



Validation of Learning Outcomes in mobility training for adult education staff

Introduction

Up to now, the learning outcomes of mobility training for adult education staff have not (or hardly ever) been subject to validation. Certification and recognition of the participants' course learning outcomes is not at all common practice. Course organisers provide a certificate of attendance and sometimes a certificate of input – on rare occasions linked to achievement levels. However, hardly ever do they consider validation of learning outcomes, validation of competence development or certification by a related higher education organisation.

Especially in the light of the ERASMUS+ programme and the validation requirements in the Key Activity 1 courses for educational professionals a competent management of validation is a key issue. Validation of learning outcomes in in-service training (IST) courses would definitely add to the value of these courses. It would contribute both to the recognition of the professional development of the adult educators involved (in this case as trainees) and to the quality of the courses.

Definitions

A simple definition of **validation** is 'the process of identifying, assessing and recognising skills and competences acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings'. The CEDEFOP 2009 guidelines state that validation is "the confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification".

Another concept that will be relevant in the future validation processes in IST are **Learning outcomes**. These are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after the completion of a process of learning (ECTS - EU, 2004). Learning outcomes should provide comparable information about what learners have actually learned. They are a counter-concept of time-based systems such as ECTS.

A **competence** is the ability to apply a synthesis of knowledge, skills and attitudes in a particular situation and with a particular quality”.

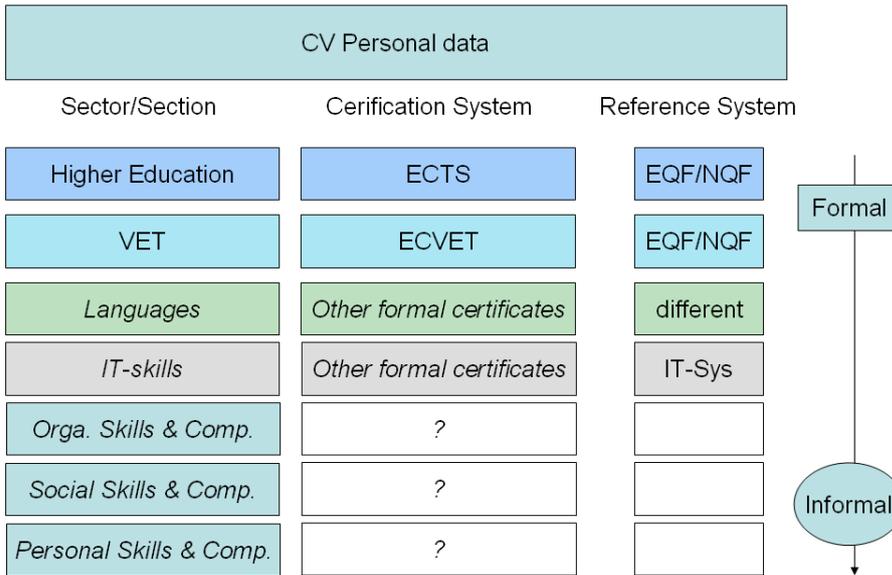
The complete process of validation consists of the following elements that each individual can take advantage from (either separately or in combination, in accordance with his/her needs):

- IDENTIFICATION of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- DOCUMENTATION of an individual's learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning;
- ASSESSMENT of an individual's learning outcomes;
- CERTIFICATION of the results of the assessment in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification.

A learning process normally aims at improving competences. Consequently it has to be planned and delivered in a *competence oriented* way. For most educationalists this may sound odd, but it is a development from a supply oriented to a demand oriented teaching and learning approach. Still, in many European countries learning is offered in a traditional way, teacher/trainer centred, with fixed (centralised) methods, traditional instructional design, including fixed teacher/learner roles etc.. In a time in which social and personal competences become more and more important (which is certainly an issue regarding validation) also the acquisition and development of those competences is an important topic for educational professionals...

EUROPASS

In KA1 EUROPASS has been put forward as the standard portfolio helping people to make their qualifications and skills understood and recognised throughout Europe. Its web portal includes interactive tools that, for example, allow users to create a CV in a common European format. The portal, run by CEDEFOP, and available in 26 languages, provides an interactive tool to complete the EUROPASS CV and the EUROPASS Language Passport. EUROPASS plugins are available also in existing e-portfolios (mahara-plugins), for instance on the GINCO e-portfolio (ginco.my-vita.eu) or in the LEVEL5 validation software.



EUROPASS elements

The EUROPASS CV highlights peoples' qualifications, skills and competences in a decreasing level of formalisation from professional degrees and qualifications (based on ECTS and ECVET credit transfer systems) over language skills (here with the interface to the language passport) up to personal and social competences (high level of informality) in which evidences of the acquired competences is not required.

