Erasmus+
Co-funded by the European Union

HarISA

TRAINING FOR MENTORS
How to Become a Good Mentor?
Friday the 19th of February 2021

How to empower doctoral students' career self-management skills and employability?

Amelia Manuti
Department of Education Psychology Communication
University of Bari – Italy
amelia.manuti@uniba.it

1

Welcome back ☺ and again….what else can I do for you this morning?

- Consider PhD as an occasion to experiment with a professional identity (shadowing supervisors and learning job demands and challenges);

- Discuss about the possibility to help students in optimizing this experience in terms of professional future, developing skills that could be transferred to other different professional domains especially in a time of great uncertainty and boundaryless careers;

- Share the opportunity through our mentoring relationships to shape and empower core soft skills that are precious for students' future employability;

2

Going back…where did we stop last week?

Mentoring is a complex relationship where formal roles and crucial interpersonal skills on the side of mentors are needed (psychological function);

There is no magic formula for a perfect mentoring relationship;

Mentoring is a two-way street where a great match between what the Mentor and Mentee reciprocally expect and want out of it is very important;

To maximise the relationship, it should be kept in mind the importance of some subjective factors that could impact on mentorship positive adjustment: learning, values, motivations, self efficacy, etc.

Therefore, mentors need to master many technical and interpersonal skills in order to manage these relationships….

3

…and today we add more meat to the barbeque…

4

But before going into details…let's take a breath and go on…

We stopped with these few highlights about your experience ….

What were your impressions in line with the discussion brought about last week?

- What qualities in a mentee will bring out the best qualities in you as a mentor?
- Which are the 4 characteristics that might define you best in the role of mentor?

5

And now…what do we focus on today?

Phd as a «natural» learning context where students may have the opportunity to learn more about themselves and their future working aspirations….

6

Some evidences about this assumption….

Phd could be seen as a Job shadowing experience namely as a valuable experiential learning opportunity (on the job training!) for young researchers who are engaging in career exploration, and seeking information about professional domains, specific companies, or positions.

Through mentoring experience, Phd students can gain insight into their career search while practicing their professional networking and communication skills.

While experiencing Phd, students could develop and empower a set of soft skills which will be precious for their future….
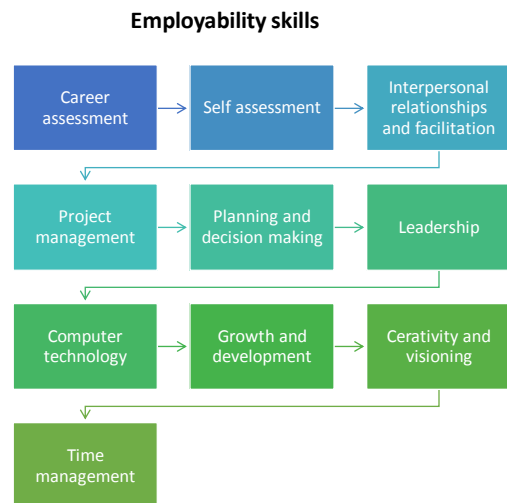
(Lozada, 2001; Yoo, 2012, Mader & Mader, 2017)

7

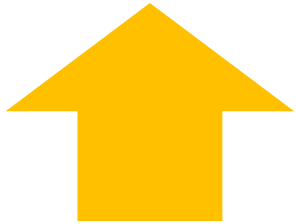# Which (soft) skills do students develop during the Phd?

Career self management skills

Personal effectiveness

Managing relationships

Finding work and accessing learning

Managing life and career

Understanding the world

Neary, Dodd & Hooley, 2015

Employability skills

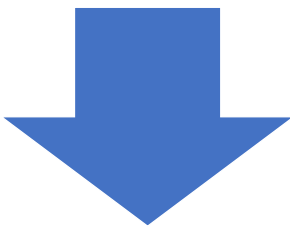| Career assessment | → | Self assessment | → | Interpersonal relationships and facilitation |
Project management	→	Planning and decision making	→	Leadership
Computer technology	→	Growth and development	→	Cerativity and visioning
Time management				

Knox, 2011

8

And therefore why is employability so important for phd students?

