



Erasmus+

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"The only way to exert control over your life is through your decision-making.

The rest just happens to you."

(Ralph Keeney, World Leading Decision Analyst)

Decisions have to be made on a daily basis. While most of them are related to simple issues, like what to have for dinner or which book to read next, others are more complex and call for greater attention. One of the most important and pressing decisions that young adolescents face is to make up their mind about a future career path. This particular decision is both very complex, given the large number of alternatives that can be chosen from, as well as highly relevant, due to its impact on the individual future. Arguably, so far, the German education system does not sufficiently prepare teenagers for this monumental decision. An exemplary indicator is that one of every four German university students did not finish their Bachelor's Degree in 2015.

The plethora of surrounding services and offerings by both public and private institutions who seek to provide guidance with the help of personality and skill assessment tests apparently do not effectually meet the needs of young adolescents. We believe that this originates from the fact that those offerings focus on what the participants can do, instead of focusing on what they want to do. This is where decision competency comes into play. Based on Value-Focused Thinking, a methodology, which was established by the American decision analyst Ralph Keeney, teenagers and young adolescents are taught how to proactively prepare and approach important decisions during a two day workshop. The decision of choosing a future career path serves as an exemplary learning case in this setting. The acquired skills and competencies however can later be applied to any kind of decision throughout their whole life. After participating in the workshops, the students are able to:

- Recognize and express decision situations.
- Envision and analyze objectives and values.
- Identify and create possibilities, opportunities and alternatives.
- Compile and procure necessary information.
- Evaluate the available alternatives based on values and objectives.
- Reflect their decision both critically and analytically.

The achievement of those learning goals is measured using a variety of methods. Aside from standard evaluation measures that provide insight into the trainers' performance and the goodness-of-fit of the workshop to the target group, recently published measurements for both the decision making competency and proactive decision making capability (which describes the ability to actively influence the quality of a decision, rather than simply obeying to it) are applied in order to generate profound insights regarding the workshops effectiveness.

The opportunity to work with students from different countries offers unique possibilities. Both students and trainers gain insights into the cultural differences of the perception and handling of the decision situation. Participants can compare their values and objectives with participants from other countries and hence develop a clear understanding of differences and similarities between them.

Additionally, teachers are offered a one day introduction to decision making competency and participate in the two-day workshop. We aim to enable teachers to include the basic mechanisms and ideas of effective and successful decision making into their daily teaching activities. Ultimately, we want to empower teachers to be able to lead workshops and their own and hence create a larger reach. Lastly, teachers are asked to provide feedback on their assessment of the workshop and collaboratively work on its improvement.

The workshops are held by a team of educated decision scientists. PD Dr. Johannes Siebert, who is currently employed as a Senior Researcher at the University of Bayreuth, is considered to be the leading expert on Value-Focused Thinking in Germany. He is responsible for the scientific and conceptual outlay of the workshops. Dr. Nadine Oeser, who holds a master's degree in Psychology from the University of Berlin and PhD from the London School of Economics in Decision Science, is responsible for the design and execution of both the workshops and their evaluation. Additionally, Johannes Heller, PhD student in Business Administration with a focus on Decision Analysis at the University of Bayreuth, will serve as a support trainer during the workshops. Both trainers, Nadine and Johannes, are also members of the non-profit wahlweise e.V., which is based in Berlin and has dedicated itself to train young people in good decision making.