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Assessment of Prior Learning in Vocational Teacher Education

Handbook for Assessors

Assessment of Prior Learning in Vocational Teacher Education



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ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING IN VOCATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION

Handbook for Assessors



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Lifelong Learning Programme

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING

Aušra Fokienė and Ruud Duvekot

- *Who are the readers of this handbook?*
- *What can a reader expect from this handbook?*

We live in an age in which knowledge is becoming evermore quickly outdated. The intensity of knowledge is increasing and methods of learning and working are changing and becoming more complex. Everyone in the knowledge society is responsible for acquiring new knowledge and skills efficiently and effectively. *Lifelong learning* is vital for everyone as it concerns their potential employability and empowerment. People should be aware that they are always learning everywhere, but more importantly that learning is not always in a conscious or self-chosen *learning situation*. The degree to which individuals and the knowledge society depend on the learning process is however still strongly underexposed and underutilised. Research is needed, especially on the individual learning process. A factor, which hinders this research focus, is that the formal procedures of teaching, training and assessment embrace only a limited part of individual learning potential or competencies.

Lifelong learning is mainly implemented as a top-down strategy aiming

at the need for society to respond to changing societal – especially economic – circumstances. Lifelong learning, as a bottom-up strategy, would however be more beneficial if the strategy would take into account the individual and his/her potential and ability to learn! This means, not exclusively focusing on the economic functions of learning but more on the autonomous development of competencies and competence-development of its people.

First, the *Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning* is dedicated for those educators who in caring for Lifelong learning processes agree that *learning achievements* are more important than either the location or the timing.

Secondly, the *Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning* will be useful for those educators who are participating in Vocational (VET) teacher education programmes specifically in planning, organizing, implementing and improving. The context of VET teachers' pedagogical activity referring to work and learning is all-inclusive – reflecting reality and confronting social conflicts. The workplace environment, in particular, creates impressions, experience of which becomes the basis for learning and

decision-making. VET teachers become active participants of Lifelong learning, however, assessment and *recognition of prior* (non-formal and informal) *learning* is still a new phenomenon in VET teacher education, in many European countries.

The primary goal of assessment of prior learning (APL) in VET teacher education refers to the improvement in quality of VET teachers' education programmes. This improvement is achieved by increasing accessibility and flexibility of formal learning programmes, as well as promoting participation in Lifelong learning processes by providing educators opportunities to enrol in VET programmes according personalised study plans.

Secondary goals are to:

- Increase accessibility of learning based on individual needs,
- Avoid double learning,
- Match choice of study programme to learning needs,
- Reduce costs for learning,
- Evaluate the relevant worth of previous learning based on experience,
- Increase self-esteem and self-confidence,
- Ascertain which competencies are to be improved,

- Influence a more positive attitude towards learning in the workplace by emphasizing particular competencies acquired rather than the institution or country of acquisition.

The authors would like point out that the *Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning* aims to improve both the process of APL and VET teacher education programmes. This mission does not extend to making practical recommendations for shortening the study process of VET teachers. The authors consider the initial role of APL as helping adult VET students to use their prior learning to design their own development path, which will show the professional knowledge and skills they need to be a better teacher. The premise of this book is that the prior learning situation (*formal learning, non-formal learning or informal learning*) is not of paramount importance. The important issue is whether the individual is able to perceive their learning needs, participate in learning processes with the deliberate aim of improving their professional activity, and reflect on the learning experience. Furthermore the *Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning* aims to promote discussions of common experiences in the arena of VET teacher education programmes as opposed to providing the 'correct formula' for implementing assessment of non-formal and informal learning.

The *Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning* consists of two parts:

Part I provides the theories behind the broad definition of APL, defines VET teachers, discusses the worthiness of APL and the application of APL to VET teacher education programmes.

Part II continues from the last chapter in Part I, discussing concrete examples of using APL in VET teacher education. Part II defines the principles and the participants of APL, the APL methods they should use, and ends with concrete examples of good and bad practices. Educators responsible for implementing the assessment of non-formal and informal learning within VET teacher education should find answers to their methodological and organisational questions in this section.

Parts I and II conclude with reflective or practice oriented learning tasks, which will help readers to create their own methodology for implementing APL in VET teacher education.

The *Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning* is one of the outcomes of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme project ‘Transfer of Innovative Methodology for Assessment of Vocational Teachers’ Prior Learning’ (No. LLP-LdV-TOI-2007-LT-0004). More information about the project can be found at <http://www.vdu.lt/tima-balt>.

I. PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

LEARNING IS EVERYWHERE!

Marin Gross

How do you learn?

Think of an experience where you thought you'd learned something.

- *What was the experience like?*
- *How did you learn from the experience?*
- *Where did you learn?*
- *How did you know that you'd learnt anything?*

Learning is an essential human activity. Throughout our lives, as we progress through the university of life we learn in many institutions and through many different activities. Education and training is no longer seen as being solely the realm of educational institutions. Education and training is increasingly viewed in terms of a broader system involving workplaces, educational institutions, individuals and a variety of other organisations.

In this chapter we are going to examine the importance that experience has for the learning process as well as for the specifics of adult learning. So, sit back and relax and reflect on your own learning as an adult; then let this chapter walk you through the exciting path of learning.

Learning from experience is the most fundamental and natural means of learning. Experiences need not be expensive, nor does the learning process require the support of substantial technological hardware and software. Instead, in the majority of cases, all the experiential learning process requires is a quiet opportunity to think and reflect. However, despite experiential learning being a natural means of learning the method is not always consistent or effective for a number of reasons, such as a lack of time, a lack of awareness of other ways of managing the learning process and the absence of other people to act as sounding boards to assess and evaluate our prior experiences.

Kolb's definition of 'experiential learning' is learning derived from a direct experience (Boud et al, 2005). Essentially all learning comes from direct experiences; being one of a group in a classroom and being instructed one-to-one are both direct experiences. So the focus needs narrowing and sharpening. Experiential learning was one way to acknowledge the process of learning as much as the outcome in terms of new skills and concepts for learning developed. The experiences from which experiential learning is derived are for the most part those which formal education

institutions do not provide. Experiential learning is essentially, learning acquired non formally and informally. The experience may be gained through employment, on-the-job learning, through domestic responsibilities, through hobbies and leisure activities. This informality extends the range of experiences which may lead to learning. Crucially, individuals acquire knowledge through experiential learning with or without any reference to formal learning arrangements.

Experiential learning is consequently a complex, vague and ambiguous phenomenon. Experience cannot be by-passed. Experience is the central consideration of all learning. Learning builds on and flows from experience: no matter what external prompts to learning there might be (Kolb, 1984).

The influence of Kolb (Boud et al, 2005) on how APL conceptualizes learning from experience has been huge. Kolb's experiential learning cycle suggests there are four stages which follow from each other: *concrete experience* is followed by *reflection (reflective observation)* on that experience. The next step would be applying known theories to the experience (*abstract conceptualization*), which leads to the constructing of ways of modifying the next occurrence of the experience (*active experimentation*), leading in turn to the next *concrete experience* (see Fig. 1). Kolb argues all

four stages in the experiential learning cycle are essential for the full integration of concrete experience and action with knowledge and theories about the world. The main critique to Kolb's theory of experiential learning is that learning occurs in social realities and is influenced by the specifics of the context and the socio-cultural aspects (Boud et al, 2005).

Whether we respond to, and how much we learn from, a new experience depends on previous experiences with common linkages (Moon, 2004). Five propositions about experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) are:

- Experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for, all learning.
- Learners actively construct their own experiences.
- Learning is a holistic process.
- Learning is socially and culturally constructed.
- The socio-emotional context influences the learning process.

Learning from experience relates solely to the ability of an individual to create a relevant meaning from a direct experience.

Most of the research into experiential learning is, as Peter Jarvis comments, 'actually about learning from primary experience that is learning through sense experiences' (Jarvis, 1995). He

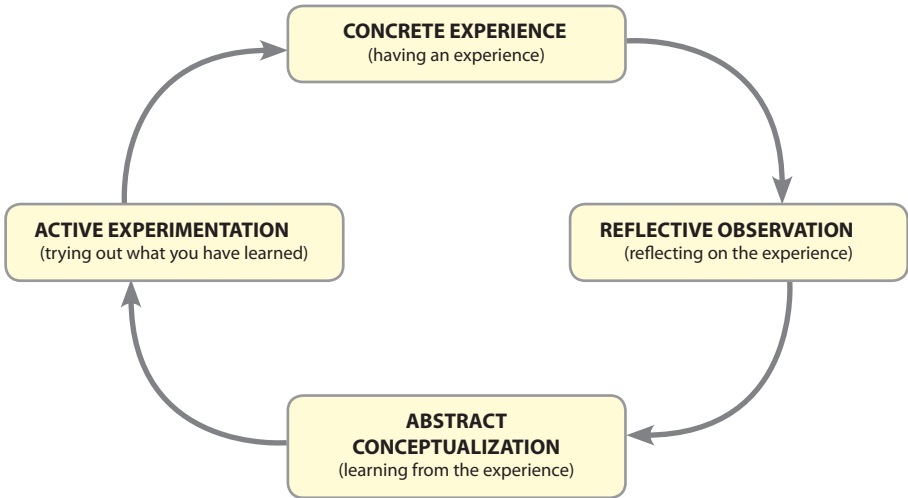


Figure 1. Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

continues, 'unfortunately it has tended to exclude the idea of secondary experience entirely'. Jarvis also draws attention to the different uses of the term 'experiential learning', citing Weil and McGill's unique categorization of four 'villages' (Weil & McGill, 1989). 'Village' is an interesting word for category because it reflects the idea that there is both similarity and diversity in each area. Their four villages are (Jarvis, 2005a):

Village One is concerned particularly with assessing and accrediting learning from life and work experience. For educators gathered in this "village," reflection is about recording and assessing experience.

Village Two focuses on experiential learning as a basis for bringing change in the structures of post-school education, using experiential learning to challenge higher and continuing education schools and curriculum. Educators help learners unveil their hidden untapped knowledge through reflection on life experience.

Village Three emphasizes experiential learning as a basis for the raising of group consciousness. Focusing on social change. In this radical tradition, educators help learners see outside their private world of reflection and become aware of the broader socio-cultural dynamics and history shaping both their life

experience and their ways of reflecting on it.

Village Four is concerned about personal growth and self-awareness, focusing on individual development. From a humanist perspective, educators in this village encourage (Jarvis, 2006b).

We have been talking about learning but we need to identify adult learners and the aspects of adult learning, which are different to other forms of learning.

Malcolm Knowles states there are five crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from those assumptions about child learners on which traditional pedagogy is based (Knowles & Associates, 1984).

Self-concept: As a person matures [their] self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being (Burns, 2002).

The point at which a person becomes an adult psychologically is, according to Knowles, ‘that point at which he perceives himself to be wholly self-directing. And at that point he also experiences a deep need to be perceived by others as being self-directing’ (Knowles, 1983).

Experience: As a person matures [they] accumulate a growing reservoir of

experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning (Burns, 2002).

The next step is the belief that adults learn more effectively through experiential techniques of education such as discussion or problem solving. There may be times when experiential learning is not appropriate - such as the need to memorise substantial amounts of new information. Learners need to question what is being learnt before they can make judgements.

Readiness to learn: As a person matures [their] readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles (Burns, 2002).

It is difficult to see how this assumption has any implication at all for the process of learning, let alone how this process should be differentially applied to adults and children (Tennant, 1998). Children also have to perform social roles (Burns, 2002).

Orientation to learning: As a person matures [their] time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly [their] orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centredness (Burns, 2002).

This is assumption according to Knowles, is best viewed as ‘conditioned’ as

opposed to 'natural' (Burns, 2002). "It follows from this that if young children were not conditioned to be subject-centred then they would be problem-centred in their approach to learning" (Burns, 2002). Subject-centred means that learners focus on studying one concrete subject e.g. mathematics. But adult learners, when deciding to further their learning, focus on problems related to work or personal life, which require broader subject knowledge.

Motivation to learn: *As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal* (Weil & McGill, 1989).

This assumption, also according to Knowles, should be viewed as conditioned - in particular, through schooling. This assumption sits awkwardly with the view that adults' readiness to learn is the result of the need to perform (externally imposed) social roles and that adults

have a problem-centred approach to learning (Burns, 2002).

In summary remember that learning always starts from experience – without experience there is no learning, but experience alone would not suffice, as learning will only take place after experience is reflected upon and interpreted. We learn from the meaning that we give to our experience.

Up to this point, you have been reading and thinking about learning and the importance experience plays in learning. Learning in adulthood is a complex but at the same time very interesting phenomena greatly influenced by your own life-experiences, values and learning sites. Being aware of your learning enables you to assess learning which in turn enables us to move further on, to a discussion on how learning can be assessed.

PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Marin Gross

How can your experiential learning be assessed?

- *What do you think is important in assessing experiential learning?*
- *What are the difficulties in assessing adult learning in higher education institutions?*

The complex lives of adults and their varied patterns of participation in learning challenge traditional assessment practices. The making of meaning is often interconnected with a sense of themselves as adults, as learners, and as social citizens (Kasworm & Marienau, 2002). Despite adults' growing prominence in higher education institutions (HEI), adult learners typically are ignored in the HEI's assessment practices. HEIs need to learn to evaluate knowledge they have not themselves imparted, and to devise new systems for assessing and accrediting students' expertise (Michelson, 2002). Current assessment programs tend to assume linear, continuous participation oriented towards a

residential academic learning community (Kasworm & Marienau, 2002). The nature of adult learning and the complexity of adult students' lives challenge the traditional assessment frameworks of higher education.

Key differences exist between assessment for abstract knowledge and objective, non-*contextual* problem solving, and the real world of solving messy problems and creating knowledge in the complex contexts of adult lives. Assessment of adult learners moves beyond the knowledge of abstract content to the world of situated cognition. The importance of context in establishing meaningful connections between knowledge, skills, and experience becomes one of the cornerstones for the creation and implementation of assessment approaches (Kasworm & Marienau, 2002).

Five key premises of adult learning are interrelated to principles of adult-oriented assessment practice (see Table 1).

Table 1. Premises of Adult Learning and Interrelated Principles for Adult-Oriented Assessment Practice (based on Kasworm & Marienau, 2002).

Key Premises of Adult Learning	Key Principles of Adult-Oriented Assessment Practice
Learning is derived from multiple sources	Assessment practices need to recognize multiple sources of knowing, that is learning that occurs from interaction with a wide variety of formal, non-formal, and informal knowledge sources.
Learning engages the whole person and contributes to that person’s development	Assessment practices need to recognize and reinforces the cognitive, conative, and affective domains of learning.
Learning occurs in context; its significance relates in part to its impact on those contexts	Assessment practices embrace adult learners’ involvement in and impact on the broader world of work, family, and community.
Learning from experience is a unique meaning-making event that creates diversity among adult learners	Assessment practices accommodate adult learners’ increasing differentiation from one another given varied life experiences and education.
Learning and the capacity for self-direction are promoted by feedback	Assessment practices need to focus on adults’ active involvement in learning and assessment processes, including active engagement in self-assessment.

Most distinctive characteristic of adult learners is that they bring rich and varied experiences to the learning setting. They learn by integrating formal academic knowledge with their personal experience in their life context. There are adult learners who selectively learn, apply, synthesize, and critically reflect on new and old sources of knowledge from the world of their everyday life and work, and the world of formal knowledge. Adult learning assessment

must not focus exclusively on academic knowledge structures, rather, it should focus as well on the social learning of the adult world and the relationship among multiple sources of knowledge that create meaningful learning (Kasworm & Marienau, 2002).

Learning involves the whole person, the cognitive, affective and *conative* domains of learning. Traditional learning assumptions and assessment

practices have focused only on cognitive dimensions of learning. However, all learning is simultaneously an emotional process (Illeris, 2004) and therefore the affective aspect of learning is a crucial aspect to be considered in assessment practices as it involves feelings, emotions and attitudes which are part of learning. The conative domain of learning encompasses motivation and volition.

Adults learn in various contexts and their learning is highly context specific. In the assessment practices the question can arise of how to consider the context specific aspect of learning. A possibility to consider is to involve other parties in the assessment such as employers and social acquaintances to reveal the learning that is context bound. Also assessment has to satisfy multiple stakeholders, each with different purposes for assessment and interests in the outcomes of the program (Kasworm & Marienau, 2002).

The uniqueness of experience, the unpredictability of its interpretations, and the individuality of meaning-making leads to a staggering diversity among adult learners and a challenge to practitioners of assessment. So HEIs need to conduct assessments on a strictly individual basis.