EUROPASS Mobility records learning experiences abroad – such as academic exchanges or work placements in companies – and, this way, makes them more visible for employers. Finally, the EUROPASS Certificate Supplement explains vocational training certificates in terms of skills and abilities, enabling employers to better appreciate what their holders can do.

EUROPASS is NOT a validation system; it is a portfolio with a European standardised reporting system for qualifications and competence development. The value and quality of someone's Europass lies with the value, validity and quality of the documents that are added to the portfolio.

Credit Transfer Systems and the EQF are aiming at professional qualification levels that can be described in terms of learning units or curricula. But there are challenges that go beyond the subject specific knowledge and skills and include personal, interpersonal, social and organisational competences. Especially in a time in which employers (companies and industries) are more and more heading for candidates with high potentials regarding to social and personal competences the validation of informal and non-formal learning has to consider these competences as well.

The following competence clusters can be derived.

Social

- ✦ Communication competence
- ✦ Intercultural competence
 - Ability to work in an international context
 - Understanding of cultures and customs of other countries
- ✦ Negotiation competence
- ✦ Customer orientation
- ✦ Team competence

Personal (Self)

- ✦ Flexibility - Capacity to adapt to new situations
- ✦ Creativity - Capacity for generating new ideas
- ✦ Autonomy - Problem solving - Decision-making
- ✦ Self-reflection competence -
 - Critical and self-critical abilities
 - Ethical commitment and self-critical abilities
- ✦ Entrepreneurship/sense of initiative
 - Capacity for applying knowledge in practice
 - Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit
- ✦ Learning to learn
 - Information management skills

Organisational

- ✦ Leadership
 - Problem solving competence
 - Decision making competence
- ✦ Planning/(Resource-)management competence
 - Capacity for analyses and synthesis
 - Capacity for organisation and planning
- ✦ Project design and management
- ✦ Concern for quality
- ✦ Diversity management competence
 - Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team

LEVEL5

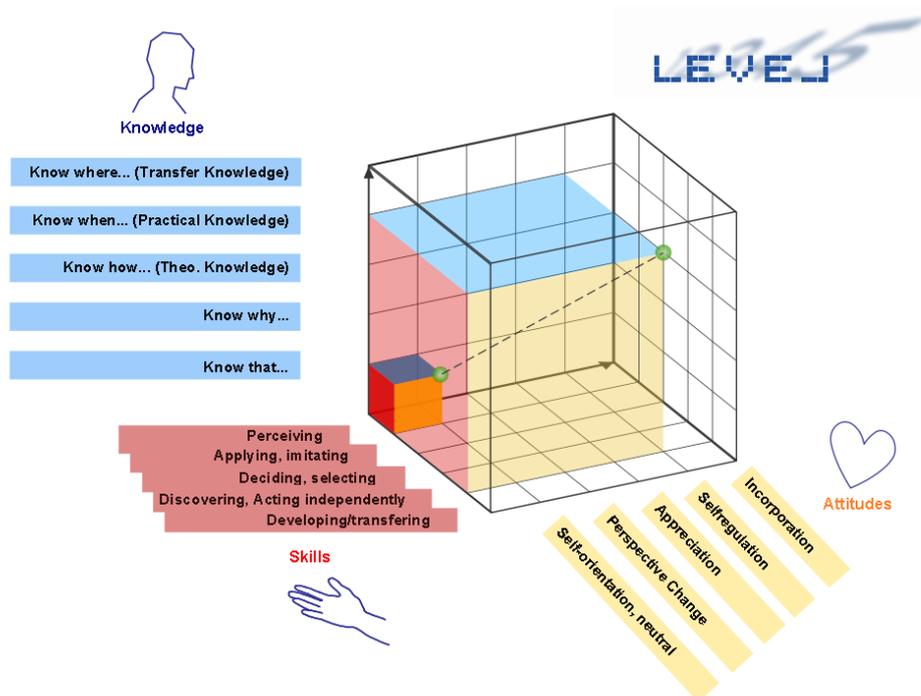
Therefore a valuable document in the Europass portfolio of a KA1 course participant could be a LEVEL5 certificate. LEVEL5 offers an approach and instrument to assess, visualise and document competence development. It focuses especially on personal, social and

organisational competences that form the backbone of the European framework on key competences. The LEVEL5 system allows users to evidence the impact of their work according to a standardised procedure while keeping up their individuality as informal learning projects in their specific contexts.

