ETHAZI: HIGH PERFORMACE CYCLES IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

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Abstract

The ETHAZI learning model was developed as a pilot experience at five vocational training centres in the Basque Country four years ago. 100 students and 25 teachers from several training programmes took part in this first experience.

Currently, we have already completed the pilot phase and are now in a stage of deployment and implementation of the model. Our purpose is to arrange the conditions for all the VET centres in the Basque Country to be able to set up a new learning scenario in the short-medium term: High Performance VET Cycles – ETHAZI.

The whole learning model relies on a key concept: The CHALENGES-BASED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING.

The presentation of a problematic situation to the students, its transformation into a challenge and the whole process, until the obtainment of results, are structured taken into consideration the technical and specific skills of each vocational programme, the transversal skills that are currently considered as strategic are also included in the process: learning autonomy, teamwork, focus on outstanding results, digital skills, etc …

Following our methodology, the problematic situations are initially exposed to the students in the classroom, which has been previously distributed in teams. The work process aims at enabling the students to live the situation as a challenge and, furthermore, it is meant to generate opportunities for the students to acquire the necessary piece of knowledge that allows them to come up with substantial solutions.

This approach to challenges-based learning asks for a reinterpretation of the learning mechanisms. The interpretation that suits the model best is the description of learning as an evolution process, where the students hold the highest responsibility. Challenges-based learning calls for a scenario where students, individually and in teams, can be placed into action and produce a result. The final result is reviewed and all positive and negative aspects are carefully analyzed. At the end, students decide which issues need to be improved in order to tackle higher objectives in the next challenge.

This learning proposal does not fit into the traditional learning model as we know it. Elements such as schedules, assessments or classroom settings are no longer valid in their current format and need a re-thinking and a redefinition.

Keywords: innovative teaching, learning methodologies, effective teaching, collaborative learning
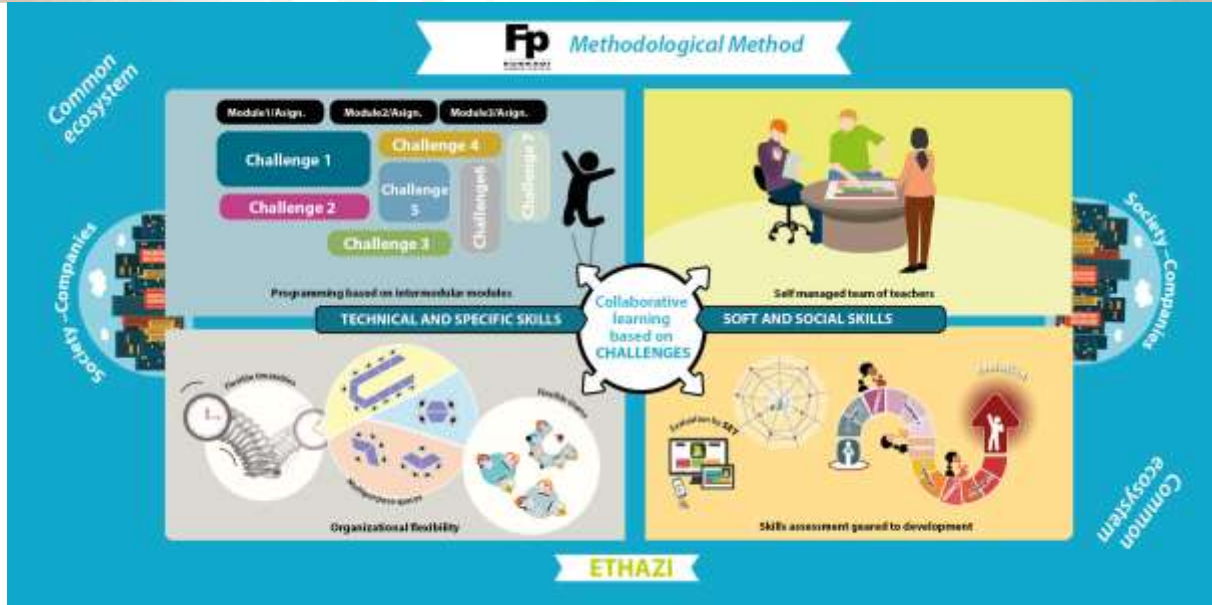
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Fig.1. ETHAZI Methodological Framework

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ETHAZI MODEL

These are the key features that distinguish this methodological approach called ETHAZI:

1.1 Intermodularity

When designing the challenges, teachers need to very much consider the real working environment which surrounds each training programme. This requires an in-depth analysis of the professional skills and learning outcomes of the training programme in order to improve efficiency along the learning process. The vocational subjects or modules must be perfectly articulated so that the design of the challenges produces activities which are both attractive for the students and closely related to the real tasks of the companies.

