

Ideo Workbook in English Lessons: A Fit Analysis to Skola2030 Transversal Skills

Ieva Margeviča-Grinberga, Anna Sidorova

University of Latvia, Latvia

ABSTRACT

The concept of transversal skills is a crucial element in competency-based approach in Latvia, which is specified in project Skola2030 and gradually has been approbated since 2017 in schools in Latvia. Teachers were provided with the methodological tools to practise these skills successfully, however, there are still struggles in this field. The objective of the research was to demonstrate the evidence regarding whether the principles of IDEO workbook are appropriate ('fits') Latvian educational context, particularly, the notion of Skola2030 transversal skills. Based on fit and feasibility theory this work addressed the research question: 'How does the design of IDEO workbook's skill set fit to the transversal skills of Skola2030 methodological tool in English lessons?' The examination used statistical descriptive frequency analysis of the transversal skills of each document and comparative analysis between the two document sets included in each of them, using Excel software. The results show that the Skola2030 methodological tool for teachers on transversal skills in language areas stresses critical thinking, collaboration, and digital skills, whereas IDEO workbook underlines critical thinking, creativity and entrepreneurship, and self-directed learning. The high fit of both documents suggests that the adaptation of the IDEO workbook in the schools of Latvia could considerably enrich the Skola2030 educational offer. Suggestions for the improvement of the IDEO workbook and its adaptation are put forward.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, fit and feasibility analysis, Hexagon tool, IDEO workbook, Skola2030, transversal skills

Introduction

Significant changes in Europe and worldwide have fuelled the understanding of the value of continuous learning and enhanced the need for all persons to build talents, competences, and inclinations that go beyond core skills over the

past several decades. These shifts have also influenced existing notions and techniques for developing transversal skills. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), transversal skills are often not explicitly tied to a specific task, job, academic discipline, or specific subject and may be applied in a broad range of contexts and workplaces (Skills and Education Group, 2019). These abilities are ‘transferable’ since they are not limited to a single industry or professional role. Like a transversal line in geometry, the term ‘transversal’ refers to how specific talents ‘cut across’ diverse tasks and jobs. They are analytical and innovative thinking, active learning, complex problem solving, leadership and social influence, technology use, monitoring and control etc. (World Economic Forum, 2020, 36; Álvarez, 2020). Teachers who possess the skills mentioned above can adapt to various work settings and situations. However, the challenge comes when they are not well-versed in English, which is a globally used language for instruction (Zeide, 2022). IDEO workbook is an appropriate methodology to get such teachers on board with language acquisition due to its discovery, interpretation, ideation, experimentation, and evolution approaches with the help of a design thinking approach, which involves recurrences to improve the solutions and increase knowledge (Schallmo et al., 2018).

To begin with, IDEO is design thinking that is experimental in nature. Therefore, it permits teachers to develop new ideas, obtain feedback on them, and then iterate (Lūka, 2014). Design Thinking allows teachers to fail and learn from their failures. Given the breadth of the instructors’ needs, their English acquisition will never be completed or “solved” on time (Henriksen et al., 2020). Riverdale (n.d.) states that it will always be in the works. Riverdale Country School located in New York City, and the design firm IDEO collaborated to establish Design Thinking for Educators (DTE). As the name implies, it provides a teamwork approach to developing thinking aimed at teachers looking for design solutions. DTE’s toolset and workbook are its highlights since they provide a step-by-step way to get design solutions. The fact that this material is entirely free to download from IDEO’s website adds to its appeal, making it an open call for teachers with a focus on English acquisition gain from it.

This research analyses one of the recent contributions to the improvement of the implementation of transversal skills in Latvian schools. Since 2016 Latvia is gradually moving to competency-based education, in which transversal skills promote knowledge acquisition in various contexts with different ways of thinking and self-directed learning, thus boosting the connection of new knowledge with a student’s personal experience. Moreover, the use of transversal skills in different learning areas strengthens students’ abilities to use them independently and in a wide variety of situations, including complex and unpredictable ones (Skola2030, 2019).

The methodological tool for teachers to enhance students' transversal skills includes specific skills according to the learning areas, such as critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and entrepreneurship, self-directed learning, cooperation, civil participation, digital skills. As for the language area, where foreign languages are included as well, the main three transversal skills that are highlighted to be taught more meaningfully and successfully are critical thinking and problem solving, cooperation, and digital skills (Skola2030, n.d.). Nonetheless, according to the curricula of English as a foreign language in Forms 1 to 12, approved by National Centre for Education Republic of Latvia (Valsts izglītības satura centrs), all existing transversal skills in Skola2030 and outcomes of a successful acquisition of them is mentioned and described (VISC, 2020). In UNESCO document on assessing transversal competencies (Care et al., 2019, 2) a divergent set of transversal skills is mentioned; however, the main domains are global citizenship, critical and innovative thinking, physical health and religious values, intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, media and information literacy, which have got the relevance both to the list of transversal skills in Skola2030 and IDEO workbook (see Table 1).

