



Validation procedure for the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired skills in Germany

Curriculum: Training for counselors in the validation procedure for the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired skills

Authors: Anett Kromrei-Suwareh, Julia Stertz, Jacqueline Hennig

Table of contents

Introduction

Introduction.....	3
Curriculum	3
Learning objectives.....	4
Methods and didactics	4
Entry requirements	4
Module	5
Module 1 - Non-formal and informally acquired skills, recording in the conCert validation dossier. 5	
Module 2 - The validation process – instruments and actors (1).....	6
Module 3 – The validation process – instruments and actors (2).....	7
Module 4 – The validation dossier in consulting practice / consolidation.....	8
Conditions.....	9
Attachments overview	9
Handouts	9
Worksheets.....	10

Introduction

The acquisition of vocational and employment-related education takes place both as a formal acquisition of competences in institutions and institutions of vocational qualifications (vocational training institutions and vocational training, colleges and universities) as well as in non-formal and informal ways through experiential knowledge. However, in Germany so far mainly the formally acquired skills are recognized, as these are verifiable by diplomas and certificates.

At the same time require both the trends in the national labor market as well as the European free movement regulations to make all existing competences exploitable for work visible and comparable. Regardless of the type of skills acquisition, existing knowledge and skills shall be documented, recognized and be equaled to formally acquired qualifications.

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the national implementation (the German Qualifications Framework DQR for Germany) created the conditions for a Europe-wide comparability of qualifications. EQF and DQR are explicitly geared to classify existing qualifications, regardless of education on which they were acquired. This includes non-formal education as an acquired as informal education.

To represent non-formally and informally acquired competences adequately, valid methods of competence assessment are required at the operational level. Methods borrowed from formal education paths (tests etc.) are not optimally suited in any case. Especially in further training often time-consuming training courses have to be completed in order to acquire formal evidence of existing knowledge.

Comparable to the processes developed in the framework of the recognition of foreign qualifications the transfer project conCert developed and tested a validation system for the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences.

Transferred and adapted was a successfully-applied system of validation of non-formally and informally acquired vocational competences of the Schweizerischen Verbund für Weiterbildung SVEB to the conditions and requirements of the German educational system.

The conCert project for the "development and preparatory actions for the implementation of a validation system for counseling and recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences on the example of professional work place tutor" is funded in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme, Leonardo da Vinci - Transfer of Innovation.

Curriculum

The curriculum is based on learning objectives and includes detailed approaches in the learning process. It establishes a framework of learning and methodical interpretation of the learning modules. The curriculum modular system suite includes 4 modules over time totaling 24 hours.

Learning objectives

- Identify professional usability and acquisition relevance non-formally and informally acquired skills
- options for recognizing non-formally and informally acquired skills
- getting to know the conCert validation tool and applying it
- put across information about the validation process (order of events, actors, instruments)
- have a critical look at the areas of responsibility of the actors in the validation procedures
- reflect roles and responsibilities of the consultant in the validation process

Methods and didactics

The consultant training consists of four successive structured learning modules that include different areas of the validation process. If the advisor offers consultations to validate non-formally and informally acquired skills immediately after the training, the first three modules should be implemented as a compact seminar and the fourth module with a time interval in the form of a consolidation conversation. With optimal implementation the curriculum protrudes into the consultation process and includes the first practical phase of the consulting process. Methodically the fourth module is based on the reflection of first practical experiences. If practice can't be integrated in the training process, the fourth module needs to be designed as a simulation.

The modular design allows a flexible temporal organization of the training, the individual modules can also be implemented with an interval.

The curriculum is based on interactive and holistic methods, based on the active testing of the instruments in the validation process by each participant. Various exercises are used.

Besides the teaching of knowledge on the importance of non-formal and informal education as well as the structure and use of the validation tool, the use of the validation tool by the participant is the most important methodological approach.

Participants thereby assume the role of the aspirant, and answer the questions in the validation tool. The results are reflected within the group of participants, the different ways of presentation and proof of existing competences discussed. This also includes the exchange of question techniques to promote the self-reflection of the aspirant with regards to the existing competences.

Entry requirements

The training for advisors in the validation process for the recognition of non-formally and informally acquired competences is a further training for consultants and thus presupposes basic counseling skills as well as a systemic look at the language in the consultation process.

Required is also a basic understanding of the different forms of knowledge and skills acquisition, as well as to the possibilities of competence assessment and competence assessment.

Advisors in the validation procedures act as a companion in the process of documentation of existing competences. They support on the basis of an appreciative attitude, depending on individual needs of the aspirant. They provide support and advice in the preparation of the dossier submitted, but do not assess it.