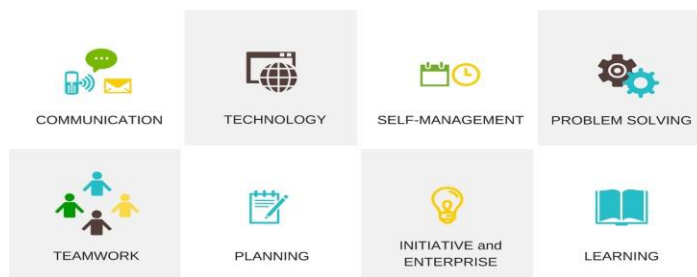Because the future could be unpredictable

Phd could be a very uncertain career path in some cases (boundaryless and precarious careers)
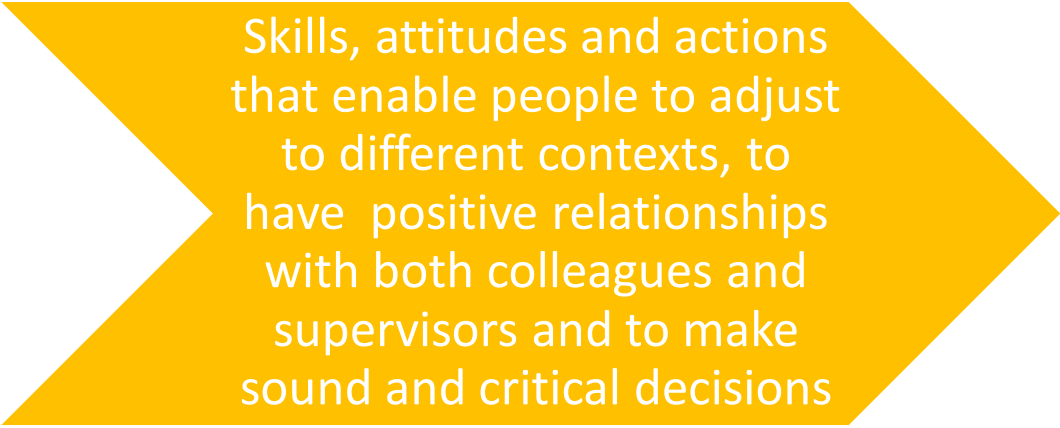
9

But, first we need to know…

What are employability skills????

COMMUNICATION   TECHNOLOGY   SELF-MANAGEMENT   PROBLEM SOLVING

TEAMWORK   PLANNING   INITIATIVE and ENTERPRISE   LEARNING
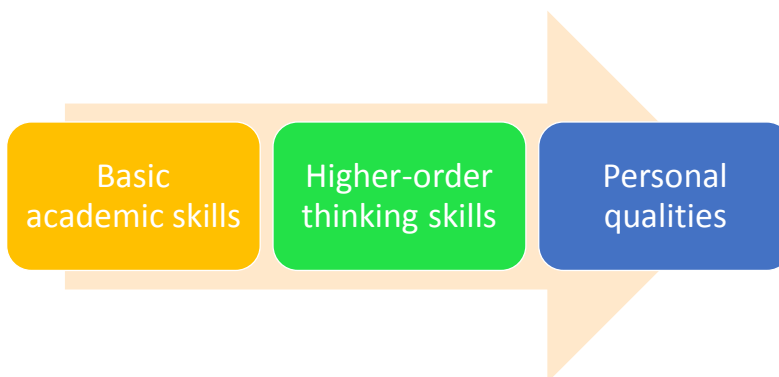
10

Employability skills are . . .

