

ERASMUS PROJECT 'I KNOW WHAT I WANT TO BE'

The methodology, with associated activity suggested below, is an exploratory and evolving process in which the students discover, little by little, their identity in relation to future career choices. It is not the end of the process, but a means by which student deepen their understandings of their potential and profile.

IDENTITY AND PERSONAL CHOICES - CAREER SWOT ANALYSIS

The activity suggested here is a method for discovering the current thoughts and aspirations of students with regard to career choices; it focuses on finding out their ideas of what they want to be in the future, and it helps them to get to know themselves better.

A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) is a technique used in Business, and is sometimes applied to clarifying the personal career choices of adult workers.

In this activity we have modified the SWOT analysis process to make it applicable to young students, in our case mainly middle school students, with a view to discovering their future career aspirations. The SWOT could be adapted for those of you working with different aged students, according to your needs.

We have used the SWOT to get our young learners to:

- analyse their strengths in terms of their personal characteristics, attitudes, knowledge and skills (**Strengths**);
- think about areas they need to improve (**Weaknesses**);
- consider what they think they would like to do in the future based on their analysis of possible opportunities available in the world outside with their profile (**Opportunities**);
- and, consider possible reasons that might hinder or stop them achieving their career goals (**Threats**).

The SWOT analysis, if it is filled in by all participating students, will allow data to be collected on all students strengths (what they feel they are good at); their weaknesses (their needs for the future); opportunities (areas they would like to focus on for their careers); threats (possible blocks to them achieving their wishes).

We suggest the following procedure to be used for middle school students; a similar procedure may also be applicable to primary and high school students, but the complexity of the stories used would need to reflect the students' profiles.

A. The specific objectives of the Career SWOT Analysis

To give students an opportunity to focus on their future through filling out a career SWOT analysis and help them develop:

- The ability to reflect on themselves in terms of their characteristics, skills, knowledge and potential;
- Greater awareness, based on an analysis of their interests and talents, of career opportunities which match their identity and profile;

- Responsibility for the consequences of their career choices in contributing to a more effective and efficient society.

B. Methodology for Putting into Operation the Career SWOT Analysis in Class

In order to prepare for the SWOT analysis students need to understand clearly what they need to do.

1. Firstly, teachers need to prepare a story which they will then read to the students. The story should be about a child of the students' own age. The story should include clear reference to what the child in the story is good at (strengths); what that child is not so good at (weaknesses); what that child would like to do in the future (opportunities); and some of the things that might stop the child realising her/his plans (threats). *Example stories are given in Attachment-3, but these may need to be modified for your local context.*
2. This activity may extend over two separate periods; one period working with the example story and analysis; the second period with the children carrying out their own SWOT analysis.
3. In the chosen class, the teacher tells the students that they are going to hear a story about a girl/ or boy who is thinking about what they want to do later in life. The students need to listen to the story and remember (or take notes) about what this student is:
 - a. good at;
 - b. not so good at;
 - c. what job/ career the student would like to do in the future;
 - d. and what the student needs to change about him/herself in order to allow her/him to make her/his wishes come true.
4. The teacher then distributes a worksheet (See Attachment-1), which the students need to fill in while listening to the story, or after finishing listening to the story.
5. The teacher may read the story to the class as a whole, or it may be a better idea to record the story (a different voice) and play the recording of the story while watching the students' reactions.
6. Students may then work in groups to fill out their worksheets together and compare answers. The teacher may wish to play the recording a second time in order to allow students to check their ideas and add more points if necessary. Once students have compared notes:
 - a. The teacher may wish to ask questions to emphasize some of the strengths of the student, and the weaknesses;
 - b. The teacher should stress through questioning the connection between strengths and possible chosen career for the future;
 - c. The teacher should also make the connection between weaknesses and the problems in achieving that career that the student might have if he/she does not learn/ improve

the lacking skills. The teacher should make certain that students have understood the concept of threat.

- d. For older students the spoken text needs to be complex to reflect the true needs of the profession chosen by the example student. It may be possible to introduce the SWOT through a written text for this age group, but the same process of group work is recommended.

7. It is recommended that this second step in the SWOT process be carried out in a second period.
8. Once the class has a clear idea of the process of completing a SWOT, then students should be given the 'Career Swot Analysis Form' and be asked to complete a SWOT for themselves (some example questions are in Attachment-2, but they may need to be adapted for the age of the students).
9. While students are filling out their SWOT form (on their own), the teacher should monitor and provide help and suggestions where needed. It is assumed that the teacher who is carrying out this activity knows the students well.
10. For a strong class it may be possible to get students to write their own stories and share them with their peers. This would imply imagination about the future.
11. The teacher should tell the students that the forms once completed will be collected at the end of the lesson.
12. As a final part of the activity:
 - a. the teacher may ask students to sit together and tell each other about their strengths, etc. and what they want to do in the future (or their stories).
 - b. For more mature classes this may start a conversation, which the teacher should encourage.
 - c. In general the teacher should be an empathetic listener and not judge the choices made by the students.
 - d. As a whole class the teacher may ask students to tell of some interesting examples that they have heard from their friends.
13. Once the teacher collects the individual SWOT forms they should, after the class, analyse the career choices of students and produce data for each class, and then for all classes together.

C. Analysing the Data and Developing a Curriculum

14. Each country in the project should analyse the data from the SWOT analysis in order to see what type of career choices the children have made; the data can be grouped under the headings of the SWOT.

15. The data will be the basis for the curriculum for the 10 sessions (See Examples of activities in Attachment 4) you are going to do with the children in order to increase their awareness of themselves and their career choices.
16. Each country then should prepares a tool kit for teachers, including lesson plans for implementing the classroom activities with the chosen classes.
17. During the classes teachers should keep a diary / report / summary of the discussions and classroom guidance activities.
18. At the end of the 10 classes the teachers should ask the students to do the SWOT analysis again. Teacher should collect the SWOT analyses of the children and see whether there have been changes in their ideas over the course of the intervention.
19. It may be useful to choose and interview a number of children and ask them about the experience and whether it changed their ideas, and why.