

## LESSON : Decision-Making and Planning

**Authors:** Marco Cadavero and David Vagni (CML)

### EntreComp Competence Framework

Planning and management

### Introduction

**Decision-making** is the ability to choose between different alternatives on the basis of rational criteria and personal values. It is a fundamental competence in both the educational and occupational spheres, as it allows one to direct one's educational and professional path, to solve problems, to face challenges and to seize opportunities. However, the decision-making process may encounter several difficulties, linked to both individual and contextual factors.

Individual factors that may hinder decision-making include:

- A lack of information or an overabundance of information makes it difficult to evaluate the different options and their pros and cons.
- Lack of self-efficacy or over-esteem, leading to under- or overestimating one's abilities and resources.
- The lack of motivation or the presence of extrinsic motivations, which reduce interest and involvement in the choice and its outcome.
- Lack of awareness or the presence of cognitive distortions, which negatively influence judgement and evaluation of alternatives.
- Lack of flexibility or the presence of mental rigidity, which prevent one from adapting to changes and modifying one's choices if necessary.

Contextual factors that may hinder decision-making include:

- Lack of support or the presence of social pressures, which limit autonomy and freedom of choice and lead to conforming to the expectations of others.
- The lack of opportunities or the presence of structural barriers, which narrow the field of possibilities and prevent access to useful resources.

To overcome these difficulties, it is important to develop effective strategies for decision-making, such as:

- Gather relevant and reliable information on the different options and their pros and cons, avoiding unreliable or biased sources.

- Evaluate one's abilities and resources realistically and objectively, recognising one's strengths and weaknesses.
- Identifying one's own personal motivations and values, choosing according to what is important and meaningful for oneself.
- Being flexible and open to change, accepting uncertainty and the possibility of modifying one's choices if necessary.
- Exploring opportunities and overcoming barriers, looking for useful resources and creative solutions to realise one's choices.

Decision-making is an essential competence for students and staff in training, but it may encounter several difficulties that compromise its quality and effectiveness. For this reason, it is important to develop effective strategies for decision-making that enable people to choose consciously, responsibly and consistently with their goals and interests.

ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) is a psychotherapeutic approach that is based on the concept of psychological flexibility, i.e. the ability to be in touch with the present, accept one's internal experiences and act in a manner consistent with one's personal values. Values are the guiding principles that guide a person's choices and actions in life, while goals are the concrete and measurable results one wants to achieve. The difference between values and goals is that the former are directions along which one wants to move, while the latter are destinations to be reached. Values are here and now, they do not need to be justified, they must be prioritised, freely chosen and flexibly held. Goals, on the other hand, are in the future, they must be specific, realistic, attainable and timed.

The difference between values and goals is important in business and education because it enables the development of entrepreneurial competence, i.e. the ability to transform ideas into actions that generate value for oneself and others.

Values are not goals. Values are the directions in which we keep moving, while goals are what we want to achieve along the way. A value is how we create innovation; no matter how many innovative ideas we come up with, we never achieve it. A goal is like the product or service or project we aim to develop by travelling in that direction. Goals can be achieved or 'cancelled', while values are an ongoing process. For example, if you want to be a curious, passionate and responsible student, this is a value - an ongoing process. If you stop being curious, passionate and responsible, then you are no longer a curious, passionate and responsible student; you are no longer living by that value. Conversely, if you want to get good grades, that is a goal: it can be

'cancelled' or achieved. Once you have good grades, you have them - even if you start studying little or badly, you can lose them. Instead, being studious is entirely up to us.

To develop planning and management skills, it is crucial to have a clear vision of one's values, which motivate and inspire entrepreneurial actions. Values help to identify opportunities, select the most innovative and relevant ideas, involve the right people, overcome obstacles and create positive impact. Goals, on the other hand, help to organise activities, set priorities, define indicators of success, check results and continuously improve.

In conclusion, the difference between values and goals according to ACT is essential to develop the entrepreneurial competence of planning and management. Values are the driving force behind entrepreneurship, while goals are the tools to realise it. Both are necessary to create value for oneself and others in business and education.

### **Bibliography and webliography**

Cannon, L., Kenworthy, L., Alexander, K. C., Werner, M. A., & Anthony, L. (2011). *Unstuck and on target! An executive function curriculum to improve flexibility for children with autism spectrum disorders*. Brookes Publishing Company. PO Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285.

Bruine de Bruin, W., Parker, A. M., & Fischhoff, B. (2020). Decision-making competence: More than intelligence?. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 29(2), 186-192.

Hastie, R., & Dawes, R. M. (2009). *Rational choice in an uncertain world: The psychology of judgment and decision making*. Sage Publications.

Reyna, V. F., & Farley, F. (2006). Risk and rationality in adolescent decision making: Implications for theory, practice, and public policy. *Psychological science in the public interest*, 7(1), 1-44.

Blakemore, S. J., & Robbins, T. W. (2012). Decision-making in the adolescent brain. *Nature neuroscience*, 15(9), 1184-1191.

[A Tool to Help Students Make Good Decisions](#)

[How to Help Your Students with Decision Making](#)

[5 Reasons Why Decision Making Is Important for Students](#)

### **Purpose and recipients**

The lesson aims to help learners in the transition between EQF level 3 and EQF level 4: to exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable but



subject to change; to supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities. The target groups are secondary or higher school students or persons in their first years of higher education who need to learn greater autonomy in planning and managing their studies and future work.

### **Learning outcomes**

Making simple rational choices between behavioural alternatives in order to achieve their goals in line with their values and needs.

### **Description of teaching and learning activities**

1. Introducing the concept of decision-making
2. Introduce students to the topic and how many decisions are made unconsciously and our emotions influence our choices and behaviour.
3. Introduce the distinction between values and goals.
4. Conduct an exercise to help students understand what is important to them.
5. Introducing 'The Compass' as a useful tool for decision-making.
6. Making suggestions and scripts.
7. Monitor results and have students work in small groups.

### **Supporting resources**

[My Compass](#)

**Duration:** 2 hours.

**Competence level:** EQF = 3



Co-funded by  
the European Union

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.