While feedback is seen as a powerful tool for supporting learning there is no

requirement for feedback to come from an external body. Self-assessment is also a key feature for the assessment practices. Self-assessment, self-analysis and reflection unfold the content of learning for the learner.

A single overarching APL assessment theory does not exist and arguable, as a result, HEIs depend on 'misusing' assessment principles for one learning site in another. For example, adult experiential learning is assessed as formal learning that occurred in HEI. The focus, when assessing prior experiential learning, needs to be the adult learner. The learner, who is essentially unique, has learned over the course of their life in various learning sites. The learner, whose learning is contextual and *situative*, has cognitive, emotional and conative domains. Thus HEIs need to find ways for assessing learning that is not linear or curricula specific.

We've now talked about adult learning and the difficulties of assessing adult learning in HEIs. The world of adult learning is consummately interesting and especially when given the opportunity to evaluate a participants' learning experience. In assessments, key aspects are to identify the different sites, the ways in which adults have learned and to be open about your evaluations. You and the learner will discover the unknown.

Different learning situations

Formal learning

Formal learning occurs within an organized and structured context. Formal learning is always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. Formal learning is always intentional: the explicit goal for the learner is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences. The most commonly shared examples are learning that takes place within the state education system and vocational training. Formal learning is also referred to as 'formal education' and 'formal training' or more accurately learning in a formal setting.

Non-formal learning

Non-formal learning is also organised and may not have specific learning objectives. Non-formal learning may occur at the initiative of the individual but also happens as a by-product of more organised activities, which may, may not, have learning objectives. On-the-job training is often viewed as non-formal learning.

Informal learning

Informal learning results from daily activities related to work, family or

leisure. Informal learning is an element of non-formal learning. Informal learning may be understood as accidental and consequently experiential learning.

Informal learning takes place wherever people have the need, motivation, and opportunity for learning. Marsick and Volpe (Marsick & Volpe, 1999) conclude that key characteristics of informal learning are:

- **routine** - integration with daily routines,
- **jolt** - internally or externally triggered,
- **sub-conscious** - not highly conscious,
- **accidental** - haphazard and influenced by chance,
- **inductive** - process of reflection and action,
- **linked** to learning of others.

Reflective task/questions:

Having thought about your own learning, and having read this chapter, please think about how your APL candidates may have learned.

- *How have your APL candidates been learning? What is significant about their learning?*
- *Identify learning in formal, non-formal and informal situations. How does learning differ in those situations?*
- *What kind of challenges do you see in assessing your APL candidates' prior learning that has taken place in the various situations (e.g. formal, non-formal, informal)?*

VOCATIONAL TEACHERS – LIFELONG LEARNERS

Aušra Fokienė

- *What are the ways that teachers learn on-the-job?*
- *What are the motivators for them to learn?*

Before we discuss the ways to formalize the *achievements of prior learning* in vocational teacher education, we need to define how the teachers of vocational schools learn, especially if this learning is a planned step in their professional development.

As a consequence of educational reforms and the developing *knowledge society*, there are more initiatives and opportunities to learn in various contexts, participating in processes of change. The importance of assessing and recognizing the achievements of non-formal and informal learning has, therefore, increased in this context. Education policy makers emphasize the necessity of raising the quality and prestige of vocational education and training (VET), which is highly dependent on the *qualification* and competence of vocational teachers. The course of development processes in VET has caused changes in the roles of vocational teachers, making their pedagogical activity more complex and requiring them to make self-supporting decisions. Teachers are,

therefore, being encouraged to continuously develop their competencies. It is important to stress, that knowledge, skills and abilities are not gained for life, they need to be permanently renewed throughout the career of a teacher. This means that a teacher should be able to act as a role model for Lifelong learning on the basis of their teaching practice.

Various forms of non-formal and informal learning situations of vocational teachers can be distinguished. Viable examples are educational events, qualification improvement courses, supervision and evaluation of individual lectures, lectures taught by colleagues, participation in various processes of development (projects and programmes) and study groups of research regarding pedagogical activity (Fokienė 2006). In summary, four areas for acquiring teaching knowledge and skills of vocational teachers can be defined: formal learning institutions, non-formal educational events, the workplace and personal life-experience.

Issues influencing vocational teachers' participation in Lifelong learning processes can be divided into internal factors, internal attitudes and external factors (see Table 2).

Table 2. Factors Influencing VET teachers in participating in the Lifelong learning process.

INTERNAL FACTORS related to personal features and activities of learning teachers	INTERNAL ATTITUDES	EXTERNAL FACTORS related to the learning context
Biological Genetic Somatic	General values Curiosity Inclinations Ideals Viewpoints Needs	Societal environments National Cultural Organizational Administrative Industrial Micro Macro
Mental Psychological Spiritual	Professional values Curiosity Inclinations Ideals Viewpoints Needs	EU development Work force mobility Foreign investments Rapid economic restructuring Free-market
Potential ability Aptitude Nurturing Creativity Talent Skill		Knowledge economy Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ improvement ▪ development ▪ rapid changes Innovations at work Lack of knowledge Competitiveness Unemployment Information technologies Information abundance Adjustment of ideas
Activities Professional Participatory		Pedagogical Interdisciplinary relations Learning by cooperating Practical Professional Opportunities for active participation Tools modelling pedagogical maturity

The discussion of the factors influencing non-formal and informal learning enable us to assume vocational teachers may seek and use a sufficient number

of opportunities to learn in non-formal and informal situations by participating in pedagogical activity at vocational schools.

VALUE OF ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING

Aino Lepänjuuri

- *What comes first to your mind when you hear about Assessment of Prior Learning?*
- *What are your own experiences of Assessment of Prior Learning (either in your own learning processes or work)?*
- *What do you consider are, or linked to, important aspects, concepts and ideas in Assessment of Prior Learning?*

Assessment of Prior Learning: what does it actually mean?

In order to understand the concept of Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) we have to see learning as an activity which is not solely limited to occurring inside the walls of a classroom or a traditional educational institution. The emerging agenda of Lifelong learning promotes the idea of an ongoing learning process which takes place everywhere and in all paths of life. In Lifelong learning, societal learning processes are based on various sources; formal education and training; non-formal learning (work experiences, non-for-profit workplace courses), and informal learning (hobbies, voluntary work, unpaid work or other life experiences). When we understand

this we can understand the fundamental idea of the APL system.

The concept of Lifelong learning involves formal, non-formal and informal learning. APL can be used for all these types of learning. APL gives recognition to skills and knowledge on the basis of learning that has occurred previously at some time in the past and possibly elsewhere. This learning may have been gained as the result of a course, or self-directed study, or as the result of experience either at work or in leisure time. APL is a way of evaluating and recognizing the knowledge, skills and experience that people have already acquired, when they face new education or training processes. APL is a process that enables people of all ages and various backgrounds to gain formal recognition for the skills and the knowledge they already have, and prevents the unnecessary overlap of education and training which might otherwise lead to a weakening of motivation.

An important point to remember is whichever type of prior learning background an individual has, the achievements, application and reflection of learning to professional life is important and not the learning experience. The APL process is based on comparing the

existing knowledge and skills against the requirements of the curriculum or programme. In other words the focus is on competence, not just the experiences or the activities.

In practice, the candidate is given the opportunity to have a competence assessment, which is one of the central functions of APL. The APL process includes three subordinate processes: (i) *identification*, (ii) assessment and (iii) *recognition* and *accreditation* of competencies. The recognition and accreditation of prior learning acquired in other settings than official education is referred to as ‘*validation*’ within the European Union (Colardyn & Bjørnåvold, 2005).

Assessors need to know, in general terms, the context of APL which enables further discussions about developing learner –focused activities in the assessment of prior learning. The skills, knowledge and individual expertise needs to be matched against the *learning outcomes* of the curriculum or modules. Individuals need help in identifying and assessing their prior learning achievements and in gaining the recognition (educational credits, work experience- or professional certifications).

Is Assessment of Prior Learning worth the effort?

These are some of the *key thoughts* behind APL. *No-one is a blank slate*, in that an individual should be capable to make use of what they already know and are able to do. *Valuing learning* is the key message of APL, for as Duvekot (Duvekot et al, 2007) says, “valuing learning is a strategy that demonstrates and develops employability potential for many purposes, which connects individual learning processes and socio-economic use of competencies”. The primary point of APL is to discuss the way Lifelong learning is inevitably moving towards a process steered by the individuals participating in the learning process. This individual element is something *new in our learning culture*. APL helps to gain wider acceptance to the aspect of learning - learning happens everywhere and some is of great value. The use of APL will develop students’ to create their *personal learning paths* to develop abilities to describe, assess and document their own learning achievements and ultimately provide personal *professional growth*. This ability can have an *empowering* impact on the student. At the same time, APL sheds light on the indisputable aspect of educational institutions

that they are experiencing a process of change. The primary aim of this change is to create a *new learning culture*. The aim must first succeed in eradicating the traditional idea that educational institutions function to increase and disseminate the fund of knowledge.

APL in particular focuses on the ways in which each person's learning achievements can be documented and acknowledged. The methods and tools that the individual can use to describe and document prior learning are of great importance. Any requirement for evidence based mainly on written documents discriminates against individuals who do not have good writing skills. The assessment process must therefore give students opportunities to use a variety of methods to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Portfolios are in many cases the most important tool for collecting and providing evidence.

The idea is that an individual takes the initiative and responsibility, but at the same time provide information and guidance are important too. A learner must be able to make prior learning visible and their duty is to substantiate the learning. This poses a challenge in many respects for the student as well as for the instructor. After completing the APL process, the next desirable step is that the individual considers their future actions and goals. This is important

because the act of doing so will help to develop the learner's self-confidence as well as the motivation to seek new learning and professional growth.

In general, the APL system can offer a number of benefits to individuals, education and training institutions and organizations. Everyone benefits when the individual does not need to learn skills that they already know and feel confident in performing, as they have the opportunity to develop in other areas. This will give the learner the feeling that their prior learning and knowledge is valued, which in turn will increase their motivation to enter their (new) working life more quickly. APL also has clear benefits for organizations. An institution which uses the system is more likely to attract people when they are guaranteed that their prior learning achievements will be valued.

However, the APL system poses great challenges too for providers of education, training and guidance as well as educational institutions. Training and education must be flexible. A critically important concept is to develop modules, in which the APL procedure is included, of up-to-date content in order to guarantee the high quality of the system. The approach, ideas, tools and methods of APL are important in guidance. Listening and discussing have important roles in APL.

The rhetoric of Lifelong learning is positive. Lifelong learning concerns promises, benefits and opportunities following one another throughout an individual's career. Lifelong learning sounds like a great idea but deserves also to be viewed critically. The worth of continuing learning is still questionable. Individuals can become imprisoned in the global classroom. Employers expect their employees to learn continually and keep abreast with changes of work, often in their own time and at their own expense. Learning is indeed expensive, not only in the financial context, but also the social and personal contexts. Also the free-market system of learning and Lifelong learning as a means of control is under discussion because the profit motive of providers and ancillary stakeholders conflicts with the needs of the 'customer', the learner. Nevertheless, the value of Lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning can be seen in many ways (Jarvis, 2007).

Assessment of Prior Learning is everywhere?

The APL system is closely related to the ideas of Lifelong learning, *learning society*, learning environments, development of training processes and the internationalization of educational systems. Learning is valued and no longer has a predicated frame of time, place and

content. Learners have diverse educational backgrounds, learning paths and work experiences. They need support, tools and guidance in their career planning both in the fields of education and working life. Obviously counsellors, teachers and working place instructors need different kinds of tools to recognize competencies. On the other hand we, the counsellors, need more information about the APL process, the methodology and methods to see existing methods in a new way and to create new ways of assessment. Also we need to know more about the different kinds of APL systems in various institutions.

At the moment the work and labour market in Europe is going through a drastic change. The generation retiring within the next decade or so means a lack of professionals will occur in many areas in the near future. An increasingly important aspect is to acknowledge peoples' competencies and certifies to create more flexibility and mobility in the volatile labour market. Furthermore developing knowledge and skills throughout life and keep professional skills updated is a critical socio-economic factor. The need to constantly refresh skills and knowledge does not mean that people would have to return to educational institutions, as learning can also occur in the work place. The aim is that training should be flexible in all areas, as well as being economical and student-centred.

Societal appreciation of learning has been increasing and has become a priority issue in national and European policies of education. The importance of APL is now promoted as one of the key strategic means of educational reform. In order to make Lifelong learning a reality throughout the Europe, APL is currently outlined in strategic EU documents and in many national education strategy regulations. This means that all learning achievements, irrespective of their origin should be viewed in a fair and transparent way. The assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning has become the key aspect of Lifelong learning policies.

The aim of the Bologna Process is to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide. In addition, the Bologna process facilitates student and staff mobility and increases both the competitiveness of Europeans in the world labour market and the attractiveness of the European higher education in the world (Opetusministeriö, 2005). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), EU and national policies, all stress the importance of recognizing non-formal and informal learning by calling for exploration of ways to recognize prior learning in these areas and developing tools to implement it. All this must be in line with the development of common

structures of education across Europe and is associated with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

At the national level in Finland there have been committees to promote and disseminate good practices of APL and to make recommendations for common practices to be used in APL. Education institutions must have uniform, reliable and transparent systems for recognizing prior learning. These guidelines are specified in specific cooperation in different disciplines of study between educational institutions. The recognition system must be developed as a part of the development of curricula, teaching and guidance, evaluation and quality assurance (Opetusministeriö, 2004; Opetusministeriö, 2007).

Process and steps of Assessment of Prior Learning: how does it work?

Main stages in the APL process can be seen as a way of learner activity or the activity of an organization providing APL. These ways are inter-connected. In defining competencies, the steps in the APL process and the developing methods and tools are important as much

as information, communication and reflection.

In general the process of APL consists of three subordinate processes which form the main steps: (i) identification, (ii) assessment and (iii) recognition / validation / accreditation of prior learning (see Table 3). Recognition of prior learning is defined in a number of ways, some more expansive than others. All definitions include the key notion that recognition involves the assessment of prior learning an individual has achieved outside the formal education and training system. If we state that APL is an individually steered process, then identification is connected with personal recognition and the assessment comes next. Duvekot outlines the diversity of the process of APL as *valuation of prior learning* (VPL) (Duvekot, 2009). As Duvekot explains VPL aims at recognition, accreditation / validation and further development of what an individual has learned in every possible learning environment (Duvekot, 2009).

At the beginning of the APL process, preliminary discussions aim to reflect and determine learning achievements acquired in non-formal and informal settings. Learning outcome-based curricula is a key tool to start APL. Evidence must be presented to demonstrate that such learning has taken place, which is the starting point of the APL process. Some competencies can be

documented easily, whereas others are more difficult to demonstrate. In some cases only practical findings can be given as an indication that the required competencies have been reached. There are many tools to map competencies which are developed in educational systems and in working life and can help in this phase. Personal learning plans and learning logs are important tools for setting aims, and reflection in this phase and during the process.

Gathering the evidence forms the basis for the assessment phase. The evidence can be in written, visual and other formats. The evidence may be paper-based, electronic, video recorded evidence, a competence test, participation in a development project, etc. By assessing evidence of prior learning, the equivalence of acquired skills and knowledge can be defined and compared accurately in relation to those aims in formal education. This kind of assessment is related to learning outcomes in the curriculum. Therefore the learning outcomes in the curriculum have to be defined clearly. On the other hand, the educational systems, modules and training processes must be flexible enough to provide opportunities to update knowledge and skills and to accredit prior learning.

Choosing methods is one of the most important elements in the assessment of prior learning achievements and can

Table 3. The process of ‘Valuation of Prior Learning’ (according to Duvekot, 2009).

Phase	Step and question	Action by individual
I. Preparation	1. Awareness <i>What necessity is there for self-investment?</i>	Being accessible to Lifelong learning Inventory of personal learning wishes Start self-management of competences
	2. Setting targets <i>Which learning targets are relevant?</i>	Self-assessment SWOT-analysis* Formulate learning targets
II. Recognition	3. Setting a personal profile <i>How to determine the need for competencies?</i>	Writing a personal profile Choosing a portfolio-format
	4. Retrospection <i>How to describe and document learning achievements / prior learning?</i>	Filling in a portfolio if needed get portfolio-guidance
III. Valuation & Validation	5. Standard setting <i>What is the relevant standard related to the targets?</i>	Choosing a standard Re-arranging the personal portfolio Self-assessment Inventory of career-opportunities
	6. Valuation <i>How to get evaluated?</i>	Valuation of the portfolio Get advice on certification and career opportunities
	7. Validation <i>How to get validated?</i>	Turning the advice into proper certification and career-evaluation
IV. Development	8. Propection <i>How to set up a PDP**?</i>	Turning validation into a PDP for reasons of certification, employability, empowerment Arranging learning-made-to-measure
	9. Implementing a PDP <i>Working on learning targets</i>	Execute PDP
V. Implementation	10. Structural implementation & empowerment <i>How did it go? If ok, how do you embed VPL*** structurally in a personal Lifelong learning strategy?</i>	Evaluation of the process maintaining portfolio-documentation

*SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

**PDP – personal development plan

*** - Valuation of Prior Learning

take either a descriptive or a demonstrative form. In the former, the student describes the professional experience by documents reflecting upon their career; in the latter the student shows their experience by means of actions. These forms of evaluation are not mutually exclusive, as activity needs verbal explanations and vice versa. In many cases the combination of both descriptive and demonstrative approaches may help to understand the complexities involved in prior learning. No firm conclusion has yet been reached as to which methods are applicable for higher education and whether the chosen method should be based on expert competence consisting of practical knowledge, formal knowledge or meta-cognitive knowledge. Nevertheless a portfolio is the most important tool for presenting a synthesis of learning achievements.