Skills, attitudes and actions that enable people to adjust to different contexts, to have positive relationships with both colleagues and supervisors and to make sound and critical decisions

(Saunders & Zuzel, 2010)

11

Employability skills can be divided into...

| Basic academic skills | Higher-order thinking skills | Personal qualities |

12

Basic academic skills

Reading

Writing

Numerical skills

Oral Communication

Listening

13

Higher-order thinking skills

Learning

Reasoning

Thinking Creatively

Decision Making

Problem Solving

14

Personal Qualities

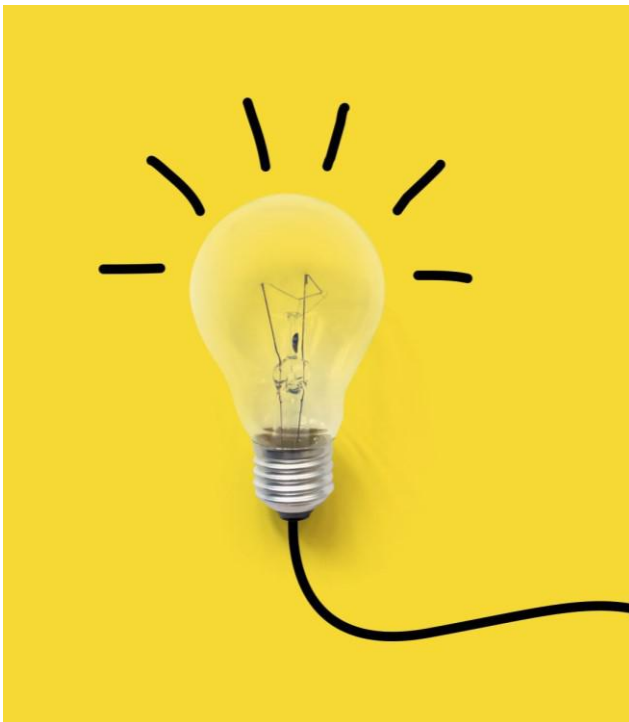|		
Cooperative	Self-Motivated	Self-Management
Responsible	Social Skills	Good Work Attitude
Self-Confidence	Honest	Well Groomed
Self-Control	Team Spirit	Integrity
Adaptable & Flexible	Self-Directed	Punctual & Efficient
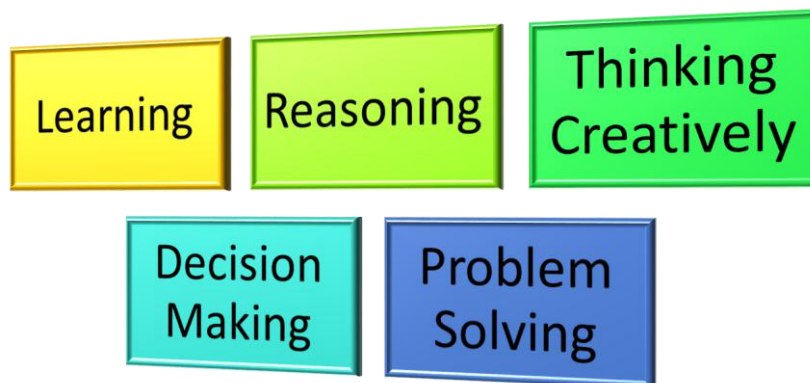
15

...the good news is that these are all *transferable skills* that could be highly demanded by most employers in the future

(Robles, 2012; Appleby, 2017)

16

Therefore, these skills should be recognized, managed and empowered…..

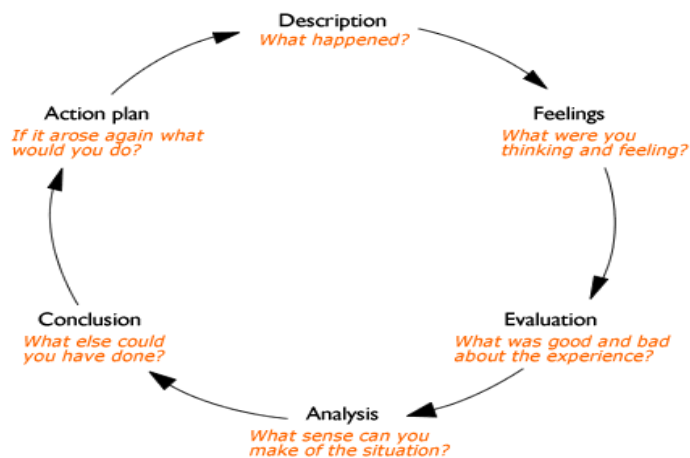Mission impossible?!
No, we ALL have them!