Module

Module 1 - Non-formal and informally acquired skills, recording in the conCert validation dossier

Time frame:	6 lessons
Methodology - didactics:	Keynote speeches, group discussions, individual work, interactive and activating self-drafting exercises
Objectives:	<p>knowing the importance of the concept of non-formally and informally acquired skills</p> <p>Obtain overview of the options for recording non-formal and informal competences</p> <p>Introduction to the conCert validation dossier – structure and application</p> <p>Roles and actors in the conCert validation process</p>

In the first module, the participants familiarize themselves with the topic of validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills and get an overview of validation methods and their applications. They deal with the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the validation process and learn about the structure of the concert-validation tool know. In addition, methods are taught, which are likely to assist aspirant in the process of self-reflection on existing skills and competences. Participants will be actively involved in the learning process by introducing their experiences from different advising contexts and critically reflect the suitability of different counseling approaches and methods in the validation process.

They will create - accordingly to the structure and purpose of the validation process - an individual portfolio of methods and techniques in order to accompany the aspirants optimally in the validation process.

Theme / Content	Method	Objectives
The existing own counseling skills as a basis for consultation in the conCert validation process	Structured brainstorming, group discussion	Elaborate method matrix, overview interview techniques, define appropriate procedure for validation procedures

Methods of competence assessment and competence recording; Objectives of the conCert –validation procedure	Input, discussion	Sort the procedure in the canon of competence assessment procedures
Non-formal and informally acquired skills - Definition and disambiguation	Input, discussion	Opportunities of skill acquisition, career-relevant aspects of non-formally and informally acquired skills
Methods for initiating the self-reflection on existing competences skills and professional usable experiences (eg "Travelogue", "My life profile", "mind map - competencies")	Structured brainstorming, group discussion, prove methods in individual work, reflective conversation about suitability, advantages and disadvantages of methods	Various methods to learn self-reflection and its application, enhancing one's own range of methods for self-reflection and use in the work with aspirants
The conCert competence dossier - structure and components (competence profile, supporting documents, etc.)	Input and exchange	Knowing the structure of the dossiers, knowing competences to be acquired, options for supporting documents
The validation process - the role and responsibilities of actors	Interactive small group work and reflection	Overview of the validation process and classification of advice

Module 2 - The validation process – instruments and actors (1)

Time frame: 6 lessons

Methodology - didactics: Keynote speeches, group discussions, individual work, interactive and activating self-drafting exercises

Objectives: to know the validation procedure, classify the validation dossier to the procedure
The consulting process as a supporting element in the validation procedure
Role and responsibilities of the consultant
The areas of competence in the validation dossier (part 1)

In the second module, the entire validation process is considered. The roles and responsibilities of the various actors are illuminated. Here in particular the remit of the consultant is considered, its position in the overall process and towards the aspirants and the experts.

The individual areas of competence of the competence dossier are explained and the possibilities of their processing by the aspirants discussed. In the second module, the consultants start to work on the competence dossier by putting themselves in the role of an aspirant. First, the same field of competence will be processed by all participants. In the subsequent evaluative reflection, the participants discuss, which possibilities of description and which evidence of the described competencies exist and draw conclusions on procedures and forms of support in the process of consultation of the aspirant.

Theme / Content	Method	Objectives
The actors and their roles in the validation process - the position of the adviser in relation thereto	Interactive work, change of perspectives	Define roles of experts and consultants and differentiate from each other; clarify the relation Aspirant - Consultant Aspirant – Expert Consultant – Expert
Role and responsibilities of the consultant	Input and simulation	Position of adviser in the process; Tasks and demarcation with other actors
The areas of competence in the validation dossier - part 1	Input to the individual fields of competence; custom editing of individual areas of competence, reflective conversation	Getting to know and testing of the dossier; draw conclusions about important aspects in the advice and support of the aspirant on basis of processing the dossier

Module 3 – The validation process – instruments and actors (2)

Time frame: 6 lessons

Methodology - didactics: Keynote speeches, group discussions, individual work, interactive and activating self-drafting exercises

Objectives: the areas of competence in the validation dossier (part 2)
The consulting process as a supporting element in the validation procedure
Counseling competences - possibilities and limitations
Practice Workshop - Implementation of the procedure

Theme / Content	Method	Objectives
The fields of competence Competence assessment dossier - part 2	Individual processing of other fields of competence - Result discussion and reflection in plenary	Getting to know and practicing the dossier; Transfer knowledge to the resulting requirements in the consulting process; Generate empirical knowledge for counseling process
Practice Workshop - own advisory skills and attitude in the consultation process (practice transfer)	Simulation / role play and feedback, self-assessment, discussion in plenary	Reflect attitude in the consultation process try out interview techniques, recognize boundaries in consultation process

