
- Collect some data from you to enable us to assess the impact of the S-CUBE training activity;
- Tell you what will happen next.

About S-CUBE

S-CUBE is a project that has been funded by the EC to develop soft-skills training for social enterprises through online role-play. Participants are given characters to play, represented by avatars, and they act out a scenario using the online e-learning platform. When you participate in the role play, you will be playing with three to four other players, each of whom will take on a different role.

The aim of S-CUBE is to provide an engaging training experience through which participants are able to reflect on their soft skills development needs, particularly those relating to communication and relationship building. The S-CUBE e-learning platform is easy to use and an on-line User Manual is provided.

After the trialling period, S-CUBE will be freely available for trialling participants to use in their organisations. New scenarios can be developed tailored to your own training and development needs.

About the Trialling Process

S-CUBE is a training product under development, so we need your feedback to make it as useful to social enterprises as possible. Between now and Spring 2013, we will be undertaking trials with various social enterprises and social enterprise stakeholders in the UK, Ireland and Germany. The trial will be in two phases. After the first trial we will ask for your feedback (via a short online survey) so that we can make improvements to the software. Two to three months later, we will ask you to trial S-CUBE for a second time before asking for your final feedback on the enhanced version. Each trial (when you will be playing the on-line role-play) will last for approximately one hour. Including the time you give to complete the feedback surveys, we expect that the total amount of time you will spend on this project will be around 3 hours across a period of 4 - 5 months.

Assessing the effectiveness of S-CUBE

To evaluate the impact of S-CUBE, we are asking participants to complete some questionnaires. Some will focus on your views about the S-CUBE software and others relate to your perceptions about certain soft-skills. To start the evaluation, we ask you to

complete the survey contained within this briefing document. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete and all responses will be held in the strictest confidence.

What's next?

Once you have read this document and completed the survey, you are ready to participate in the first trial. If arrangements have not yet been made, we will be in contact with you soon to schedule the trialling session (communication may come via a nominated contact person in your organisation).

IMPORTANT – if you are participating in the trial from your own home or work PC/laptop, you will need to download the S-CUBE software and check that it works **BEFORE** the trial date. Where you do not have administrator rights, you may need the assistance of your IT administrator to set things up. If you encounter any problems, please email jonathan.moizer@plymouth.ac.uk (UK), Paul.Walsh@cit.ie (Ireland) or anna.sturm@gepros.com (Germany).

To download S-CUBE, please follow these instructions:

- 1) Go to <http://eutopia.unina.it/scube/>
- 2) Download the S-CUBE Client. There are two versions: normal (with setup) and portable (without setup, just with the executable file). The first is suggested, the second is for people that don't like installing too many applications on their computer. Note that you can also download the *User Manual* from this location.
- 3) Run the S-CUBE Client. Notice: on Windows Vista and 7 operating systems, it could be necessary to open the program with Windows XP SP3 compatibility, or alternatively as Administrators (right click on the program icon and then press "Run as administrator").

Thank you once again for participating in this trial. We hope that you enjoy the S-CUBE experience!

Now please complete the attached survey form.

S-CUBE Pre-Trial Survey

All information collected will be held in the strictest confidence.

PART 1: About You

Name & role

Organisation

Date

Contact details (tel. no/Skype contact) in case we need to contact you direct

.....

PART 2: Soft Skills Self Evaluation A

Instructions

Use the following ten-point scale to rate yourself on the twenty situations, as described on the next page. Read over the descriptions and determine how much it characterises you in your relationships with other people.

Rating scale

10 EXTREMELY CHARACTERISTIC	I do this consistently
9 VERY CHARACTERISTIC	I do this nearly all the time
8 QUITE CHARACTERISTIC	I do this most of the time
7 PRETTY CHARACTERISTIC	I do this a good deal of the time
6 FAIRLY CHARACTERISTIC	I do this frequently
5 SOMEWHAT CHARACTERISTIC	I do this on occasions
4 FAIRLY UNCHARACTERISTIC	I seldom do this
3 PRETTY UNCHARACTERISTIC	I hardly ever do this
2 QUITE UNCHARACTERISTIC	I almost never do this
1 EXTREMELY UNCHARACTERISTIC	I never do this