The characteristics of learning, life-long for learners, creating flexible learning paths and strengthening links between

formal education, working life and society are major challenges for Life-long learning providers and for who give guidance. The most important note to remember is to provide support and guidance to adult students in the process of identifying their competencies. Additionally, APL depends on training assessors in educational systems as well as in the work place. The more people in work places who have assessment skills - the better lies the future for workers and students.

Learning tasks

- *100 words of your competencies: how do you describe your competencies as a vocational teacher or teacher educator: use 100 words (please use the following form: I can...)*
- *What kind of challenges do you see in relation to Assessment of Prior Learning?*
- *What is your vision about Assessment of Prior Learning: how will APL be used in 10 years?*

ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Harri Keurulainen

- *What purposes are important when assessing someones prior learning experiences?*
- *What is the role of the candidate in the assessment process?*

Assessment is vital part in the accreditation process. During the past few years there have been some efforts to develop practical assessment methodologies and procedures for the APL in teacher education institutions. The same basic

questions concern assessment occur for APL as in any other assessment situations. The questions which need answering are: why are we assessing? what are we assessing? how do we assess? and what is the subject in assessment process? My impression is that the answers we give to 'why?' and 'what?' formulated questions have great impact on the assessment practices and procedures (see Fig. 2) (Keurulainen, 1998).

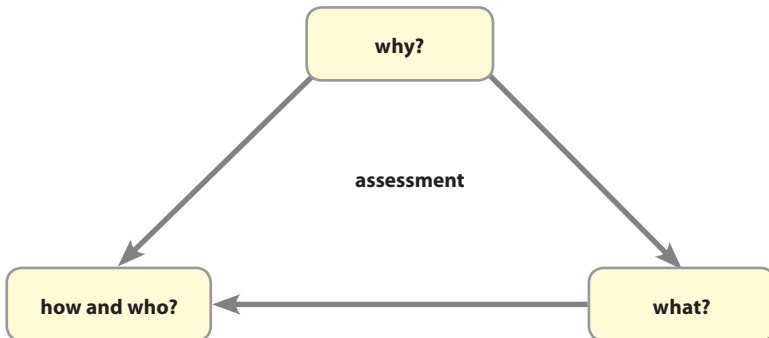


Figure 2. Basic questions.

In this section these questions are briefly discussed. Assessment methodologies seem to differ especially in their ontological and epistemological backgrounds. There seem to be positivist

methodologies which rely on the realistic ontology and empiristic epistemology and, on the other hand, there seem to be phenomenologic methodologies

which rely on relativist ontology and rationalist epistemology.

On the ontological level there are different kinds of viewpoints on teacher's competence: is it an absolute or a more relativist phenomenon? On the epistemological level there are also different kinds of views, but on assessment: are we seeking for objectivist "truth" or do we see the outcomes of assessment process more as a matter of consensus?

An important point to remember is all the assessment methodologies are related to the overarching paradigm of training and education. In the behaviorist paradigm, assessment is used mainly for control purposes whereas in constructivist paradigm the main purpose for assessment is to support the learning process.

The discussion on 'why?': alternative views on the purpose of assessment

When talking about the purpose of assessment of learning, the history of assessment is a history of control and classification. Some assessors emphasize the control nature of assessment. Their only interest is to find out if someone has - or doesn't have - the competencies demanded. However during the last few

decades there have been different views whether, and to what extent, assessment should also benefit the professional growth of a person whose learning achievements are assessed. In this case the assessment tasks and examinations are seen as a significant phase of one's professional growth. Thus in this discussion the issue that has been the main function of assessment is whether the emphasis should be on ascertaining or on the development of competence.

In Finland, for instance, there have been discussions since the competence based assessment system began in the 1990's, concerning the primary purpose of assessment activities. There has been wide consensus that the main purposes of developing this system are the improvement of Finnish working life and raising and ensuring the quality of learning. The competence based assessment is officially and clearly criterion referenced. Thus, the purpose of assessment activities is to find out what the quality of one's achievements is, compared with the assessment criteria. However, the idea of normative assessment can still be found in some descriptions of assessment procedures. In some cases a great deal of effort has been ensuring that all the candidates should have exactly same kind of assessment environments and that the assessment tasks are the same for everyone. The issue of objectivity is important, especially in normative assessment. That is why the demand for

strict objectivity is important for many assessors, even though the demand for objectivity is not of equal importance in the criterion referenced assessment as it is in normative assessment. In some cases the idea of normative assessment is also found in the demand that only a certain percentage of candidates (i.e. 80 %) can be approved in a certain year.

The discussion on ‘what?’: alternative views on teacher’s competence and alternative assessment paradigms

The starting point for the APL process is the definition of competence or competencies. According to Smith a distinction can be made between the concepts of ‘competence’ and ‘competency’. (Smith 1996) The use of these terms reveals the ontological view on the phenomenon. Competence is broad capacity and the approach is holistic. Competency (and competencies) is a narrower, more atomistic concept used to label particular abilities or episodes.

In many countries there is a development process of changing the curricula from subject based to competence-based. In some cases, new curricula are based on the constructivist viewpoint on learning

and on the holistic interpretation of competence. The situation has also reactivated traditional ways of describing educational goals which date back to the behaviourist era of educational thinking. For instance Bloom’s description of the domains of competency (knowledge, attitudes and skills) and the taxonomy of the levels of competence (Bloom, 1956) is still very popular. In fact the taxonomy has improved during recent years so that it is also useful in constructivist educational contexts; furthermore the descriptions of the levels of competence are a good starting point for any analysis of competence. The problem is that if the domains are assessed separately, this can be viewed as an exemplary implementation of the atomistic approach to competence. Another problem occurs when the learning outcomes are prescribed narrowly or in simple terms because there is a risk that it leads to simplistic rote learning.

Smith points out (Smith, 1996), that frequently in the discourse, competence as a fully human attribute has been reduced to competencies, i.e. a series of discrete activities. The implication is that behaviour can be objectively and mechanically measured. This is, according to Smith, a highly questionable assumption - there always has to be some uncertainty about the object being measured. Instead of measurement the concept used is “assessment”. Thus, depending on the epistemological

presumptions, the assessment process can be seen either as a search for objectivistic “truth” which rely on quantities produced by measurement tools or it can be seen as a search for “truth”, which is more relative by nature. The “truth” in the latter case is neither objectivistic nor *subjectivistic* by nature. Rather “truth” is inter-subjectivistic, which means that when making the assessment decisions different points of view are taken into account during the assessment process. Self assessment, for instance, is a vital part of this kind of assessment process. There for communication is the essential condition for a successful assessment process.

When searching for objectivistic ‘truth’, empirical inquiry methods are relevant. When searching for inter-subjectivistic ‘truth’ the inquiry methods are different. Therefore it resembles more a qualitative than quantitative inquiry process.

Another important issue, which has caused vivid discussion since Bloom’s taxonomy appeared in 1956, is the nature of the objectives. At the heart of the criticism is that if the objectives are highly objectivistic by nature or very tightly standardized, they do not allow any contextual interpretation of objectives according to learner or the assessment situation. The fact however is that teachers work in a variety of educational institutions and with a diversity of learners. There, should therefore be

some possibility to adapt the objectives flexibly in different situations.

Ecological validity - that the tools are “fit for purpose”, and contextuality - that the tools are “fit for situation” of the assessment tools are more important qualities than reliability or standardisation of the tools. In the objectivistic assessment culture the ways of producing the evidence is thoroughly defined by assessor. If the emphasis is on inter-subjectivism the use of assessment procedures permits learners to produce varieties of acceptable evidence appropriate for educational objectives.

Wiggins defines authentic assessment as the performance of exemplary tasks that would be responsive to individual student’s contexts (Wiggins, 1989). These tasks are highly contextualised and usually require collaboration and, importantly, facilitate learning. The assessment of performance requires an individual’s judgment, emphasizing both process and product and entails dialogue between all the participants in the process.

Table 4 draws the main points together, contrasting the main ideas of objectivistic and inter-subjectivistic assessment paradigms.

Biggs (2006) points out that the quantitative features of assessment, the need for standardizing the conditions

and the entire measurement culture are essential when selecting people or comparing individual achievements. If the emphasis is in promoting learning – Biggs prefers a qualitative process where conditions reflect an individual’s optimal learning in the intended application of the learning.

The discussion on ‘who?’: the role of the candidate in the assessment process

The issue of ‘who’ has the right to participate in the assessment process has been a much discussed issue from the very beginning of the existence of competence based qualification

systems. Initially no distinction was made between collecting the assessment information and making decisions according to that information. So there was a broad common understanding that only very few people could participate in the assessment process. In most of the cases, the same people who had the right to make the assessment decisions (the assessor teams) also collected all the information.

At the start up of the competence based assessment system in Finland, there were debates on the limitation of the number of participants in the name of objectivity. For example the teachers who participated in preparatory training for the assessment approach were not allowed to take part in the assessment process. In the name of objectivity,

Table 4. *Comparing the objectivistic and intersubjectivistic assessment.*

Objectivistic assessment	Intersubjectivistic assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ definition of competency is strict and atomistic ▪ measurement is essential ▪ quantitative method are emphasised ▪ reliability is important ▪ standardisation of assessment tools is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ definition of competence leaves space for situational interpretations ▪ communication is essential ▪ qualitative methods are emphasized ▪ ecological validity is important ▪ contextuality of assessment tools is important

the candidate’s own work place was not considered to be a suitable location for implementing the examination of their competence, and their colleagues and

employers were considered to be too “subjective” to be valid sources of assessment information.

However, this kind of approach was rapidly evaluated as leading to very costly, limited and artificial situations from which information was collected. Thus in many cases, as the evaluation report pointed out, the arrangement of the examination could correspond only in part to the requirements of the qualification in question.

Nowadays the practices vary from the rigid *objectivistic approach* to more flexible and pragmatic approaches. For example, the role of the teachers in preparatory training as information sources for candidates is in most cases approved. The tendency towards authenticity in assessment recognises work places as possible examination environments and the use of portfolios as an assessment tool also makes it possible to have different kinds of informants as sources of assessment data.

A significant element, of the issue of 'who?', is the role of self-assessment, which has been discussed during the past twelve years. Nowadays self-assessment has clearly two functions which are apparent in different qualifications: 1) in most qualifications, self-assessment is recognised to be a significant element of competence; 2) in many cases the assessors view self-assessments to be a vital source of assessment information enabling them to make relevant assessment decisions. However, initially, self-assessment was not recognised widely as

a significant and natural part of assessment process, as it is today. In many cases the only acceptable feature of self-assessment occurred when the learner was asked to evaluate the arrangements of examination procedures.

The discussion on 'how?'

A note of importance is that traditionally the assessment procedures have relied mostly on examinations and tests. Objectivity, measurement and standardisation of methods have been the keywords. The methods that were planned for assessing how successful certain transfer processes, of skills and knowledge, were also applied in the competence based environment. However, many assessors have realised that competence assessment needed an approach that was different to those applied in formal training. Gradually the varieties of methods have expanded; portfolios, observations, discussions and self-assessments are nowadays quite widely used.

At the same time as the variety of assessment methods were increasing, the structure of examinations was also developed from a simple 'theory exam or practical test' structure to more versatile assessment procedures. In many cases, the examinations are integrated into a normal work day by giving the candidates the assessment tasks, which

consist of planning, implementing as well as assessing a certain work process.

In summary, assessment practices at the beginning of competence based qualification system relied mostly on the behaviouristic paradigm of learning. The critiques towards these practices have been based mainly on the constructivist paradigm. So the main trends in development of assessment

procedures during the past decades have moved from:

- ascertaining competence towards developing competence,
- a narrow and atomistic understanding of competence towards a more broad and holistic view,
- measurement towards qualitative assessment methods,
- external assessment towards self-assessment.

Learning tasks

- *Plan a brief (15-minutes) discussion about APL. Write out the sequence of questions you will use to advance the discussion fruitfully.*
- *Define the concepts: **ecological validity, contextuality, competence and competency** in your own words.*
- *Define the role of the APL candidate within the context of the learning paradigm of your institute.*

II. PRACTICING ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING

*Aušra Fokienė, Anita Lanka, Eglė Stasiūnaitienė, Sandra Gudzuka, Alvars Baldiņš, Jovita Gudaitytė,
Vilma Šlentnerienė*

Welcome to the second part of the Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning. Here you will find some practical solutions on what and how to assess in order to recognize the achievements of vocational teachers' prior learning. It is expected that you select and adapt the information for your own contexts of APL. Learning tasks at the end of each sub-section will help you to reflect on the candidate's material evidence, as well as to plan your own assessment practice.

The main questions Part II of the handbook will answer are:

- *What can be assessed in teaching?*
- *What are the principles for assessment of prior learning?*
- *Who are the actors of the assessment process?*
- *What kinds of methods are most suitable for assessing non-formal and informal learning of vocational teachers?*

THE GATEWAY TO ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

This discussion will begin by clarifying the concepts of assessment (the process) and evaluation (decision making). Assessment of learning achievements is a process that assesses a person's knowledge, skills, attitudes and value dispositions, through various methods and processes. Evaluation defines decision-making, as a distinctive value or decision about distinction. Evaluation is related to the concept value or worth and denotes attribution of a certain value or decision-making (Kraujutaitytė, 2003; Knight & Yorke, 2003). Thus, evaluation is making a decision about value, based on systematic information and aiming to improve the performed activity, in our case – a person's learning. R. Laužackas

asserts that evaluation is the result of assessment which can be recorded in the learning process in various ways– writing a mark, recognising a competency or qualification by issuing a certificate or diploma, etc (Laužackas, 2005).

The goals of **formative assessment**:

- measure progress during a certain period of time
- determine learning difficulties and professional development needs
- provide information to learners on how to improve their learning and professional activities

According to the purposes, an assessment can be normative, criteria-based, formative, diagnostic or summative. During normative assessment the individual's achievements being assessed are graded, comparing them to the achievements of other representatives of the appropriate group, aiming to discern a higher or lower rate in the group. In the case of criteria-based assessment, the learning achievements are assessed according to an assessment scale or standard created beforehand.

Diagnostic / formative assessment identifies the level of achievements, i.e. how many and what kind of achievements the individual holds. During this kind of assessment, their needs and abilities to improve professional knowledge and skills and/or to acquire new ones are discussed. Formative assessment should be applied when aiming to critically evaluate and correct professional activity (see Fig. 3). Formative assessment determines the progress of learning and provides detailed feedback information about learning and development

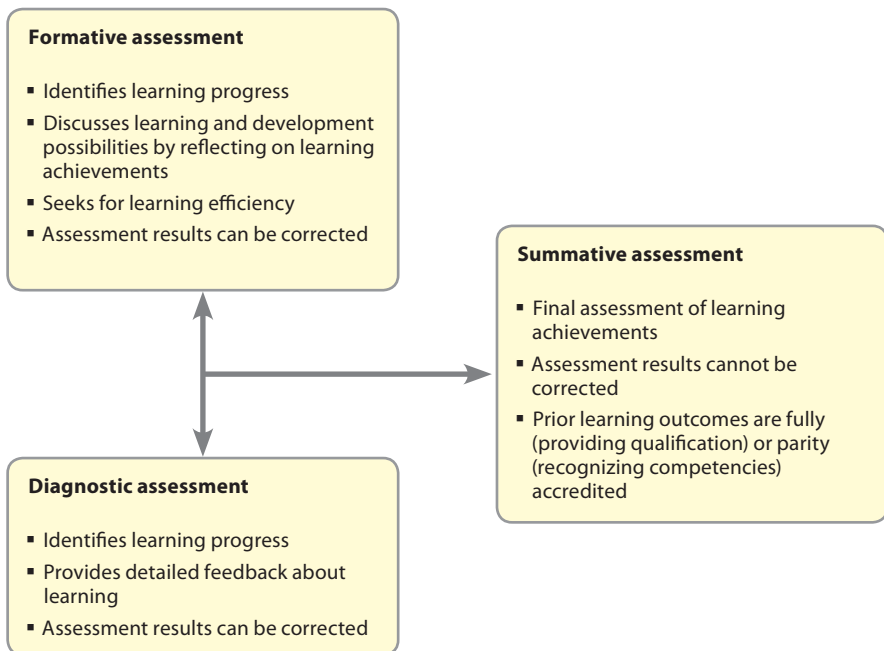


Figure 3. Aspects and relationships among diagnostic, summative and formative assessments.

possibilities. Formative assessment is geared to learning efficiency and is related to continuous diagnosing of learning achievements, whereas feedback allows the learner to perceive the elements of learning that need improvement (Black & Wiliam, 2003; Stobart & Gipps, 1997; Dunn et al, 2005; Breier 2005). Formative assessment should be based on constant initiative of teachers and their involvement in the process of assessment.

