Sustainability Plan(WP5) Roadmap

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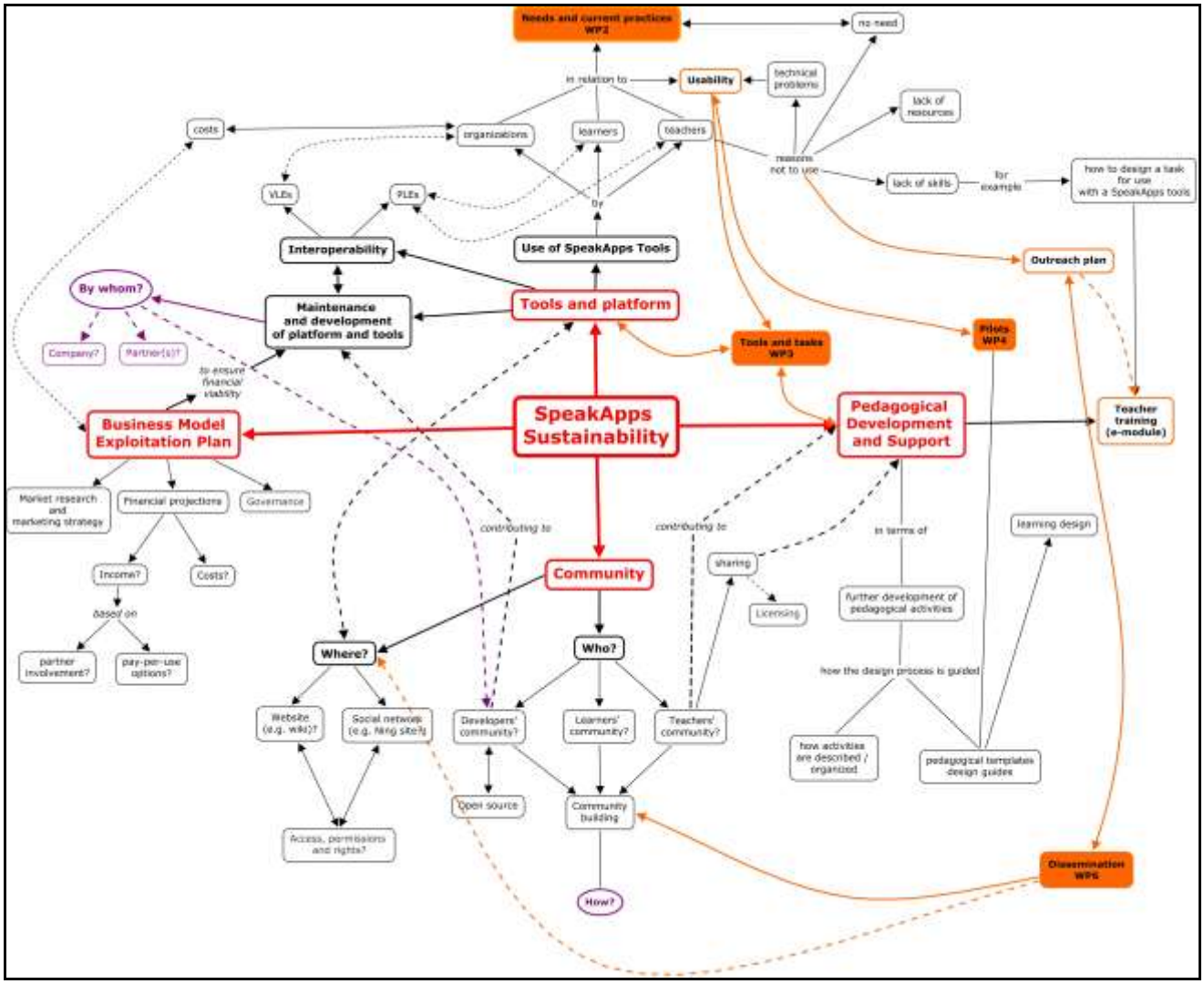
Overview: main concepts

In order to ensure the sustainability of SpeakApps, four interdependent areas have been identified, which all require a specific plan. These are:

1. SpeakApps tools and platform.
2. Business model and exploitation plan
3. SpeakApps community
4. Pedagogical development and support

Figure below illustrates the main concepts that constitute the core of the sustainability plan, the interaction between these concepts and their relationship with the different workpackages, and the items for discussion between project partners.

Figure 1. Sustainability plan main concepts



Sub-components of the sustainability plan

1. SpeakApps tools and platform

The sustainability of the SpeakApps tools and platform over time entails:

1. their sustained use by organisations, learners and teachers;
2. their integration and interoperability with the most commonly used Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), such as Moodle, Blackboard, Sakai, etc., and Personal Learning Environments (PLEs);
3. the sustained maintenance and continuous development of the platform and tools.