The Core Principle

Along the lines of the European framework of key competences, the LEVEL5 developers assumed that learning outcomes can be displayed by means of three components or dimensions:

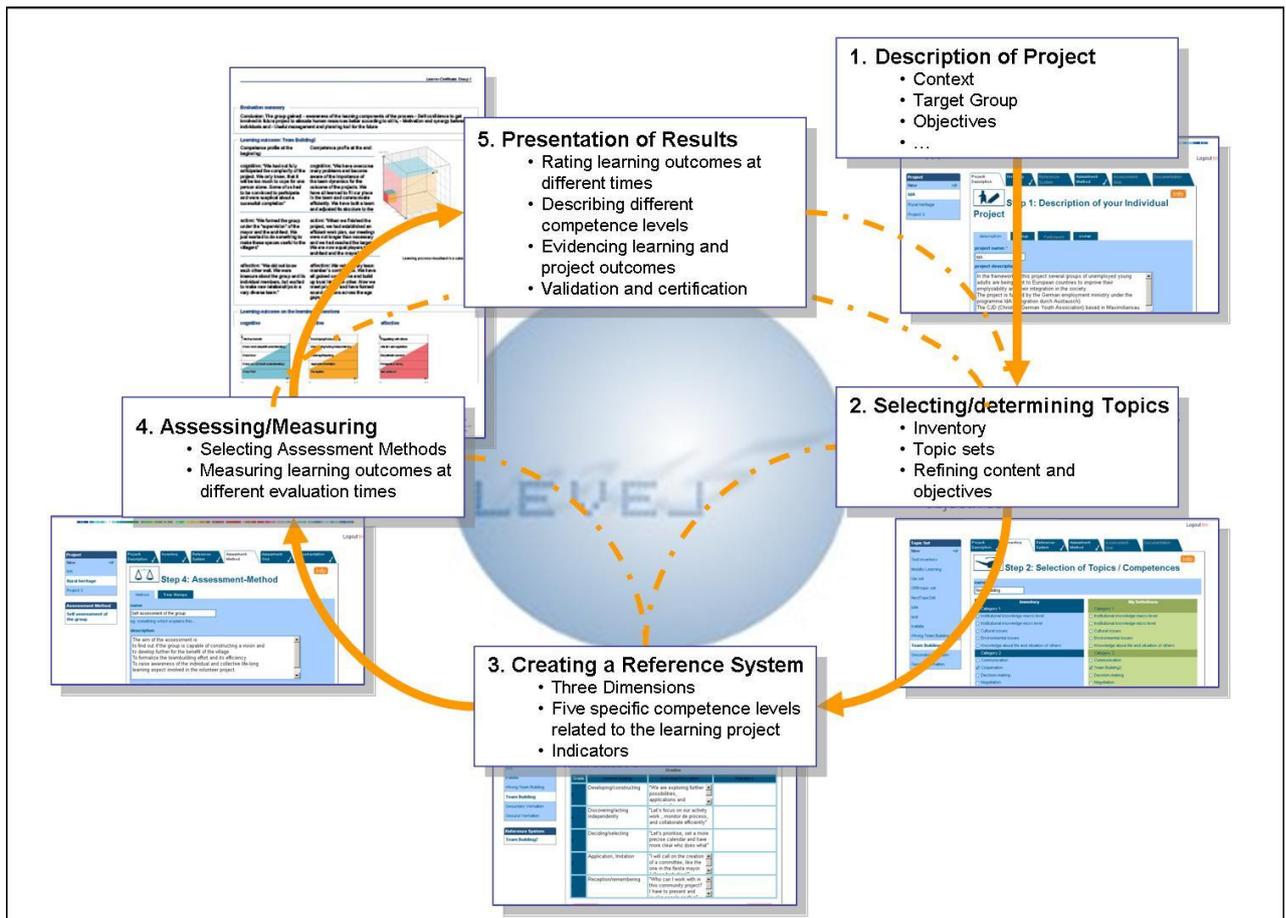
- 🌱 knowledge component
- 🌱 activity component
- 🌱 affective component.



For the evaluation process, the competence levels of an individual are set at five levels for each dimension, which gave rise to the name *LEVEL5*. Hence, the kernel of the system is a three-dimensional visualisation system: the LEVEL5 cube.

LEVEL5: The Procedure

The LEVEL5 approach is based on a five-step procedure, starting with a description of the learning project and ending with the evidencing of learning outcomes and the validation of learners and learning projects.



Validation should not be considered as an isolated concept, but rather as something that is always connected with a purpose and a target group – in other words, as part of the learning process.

For more on validation please go to:

www.ginconet.eu/content/validation-learning-outcomes-0

www.vilma-eu.org

http://issuu.com/aldenbieseneu/docs/ginco_manual

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