Formative assessment, in the function of diagnostic assessment, defines individual learning needs and difficulties and proposes a range of solutions for learners to choose from, such as individual programmes, special educational methods and support programmes.

Formative assessment is characterised by change or progress measurement,

and educational and diagnostic functions that determine motivation for continuous learning.

Summative assessment is used to summarise and generalise learner achievements. Dunn *et al.* indicate that on the basis of summative assessment conclusions the learner can judge their own progress; however, different to formative assessment, results of summative assessments cannot be corrected. In an ideal situation, the aim is to use summative assessment as a final assessment of various learning activities, which are formatively assessed during the learning process (Biggs, 1999).

Assessing achievements acquired not only in formal but also in non-formal and informal learning, requires all three kinds of assessment: diagnostic, formative and summative, are applied.

Components of competency	Evidence of competency in:		
	actions	behaviour	results
Knowledge	→	→	→
Skills	→	→	→
Attitudes / value	→	→	→

Figure 4. Assessing components of competency.

Preparation of assessment methodology involves such processes as:

- setting the assessment criteria, which are described as attributes, based on which the evaluation decision is taken. *Competence* is the aggregate of the personal attributes - knowledge, skills, values and attitudes – of a particular competency which can be assessed as being necessary for implementing teaching activities;
- selecting the assessment methods, which are suitable for assessing all attribute components of a certain competency, on the basis that evidence of competency is discernible in actions,

behaviour and results of the teacher (see Fig. 4).

The idea of APL is to recognize that a teacher's competence has been developed in a variety of learning situations in job and life-experiences. Assessing a VET teacher's prior learning slightly differs from assessment of traditional formal learning (see Table 5). Assessment of a VET teacher's non-formal and informal learning could be described as a holistic form of assessment as a collection of related knowledge and skills is assessed at the same time. Therefore, a number of methods exist which allow flexible and effective assessment of a teacher's knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

Table 5. Comparison of features of assessment in formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Assessment in formal education	Assessment of informal and non-formal learning
Quantitative assessment methods dominate	Qualitative assessment methods dominate
The main assessor is the teacher	Integration of assessment and self-assessment
Oriented towards measurable learning achievements, which are assessed at the end of the course or topic.	Assessment throughout the process, promoting self-progress, recording individual accomplishments and development possibilities.
Assessment results are expressed in points and percentages regarding standards	Learning assessment expressed verbally in a particular context, weak and strong elements of professional activity are revealed
Prevalence of declarative knowledge and reproduction skills	Prevalence of operative knowledge, integration of operative knowledge and skills and their appliance in non-standard situations
Assessment as objective reality	Meaning of context in assessment
Learning achievements are easier to assess	Complex assessment

CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT

Assessment of teachers' knowledge and skills could be defined as a documented statement of their teaching responsibilities, philosophy, goals and accomplishments as a teacher. Traditional sit-down exams were the result of a view regarding knowledge as objective and transferable and therefore reproduction of knowledge and not production was at the forefront of that assessment culture. Qualitative assessment methods, such as portfolios, log books, interviews and case studies are strong change agents. In a traditional assessment culture, where the control aspect of evaluation is highlighted, there is resistance to making qualitative methods the basis of assessment.

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own "rules" and "mental models," which we use to make sense of our experiences. Learning, therefore, is simply the process of adjusting our mental models to accommodate new experiences.

Constructivism calls for the elimination of grades and standardized testing. Instead, assessment becomes a part of the learning process so that students play a larger role in judging their own

progress. Constructivist learning theory offers an approach to the study of work-related and work-based learning, but is not insufficient on its own to explain work-related learning, which can be described with the concepts of reflective, transformative, contextual and situated learning. Practice-oriented assessment reflects features of the above-mentioned theories, especially constructivist and contextual learning. The characteristics of practice-oriented assessment can be set against those of the traditional thinking on assessment (Stenstrom & Laine, 2006).

Criteria for assessment are set on the bases that the evidence:

- is based on actual performance and not just theoretical knowledge;
- demonstrates an acceptable level of competence against performance indicators (such as learning outcomes in a study programme or list of competencies in a professional standard);
- demonstrates an ability to transfer knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to pedagogic situations in a different environment;
- is up-to-date;
- is sufficient to prove competence in different types of evidence:

research and continuing professional development activities;

- includes samples of work produced, e.g.:
 - a learning programme the teacher has designed,
 - evaluation sheets,
 - reports,
- includes feedback from learners, colleagues, line managers etc;
- includes reflective analysis of the teacher's professional activities.

evaluation of teaching must assess more than classroom performance. Among the teaching activities that may be assessed are the following:

- quality, amount, and level of classroom instruction;
- development of curriculum and classroom materials;
- consulting students, including supervision of independent study and reading courses;
- conduct and supervision of laboratory instruction;
- advising students in their *major* subject;
- supervision of field work;
- supervision of *practicum experiences*.

What aspects of teaching that can be evaluated?

Since teaching includes activities broader than classroom instruction,

Learning tasks: Evaluate each statement in the light of APL theory:

What is the purpose of informal, formative assessment?

To find out what the candidate already knows and is able to do before starting a particular learning course or programme.

To provide the candidate with immediate feedback on their professional strengths and weaknesses.

What are the results used for?

To show the candidate what their professional strengths or weaknesses are.

To guide the teacher in shaping the study programme to meet the need of the particular learner.

How are the results recorded?

The results are not officially recorded but sometimes the assessor or the candidate may want to write down their reflections.

Who will do the assessment?

The most appropriate person assessee, peer, assessor or educator.

PRINCIPLES OF APL

- *How to model the APL process?*
- *What principles should be followed in APL process?*

Assessment of prior learning is a complex process, involving certain stages and the particular actors, which may vary from tradition to tradition and from culture to culture. Therefore modelling of the APL process must be based on a selection of attitudes, which impart the information of the main principles. The principles and goals of the assessment system are defined by the participants of the VET system: VET teachers, APL assessors, counsellors, VET educators and Principals of vocational schools.

Principle 1: Learning outcomes based approach. The main issues of the theory are introduced with the emphasis of learning outcomes as a starting point to assess the achievements of non-formal and informal learning. The study programmes are constructed of integral parts such as learning outcomes, criteria of assessment of learners' achievements, study content, study forms and methods and learning environment. Learning outcomes, in other words, intended learning results are derived from competencies, and this peculiarity makes them crucial to the creation of a system of easily comparable competencies and their recognition. Learning

outcomes is also an essential assumption for the development of a common European higher education area. Learning outcomes are a 'check-list', describing good teaching, and a meter to compare personal achievements against

A learning outcome is a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after a completion of a learning process.

A learning outcome based curriculum is a prerequisite for constructing an APL procedure.

the required ones. The priority to study outcomes is frequently described as a new approach to learning and teaching where active learning (constructivist) ideas are supported (The shift to ..., 2008). This approach implies the following particularities of the learning process:

- learners build up their own meanings, based on what they already know;
- different learners may give different interpretations to the same thing;
- there are many ways through which learners can study;
- studying is a social activity;
- studying is dynamic and context dependent.

Teaching competencies are defined by the VET teachers themselves, by the university tutors and external stakeholders suggesting knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that VET teachers should have. Learning outcomes are based on the definition of competencies, and they are formulated as the required results within the study programme. Learning outcomes are defined by representatives of an academic community, on the basis of the described competencies. Competencies are the abilities of a person to solve a problem in an *unpredictable* (i.e. in a real labour market) situation (Pukelis & Navickienė, 2008). Learning outcomes, as well as competencies, are statements on abilities of students to solve problems, but differently from competencies, study outcomes are related to *predictable* (i.e. educational) situations.

Predictable situations mean that learners know in advance the field from which they could be tested during the exams. But they do not have concrete information on the type of the assignment they will be asked to perform during the assessment process of their achievements. Predictable situations also mean that learners may be examined only on the issues from the field they have studied, directly or indirectly, during the study process. Those achievements, which have been acquired during non-formal and informal learning situations, are also compared to the achievements

required within the formal programme, so that the evaluation could be made in the event the achievements match together. An important point to note is that learners' achievements are a subjective part of learning outcomes and can exceed or drop short of the defined learning outcomes (competencies). This occurs because learners' achievements are influenced by many factors, such as level of efforts in studies, aptitude, abilities, their teacher's qualification and the material and financial resources of the learners' institutions.

Principle 2: Integral Process approach is grounded on a series of procedures composing the design and development of the APL system. The approach stresses that all the step-by-step procedures of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning must be taken into account and the whole of procedure is presented clearly for the benefit of both the candidate and the assessor. A detailed description of the recommended sequence of the integral procedures of APL is presented in the next sub-section of this Handbook.

Principle 3: Expedience, which is understood as an opportunity to use the assessment results to choose that part of a formal education programme, which best corresponds to personal learning needs. Expedience is also understood as a stimulus for further participation in Lifelong learning processes.

Principle 4: *Stakeholder interest groups involved in the assessment and recognition process* describes a pattern ensuring permanent links between the labour market, VET teachers and VET institutions. Stakeholders are individuals or groups, interested in the quality of learning in a certain study programme, or recognition of non-formally or informally acquired competencies. The following groups are examples of stakeholders: academic and administrative staff of the institution, learners, graduates, employers, trade unions, governmental institutions and representatives of professional associations. Stakeholders can be involved in identifying competencies that are necessary for VET teachers and these competencies become the basis for the definition of learning outcomes.

Principle 5: *Exactness and validity* are associated with the reliance of the results of assessment.

Principle 6: *Versatility of assessment methods* reflects the diversity of learning methods, and emphasizes the inherent triangulation in seeking to base the assessment results on deeper analysis of cognitive, psychomotoric and affective learning achievements. The assessment methods should include both assessing written information and examining the empirical evidence of the competencies to be recognized.

Principle 7: *Transparency* emphasizes quality assurance mechanisms founded on certain methodology.

Principle 8: *Voluntarism and consciousness* states that the process of assessment and recognition is complex, time-consuming and requiring the endeavour of the candidate, therefore it should not be compulsory, but based on choice.

Principle 9: *Trust (assuring the competence of assessors)* states that trust of the assessment process is concerned with the people implementing the assessment, and their formal qualifications and real competence.

Principle 10: *Periodic renewal.* The system of assessment of non-formal and informal learning is open to change and development and therefore should undergo periodic renewal at regular intervals. The renewal could be performed through evaluation of the system's effectiveness and consequent improvements. The APL process' fundamental aspects of utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy, the effectiveness of assessment methodology and the quality of assessors' activities should be periodically examined. Evaluation of the APL system is correct when performed legally, keeping to ethical norms and human rights with regard to the participants. The evaluation results show the strengths and weaknesses of the APL

procedure, and the consequent improvements should include both the enhancement of the identified strengths as well as the elimination of the weaknesses.

These 10 principles are recommendatory. They may change or be adjusted in accordance with principles and traditions of VET teacher education from country to country.

Learning task

Create your own list of principles, to be used in your context of implementing APL. Take into account your personal norms and values on objectivity and transparency of APL.

PROCEDURES

- *What procedures of APL can be distinguished?*
- *What do the procedures of APL start and finish with?*
- *How can stages of the APL process be characterized?*

Before starting the APL procedure, the initial task is to clarify if the aim of the candidate is to improve their teaching competence, or to shorten a certain study programme. This key task influences the whole process and quality of APL.

The Main Stages of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Assessment Procedure

The procedure of non-formal and informal learning achievements' assessment involves characteristic consecutive steps or stages as well as consequent functions and actions that are necessary to the process (see Fig. 5). Although countries are responsible for describing and naming the steps of non-formal and informal learning assessment procedures according to national requirements, generally an assessment procedure involves several integrated and

consequential steps such as: information, consulting, evidence preparation and submission, assessment, and decision enactment.

Main steps in assessing teachers' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes:

- 1st Informing: the initial advisory interview
- 2nd Consulting: identifying sources of evidence
- 3rd Preparing and submitting the portfolio
- 4th Assessment
- 5th Verification and certification

1st Step of Information: refers the candidate to the elements of the assessment procedure:

- assessment principles,
- assessment criteria,
- assessment results:
 - recognition of qualification,
 - recognition of separate competencies,
 - personal study programme.

The Information step is the mean of promoting the recognition of non-formal and informal learning achievements, with the help of the relevant institution, to the public as well as candidates for APL. The Information step also introduces post-assessment possibilities

in the context of study continuity or new studies. The Information step requires qualitative criteria and indices in order to ensure accessibility to the assessment of non-formal and informal learning. Accessibility also infers the assurance of equal opportunities, which is the essence of the APL procedure, explanations of particular procedural elements and the discussion of assessment results.

IMPORTANT:

Well defined concepts in place at the beginning of developing the procedure will benefit the dialogue between the candidate and the assessor.

The Information step is not always attributed to the assessment procedure of non-formal and informal learning achievements. This is because the processing of information is an extensive activity and is not the only activity performed by the institution carrying out the assessment. Any information regarding APL, which the candidate receives at this stage, influences their decision of whether they will manage the 3rd step of preparing for the assessment on their own, or need the help of a consultant. In many countries (e.g. France, Denmark, United Kingdom, Finland, and Ireland) the provision of information is performed by various supplementary instruments, chiefly ICT systems, which help to develop a portfolio of personal learning achievements. The Information step must ensure that the APL process is recognized as reliable,

fair, and transparent, not only by the candidate but also all the stakeholders. These conditions can be realised with the help of well-defined concepts and clear cut steps in the assessment process.

2nd Step of Consulting: in a broad sense is a process during which a counsellor helps a candidate to prepare for the process of assessment. This stage requires transparency and fairness as regards the candidate. The candidate needs to know what their input will be during the assessment procedure, how much time the assessment will take, what assessment criteria will be employed, how an individual situation will be regarded, and other aspects. Consulting can be one-to-one or in groups.

During the 2nd Step of Consulting, the procedure of assessment is introduced in detail. In contrast to the 1st Step of Information, which informs about the stages and principles of the assessment procedure, during this 2nd Step the candidate is advised on the assessment procedure. Particular attention is paid to the evidence of learning achievements and to analyzing its compliance with professional standards. The consultant needs to be well acquainted with the study programmes of institutions that prepare people for future careers. Consequently, consultants can be selected from the representatives of various study programmes who are well

aware of what competencies the study programmes are developing.

3rd Step of Preparation: As mentioned earlier, the candidate will decide during the 1st Step of Information whether they can manage to prepare a portfolio of documentary evidence on their own or need help. Should the candidate decide that no help is needed, they fulfil the 3rd Step after the previous step has ended. Should the candidate decide that they cannot manage on their own the consultant provides help in compiling a *portfolio* during the 2nd Step.

The counsellor can advise in what logical sequence all the documents, reflections, sketchbooks, certificates, diploma copies, or any other competence proofs should be arranged.

4th Step of Assessment and Evaluation: This stage of assessment consists of the primary analysis of the evidence of the candidate's learning achievement, provided in the portfolio, and whether the evidence indicates compliance with the learning outcomes identified in the study programmes. A secondary analysis considers whether there is sufficient evidence to prove the desirable competencies, whether they reflect precisely the candidate's factual knowledge and skills. During the process of the assessment special attention is to be paid to the following:

- the candidate's activities during which they acquired their competencies,
- the variety and specificity of these activities, whether these activities are related to the competencies and learning outcomes defined in the professional standard and study programmes
- the candidate's experience during which they acquired the competencies and the length of this experience.