These are the skills acquired during any activity in life – voluntary work, part time jobs, classes, projects, parenting, hobbies, sports, etc.

What makes the difference is the awareness about this heritage and the ability and intention to make them "work" in different kind of contexts

17

How to recognize skills and become employable?

Description
What happened?

Feelings
What were you thinking and feeling?

Evaluation
What was good and bad about the experience?

Analysis
What sense can you make of the situation?

Conclusion
What else could you have done?

Action plan
If it arose again what would you do?

18

Some examples of transferable skills obtained in the Phd experience that can be transferred to other kind of workplaces…

19

Here they are….

#1: Ability to meet deadlines

#2: Ability to manage multiple tasks

#3: Ability to achieve goals

4: Ability to adapt to different contexts and demands

5: Ability to manage cultural, ethnic, gender, age diversity

6: Ability to handle failures and disappointments along the way

7: Ability to manage stress and time pressure

8: Ability to manage one's own responsibilities

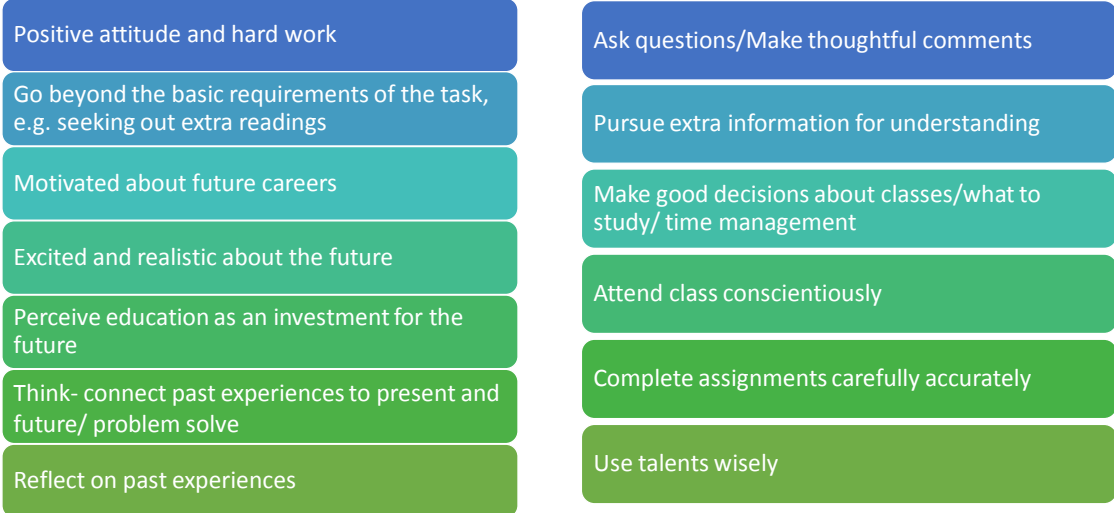# 9: Ability to work in teams

10: Ability to share knowledge

#11: Writing skills

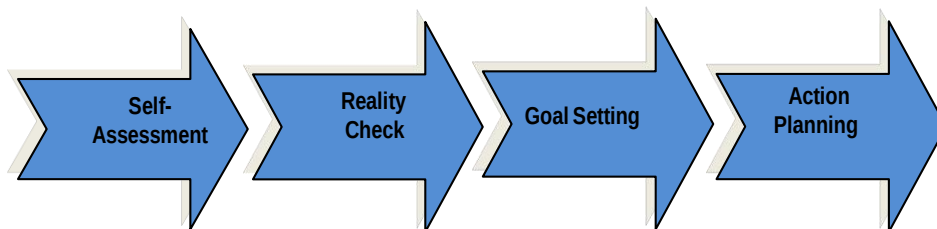#12: Research skills (Information seeking)

….