1.2 Self-managed Teaching Teams

The transfer of skills such as teamwork or responsibility begins with the teaching team. The teaching team is made up by few teachers which will be in charge of the complete training programme. Empowered with a high degree of self-management capacity by the centre's management body, teachers can adjust the schedules and adapt spaces to the needs of the eventual learning activities. The team itself shares both individual and group tutorship throughout the lifespan of the programme.

1.3 Assess students to evolve in the skills acquisition process

The assessment is integrated as a key element in the students' own learning process, providing them with frequent feed-back on the evolution in their attempt of acquiring professional skills.

In order to enhance this assessment approach and to encourage the participation of teachers and students, (individually and as members of a team) and to support the commitment of other agents for contributing to the assessment process, we have developed a specific app called SET Tool. (Skills Evolution Tool)
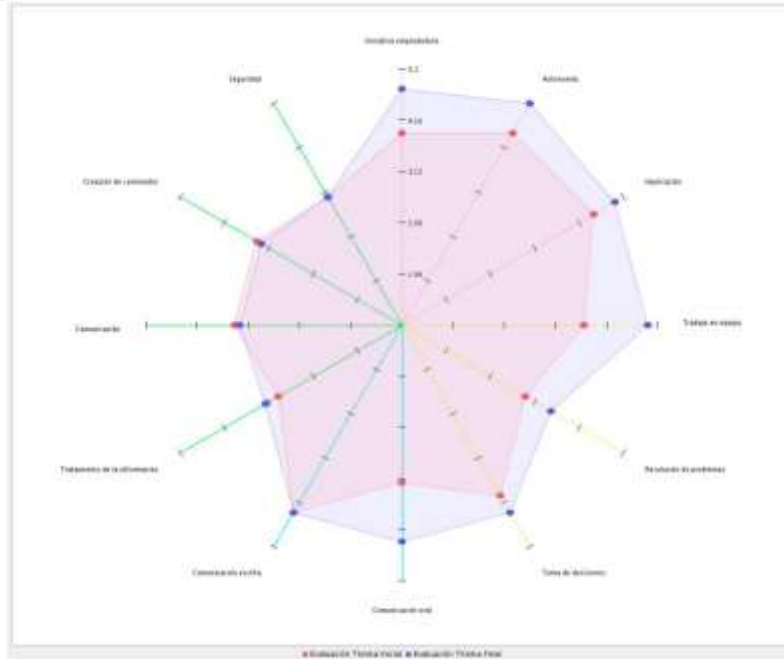
Fig.2. Example of feed-back: Evolution at acquiring some professional skills.

1.4 Adapting the learning spaces

The implementation of these new methodologies requires a modern learning setting, equipment, furniture and attractive spaces, away from those we see in most training centres nowadays. Their design should aim at putting at our disposal interconnected, flexible open spaces which unleash creativity and originate warm atmospheres, ideal for practicing active-collaborative experiences.

Fig.3. New learning spaces

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF ETHAZI MODEL
The ETHAZI methodological framework is a model which has being launched to induce methodological changes at the Basque private and state VET centres. At this stage, the deployment phase, 47 Basque VET centres have already joined the initiative. It implies that 1646 teachers, 3550 students and 142 training programmes are involved in the Ethazi experience.
We have designed some strategies to facilitate this deployment:

2.1 Training programmes focused on the methodological change
ETHAZI has some requirements which need to be satisfied before tackling the implantation of the model in a VET centre: Awareness campaigns, teacher training on new methodologies, redefinition of the educational project and the explicit commitment of managers and teachers.
Given its relevance, we are working, at Tknika, on the provision of a wide range of training programmes aimed at VET teachers that will drive the methodological change in the Vocational Training centres of the Basque Country in the coming years.

Fig.4. Training courses about Ethazi model in Tknika

2.2 Support and mentoring throughout the implementation process
Along the two years that last the implementation phase, some experts from Tknika and teachers who have been involved in Ethazi previously coach the teachers who are implementing the Ethazi model and support them at the several steps of the process, solving doubts and providing recommendations and cases of good practices.
This is a nice opportunity to see how teachers from both private and state VET centres collaborate with each other with the purpose of furnishing the methodological change in the learning process of a VET system.