Practice Workshop - dealing with "difficult" aspirants	Simulation / positive and creative thinking; Reflection and exchange	Expand action competence in the consultation process; Expanding range of methods
--	--	--

In the third module, the examination of the fields of competence of the validation dossier continues. As noted in Module 2, the consultants take on the role of aspirants and edit the file. In subsequent evaluation and reflection talks particular difficulties or issues that occurred during the processing are discussed in plenary. The aim is to collect, especially for these aspects, formats and possibilities of support for the aspirants. By processing the dossiers the consultants generate practical knowledge that they can feed into the implementation of the consultative process.

In the second part of Module 3, participants leave the role of the aspirant and take again the advisory role. With the methods of simulation / role play and structured self-assessment they illuminate their attitude/position in the process. The feedback on a simulated consultation contributes to the optimization of consultant attitude and interview techniques. In a further step techniques of positive and creative thinking are used to find support for counseling situations which were individually perceived to be difficult (e.g. if the aspirants have difficulties to describe their experiences or to relate to the dossier).

Modul 4 – The validation dossier in consulting practice / consolidation

Time frame: 6 lessons

Methodology - didactics: Keynote speeches, group discussions, individual work, interactive and activating self-drafting exercises

Ziele: the consultation process - possibilities, limitations and issues
Exchange on the progress of consultations
Pitfalls and prospects of the validation tool

This module is implemented optimally with a time interval to the modules 1-3 and at a time when the trained counselors already implement the counseling process. In this case, the module builds on the experience of the advisor in the validation consulting. Specific issues arising out of the implementation process will be worked on.

If it is foreseeable that the trainees are not directly offering counseling for validation procedures, the module 4 is implemented as a simulation, in which the existing advisory experiences of the participants are incorporated. A time interval to the modules 1-3 is not required in this case.

Theme / Content	Method	Objectives
Competences, techniques and methods that were used / could be used in the validation consulting	Brainstorming, interactive exchange	Define target-oriented and process supporting techniques of counseling

Open questions for validation procedures in general and to advise the aspirant (resulting from the first consultancy experience or from the training / anticipated)	Interactive discussion, „Coffee to go“	Optimize interfaces within the validation process, improve quality of advice
systemic issues as an instrument of purposeful advice	Input	Expanding range of methods
Work on questions arising from the processing of fields of competence more deeply, name problems concrete (Feedback from advised aspirant, experience from the consulting process or uncertainties that arise from the examination of the dossier)	Simulation, role play	Try interview techniques, reflect techniques and limits of the consultation, ensure practical transfer
Open questions / exchange on difficult situations experienced; question schools of thought	Plenum, "Thinking Hats" by Edward de Bono	Illuminate pros and cons of action approaches

The module 4 largely builds on the experience and active involvement of the participants. The concrete content and flow generates from the needs of the consultant. The content shown here can be modified and extended accordingly. Trainers change in module 4 strongly in the position of a moderator, which structures the exchanges between the consultants, but makes only few content requirements.

Conditions

For the intensive work in the training, the maximum number of 8 participants has been found to be particularly effective. For the implementation of the contents handouts and worksheets were created, which are annexed to the curriculum, as well as an overview of the exercises used in the training process. The specific exercises are not binding / mandatory, but can be replaced by others with the same goal.

The competence assessment dossier should be available both in print as well as digital.

Attachments overview

Handouts

- (1) Competence assessment WPT*
- (2) Compendium competence assessment process **
- (3) Definition formal, non-formal and informal learning
- (4) Consultant Profile
- (5) Structure of the validation process***
- (6) Systemic issues in the advisory process
- (7) Feedback rules

Worksheets

- (8) Timeline – Life profile
- (9) conCert Travelogue*
- (10) Role descriptions for role play
- (11) observation sheet aspirant
- (12) observation sheet adviser
- (13) Role description second-interview-aspirant
- (14) Self-evaluation - adviser
- (15) Questions for “Coffee to go”

*outcomes of GAB München e.V. work packages

**Elaborated by PerformPartner

***proposal based on the procedures implemented by SVEB in Switzerland

The concert project was implemented by:

- VESBE – e.V. - Hennef (project coordination)
- Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung SVEB (transfer provider)
- GAB München - Society for Education Research and Professional Development eV.
- EU WAREHOUSE, Brussels
- The Wille gGmbH, Berlin
- Perform partners (external staff)

Many thanks to all the partners who have contributed to this concept with their skills and commitment.