If the learning achievement portfolio lacks evidential material to prove the candidate's desirable competencies, the assessor chooses other methods of empirical assessment. The alternatives are, for example, an interview, a test (oral or written), practical tasks and the observation of practical tasks and the analysis of reflections. The assessment methods can be various and selected according to the situation so that as many as possible of a candidate's achievements can be identified and a comprehensive profile of the competencies can be provided. In order to achieve a high level of assessment quality the principles of assessment: objectivity, validity, reliability, practicality and confidentiality as well as the function of formative and summative assessment and safe assessment environments become very important.

5th Step of Verification and Certification: The essential aspect of this Step is the 'making of a decision' and is, therefore,

the final Step in the assessment procedure. The decision on which competencies can be recognised is made by the assessor or the assessment committee. If the candidate proves to have the competencies defined in the professional standard they are awarded with the certificate that proves the qualification, or, if the assessment indicates the candidate needs to acquire (or the candidate is aiming to gain) more competencies, a personal study plan can be developed.

The candidate is able choose only those study programme modules or subjects that are necessary for the acquisition of the desirable qualification.

The assessment committee must give feedback information to the candidate about the final decision. The importance cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, throughout the assessment procedure, irrespective of the assessment methods or the assessment results, the candidate

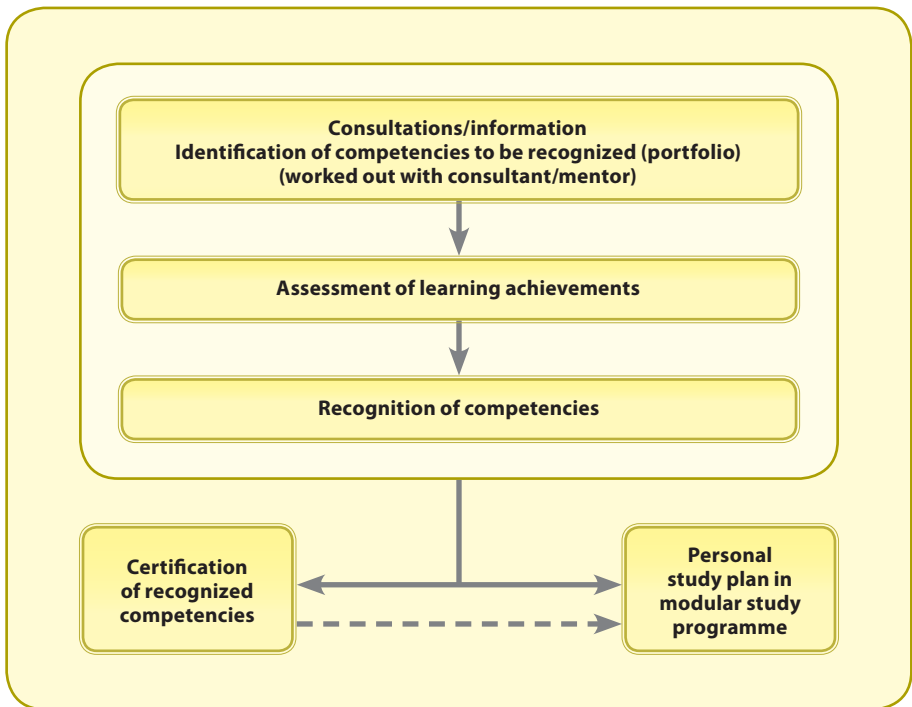


Figure 5. The Process of Assessment of Prior Learning.

should receive constructive feedback. Negative feedback can be even more useful particularly if it is provided in a constructive way and accepted properly. Constructive feedback is not only positive reviews and remarks. Constructive feedback also emphasises what should be improved. The assessor who provides the feedback should analyse the current situation and seek solutions with the candidate to find a common agreement with regard to the assessee's competence development. Feedback is important because it performs the function of

formative assessment. Feedback information should be based on concrete examples or specific situations or events which were observed in an activity. The candidate benefits from knowing what has been done very well, which were the mistakes and what forced the assessor to draw appropriate conclusions. Feedback is significant if the assessor refers to behaviour which helped or hindered the learning process. Therefore, knowing how one behavioural pattern, or another, influences the candidate's professional activity is of great benefit.

ACTORS: THE APL-PROFESSIONALS

- *Who are the main actors in the APL process?*
- *What are the tasks of these actors?*
- *What should be the features of good assessor?*

The main actors in the APL process are:

- Candidate (VET Teacher)
- Counsellor
- Tutor
- Assessor

The process of APL starts with assessing the evidence of prior learning and closes with personalized learning qualification development plans. Therefore, the entire procedure of APL is not simply about recognizing competencies, but about the communication between the candidate, the assessor and the consultant (and any others who may be involved in the process) in order to find the effective personal learning path. The initial task of the assessors, before starting the APL procedure is to clarify whether the aim of the candidate is to improve their competence or to shorten the study time of a certain education programme.

Various actors can contribute to the success of the assessment of VET teachers' non-formal and informal learning achievements. The key actors are the VET teacher, the counsellor, the tutor,

and lastly the assessor who makes the decision based on the assessment results.

The VET teacher is the most important of the key actors in the entire process of APL in VET teacher education. The quality and the success of APL mainly depend on the aims and attitudes of the candidate. The candidate should understand the meaning on APL in their own career development, and should be applying for APL to improving their teaching as opposed to wanting to shorten a study programme. The candidate should have enough of information about APL and sufficient motivation to collect and demonstrate the evidence of their development process, i.e. to carry out self analysis of their own learning achievements. The starting point for any candidate wishing to claim for APL is to reflect on their experience in order to identify relevant achievements.

The Counsellor. Even though the Life-long learning ideas are being actively promoted, the idea of learning and planning a professional career is not yet an everyday activity in the VET teacher education culture. Therefore the role of the counsellor as a facilitator is hugely important for the candidates, since they have little or no experience in planning learning activities or gathering the evidence of learning on-the-job. The

assistance of the counsellor is central to the phase of gathering information and preparing to present it for the assessor.

The Tutor is one of those key actors who work at a university in the field of vocational teacher education at both initial and in-service training levels. The tutor is responsible for the design, development and implementation of the VET programme and education process, from an education perspective, at university. The tutor also supervises the practical realisation of the theoretical study process and encourages programme teachers by providing advice and consultations.

In constructing the APL, the tutor could give consultations on the whole study programme and may be one of the stakeholders, representing the rules and regulations of the study programme and aiming to improve its quality.

The Assessor is by default both the subject expert and the lecturer to whom the APL candidate applies. The main requirements for the assessor of VET teachers' non-formal and informal learning are as shown below (see Table 6).

Table 6. Profile of master assessor.

Formal features	Personal features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expert of the subject field (formal qualification not less than the candidate's) ▪ Qualified in the field of assessment of practical learning achievements ▪ Experienced in designing and developing the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possessing a positive attitude towards non-formal and informal learning and capable of recognizing achievements in these learning situations ▪ Supportive and easy-going ▪ Trustworthy ▪ Practitioner of equal opportunities for all APL candidates

The goal of the assessor is to make a decision if the demonstrated knowledge, skills and attitudes correspond to the learning outcomes in the study programme (or competencies listed in an occupational standard). The assessor is responsible for analysing the candidate's APL portfolio and for choosing

the appropriate assessment methods in order to prove the evidence provided in portfolio complies with the criteria.

Table 7 summarizes this sub-section and indicates the dominant participants, their tasks and challenges within each step of an extended APL process.

Table 7. APL participants, their tasks and challenges in APL Steps.

Steps of APL	Tasks	Actors	Challenges
Preparation	Initiation	Candidate ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be aware of the benefits of APL ▪ Be aware of the structure the curriculum
	Information	Counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use various informing methods ▪ Explain the APL process
	Consultation (for creating portfolio of evidence)	Counsellor + Candidate	<p><i>Counsellor:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Counselling strategies and techniques <p><i>Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formulate their expectations and aims
Assessment	Portfolio analysis	Assessor + Candidate	<p><i>Assessor:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Setting assessment criteria <p><i>Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presenting the evidence collected in the APL portfolio
	Choosing assessment methods	Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Choosing assessment methods for each component of competency, especially values and attitudes
	Formative and summative assessment	Assessor + Candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal contact is important
Decision making	Full or part recognition	Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Matching assessment results with the learning outcomes in a study programme
	Personal learning plan	Assessor + Candidate + Counsellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussing and negotiating basing on personal aims and results of assessment
Quality assurance	Internal quality assurance	Assessor + Counsellor + Candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Open discussion on improvement of the procedure, based on the feedback from all APL participants
	External quality assurance	External expert (not discussed within this Handbook)	

¹ Candidate in the Handbook is VET teacher

Learning tasks

- *How would you stimulate the active participation of the APL candidate in your own subject?*
- *Prepare a list of the “assessment team” for APL within your own context and subject. What are their main tasks and responsibilities?*

METHODS

- *What are the methods enabling assessment and evaluation if teaching knowledge and skills?*
- *How are these methods combined in an assessment process?*

Developing deeper, holistic and critical assessment experiences that would better reflect the VET teacher competencies in a dynamic vocational education

environment is challenging. One of the constructivism principles in assessment is that meaning requires understanding the whole as well as the parts; and the parts must be understood in the context of the whole. Therefore, the APL process should be much more focused on teacher learning achievements in general, not isolated facts or actions.

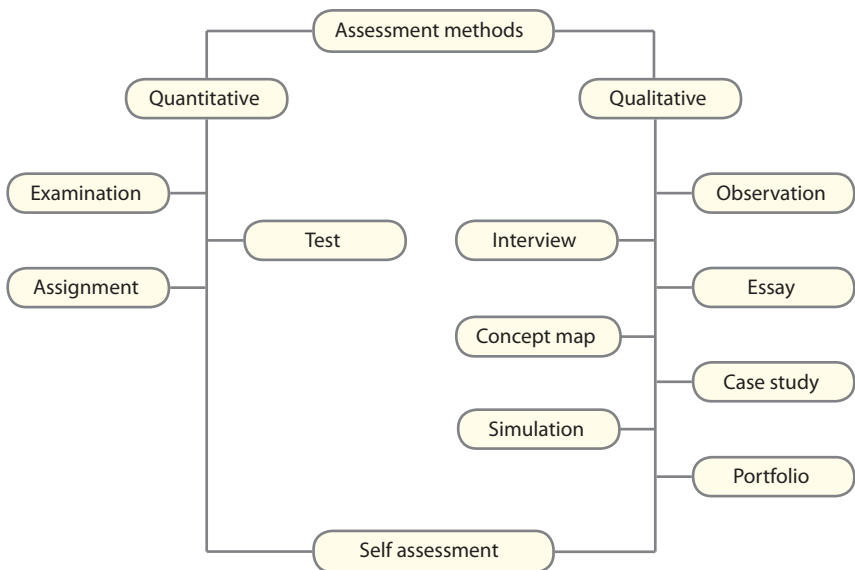


Figure 6. Possible APL methods.

The purpose of APL is for an individual teacher to demonstrate their own meaning and understanding of good teaching. Since education is inherently interdisciplinary, the only valuable way to compare whether and how individual learning

achievements correspond to the learning outcomes of a study programme, is to use various assessment methods (see Fig. 6), ensuring APL provides teachers with information on the quality of their teaching (see Table 8).

Table 8. *Examples of learning outcomes, the evidence and assessment methods.*

Learning outcomes in teacher education programme	Evidence	Assessment methods
Awareness of new theory and practices in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal reflection about their 'teaching philosophy' ▪ Diaries, Blogs ▪ Reports or certificates of attendance/participation in professional development activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portfolio ▪ Essay ▪ Interview ▪ Concept maps
Diagnoses students needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information on all students' determined learning strengths and areas to be developed. Individual learning plans ▪ Statements on teaching and assessment individualization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion about information obtained from Portfolio ▪ Case study
Plans for students' learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Syllabus, lesson plans with comments how the candidate integrates subject content with the nature of diverse learners, learning theories and instructional strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portfolio ▪ Direct Observation
Demonstrates the knowledge of VET policy, main trends in VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annotations of articles about VET policy, presentations in seminars or conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Essay ▪ Interview ▪ Portfolio

Learning outcomes in teacher education programme	Evidence	Assessment methods
Candidate acts in accordance with the structure, standards and responsibilities of the profession, has positive attitude, possesses a strong work ethic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Testimonial, results of students' questionnaires ▪ Self-reflection commentaries by colleagues or other people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mentor or university teacher observation ▪ Case study ▪ Portfolio
Fosters student well-being to support learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher diaries, reflections, testimonial ▪ Films or digital presentations illustrating some educational situations, which were considered important by the candidate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Essay ▪ Interview ▪ Case study ▪ Direct Observation
Autonomously gathers information and makes decisions on how to improve the quality of his/her own pedagogical performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feedback collection and interpretation ▪ Self assessment report, ▪ Reports on educational projects developed within the learning space ▪ Certificates ▪ Personal learning plan for professional growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portfolio ▪ Interview

Constructivist learning theory offers an approach to the study of work-related and work-based learning, but is insufficient on its own to explain work-related learning, which can be described with the concepts of reflective, transformative, contextual and situated learning. Practice-oriented assessment reflects features of constructivism. The characteristics of practice-oriented assessment can be set against those of the traditional thinking on assessment (Stenstrom & Laine, 2006).

A point worth emphasizing is that the initiative of the candidate is the foundation of the concept and the process of APL. The candidate makes the decision, whether or not, to gain recognition of their non-formally and informally acquired learning achievements. Their decision should be based on the results of self-assessment. The candidate, prior to preparing the portfolio should go through self-analysis with the help of the counsellor. This process should indicate their professional goals and ambitions, and help to review professional

development opportunities in the past, the present and the future.

Self-assessment contributes to the variety in assessment methods. This method may overlap with the reflective method because it typically involves a narrative that summarizes a candidate's work as a teacher and explains the relevance of the evidence contained in the portfolio. Self-assessment is the key method of APL of VET teacher, as it provides the information concerning the competencies teacher already has, and their strengths and weaknesses in the teacher's daily pedagogical practice. The information obtained from self-assessment can be used in three ways: 1) to identify areas for improvement; 2) to compare personal perceptions of competencies with results of assessment by the assessor; 3) to assist in developing a professional learning plan collaboratively with a counselor. Teachers benefit from using the self-assessment when trying to identify priorities for their professional learning and to identify any improvement.

To make self-assessment a more reliable method, the areas of competence, or the list of items they should refer to, need to be defined. The self-assessment form can be freely structured and reflective or highly structured and more formal.

Example of semi-structured reflective self-assessment form

1. What qualities do I possess that make me an effective teacher?
2. What strong points characterize my teaching?
3. What is my greatest weakness that I need to overcome for continued success as a teacher?
4. What do I need to become a better teacher?
5. What are my pedagogical beliefs? What educational philosophy lies behind them?
6. What do I need to do to become a better teacher?

The formal self-assessment process is clearer and more concrete: What will be assessed? Who will design the questions and identify a set of criteria?

The following scale is suggested for determining the scores for each of the indicators and competence areas in a highly structured self-assessment form:

1. **Unsatisfactory** – indicates that teacher's competence in this area is not acceptable. Learning activities must be undertaken.
2. **Needs improvement** – indicates that teacher's performance sometimes but not always meets expectations in this position requirement. Improvement activities are recommended.

3. **Area of strength** – indicates that teacher consistently meets and sometimes exceeds expectations for performance in this position requirement. Performance can be improved, but current practices are clearly acceptable.
4. **Demonstrates excellence** – indicates that teacher does an outstanding job in this position requirement. No area for improvement readily identifiable.
4. I integrate knowledge and skills across curriculum areas.
5. I use innovative activities appropriate to objectives, including the use of technology.
6. I identify teaching-learning activities to accommodate individual differences among students.
7. I select and use resources that are more related to the purpose.
8. I use accurate, up-to-date information
9. I use interactive teaching methods to enhance students' active learning.

Example of a structured self-assessment form

1. I know my subject matter.
2. I am aware of modern teaching and learning theories.
3. I select objectives from state and school system sources.
10. I assess my students' progress regularly.
11. I use assessment results to determine achievements of objectives.
12. I use assessment results to modify my teaching.
13. I use assessment results to modify the curriculum.

Portfolio

An APL portfolio is a collection of reflections and (paper-based & digital) evidence of an individual's prior learning experiences gathered into a dossier. The portfolio method (a) helps individual learners to capture, organize, integrate and re-use the achievements of their formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences, which they have acquired over a certain period of time;

(b) enables learners to take advantage of this accumulated information when planning and assessing the progress of their learning (Stefani et al, 2008). The portfolio method is based on self-assessment and thus enables learners to become stakeholders in their individual learning progress.

By submitting a request for APL, a candidate is declaring that their prior learning experiences will document

that they qualify for an academic credit award. Therefore, a teacher's portfolio is a collection of documents that represent the best of their teaching practice and provides the teacher with the opportunity to reflect on their professional behaviour as well as to claim for its recognition.