In the Skola2030 methodological tool, in the chapter of each transversal skill, specific recommendations are described on how to develop students' transversal skills, using all three teacher actions, such as: shape in their own actions the skills and attitudes that students learn, create an environment and offer tasks that promote skill practice, guide the development of skills and support students in the learning process. It is also crucial to point out that the methodological tool provides advice on enhancing critical thinking, cooperation, and digital skills especially in the language area (Skola2030, n.d.). Critical thinking in students is formed when students analyse and evaluate various types of information and situations, study problem situations related to language learning or the language system itself and offer simple or complex solutions, determine the open and hidden intention of the author of the text, justify the opinion and formulate the argumentation.

Table 1. Main Transversal Skills in the Skola2030 Curricula in English Lessons and IDEO Workbook

Skola2030 Curricula in Forms 1 to 12 ^a	critical thinking and problem solving (4 ^b), creativity and entrepreneurship (3), self-directed learning (5), cooperation (3), civil participation (4), digital skills (4)
IDEO Workbook	teamwork and collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, application skills, empathy, reflective thinking, communication skills, self-discipline

Note. ^a The curriculum 'English as a First Foreign Language' for Forms 1 to 9 was chosen for the analysis, whereas for Forms 10 to 11 it was 'Foreign Language I (English, B2 level)', and 'Foreign Language II (English, C1 level)' for Form 12 were analysed. ^b The numbers describe additional notes on variations of possible outcomes of the enhanced transversal skills.

Whereas cooperation is developed by offering topics and tasks that encourage students to think about communication as a basis for successful cooperation, and by providing it. According to the communication situation, students express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions orally and in written form to learn and provide information, express emotions and build relationships, as well as listen to others and solve language-related problems together in a group. The digital skills in students are strengthened in diverse learning activities, using digital technologies in a safe and ergonomic way, and critically analysing the content found on the web, including the content of social networks, as well as creating their own original content. The teachers should promote the process rather than just educate so that there is learning by the students with the added outcome of garnering and nourishing experiences about students' own learning (Skola2030, n.d.; Pande & Bharathi, 2020).

The objective of this research was to provide evidence regarding whether the IDEO workbook is appropriate ('fits') to the Latvian context, in reference to the Skola2030 curricula in English lessons. This curriculum research would also be useful to improve the lesson plans for further implementation in English acquisition. The research question guiding the enquiry was: 'How does the design of IDEO workbook's skill set fit to the transversal skills of Skola2030 methodological tool in English lessons?'. The methods for answering this question included content analysis, both thematic and quantitative, focussing on the similarities and differences of the sets of transversal skills that are present in Skola2030 curricula and IDEO workbook.

Methodology

The documental base of the research included the whole IDEO workbook and Skola2030 methodological tool for teaching transversal skills through all learning areas. The IDEO workbook included six activity plans described in the following sections: definition of a challenge, discovery, interpretation, ideation, experimentation, evolution. The Skola2030 methodological tool for teachers on transversal skills' enhancement proposed description and activity plans for the following transversal skills: critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and entrepreneurship, self-directed learning, cooperation, civil participation, digital skills. Both documents included 129 pages, that consisted of the main idea and objective of the document and advised activities that can be used by educators. The UNESCO document on assessment of transversal competencies was also taken into account (Care et al., 2019).

Data collection and analysis covers the DTE document's concept of the five main components, such as discovery, interpretation, ideation, experimentation, evolution is divided into the similar sections throughout the whole IDEO

workbook. In the beginning of each of the unit and afterwards the whole idea of the activities was provided with the precise description, that helped to conduct the analysis of the practised transversal skills. Regarding Skola2030 the main accent was put both on the set of transversal skills, and to the concept of aims and objectives especially in secondary education, since the level of the use of IDEO workbook requires students' English proficiency at least on level B1, which is the introductory level in Form 10.

The qualitative content analysis was carried out in two stages: first, descriptive analysis of the transversal skills of each project was performed using Excel software. A comparative analysis between the two document sets was implemented by using the Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool (Metz & Louison, 2019), revealing similarities and differences between IDEO workbook and Skola2030 methodological tool.