Use of SpeakApps Tools

The sustained use of the SpeakApps tools by learners and teachers is likely to be dependent *inter alia* on:

1) their usability;
2) their propensity to answer users' needs in relation to the teaching and development of spoken skills and to offer cutting edge and up to date pedagogical and technological solutions;
3) the adequacy of teachers' skills in relation to a) the use of the tools, and b) task design, implementation, and evaluation;
4) the availability of resources in terms of a) the technological infrastructure available to teachers and learners, b) teaching and learning materials, and c) teaching and support staff within the organisation.

Item 1) is being addressed in WP3 and WP4 (development and beta testing of tools).

Item 2) is being addressed in WP2 (e.g. users' needs and requirements, state of the art review, comparative studies and benchmarking), WP3 (design, implementation and evaluation of tasks), and WP4 (pilot studies).

Item 3) is related to the concept of sustainable pedagogical development and support, and is being addressed in WP6 (dissemination and teacher training).

Item 4) partially relates to the interoperability and maintenance concepts, and will be contingent on the chosen business model and the building of a sustainable community. It is also addressed in WP3 (development of tasks and teaching materials).

In addition, an **outreach plan** should be elaborated with a view to maximise and expand the use of the SpeakApps tools within and beyond the partners' institutions and countries.

Action 1: Jyväskylä and Dublin?

Interoperability

The integration and interoperability of the SpeakApps tools with the most commonly used VLEs and PLEs across Europe and beyond is key to the sustainability of these tools in the medium and

long term. In the short term, this is addressed in WP3 (development of tools). However, these environments will undoubtedly evolve over time, with the likely consequence that SpeakApps tools will need to be upgraded on a regular basis if their integration with institutional VLEs/PLEs is to be sustained.

Issues of integration and interoperability with the most commonly used VLEs/PLEs need to be reviewed and documented on a regular basis. A plan for the provision of tools **upgrades** , including their submission to developers of VLEs (open source or commercial), as they may be required from time to time should be elaborated .

Action 2: UOC?

Maintenance and development of platform and tools

The maintenance and continuing development of the SpeakApps platform and tools are key to the sustainability of the project. In particular, it should ensure that users (i.e. organisations and teachers) do not suffer interruptions of access due to integration issues following an upgrade of their VLE.

The following questions must therefore be addressed:

1. Who will be responsible for the maintenance and continuing development of the SpeakApps platform and tools? A private company (outsourcing)? A consortium (i.e. all partners)? One partner (e.g. UOC)? Other?
2. To what extent will communities of open source developers (e.g. moodle.org) or commercial VLEs (e.g. Blackboard) be involved in the maintenance and development of tools?

Action 3: All partners

2. Business model and exploitation plan

The development and adoption of an adequate business model will ensure the financial viability of the maintenance and development plan as well as the sustainable use of the SpeakApps platform. The business model will include the following:

1) Market research and marketing strategy
2) Financial projections
3) Governance

Item 1) is partially addressed in WP2 (user needs and requirements) in so far as surveys and case studies will provide background information on the potential market for the SpeakApps platform (e.g. teachers and organisations with no easy access to a VLE) and for the discrete tools. The development of the outreach plan (Action 1) will inform and be informed by the marketing strategy.

Action 4: Dublin, Jyväskylä, and all partners

Item 2) requires the preparation of financial projections in terms of expected costs over the next five years and in terms of income generated either through the involvement/contribution of partners or pay-per use options.

Scenarios will be developed for different options and modelled for a period of five years following the completion of the project.

Action 5: Dublin, UOC?

Item 3) requires that all partner institutions come to an agreement in relation to governance issues.

A governance model will be proposed and negotiated with all partner institutions.

Action 6: Dublin, All partners

3. SpeakApps Community

The maintenance and development of the platform and tools, their continuing and expanding use, as well as the development of a rich repository of tasks and teaching and learning materials cannot be sustained without a dynamic online community of developers and users. Such a community may be divided in three distinct, yet interdependent "sub-communities": 1) a community of open source developers (e.g. similar to open source communities), 2) a community of language learners, and 3) a community of language teachers.

Priorities with respect to the communities to fostered will be agreed by all partners.

Action 7: All partners

There are many models for building and sustaining online communities, and there may not be a fit for all solution. Different models will be examined, along with the most appropriate digital spaces (e.g. Ning site, Mahara, Wiki, etc.) for each community category that has been prioritised by partners (Action 7).

Action 8: Dublin and Jyväskylä, UOC ?

4. Pedagogical development and support

Continuing and sustainable pedagogical development and support will be contingent on the contributions of teachers belonging to the teachers' community and their willingness to share their materials.

Copyrights issues will be explored with a view to provide members of the community with Creative Commons options that will be easily accessed via the digital space.

Action 9: Dublin and Jyväskylä, UOC ?

Templates to describe how language learning activities are described and organised are being prepared under WP3, along with design guidelines and tips (WP2 and WP3). However, quality assurance mechanisms may need to be put in place, if activities contributed by community members are to be used by others.

Quality assurance processes and criteria will be developed and will be drawn from 1) recommendations from the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and 2) from QA processes in place in the partner institutions.

Action 10: All partners

SpeakApps Project

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