A portfolio for recognition of professional competence sums up the diverse aspects of a teacher's professional activity. The content of the portfolio should, therefore, be subordinated to the characterization of the key competencies of VET teachers. Besides an account of courses taken by the candidate and certificates proving their professional development, the portfolio should contain demonstrative materials enabling the assessor to validate certain subject, didactic or personal competencies.

Assessment might require, in addition to the orthodox contents of a portfolio, submission of alternative media evidence, for example, a graphics based project, a voice recording of an oral examination, a video recording of a stage performance or teaching activity as well as copies of one or more traditional examinations. Whatever the form of evidence, the submission criteria for APL must include these four aspects:

- **acceptability** — is the evidence valid and reliable?

- **sufficiency** — is the achievement of the claimed learning fully demonstrated?
- **authenticity** — is the evidence clearly the achievement of the applicant?
- **prevalence** — is the learning current, or if not is there evidence of updating?

The APL candidate can choose the materials to include in the portfolio:

- practice-based documents;
- reports on observations of practice;
- video/audio tapes, with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes;
- analytic and evaluative description of practice;
- statements from supervisors in relation to aspects of practice;
- documents and materials of experience from the courses, seminars, conferences attended;
- lesson observation forms;
- developed learning materials;
- evaluation given by other participants of professional development process;
- assessment and feedback provided by colleagues, pupils, employer;
- self-assessment;
- test results.

Candidates choose the way they would like to reveal the existence of one or another competency. An essential aspect is that the APL portfolio is grounded in the pedagogical reality not only in formal documents. The evidence must therefore include lesson notes,

study plans, the teacher's diary containing reflections on pedagogical work, projects, experts' recognitions, students' or colleagues' opinions, a retrospective event video album and a description of pedagogical problem and its solution.

The important issue is how to structure the portfolio in a clear and assessable way; see Table 9 for a suggested format.

Table 9. *Example of Portfolio Structure.*

Activity of experience	Time involved	Assignments and responsibilities	Knowledge and skills acquired	Possible documentation
1.				
2.				

Portfolio structure (or format) varies according to what competencies the teacher has chosen for APL. In general, the teacher portfolio consists of three major components:

- A teaching philosophy (a reflective essay on recent teaching and learning, reflective annotations of current educational theories, statements of pedagogical thinking).
- Evidence of teaching (e.g. sample course programme/syllabi, lesson plans, instructional design, teaching materials, methods; samples of completed students work and results of students' evaluations).

- Self-assessment (what are the strong elements, what competencies can be improved, what problems were encountered in meeting the professional goals?).

Also important is that:

- The portfolio should contain a system for clearly cross-referencing items of evidence to individual units, elements and performance criteria.
- The exact way each item in the portfolio provides evidence of the candidate's competence (for some items a short explanation may be required) should be clear to the assessor.

Portfolio presentation and discussion

Presentation of the portfolio can occur in a one-to-one meeting between the candidate and the assessor or as a group presentation involving several candidates and an assessor. The assessor should have prior knowledge of, and evaluated, the content of the portfolio. During the presentation, the candidate

accentuates the most important aspects and answers questions posed by the assessor (see Table 10). Those competence aspects, which have not been made obvious in the portfolio or knowledge and skills, which the candidate admits have to be acquired yet are revealed in the dialogue. An essential aspect of an APL portfolio is that it is incomplete and forms the basis of a personal learning plan for professional development.

Table 10. Roles of the APL candidate and assessor in portfolio assessment.

Portfolio Assessment	
APL candidate (VET teacher)	Assessor
Presentation of the portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis and comments ▪ Guidance and advising on the process ▪ Clarifying the content and structure
Evaluation report (personal reflection on the process; individual decisions about the value of the work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reaching a consensus: group decision; ▪ Elaborating evaluation reports for all interested parties
Reflection on the evaluation reports	

The APL assessor must not base the assessment on one method; moreover, they should be able to identify the challenges in choosing one or another assessment method. Although the portfolio is one of the most important methods of APL, the method has advantages

and disadvantages, which the candidate needs to analyse in order to plan the effective use of a portfolio. Table 11 will help you to think about the advantages and disadvantages of the portfolio method.

Table 11. *Portfolio Method: Advantages and Disadvantages.*

Advantages of using portfolio	Disadvantages of using portfolio
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holistic – presents the entirety of a teacher’s professional path and learning achievements in one place. Allows an assessor to see the candidate as a person with unique characteristics, needs, and strengths. Portfolios can contain evidence reflecting a wide range of skills and attributes. ▪ Portfolios can reflect development. Most other forms of assessment are more like ‘snapshots’ of particular levels of development. ▪ Allows assessment of attitudes and values as well as skills and knowledge. ▪ Serves as a cross-section lens, providing a basis for future analysis and planning. Portfolios enable identification of areas of professional strengths and weaknesses and barriers to success. ▪ Serves as a concrete vehicle for communication, providing ongoing exchanges of information among those involved. ▪ Promotes a shift in ownership; participants can take an active role in examining where they have been and where they want to go. ▪ Portfolio assessment offers the opportunity to address the shortcomings of traditional assessment. A portfolio offers an opportunity to assess the more complex and important aspects of an area or topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can be very time consuming for an assessor to organize and evaluate the contents. ▪ Having to develop your own individualized criteria can initially be difficult or unfamiliar. ▪ If the criteria and goals are not clear, the portfolio can be just a miscellaneous collection of material evidence that does not show patterns of growth or achievement. ▪ Portfolios are much harder to assess objectively. Because of the individual nature of portfolios, it is harder to decide on a set of assessment criteria which will be equally valid across a diverse set of portfolios. ▪ Like any other form of qualitative data, data from portfolio assessments can be difficult to analyze or aggregate to show change. ▪ The ownership of the evidence can sometimes be in doubt. It is usually necessary to combine the assessment of portfolios with some kind of other assessment methods to authenticate the origin of the contents of portfolios, particularly when much of the evidence is genuinely based on the results of collaborative work.

Like all assessment methods, a portfolio used alone is insufficient to give the full picture of a teachers’ prior learning.

The following sub-sections will present and discuss a selection of alternative and supplementary assessment methods.

Concept map

Concept maps are used in research and classroom practice to reveal and assess the structure and complexity of knowledge held by learners in the sciences and other disciplines (Novak & Wandersee, 1990).

A *concept map* is a two-dimensional, hierarchical node-link diagram that depicts the structure of knowledge within a scientific discipline as viewed by a student, an instructor or an expert in a field or sub-field. The map is composed of concept labels, each enclosed in a box or oval; a series of labelled linking lines, and an inclusive, general-to-specific organization.

Concept maps in an educational context are visual representations of links between a major concept and other knowledge teachers have learned. Concept maps provide a useful and visually appealing way of depicting the structure of conceptual knowledge that people have stored in long-term memory. As a result, concept maps offer a readily accessible way of assessing how well learners see the 'big picture'. A concept map is a graphical visualization of some domain of knowledge. More precisely, concept mapping is a technique to visualize relationships between different

concepts. Concepts are drawn as nodes, (i.e. boxes) and the relationships are drawn with 'arcs' (i.e. arrowed lines show the direction of the relationship) between associated concepts.

Concept mapping is a powerful tool for showing the linking between elements of knowledge. Concepts maps could perform a key role in developing strong performance assessments that ought to be designed to generate an assessment of how candidates develop their understanding and application of concepts.

Concept maps are an excellent assessment method for providing assessors with diagnostic information on prior learning. Concept maps also provide immediate visual data to assessors on teachers' misconceptions and their level of understanding. Concept maps develop teachers' abilities in certain critical areas. Among these are the abilities:

- to draw reasonable inferences from observations,
- to synthesize and integrate information and ideas,
- to learn concepts and theories in the subject area.

How to analyze the concept maps?

An assessor initially needs to examine the qualitative aspects of a candidate's concept maps, focusing on the accuracy or validity of the candidate's knowledge, which is represented. Key questions the assessor may ask are:

- Are the most important concepts depicted?
- Are the links between the concepts acceptable?
- Is there a substantial quantity of branching hierarchy and cross-linking?

Essay

One of the forms of creative work, an essay can be used to assess the prior learning and educational work experience of teachers. Use of this method might be rather complicated due to the fact that content analysis has to be applied to achieve results, which in return requires particular preparedness and precise understanding by the assessor. To write such a work, the author of the essay (the candidate) needs to possess not only broad and profound knowledge but also an ability to plan the material, analyze and develop the content of the essay, as well as the abilities to express a reasoned opinion, clearly state ideas and to draw conclusions.

An important point to remember is that, from a psychological point of view, VET teachers will not always be motivated to devote their spare time to compile paper work that does not directly reveal the actual level of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Since the candidate is an adult learner, they will endeavour to write what is expected from them not what they really think or actually do. An assessor should clearly answer the following questions before assigning the candidate to write an essay:

- What needs to be clarified with the help of the essay?
- Would an alternative assessment method accomplish the clarification more easily?
- Would the candidate (VET teacher), involved in the assessment process, understand the essay writing conditions unequivocally?
- Would the information provided in the essay be truly objective?

In the case of assessing professional knowledge and skills, an essay is more like a retrospective description of personal experience. Unlike other written expressions of opinion, the essay emphasizes the subjective opinion of a VET teacher and their ability to express and substantiate it.

- How to verify the compliance of ideas set forth in essay with the pedagogical practice of the author?

In an essay, the author gives subjective impressions and views. An essay reveals the author's subjectively emotional attitude and considerations on their occurrence. The main goal of essay is to demonstrate candidate's opinion about the topic defined by the assessor in a binding, logical and well-reasoned way. An essay enables assessment of the author's ability to organize and integrate facts and ideas, which in turn reveals independent thinking. An essay promotes freedom for expressing opinions and creativity, which demonstrate the depth of the author's thinking, knowledge and skills. An essay does not expect an extensive description of the topic but the stress is laid on one or several clearly defined aspects.

An essay in an APL context contains these characteristic elements:

- *Introduction* presents the assessor with the essay's topic and goal, (the first sentence should tell the assessor about the topic of the essay, the core hypothesis and the ensuing sentences should outline the sphere and consistency of arguments.) Length 4-5 paragraphs.
 - *The Body* reveals the topic of essay. The ideas should be logically arranged and the argument developed in a well-reasoned way. Length 4-5 paragraphs.
 - *Conclusion* is a summary of the ideas and meaning referring back to the preceding paragraphs. Length 1 paragraph.
- *Bibliographic sources* used.
- A weak Introduction removes any ensuing interest by the assessor whereas a good Introduction encourages the assessor to read further. The formulation and importance of the hypothesis crucial to the development and quality of the essay as the Introduction should point out the position and direction of the ensuing discourse. The words or phrases in the hypothesis should be defined by the topic under discussion.
- A key point about the body of the essay is the need to achieve a balance between narrative and analysis. Facts are necessary, but must be explained and related to the hypothesis. The ability to merge narrative with analysis indicates the author is able to think independently and make conclusions. If quotes are used in the text, the author needs to put the cited words in inverted commas e.g. "...." followed by the source in parentheses e.g. (Fokienė, 2006), which would refer to a bibliography entry for the *Handbook for Assessors of Prior Learning*. The quotes should be short but with meaning. Opinions should be based on substantiation and not be either subjective or preconceptions. The form of an essay requires expressing ideas clearly and briefly thereby avoiding generalizations, vagueness, uncertainty, superfi-

ciality, weak or clumsy phrases, jargon, colloquial speech and verbosity.

The concluding paragraph needs to draw a conclusion clearly answering the essay question, and to summarize the content to ensure the assessor does not have the sense of ‘something’ missing.

When choosing the Essay assessment method, planning and defining the **essay assessment criteria** is vital, as this list suggests:

1. content (specific, convincing, creative, understandable);
2. opinion (clear, consequent);
3. layout of essay (logical, coherent, suitable for goal, oriented towards conclusions);
4. layout of paragraphs (precise formulation of topic, different structure of paragraphs i.e. a new thought needs a new paragraph);
5. style (interesting, figurative);
6. lexis (lexis and tone corresponding to the topic, language – precise, lively and imaginative);
7. grammar (observation of punctuation and orthography).

There are two types of essays – **argumentative** and **free**. An argumentative essay is a substantiated and structured statement by the author (APL candidate) of their opinion. Consequently, an argumentative essay is similar to classical essay in composition with an

introduction, body and conclusion. This type of essay requires systematic and reasoned substantiation of their opinion on the chosen topic. The essence of an argumentative essay is to develop and defend personally held arguments. Therefore the author of an argumentative essay has to adopt a certain attitude, present the main argument (assertion) and defend it with good reason. Stylistically, it is not advisable to write an essay, which asserts there are either alternative or contrary arguments to the hypothesis.

Argumentative essays are most often assigned to a particular topic. The author must read the topic carefully and write the essay on the exact theme. For example, the topic could be as follows: Vocational education is most often regarded as the place where less-gifted students acquire a profession yet the largest added-value is created by the workforce and providers of services of general interest. In what way does this contradiction impact on the professional activity of vocational teachers?

The content of an argumentative essay can be characterized by:

- purposefulness (all parts are subordinated to the topic);
- coherence (thematic connection of all text units);
- flawless (observation of scope of topic);
- completeness (conclusion).

Assessment criteria for an argumentative essay:

1. The principles of writing an argumentative essay have been followed:
 - **Understanding** (of the theory of an argumentative essay). Systematically and well-grounded opinion on topic, precise formulation of thesis, thesis is substantiated, thesis is verified with characteristic facts or quotes or experience.
 - **Purposefulness.** All three parts, the Introduction, Body and Conclusion – correspond to the topic.
2. Aspect of content:
 - **Coherence.** All three parts, the Introduction, Body and Conclusion are thematically united.
 - **Impeccability.** All structural elements of assertion, verification, substantiation, substantiation with examples and conclusion have been included in the work;
 - **Completeness.** Conclusions–remarks–advice.
3. Language aspect:
 - **Lexically varying.** Usage of figurative and literal senses, different layers of lexis, professional terms and foreign words; use of language corresponds to style and task requirements.
 - **Sentence diversity.** According to their structure and goal.
 - **Syntax.** Usage of different syntactical constructions, e.g. insertions

and explanatory word groups in accordance with text style.

- **Grammar.** Follows rules of orthography and punctuation.
4. Form:
 - **Paragraphs.** Correct division of paragraphs.
 - **Principles** - The essay accords to the principles of writing culture.

A free essay usually expresses the author's personal opinion on a particular topic related with the professional education process. The structure is the same as for argumentative essay, although the free essay does not require such precise substantiation of personal opinions. A free essay indicates the profundity of the author's general pedagogical thinking and the ability to define and explain issues.

Case study, problem situations

Case or problem situation study is one of the possible methods for deciding about the VET teacher's professional competence. This method enables the evaluation of teachers' skills in applying professional theoretical knowledge in specific pedagogical situations. In a problem solving situation a VET teacher should entertain the following thoughts:

- exploration of the problem situation;
- problem study and setting goals;
- forming a hypothesis and choosing how to reach the goal;
- verification of the hypothesis.
- comparison;
- analysis;
- synthesis;
- abstraction
- generalization.

Analysis of case studies and situations, which enable clarification of causes, problem solving and decision making, depends on the VET teacher's ability to manipulate the information they know and have access to. Likewise, there are several methods for conducting case studies, which depend on the strong points of the teacher's thinking and actions:

1. The demonstrative case study is connected with specific problem situations and practical solutions. The basis for problem solving is the method of learning by mistakes and experiments.
2. The figurative case study when the problem is solved by using specific memory images and concepts formed by previous experiences and knowledge.
3. The verbal problem situation study when the teacher acts on opinions, conceptions, conclusions, and records opinions using specific symbols and precise definitions.

When analyzing cases or problem situations the teacher uses the following *cogitation procedures*:

Thus the teacher develops an opportunity for assessing their abilities by noticing different coherences, which is the basis for pedagogical problem situations or cases, as well as the skill to define and module problem solution technologies with cogitation procedures.

Modules of cases or problem situations

In order to assess the different substantial elements of the vocational pedagogues' professional competence and to determine their readiness to solve different problems in both the study and education processes purposefully, it is possible to offer to solve the following case modules:

- extreme or deviant cases;
- critical cases;
- paradigmatic cases.

The extreme or deviant cases include situations which demonstrate dramatic processes that seriously influence the character and future personality development processes of the individuals involved. This case study can be

successfully used in determining an understanding of the educational pedagogical situation.