20

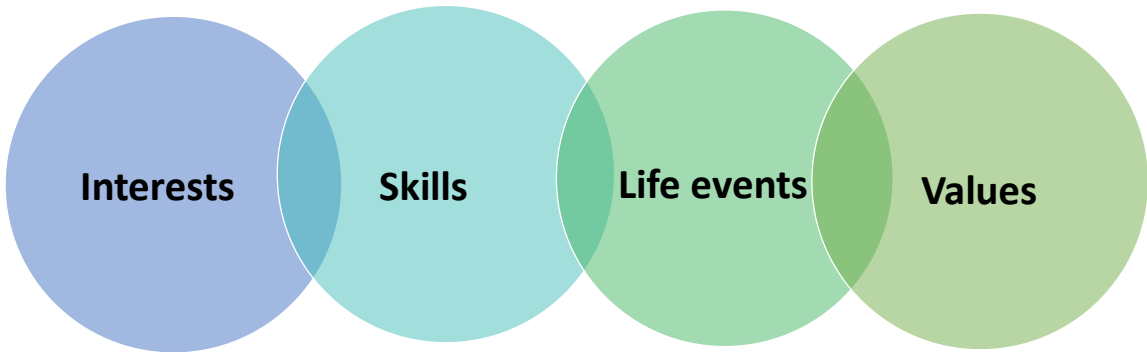# How do Phd Students Demonstrate these 'Soft Skills'?

Positive attitude and hard work

Go beyond the basic requirements of the task, e.g. seeking out extra readings

Motivated about future careers

Excited and realistic about the future

Perceive education as an investment for the future

Think- connect past experiences to present and future/ problem solve

Reflect on past experiences

Ask questions/Make thoughtful comments

Pursue extra information for understanding

Make good decisions about classes/what to study/ time management

Attend class conscientiously

Complete assignments carefully accurately

Use talents wisely

21

Career self management as a new meta-skills for employability

Self-Assessment → Reality Check → Goal Setting → Action Planning

22

Self assessment

Interests   **Skills**   **Life events**   **Values**

23

Reality check

Is it really the career I want?

Do I have all the information about this career?

Do I succeed in seeing me in this career in the near future?

Strenghts/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats Analysis

24

Goal setting

Fixing career objectives that should be coherent with one's own features, interests, vocations and with the opportunities concretely offered by the context.

25

Action Planning

Action Plan is a planning tool allowing people to:

concretely define the goals we have decided to follow;

develop according to a logical sequence tasks and activities useful to reach goals
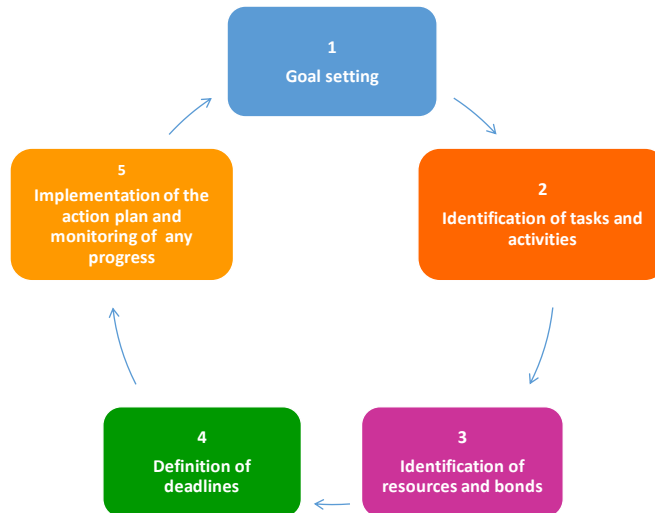
assess how things are going on in line with the established deadline and reformulate integrative actions in case goals have not been met yet;
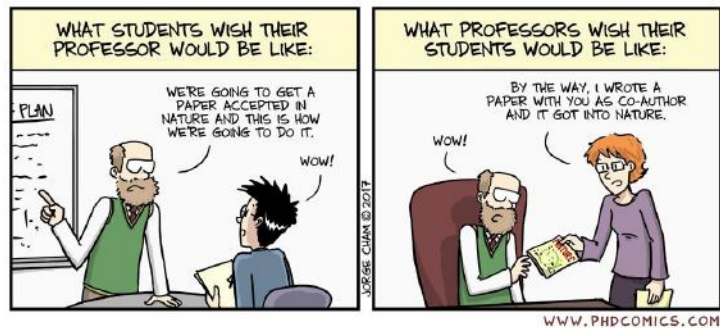
26

