ABSTRACT

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 2

Digital & Soft Skills of tomorrow's health professionals

Author: Coges

Digital technologies in the Health and Care sector will inexorably lead to further developments. The risk is that it will make us eager to upgrade before we even have realized their potential benefits and the reason, is the lack of solutions to understand their setup, the possible effects on health professionals work, the changes apported to interactions with colleagues, patients, etc. What is needed is not just a technical (or technological) knowledge transfer, but also a deeper understanding of how some key competences need to be upgraded to help health professionals to fully benefit from the ever-evolving digital era.

This is where this report comes into play, identifying core skills needed to facilitate the adoption of digital solutions in the Health and Care sector.

With this premise, the report's provide a map to better identify the soft skills of Health professionals working in a digital based/supported environment.

To that end, a questionnaire has been provided to realize interviews (n.32) delivered by specialized training organizations (16%), health professionals (53%) and technology providers (31%).

The questionnaire has been divided in three sections. The first section aimed at investigating what are the daily digital innovations used by respondents and the soft skills related to them. The second section studied the soft skills related to the six dimensions (Functional, Critical use, Creative production, Participation, Development and Self-actualising). Finally, the third section addressed the perceived level of importance – perceived by professionals in the Health and Care sector - of different sets of soft skills needed to carry out their work. Regarding the analysis, each open-ended question was read and analysed by a small study group to limit as much as possible the subjectivity inherent in the classification. Moreover, a taxonomy of answers was subsequently constructed.

The report show how digital transformation is above all a matter of people's development, change of management within organizations and implementation of new (digital) technologies. This can be achieved through the training of people that operate in those organizations. The human factor and the so-called soft

skills, are essential when it comes to technologies for effectively introducing digital transformation. From problem solving to critical thinking, from flexibility to the teamwork, from the ability to communicate effectively and empathically to being open minded. The need is a digital culture that coherently integrates technological knowledge and soft skills. Digital transformation projects often risk failing, due to acts of mismanagement: at times a separate digital strategy is developed rather than integrating a digital strategy into the company's overall strategy and human resource management. In other cases, the focus is only on pilot projects, following technological trends of the moment without making a real cost/benefit analysis and planning a real change in the organization and its people.

From the analysis of the data collected by the interviews, it has become very clear that digital skills/competences can only be effectively put in practice in the Health and Care sector, if the following essential soft skills are trained: Communication, Open mindedness, Positive attitude, Critical thinking and Empathy.

It can be concluded that in the phase of assessment, training and selection of personnel, the categories of soft-skills that have emerged can be taken into consideration, evaluated and developed.

Moreover, the results suggest to continue the research in this field, emphasizing once again how soft skills are considered relevant to perform the work effectively. A subsequent study could focus on investigating how professionals (Health professionals, technology providers, training providers) in the Health and Care sector believe they own the soft-skills they consider relevant, how school, training and professional paths helped them with the development of these specific abilities and what is the gap between the perception of having the competences and the levels they deem necessary to be able to effectively carry out their work.