Example 1:

A learner receives an unsatisfactory mark in a computer science class. The learner asks the teacher to postpone the documentation of the negative mark in the school report due adverse parental reaction. The teacher explains that the basic principle of pedagogical actions is that all learners are treated equally, which principle the teacher will not contravene. All learners without exception receive the mark they deserve. Therefore, the outcome of this conversation between the teacher and the learner is negative for the learner. The future actions of this learner in the vocation school will change as a result. The learner will become more indifferent towards peer group members, more aggressive towards the teachers and will often provoke the computer science teacher to open and public conflicts.

The critical cases reveal situations, in which the pedagogical process is deformed due to objective or subjective factor. Thus reaching pedagogical goals becomes troublesome. Such situation solutions allow the assessment of the teacher's ability to module the possible versions for solving the crises situation.

Example 2:

The development of the material technical base for the auto engineering facility in a vocational education institution is unsatisfactory. The acquisition of practical skills takes place in study laboratories where the learners have no other choice but to work with outdated technology that is no longer used in the practices of modern companies. The learners' field practice takes place in auto-repair garages that use modern diagnostic and repair technology equipment. Seeing that the learners are unprepared and unused to modern machinery, the practice instructors assign them to inessential auto repair operations that do not ensure the further development of their professional skills.

Paradigmatic situations reveal the necessity to change the education and study work principles and approaches in vocational education institutions. These situations include cases where changes are required for the pupils to become competitive in the global work market and where the current pedagogical environment is not of a sufficiently high qualitative level. These case studies provide the opportunity to evaluate the teacher's vocational policy approach awareness as well as their readiness to accept the necessity for change and to get involved in the change implementation processes actively.

Example 3:

The accreditation process of a vocational education institution reveals that the study process oriented towards the subject is the dominant study approach, which enables the students to acquire satisfactory theoretical knowledge and professional skills. However, the students also lack the necessary social skills and personality traits for successfully performing professional tasks in workplace organizations.

The inter-relation of the learners and the communication between learners and VET teachers demonstrates a receding level of collaboration ethics. In order to eliminate the current deficits, the accreditation report includes an appeal to the school's teachers and staff to consider possibilities for changing the institution's work strategy.

The case or problem situation study can be used as a method for ascertaining whether the VET teacher is capable of seeing the problem in a specific study or education process course. In order to achieve a more positive result or to promote the set pedagogical goal achievement, the assessor can assign the teacher a task to perform the pedagogical observations themselves. Thus the teacher provides the following for the assessment:

- a self composed case or problem case description;
- the problem or case study.

Each assessor forms their own conceptions about the ideals and development perspectives of the education process both by retrospectively assessing their own pedagogical experience as well as considering their personal pedagogical conviction. Consequently the usage of problem study methods in the assessment of the teacher's knowledge and skills is a challenging task for an assessor. In order to reduce subjectivism in forming the evaluation conclusion, the situation study assessment should be performed by several assessors.

When proposing a VET teacher should study a case or to solve a problem situation, the assessors must try to provide a case or a situation which is a real part of an observed pedagogical practice. This provides an opportunity to compare the interpretation provided by the teacher with the actual case or situation resolution and the achieved results.

Simulation

Simulation - an imitation of a typical job task or situation to assess how well a VET teacher might implement a comparable task or perform in an actual pedagogical situation. Candidates are asked to pretend that they are engaged in some

realistic task. This method offers the opportunity to assess responses in a life-like situation. Qualities such as decision making, leadership, analytical thinking, planning skills and others may be observed.

Structure:

1. Instructions must be clear so that the candidate knows what is expected.
2. As designer of the exercise, the assessor must have thorough knowledge of the situation being simulated.
3. Tasks included in the exercise should not require knowledge that the candidate is not ordinarily expected to have.

Interview

The **Interview** as a data obtaining method is traditionally used not only in a diversity of social sciences, psychology and marketing research but is also an integral part of recruitment and assessment procedures.

Semantics for the word ‘interview’ include the explanation of this concept, ‘inter’ (between) and ‘view’ (point of view). Therefore, in the wider sense an *interview* is an interaction between at least two people’s points of view.

More specifically the interaction consists of a specific type of dialogue,

of questions and answers, with the sole purpose of eliciting information.

Assessment interviews allow the assessor to become acquainted with the APL candidate through direct communication thus supplementing formalized assessment procedures. While carrying out interviews, the assessor (henceforth the interviewer) needs to consider what their main objectives are:

- To obtain information about a VET teacher’s activity, knowledge and skills in a direct dialogue.
- To specify documented information presented for assessment.
- To clarify uncertain responses to questions.
- To discuss disputable or controversial information.
- To motivate teachers to further their education.
- To obtain information about teacher’s activity, knowledge and skills in a personal contact (face-to-face) situation.

The motivational function and the specific characteristics, of questions and answers, of a dialogue outline the special position the interview holds among assessment methods. Successfully planned and carried out, an interview can replace or supplement information on teacher’s professional activity obtained in a formalized (written) way.

The structure of the interview

While developing the interview plan you have to acknowledge what the main aspects of teaching activity and knowledge are which need to be clarified.

The over-riding characteristics of a **structured interview** are the use of *closed questions* and a highly standardized procedure. A structured interview requires the interviewer to follow, without deviation, both the format and sequence of the questions and to record the answers in a particular format. For a structured interview to be effective, the interviewer must complete all the questions; a part-completed interview is not valid.

The advantages of the structured interview are: the effortless acquisition and multiplication of data; ease of recording and comparing the data, which corresponds with the criteria for statistical credibility. Indeed the development of databases for statistical analysis is a primary function of structured interviews in social and medical sciences.

The main disadvantage is that the interview becomes a formal and bureaucratic procedure, which does not promote the candidate teacher (henceforth the interviewee) to voice their point of view or an exchange of opinions.

A **partly-structured** interview retains the basis of the standardized questions but allows variety in their formulations. This version allows the interviewer to ask extra questions in order to clarify and if necessary to discuss uncertain responses. The main advantage of this interview is the informal aspect of a formal procedure, which transforms the hierarchy of the interviewer and interviewee into a dialogue between equals. The key disadvantages of the partly-structured in comparison with the structured interview are the greater amount of time needed to complete and analyse the interview and the greater risk of the interviewer's subjective interpretation of responses.

In order to conduct a partly-structured interview, the interviewer needs to have a high level of competence in communicative skills, flexibility and psychological knowledge.

Interview questions

The core of an interview usually consists of 8-10 questions, which allow finding out the main aspects of a candidate's professional competence. The basic questions can be supplemented with extra questions and situation descriptions.

An interview should include an open question, which give the interviewee the

Table 12. Interview example.

Interview questions you might ask:	You will be looking for:
Please summarize your background and experience relevant to your position.	... the teacher's ability to follow instruction to summarize relevant background and experience.
Name several challenges you see with today's youth that you think would influence your classroom. How would you deal with them?	... a sense of the teacher's philosophy of education
What changes do you anticipate in your occupational field over the next five years? How might these changes affect your instruction? What methods do you use to stay up-to-date in your field?	... a glimpse of the teacher's vision for the future.
Describe a time you worked as part of team. What was your greatest accomplishment with that team?	... the teacher's experience working as part of team.
<p>There are many new initiatives in education today, from career exploration to incorporating academic skills into your occupational instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Describe how you might incorporate information about careers in your field into your instruction. ▪ Give an example of the communication skills needed in your field and how you might teach or reinforce these skills in your instruction. 	<p>... the teacher's knowledge of all aspects of their field</p> <p>... and their knowledge of the academic skills needed by those working in their occupation.</p>
Case Study. Here is a hypothetical situation similar to one we've had in the past. What action steps would you take if it happened in your classroom? (Provide a short written case study and describe the incident to the teacher)	... the teacher's ability to solve problems; to define the problem; to determine what facts need to be collected, and to reach a logical solution.
We encourage staff to take professional development courses. If you could take any courses, what would you choose and why?	... an indication of the teacher's perceived weaknesses.
What strengths do you feel you bring to this job?	... an indication of the teacher's perceived strengths.

opportunity to speak freely thus giving a more significant amount of information.

The questions have to be directed towards determining the VET teacher's competencies.

The answers given by the interviewee are registered on an inquiry form opposite each particular question or on a separate evaluation sheet. Questions listed in the example (see Table 12) provide the interviewer with the possibility to analyze both individual answers and the overall discourse of interview. This holistic analysis enables the interviewer to reach conclusions about the interviewee:

- strengths and weaknesses of their experience in an occupational field;
- strengths and weaknesses of their experience in education;
- strengths of their interpersonal skills.

The procedure of the interview and the competencies of the interviewer

An essential point to remember is that the evaluation diagnostic functions are not the only functions of the interview. A successful interview serves as a means to raise professional self-confidence and motivates the desire for personal development.

In order for the interview to be effective it must be carefully prepared:

4. Consider the basic tasks of the interview and its position in the overall assessment structure.
5. Choose an appropriate type of interview (structured or partially-structured) and an appropriate format of questions.
6. Consider the strategy of the interview.
7. Prepare the forms for recording the responses.

If the interview is scheduled to take place in the initial period of the assessment process it has an approximate consultative tendency. The interviewer introduces the course and aims of the assessment procedure, and explains that there are neither correct nor incorrect answers and that if the interviewee feels a question is unclear they may ask for a repeat in a different format. One of the functions of the interviewer at this stage is to reduce the interviewee's pedagogical resistance and to form a positive attitude towards the assessment process as a whole. The interviewer must be ready to answer the interviewee's concern, as to how they will benefit from the process.

If the interview is included in the middle of the assessment process then the main functions are:

1. to supplement and define the results acquired by other assessment methods;
2. to acquire important information not included in the assessment materials;
3. to conceptualize the teacher's personality, their communicative skills and attitude;
4. to provide feedback about the previous stage;
5. to provide support to the interviewee.

If the interview occurs at the end of the assessment process the main functions are:

1. to assess the work results;
2. to determine, and agree upon, development possibilities.

The conditions of the interview process influence the interviewee's behaviour: a formal environment stimulates caution, increases control and heightens psychological defence mechanisms.

The optimum duration of an interview is 20 to 40 minutes. If the plan indicates the interview will exceed one hour, split the process into two sections.

The environment of the location and the time of the interview are also of great importance. An informal environment encourages a 'dialogue between equals' and reduces the interviewee's impression of participating in a personal audit. Mid-morning, mid-day and mid-afternoon

are beneficial times for holding assessment interviews. The interviewee has time to prepare for the experience and is mentally alert. Late afternoon and any time during the evening are unsuitable as mental alertness declines throughout the day.

The interview is opened with the more simple questions. In order for the conclusion of the interview to be optimistic and positive, sensitive questions (for example, about the hardships and failures) should be included in the middle period.

Suggestions for the interviewer:

- When interviewing teachers these basic principle are useful to follow:
 1. Display positive and unconditional interest and attention;
 2. Display an attitude of empathy.
- Show a true interest in the person and their account during the interview. Be open to having dialogues.
- In exercising the roles of 'assessor' and 'counsellor' try to maintain an informal relationship.
- Formulate the questions precisely.
- To not stray beyond the parameters of the interview.
- Comment on actions not the interviewee's personality.

- Do not interrupt the interviewee while they are answering.
- Conclude the interview on a positive note.
- After the conclusion of the interview, allow the interviewee to voice any comments or remarks.
- Do not forget the meanings of silences and body language. Posture and hand gestures can be signals of increasing or decreasing tension. Both silences and body language may cause a change in the interview strategy; but interviewer's need to bear in mind that unequivocal body language interpretation can be erroneous.
- *Comparison* to others. Interviewers have an unconscious tendency to compare the interviewees with their peer group, thus forming a mental rating index. This tendency in APL is unproductive.
- *Analogies*. The tendency to equally assess skills that seem logically connected. Example: Logically, an interviewee who understands humanistic pedagogy would also implement the philosophy in interrelations with their learners. Realistically the correlation between understanding and implementing a philosophy is questionable.

Typical mistakes of interviewers

The most common mistakes are due to:

a) incomplete interviewing skills; and b) the subjective factors of perception:

- *No consequential response recording methods*.
- *Inaccurately formed questions*.
- The *halo* effect. If interviewees are successful or unsuccessful in a particular aspect, assessors have a tendency to overestimate or underestimate the interviewee's competence in another sphere. Example: If a teacher is successful and competent in the subject they teach, the assessor may attribute this competence to the pedagogical sphere thus overestimating the person's pedagogical skills.
- The *soul mate* effect. A tendency to value more highly interviewees with whom we have a better contact and who we like.
- The *"last word"* effect. A tendency to take into account and to remember the information connected with the most recent results and not linking it to previous experiences.
- The *causative attribution* mistake. The tendency to overestimate personality factors and to underestimate situational factors.
- The *previous information* effect. Information acquired about an interviewee in an informal way (e.g. from colleagues, acquaintances and the interviewee's peer-group) is likely to influence the interviewer's perception and evaluation during the interview.

Learning tasks

1. *The interview method has both strong and weak points. Please describe them in a table format using the form below;*

Learning Tasks Table 2

Strong points	Weak points

2. *Think about three different conversations you have had about work, perhaps with a parent, a colleague and an administrator. What influence did the location have on the course of the conversation, in each instance? How might a different location have influenced the conversation?*

Observation

The goal of **observation** is to supplement the possessed information about the learning achievements of the VET teacher (henceforth the candidate) by using the data obtained during observation. If handled sensitively, the time invested in the process of observing teaching and being observed can help improve the teaching experience, share best practice and foster innovation. These benefits apply both to new and experienced teachers.

During the performance of practical activity, the object of observation can be behaviour, the candidate's character features related to the activity, task solutions and activity products. These

objects of observation are indicators, which allow making the decision about the candidate's acquired learning achievements. According to G.A. Straka (2005), interpretation of observation data refer to "how to draw conclusions about the competencies the candidate possesses from what has been noticed".

Defining the process of observation, Fullerton (1999) suggests using a three phase model, consisting of Pre-observation meeting, Observed session and Feedback / Debriefing meeting.

The Pre-observation meeting is an opportunity for the candidate to give background information on the lesson to be observed. This will include the lesson's position in the curriculum,

level of knowledge, expected learning outcomes and the overall lesson plan; and the previous knowledge the students need to have acquired. Ideally this background information should be in the form of a written statement. This is an opportunity for the assessor (henceforth the observer) to select areas to focus on, for example, presentation skills or the use of audio-visual materials, or the use of questions to prompt the students.

The candidate and the observer can discuss how notes are to be taken by the

observer. Proforma of what elements to look out for are useful as an *aide-memoir*.

The Pre-Observation meeting has a crucial role in the success of Feedback/Debriefing Meeting. The candidate should have been primed by their counsellor to reflect on how the feedback will influence them. During the Pre-Observation Meeting the candidate should outline to the observer what type of feedback would be beneficial.

Table 13. Practical example on observation of teaching: Pro-forma for observation of teaching, based on the criteria, decided by assessor and candidate.

Date of observation:	
Lesson observed:	
Structuring the lesson	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-
Use of teaching means / quality of handouts	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-
Applying of teaching / learning methods	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-
Inclusion of learners / making the teaching-learning process active	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-

Date of observation:	
Lesson observed:	
Non verbal communication / body language	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-
Use of voice	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-
Feedback from learners	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-
Use of examples	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-
Time management	
Was perfectly done:	Recommended to be improved:
-	-

The main criterion for a proforma is that it should be general enough to be useful in any discipline and for any level of teaching experience.

The Observed Session should start with a brief introduction of the observer to the students, making it clear that the observer's sole task is to assess the teacher's activity. The observer should try to get a broad overview of the teaching session, avoiding focusing on details such as use of audio-visual aids and by doing so to miss the essence of the learning and teaching that may or may not be occurring. It should be noted that as a result of the observer's presence either

the students will misbehave or be too well behaved or that the teacher being observed will give a better or worse than usual performance.

Feedback / De-briefing meeting. After the observed session, time for discussing the candidate's practical skills assessment is allocated. Broadly, the observer presents the observation analysis and the candidate reflects and analyses their mistakes and shortcomings. The feedback meeting consist of two parts – giving and receiving feedback. **Giving feedback** is a skill. A crucially important aspect of feedback is to avoid sounding patronising. The observer should start

the feedback by asking the candidate to reflect on how they thought the lesson went. This should start the feedback on a positive point; ending the session on a positive note is the sole responsibility of the observer. Observers should be fully aware that **receiving feedback** is never easy.