Results

The descriptive analysis is presented by analysing the set of transversal skills (see Table 2). In the Skola2030 methodological tool transversal skills match UNESCO almost all domains except the physical skills and religious values. The same happens with the transversal skills practised in IDEO workbook, moreover, the global citizenship skills are not present as well. However, there is a presence of other skills practised in the IDEO workbook. For instance, every aspect of the workbook goes with a control question. In the beginning of a 'discovery' phase, students have got a challenge and should find the ways to approach it.

Table 2. Transversal Skills Retrieved in the Skola2030 and the IDEO Workbook

Transversal skills category (UNESCO)	Skola2030 Methodological Tool	IDEO Workbook
Global citizenship	civil participation	
Critical, innovative thinking	creativity and entrepreneurship; critical thinking and problem solving	creativity, application skills, reflective thinking,
Physical skills, religious values		
Intrapersonal skills	self-directed learning	self-discipline
Interpersonal skills	cooperation	teamwork and collaboration, communication skills, empathy
Media and information	digital skills	digital literacy

Digital literacy is practised the most since students have the chance to explore existing ideas across the internet. In the ‘interpretation’ students have already learnt something, thus they must interpret it by using communication skills and creativity, especially through the brainstorming process. Self-discipline and application skills are required the most since opportunities are provided in the ‘ideation’ phase; at this point students are welcomed to comprehend what they will create next. Teamwork and collaboration are performed the most during the ‘experimentation’ students try to build new ideas around the existing ones. Reflective thinking and empathy is required in the last phase of ‘evolution’. Students already have experienced their projects, at this point they have a chance for the future to evolve.

The comparative analysis was carried out by applying the Hexagon tool, which was used as a planning tool to evaluate two document sets and practices for use. It is commonly used during the exploration stage, when there is a necessity to identify possible new programmes or practices to implement in the future (Metz & Louison, 2019). This exploration tool consists of two main concepts: implementing site indicators and programme indicators. The questions that were put forward for the discussion were aligned to each of the concepts and their criteria and analysed among the authors of the research (see Table 3).

Table 3. Hexagon Tool Implementation in the Skola2030 and the IDEO Workbook (Metz & Louison, 2019)

Indicators	Criteria	Question	Skola2030 Method- ological Tool	IDEO Workbook
Implementing site	capacity	Does the programme require new technology/tools?	2	2
	fit	What other initiatives currently being implemented will intersect with the programme?	3	3
	need	Was an analysis of data conducted to identify specific area(s) of need relevant to the programme?	5	4
Programme	evidence	Is there a well-developed theory that demonstrates how the programme is expected to contribute to outcomes?	4	4
	usability	Has the programme been adapted culturally and linguistically?	5	5
	supports	Is coaching/guidance available for this programme or practice?	5	5
Total:			24	23

Afterwards the evaluation was applied in the following formula: 5 for high evidence 4 for evidence; 3 for some evidence; 2 for minimal evidence, and 1 for no evidence.

The question regarding the capacity of the implementing site indicator ‘Does the programme require new technology/tools?’ brings two points for both Skola2030 methodological tool and IDEO workbook since both are guided by a well-developed theory, including clear criteria for achieving specific skills, however, they do not demonstrate effectiveness of any other technologies or tools through a research study presented in the document. As for the question ‘What other initiatives currently being implemented will intersect with the programme?’ For the fit of the implementing site indicator both documents receive 3 points because practice shows some evidence of effectiveness through examples and comments from the educators, who have carried out similar activities presented in the document. The last question of the need of the implementing site indicator ‘Was an analysis of data conducted to identify specific area(s) of need relevant to the programme?’ Skola2030 methodological tool receives 5 points since the introduction of the document includes the theoretical basis because the need in the curriculum is required and the tool has demonstrated sustained effects at least one year of application. Even though the IDEO workbook exists for several years, it mostly stresses the presentation of the innovative approach of design thinking and creative confidence, as well as that, the DTE is continuation of the company’s IDEO hard work, thus 4 points are accessed.

The programme indicator continued with the criteria of the ‘evidence’ with the question ‘Is there a well-developed theory that demonstrates how the programme is expected to contribute to outcomes?’. Both tools receive 4 points since the theoretical and scientific basis is present. According to transversal skills in Skola2030, the main aspect was taken from the global documents and sustainable development goals, whereas DTE is based on the research of creative confidence and design thinking as a tool for its enhancement. In the category of ‘usability’ both programmes receive the highest points for the question ‘Has the programme been adapted culturally and linguistically?’. The tools present data from the experience of others, moreover, the experience has been transformed into the tasks that are provided in both documents. Lastly, for the category of ‘supports’ by the question ‘Is coaching/guidance available for this programme or practice?’ the maximum number of points is provided as well, because both materials present a great amount of pages devoted to help educators to use the provided activities in practice.