Steps in action planning

27

And how could mentors help students capitalising this opportunity?

..... by defining a positive mentoring relationship

....and through constructive feedbacks

28

Remember the two-way street!

Questions for mentees

What do you want out of a mentoring relationship?
What goals have you set for yourself? Long term? Short term? Where do you want to focus now?
How do you learn best?
How do you like to be challenged?
How frequently do you want to meet?

Questions for mentors

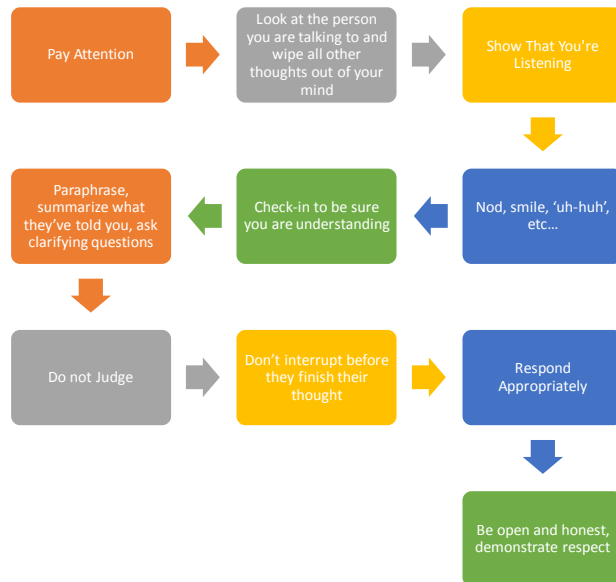| |
|---|
| How do you mentor best? |
| What kind of mentoring arrangement do you prefer? |
| For what kind of person are you a good mentor? A poor mentor? |
| The next time you consider mentoring someone, would you be willing to sit down first to explore whether you are a good match? |
| What kind of conversation would you have to determine if the relationship would be a good fit? |

29

Tips on constructive and effective feedbacks

- Establish an atmosphere of mutual trust and regard. The feeling of trust allow an easier management of communication;
- Acknowledge mentee's contributions along with the areas in which you are needing more;
- Be specific in proving feedback. It is not helpful to say «You are not producing». It is much more useful to describe the specific element of wprl that concerns you;
- Keep the feedback simple. Decide on a small number of areas you want to address in your feedback;
- Hold the meeting in your office or other private space – never provide negative feedback in an open area with others around;
- While you are giving feedback, maintain eye contact and a measured tone;

30

Schedule meetings when you can listen actively

```
Pay Attention  →  Look at the person you are talking to and wipe all other thoughts out of your mind  →  Show That You're Listening
                                                                                                              ↓
Paraphrase, summarize what they've told you, ask clarifying questions  ←  Check-in to be sure you are understanding  ←  Nod, smile, 'uh-huh', etc...
      ↓
Do not Judge  →  Don't interrupt before they finish their thought  →  Respond Appropriately
                                                                              ↓
                                                                       Be open and honest, demonstrate respect
```

31

By the way….

What is the one challenge you have experienced when giving feedbacks?

How have you seen cultural difference impact the experience of mentees receiving feedback?

32

33