

| | |
|--|---|
| | I think that my result could not change much, because my answers match my way of thinking and acting. |
|--|---|

The information related to item 6 shows a significant adoption of the so-called Self-Efficacy attitude (Bandura, 1995). Most respondents found the game experience an opportunity to think about their modes of behaviour and chose the most effective ones in order to transfer them to the real world. However, just like item 2, the information related to item 4 shows a common polarity of motivations to the positive/negative answers. *Opportunity to think about one's choices and improve one's behaviour in a situation vs. impossibility to change one's answer because of the coherence and awareness of the choices that were made.* Moreover, the percentage of negative answers is particularly significant.

3.2. Conclusions

The questionnaire results show a significant appreciation of *Un inizio difficile* and an adequately motivated recognition of the training potential of this game, even though only 10 participants had actually had some previous experience with SGs. However, it is our opinion that the data related to objections show two particularly interesting critical aspects. *The first is a widespread lack of trust on the possibility of realistically representing situations in a simulation environment. The second is a significant level of resistance towards personal engagement and getting involved about professional matters.* As previously stated, most of *Un inizio difficile* is structured as a multiple-choice activity. This does not allow for any feedback to be given to the player during the game, and it significantly limits the complexity of the situations that are presented.

After taking into consideration the structural limitations of our SG and analysing positive answers and objections at a global level, some guidance elements emerge in terms of the use of *Un inizio difficile* in teachers' training programmes and, more in general, in planning and using such similar tools.

The virtual and professional role-playing component in *Un inizio difficile* has triggered a self-evaluation process on the part of teachers who have thought about their professional choices. This process has not always matched the outcome nor the evaluation provided at the end of the game session. In this exploratory phase, the contrast between the perception of one's own professional self and the game outcome has brought a relevant number of players not to recognise the outcome-feedback as meaningful, to highlight a few specific situations or behaviours as being not very plausible and to deny the usefulness of

playing more. This is sustained by the fact that the negative answers to items nos. 5 and 6 were mostly provided by the same people. Moreover, the bivalent character of the motivations to the negative/positive answers provided in items 6 and 2 seems to further confirm this relationship. As for the result obtained, which might or might not match the result perceived by the player, different respondents provided similar explanations to support opposite positions.

By analysing data in aggregated form, the sample of teachers who filled in the questionnaire identified the characterising aspects, the training potential and the experiential opportunities of *Un inizio difficile* in a complete and articulated way, even though in many cases such components were given opposite value (an advantage or a disadvantage) in order to guarantee a good game performance.

In short, the answers provided in the questionnaires in relation to *Un inizio difficile* and its being designed on a professional role-playing model, seem to point to the following:

- The game guarantees the teacher-player's involvement, as it allows for a simulated performance that is protected from external scrutiny and emotional-relational dynamics; the game also provides a final evaluation/orientation feedback (see item 2).
- The game has good internal consistency levels between experiential situations presented and soft skills that need activating/developing (see item 3).
- The game offers a functional experiential environment for the *learning by doing* approach.
- The game needs a classroom *debriefing* integrated session, with the presence of the facilitator, in order to: *clarify and process the emotional reactions produced by the game outcomes; analyse and share the meaning of the problem situations offered by the SG; think and exchange views about the problem-solving solutions adopted; evaluate learning and competence transferability in a real context.*

As suggested during the planning stages of *Un inizio difficile*, the *multiple choice* structure imposed by the Editor and adopted in the first phase of the European ELSE project, does not allow for an efficient use of the SG as an independent training tool. On the other hand, as the data seem to indicate, the win/lose formula with an associated behavioural profile should offer a particularly effective *teaser* during the group *debriefing* activity. The analysis of the training implications of this classroom activity, with the integration of the *Un inizio difficile* SG, will become the object of subsequent experiments within the programme envisaged by ELSE.

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