Discussion

Ideation is the process of producing many ideas. Brainstorming allows you to think freely and without limitations (IDEO, n.d.). Outlandish concepts frequently spark visionary ideas. A brainstorming session can generate hundreds of new ideas with proper planning and a defined set of guidelines. Teachers can discuss what they have learned, give the meaning of a massive quantity of data, and look for design opportunities during this phase. They will have many ideas, including some that they will keep and others that they will toss out. They will make their ideas real by developing rough prototypes, which they will then share with the people they have gained and receive feedback on. They will continue to iterate, refine, and construct until they are satisfied with their solution. This stage might help students answer problems like, “How do I make good sense of everything I’ve learned?” How do I convert my newfound knowledge into a design opportunity? What’s the best way to make a prototype? And how can I know whether my concept is viable? Sketching, modelling, and building can be incorporated into this phase to uncover various new ideas (IDEO, 2013). Innovations are considered as a necessary and positive aspect of changes (Andersone, 2020), thus design thinking activities and experiential learning should be integrated into the lessons (Stock et al., 2018).

The concept of evolution is the progression of ideas over time. It entails determining the following steps, expressing your opinion to those who can assist you, and recording the process. Change takes place over time, and it’s crucial to keep track of even the most minor signals of improvement. The workbook is also human-centred, which means it is uniquely positioned to arrive at desirable, practical, and viable solutions. Teachers can quickly identify what is far more desirable by commencing with humans, their hopes, anxieties, and wants. However, this is merely one lens through which they view their answers. Next, they can focus on what is technically possible to implement and how to render the solution financially viable once they have identified a range of ideas that might appeal to them. It’s a delicate balancing act and one that is essentially necessary for developing solutions, particularly for English learning, that are effective and long-lasting.

Furthermore, teachers can improve their vocabulary by watching the world around them. Seeking inspiration in other contexts will open their minds and assist them in gaining a new perspective on learning. There is also a need to raise foreign language teachers’ awareness as to the implementation of particular transversal skills in the classroom (Baran-Łucarz & Klimas, 2020; Cleminson & Cowie, 2021). They need to try new things by getting out of their comfort zone. Learning from people’s interviews, group interviews, and observing their colleagues’ conversations are just a few ways they might learn from English language users. Each gathering of information requires a particular setup to ensure the optimal discovery

experience and people's comfort and readiness to participate. Spending time with others will encourage them to engage with and learn from them more profoundly. Afterwards, stories become meaningful insights through interpretation (Boris, 2017). Observations, field trips, or even a simple chat can be sources of inspiration but extracting meaning from them and translating them into design opportunities is not always straightforward. It entails presenting stories and organising and condensing ideas until you have developed a clear point of view and ideation path.

Limitations of the study were presented in the English proficiency level which must be obtained by students. Unfortunately, it is challenging for students of level A1 to A2 to use activities from the IDEO workbook on their own. Of course, teachers may adapt the activities and simplify the language in the tasks, however, it may be time consuming, thus not appropriate to every educator.

Conclusions

There is an underlying assumption that educators must aim for perfectionism, never make a mistake, and always be excellent role models. It is difficult for them to take risks when under pressure. It restricts the opportunities for more radical reform in English learning. However, educators must be willing to try new things as they can only learn by doing. By putting English into practice through daily communication, the teachers can grow accustomed to the language, accept corrections, and advance with time.

The basis of the idea is built on discovery. Developing an effective solution for instructors begins with a thorough grasp of their requirements. When they are open to new possibilities and remain encouraged to create fresh ideas, teachers can discover what they need for English acquisition. It will provide insight and provide teachers with explicit knowledge of the design issue if adequately prepared. Creativity and fresh insights can also be found in various locations with a curious mentality and without too much preparation, and they can help them master English more quickly.

To sum up, the IDEO workbook is an appropriate methodology tool. It necessitates the acquisition of English by complementing some of the transversal skills such as innovative and critical thinking. Both transversal competencies and the IDEO workbook complement each other as they aim to create an all-around individual. The Skola2030 methodological tool for teachers on transversal skills in language areas stresses critical thinking, collaboration, and digital skills, whereas IDEO workbook underlines critical thinking, creativity and entrepreneurship, and self-directed learning. The high fit of both documents suggests that the adaptation of the IDEO workbook in the schools of Latvia could considerably enrich the Skola2030 educational offer. Suggestions for the improvement of the IDEO workbook and its adaptation are put forward.

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