<p style="text-align: center;">Descriptions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rating (1-10 see above)</p>
<p>1. I am open and candid in my dealings with others, as opposed to being closed, cautious, and under wraps in my relationships.</p>	
<p>2. I hear, respect, and accept the comments and reactions of others, as opposed to responding defensively, dismissing them as of little value, or turning a deaf ear on their observation.</p>	
<p>3. I specifically test for agreement and commitment to joint or team decisions, as opposed to assuming that all are committed if no one openly disagrees.</p>	
<p>4. I readily admit to confusion or lack of knowledge when I feel that I have little information about a topic under discussion as opposed to trying to bluff, feigning understanding, or insisting that my opinions are right.</p>	
<p>5. I show my concern that others know where I stand on relevant issues, as opposed to being basically indifferent to others knowledge of me or just unrevealing in my comments.</p>	
<p>6. I take the initiative in getting feedback from other members, as opposed to waiting passively for others to offer their comments of their own accord.</p>	
<p>7. I “level” with others and describe how I feel about what they do and how they do it, as opposed to covering up, taking tolerance or denying any reaction.</p>	
<p>8. My comments are relevant and pertinent to the real issues at hand in the team, as opposed to being “frothy” and off-target or attempts at camouflage.</p>	
<p>9. I try to understand how others are feeling and work hard at getting information from them, which will help me do this, as opposed to appearing indifferent, showing superficial concern or being basically insensitive.</p>	
<p>10. I value and encourage reactions equally from others, as opposed to being selective in my quest for feedback or treating some contributions as inferior.</p>	
<p>11. I am openly affectionate toward others when I feel I like them, as opposed to being inhibited, restrained, or acting embarrassed.</p>	
<p>12. I help others participate and work to support and draw everyone into a group discussion, as opposed to fending only for myself and leaving participation up to each individual.</p>	
<p>13. I take risk with others and expose highly personal information, both emotional and intellectual, when it is pertinent, as opposed to playing it safe, as if I don’t trust others.</p>	
<p>14. I welcome and appreciate other’s attempts to help me, no matter how critical or direct their feedback, as opposed to acting hurt, sulking, indifference, or rejecting them outright.</p>	
<p>15. I openly try to influence an individual or a group, as opposed to being manipulative.</p>	
<p>16. I press for additional information when they, anger me as opposed to acting unaffected, restrained, or over controlled.</p>	
<p>17. I am openly hostile towards others when they anger me, as opposed to acting unaffected,</p>	

restrained, or over controlled.	
18. I encourage collaboration on problems and solicit others definitions and solutions on mutual problems, as opposed to insisting on mechanical decision rules or trying to railroad my own judgment through.	
19. I am spontaneous and say what I think no matter how "far out" it may seem, as opposed to monitoring my contributions so that they are in line with prevailing through or more acceptable to others.	
20. I give support to others who are on the spot and struggling to express themselves intelligently and emotionally, as opposed to letting them flounder or trying to move on without them.	

PART 3: Soft Skills Self Evaluation B

Please read the following definitions of soft skills and rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is Very Strong and 5 is Very Weak) according to how you perceive yourself against each skill. For each skill, tick one box.

SKILL	1 Very Strong	2	3	4	5 Very Weak
EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP the ability to motivate people to work effectively towards goals in a collective fashion					
COMMUNICATION being able to impart information in a clear, precise and unambiguous way.					
CONFLICT RESOLUTION the ability to facilitate a process whereby conflict is resolved between parties.					
ABILITY TO INFLUENCE the ability to offer reasoned debate on a subject, so as to persuade and gain agreement.					
PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS the ability to consider one's own personal effect on matters and measure effectiveness in that context.					
ACTIVE LISTENING being able to engage with others in a way that assures them that you are listening, fully understanding and considering what is being said (ideas, feelings, thoughts)					
CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING being able to approach problems from a number of perspectives, thus increasing the possibilities of successful solutions.					
STRATEGIC THINKING contextualizing thinking into a wider sphere, so all possibilities and outcomes are visible.					
DECISION MAKING being able to reflect on all implications and considerations and arrive at an informed decision.					

	1 Very Strong	2	3	4	5 Very Weak
TEAM BUILDING being able to generate a positive spirit and attitude amongst workers which incorporates positivity, happiness and positive outcomes for the organization.					
BEING ABLE TO CONVINC the ability to win people over to one's own way of thinking by presenting rational and best ideas that show a better route and outcome to a concept or action.					
FLEXIBILITY being able to display an understanding that situations can change and consequently plans may have to be re-visited. Rigidity when dealing with human beings can be problematic					
UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS the ability to understand the dynamics between individuals and groups so as to read the 'sub-text' of how people are inter-acting and re-acting					
CONSULTATION appreciating the significance of people's opinions, particularly when important decisions are to be made.					
SELF AWARENESS the ability to know oneself, both physically and mentally at any given time and the effect that is having on oneself and others.					
JUDGEMENT the ability to consider and comprehend all factors relating to reaching an understanding of a situation.					
RESILIENCE being able to 'bounce back' and resume effectiveness in the face of a set back or failure.					

PART 4: Open Questions

1: What benefits do you hope to gain from participating in this trial? (please answer in the space below)

2: What is your current view regarding the potential of e-learning as a method of training for soft-skills development? (please answer in the space below)

Thank you for completing the pre-trial survey.