An important note concerning the observer's conclusions is that they should be based on objective analysis of the data about the candidate's behaviour and learning achievements. The observer must avoid using any biased opinions. One of the essential aspects of observation is assurance of positive interaction between the observer and candidate in the context of gaining the latter's trust. Observation allows formulating only certain conclusions about the candidate's learning achievements and is only a part of the whole assessment process. Observation, in the context of assessing learning achievements has disadvantageous aspects. Decisions made on the basis of observation can't be influenced by the observer's mood, level of education (higher or lower), interests, social status and other aspects. R.Laužackas et al, indicate possible shortcomings of observation as:

- Observers use their experience and achievements as a measure to compare the candidate's behaviour or activity against.
- The tendency of a desirably positive result is possible when either or both

the observer's and the candidate's expectations are met without reserve.

- Preconceived opinions may be expressed with wholly negative results. This occurs when the observer, as a result of having preconceived opinions concerning the candidate, is either too positive or too negative in their assessment and consequently in their decision. Either way, the impact on the candidate is inherently negative.
- Complexity of the situation – the candidate can be presented with a situation either too difficult or too complicated, so that 'skills transfer' does not happen.
- When the purpose and the criteria of assessment are not clear to the observer. The acts of observing and analysing a practical session from the multitude of relevant points if the observer is unclear about the criteria or the points of the assessment. In this instance, decisions become increasingly subjective.

Due to lack of observation experience, the observer may make communication errors concerning advice, comments, and criticism of the candidate during the observation session (Laužackas et al, 2005).

Straka indicates slightly different mistakes of observation:

1. *Position effect* – when the observer formulates their conclusions about the candidate's competencies on the basis of the first and last impression.

2. *Sequence effect* – when the candidate's activity is evaluated in comparison with the activity of the previously observed candidate rather than on the basis of the set requirements.
3. *Leniency/strictness effect* – when a particular significance is attached to the identified desirable competencies or actions whereas undesirable competencies or gaps are avoided or *vice versa* (Straka, 2005).

Learning tasks:

1. *Choose the more appropriate assessment methods for teacher knowledge and skills;*

Knowledge and skills	Assessment methods
1. To understand the rationales for selecting particular materials, methods, and techniques for achieving particular educational objectives.	
2. To help students become increasingly self-directing in their learning.	
3. The teacher creates learning experiences in his/her discipline that demonstrates knowledge of student learning styles, diversity, and cognitive development.	
4. The teacher develops valid evaluation tools to measure student outcomes.	
5. The teacher researches current educational issues and applies them in the classroom.	
6. The teacher seeks opportunities to grow professionally.	

2. *After having become acquainted with the variety of assessment methods, please model the situation of assessment of your own prior learning, choosing a set of assessment methods, and then giving their description. Review the kind of preparation the candidate should do, and also the preparation by the observer. The Table below will help you to structure your ideas.*

Method	Characteristics	Preparation of Candidate	Preparation of Evaluator

CASES (EXAMPLES OF APL PRACTICE): WHAT CAN BE LEARNT?

Aino Lepänjuuri, Marin Gross, Rita Virtanen, Tuija Rautio, Kaija Hannula

APL CASE RITVA

JAMK University of Applied
Sciences / Teacher Education
College

This case study concerns a VET teacher student who is now a part-time teacher working at the Savo Consortium of Education while studying in the Kuopio area to become a full-time teacher.

Getting acquainted with the APL process (student and counsellor)

The APL process was briefly introduced at an orientation seminar for Teachers' Education.

Identification of Prior Learning (student)

The student decided to apply for recognition of prior learning for the course Teacher as a Developer (6 cr). She had an initial conversation about a personal learning plan with her assessor when she discussed the issue of recognition.

- Application and self-evaluation forms, and a rationalisation of how the documentary evidence that the candidate student provided would demonstrate the capabilities and development of the student according to the objectives of the course. The rationalisation was written in relation to the assessor's area of expertise.
- The documentary evidence was Bachelor's thesis written at Savonia Polytechnic in the Master's Degree Programme of Business and Entrepreneurship. The thesis was prepared five years ago and was a development project for Finland's Post office. The subject of the thesis was a change of organization connected with the satisfaction of employees.

Assessment and accreditation of prior learning (assessor)

The assessor acquainted herself with the material provided by the student. The connections to teacher's work, development of the educational institute, vocational education or development of own field or development challenges were not found in the evidence material. The decision was to fail the application.

APL CASE MAIJA

JAMK University of Applied Sciences / Teacher Education College/ Study Counsellor Education

Process

This case study concerns a VET teacher student, Maija, who is now working as a teacher and tutor in a University of Applied Sciences in Finland. She is studying to be a counsellor in education at Jyväskylä.

Getting acquainted with the APL process (student and counsellor)

In the first seminar, the trainee counsellors were familiarized with counsellor education studies, the curriculum and the handbook at JAMK /TEC. One brief section of the seminar concerned getting acquainted with the APL process. The APL process needs time, reflection and discussion but it is important to inform the student about APL and if possible at the beginning of their studies. After that the student is responsible for deepening their understanding about their competencies according to the ones which are described in the handbook.

Identification and self-assessment (student)

Maija had read through the handbook and the competencies described in the handbook. She conducted a self-assessment and reflected on her knowledge and skills. Based on her written self-assessment material she filled in an application form and attached the required material to her portfolio.

Her portfolio included the following information:

- application form;
- self-assessment and reflective description of her competencies based on the learning outcomes and content this study unit expects to achieve;
- personal study plan used in their university of applied sciences, created by a development team;
- descriptions about Maija's responsibilities as a teacher tutor;
- institutes counselling system and plan: what, when, who is responsible for what;
- versatile information how the institute supports students during their study path;
- Maija's duties as a member in different kinds of counselling development groups now and in previous work places;
- guidebook for adult students and learners;
- brochures of their programmes.

Assessment and accreditation of prior learning (assessor)

In the counsellor education team there are three teachers. Everyone is responsible for one third of the students. It was the counsellor's responsibility to become familiar with Maija's application, materials and self-assessment; as well as assessing Maija's knowledge and skills according to the handbook. In the counsellors education team meeting Maija's counsellor presented the case of Maija.

Finally the counsellor education team made the decision: to partly recognize Maija's prior learning. Maija has achieved mostly the competencies in the study unit developing counselling, but the competencies concerning the welfare service system and plan are not reported at all. Maija has to achieve that competence during her studies.

APL CASE KRISTEL

Tallinn University, Department of Adult Education, Adult Education (BA)

Kristel began her undergraduate studies in educational sciences nearly ten years ago. The nominal study time was four years and second year students had to

choose a specialization in adult education, early childhood education, special needs education or teacher education. Kristel decided to specialize in adult education. Her studies went well and she had excellent grades. In the fourth year of her studies she became pregnant and took a year off from her studies. After the child was born, Kristel did not immediately return to her studies. She got a job, unrelated to adult education, and also had two more children. So, there was a big gap in her studies.

Eight years after Kristel had left to have her first child, she had decided to return to university and finish her studies. According to her curriculum, all she had to do was write her final thesis. However, during those eight years many changes had occurred in tertiary and higher education. Chief amongst them was the move to the pan-European 3+2 system, which had caused all the curricula to change. The four year curriculum, which Kristel had participated in, no longer existed, although there was a similar 3+2 curriculum in adult education. The old 4+2 and the new 3+2 curricula are very different and the subjects Kristel had previously taken were no longer included. Kristel was facing a major problem as it became clear that writing her final thesis would be insufficient to graduate. All her 'old' credit points needed to be transferred to new 3+2 curriculum, but not everything matched. Her prior studies were recognized as much as possible.

But there were many subjects in the new curriculum that were not in her prior curriculum and those subjects which did match the old course content was no longer relevant. The problem in Kristel's case, faced by the head of curriculum, was to decide which elements of Kristel's 'old' curriculum to recognize and which to discard. The biggest problem was that the majority of the course content, which Kristel had studied, was no longer up to date or relevant to current adult education theory and practice. Kristel was asked if she had any work experience or other experiential learning in adult education that could be recognized as part of her studies. While Kristel had been caring for her growing family, she had worked temporarily in various jobs. Unfortunately, none of those jobs were related to adult education, nor had she studied in any non-formal education.

The university valued highly Kristel's interest in completing her studies. Since some her prior studies could not be recognized, Kristel not only had to write her final thesis but also to complete a few more courses. Ultimately, Kristel needed one more year of studies. But she was able to complete her degree and is now working in the field of adult education as a training manager.

What could have been done differently?

Kristel is a prime example of students whose studies are interrupted for many

years but show great willingness to finish their studies. Kristel's story is also an excellent example of the complications that occur during system changes in the tertiary and higher education sectors and the influences they have on people's lives.

When Kristel returned to university she was unaware of the changes in the higher education system, thus she needed more information about the new curriculum in order to understand the changes. Most of the subjects she had taken before were no longer relevant to either adult education theory or practice in a rapidly changing discipline. Because Kristel had, during her absence from studying, become a 'stranger' to the discipline of adult education, she needed to understand that some of her prior learning was no longer relevant. The difficult decision faced by the head of curriculum, and Kristel's difficulty in understanding the changes could have been avoided had Kristel had gained any work experience or any kind of non-formal learning in the adult education field. Experiential learning would have played an influential role in easing Kristel's graduation.

Study regulations do not specify the time necessary for studies content to remain accurate. But as many disciplines experience rapid changes, studies undertaken five to ten years ago might no longer be relevant. This argument is

as relevant for conceptual/theory based studies as for skills based studies. An assessor, alone, must decide if learning outcomes needed to today can be met by past studies.

APL CASE JAANA

Tallinn University, Department of Adult Education, Adult Education (MA)

Jaana had studied in Canada at Alberta University on a six day intensive summer course “Thinking Qualitatively”. The course focused on different qualitative methods in social sciences and was led by leading researchers in the discipline. Jaana had done research as part of her previous studies and also as part of her work so she was, therefore, familiar with different qualitative methods.

In her current studies the curricula includes a course on qualitative methods (5 ECTS) and Jaana wanted to have her prior studies recognized as part of curriculum. She closely examined the learning outcomes of the qualitative methods and was sure she had all the necessary outcomes. She read the study regulations, which state the possibility to have prior studies recognized, and for advice she had a meeting with the study coordinator. Prior to the meeting,

in order to have her prior studies recognized, Jaana needed to fill in an application form and hand it to the study coordinator. As a proof of her prior studies, Jaana attached to the application, her diploma from Alberta University, which indicated her participation on the course.

Her application was initially and formally assessed by the study coordinator to see if all the formal requirements were met. Unfortunately Jaana’s diploma from Alberta University did not state how many hours she had studied or how many credit points she had got. Thus the application form was returned to her to be revised. Jaana requested Alberta University to send her a formal statement indicating how many study hours the course had included the workshops, in which she had participated. After Jaana had received the additional material her application was approved.

What could have been done differently?

In Jaana’s case, the assessment decision was based only on formal requirements, i.e. matching the credit points of two courses in different educational systems. The assessment did not focus on the most important aspect of the courses which are the learning outcomes. In Jaana’s case, although she had work experience of qualitative methods in addition to attending the intensive course, neither the application form nor the assessment process focused on learning.

Assessment of prior experiential learning in higher education needs to take place in the context of the relevant curriculum. There is a risk of over assessment occurring in those HEIs, which are adopting

APL, as there is a fear that learners might not meet the curricular demands as is the case with formal learners. Therefore HEIs need to focus on learners' learning and trusting the learner.

ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1: GLOSSARY

Accreditation

Education Institution level: The act, by an authoritative institution, of granting recognition for meeting and maintaining suitable standards.

Personal level: The act, by an education institution, of granting credit or recognition for achievements of prior learning.

Achievements of prior learning

Any learning in formal, non-formal and informal situations, which occurred before the assessment process and are documented in a variety of formats – certificates, certificates of attendance, work logs and diaries, even blogs may be counted as an achievement.

Assessment

Systematic process of gathering and analysing evidence of learning achievements used to determine the appropriateness of the evidence to the planned learning outcomes of the study programme. In APL, the goal is to decide whether the prior learning should be recognized for credit.

Assessor

Usually expert in the subject area using a systematic process to assess skills and knowledge against predefined learning outcomes.

Competence

The proven and demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in a habitual and/or changing work situation is referred to as competence, as is the ability to display an

appropriate attitude mindful of professional ethics. Competence includes: 1) cognitive competence; 2) functional competence; 3) personal competence; and 4) ethical competence.

See also <http://www.cedefop.gr>: “EU Knowledge system for lifelong learning”

Competency

The ability of a person to perform a certain part of an activity on the basis of acquired knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. The combination of certain competencies composes a professional standard.

Conative (conation)

A term, which is synonymous with motivation, will, drive and is associated with psychology. Conative research did not exist before Kathy Kolbe’s ground-breaking research in the 1970s and her compilation of the index of conative abilities known as the Kolbe Indexes. For further information on Conative research see <http://www.conativeabilities.org/07a/conation/researchArticles.cfm>, <http://www.kolbe.com/>

Concept maps

Concept mapping was developed in the 1970s, initially as a means of representing the science knowledge of students. Since then use of concept mapping has expanded to include other subjects; to increase meaningful learning and to represent the experts’ knowledge.

Concept maps have their origin in the learning movement of constructivism.

Constructive criticism

Critique is a written work that is critical of ‘something’ done by ‘someone else’. A critique should be balanced, containing both positive and negative evaluations.

Constructive criticism was specifically developed with academicians in mind with the aim that the criticism, positive and negative, would lead to improvement. The key aspects of constructive criticism are (i) objectivity; (ii) both positive and negative criticisms have positive values.

Curriculum

Curriculum is a system of integral parts such as study outcomes, criteria of assessment of student achievements, study content, study forms and methods, study environment, requirements for teachers and students, etc. The adjustment of any of the integral parts influences a change in the others.

Demonstrating

Creating a portfolio or evidence file, participating in an interview, taking an oral or written test, providing samples of work, demonstrating a particular skill, completing an assignment.

Destructive criticism

Destructive criticism has largely developed as a concept for two reasons: (i) the difficulty in explaining and understanding that a negative criticism can have a positive value; (ii) increasing use of subjectivity (i.e. personal opinions) in constructive criticism. The key aspect of destructive criticism is the complete absence of positive values.

Evaluation

Making a value judgment according to assessment results, and agreed criteria.

Evidence

Data demonstrating that the knowledge and skills of an individual who is aiming to have their prior learning achievements recognised. The main forms of this evidence in the APL context consist of written or printed (paper documents), audio-visual (videos) and aural (voice recordings) materials.

Formal education

Formal Education is regulated and controlled by the state, has its aims, structure and resources. Graduates of formal education receive the State recognized diploma or certification.

Identification of prior learning

The identification of prior learning can be considered both from the student's and educational institute's point of view. The student aims to understand their previously acquired learning and analyses it in relation to learning outcomes so that they are able to describe and demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills.

Informal learning

Natural, daily learning. Not necessarily previously studied, less organized, less structured. This form of learning is usually unintentional from the learner's perspective, as this knowledge was acquired through life experience, family, informal social interactions, and other circumstances.

Knowledge society

A society that creates, shares and uses knowledge for the prosperity and well-being of its citizens. Available at: <http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/Media-Centre/Glossary-of-Key-Terms>

Learning achievements

Learning achievements are knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, which can be acquired by a person (irrespective of learning context).

Learning outcome

Statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after a completion of a learning process.

Learning situation

The phrase is a broad definition for the three key learning environments: formal learning, non-formal learning and informal learning.

Learning society

A society which considers learning to be important or valuable, where people are encouraged to continue to learn throughout their lives, and where the opportunity to participate in education and training is available to all. Available at: http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues

Lifelong learning

All learning throughout life that aims to improve personal, social, citizenship-, and work-related skills and knowledge is 'Lifelong learning'.

Non-formal learning

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element. Any organised educational activity outside the established formal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It normally does not lead to certification. (adapted according to: <http://www.cedefop.gr> "EU Knowledge system for lifelong learning")

Portfolio

Portfolio a systematically structured collection of evidence of learning achievements based on self analysis, acquired inside or outside the formal training or in the work environment. It reflects the needs of professional development of a person.

Practicum experience

Practicum Experience is synonymous to 'work' experience but refers particularly to students putting their theoretical knowledge into practice.

Qualification

Qualification is a composition of competencies enabling a person to act effectively in a certain profession. Qualification means fulfilled requirements of an occupational standard. Qualification is awarded by state authorized institutions.

Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of learning achievements is the final step in the APL.

Validation of learning achievements

Confirmation by a competent body of experts that learning achievements acquired by an individual have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the agreed standard leads to ‘validation of learning achievements’.

Validation of prior learning

The process, which involves the assessment and recognition of learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning, will lead to ‘validation’ of prior learning. Validation usually refers to the process of recognising a wider range of knowledge and skills than is normally the case within formal certification, (adapted from the same source as Non-formal learning).

Valuation of prior learning

The process, which promotes participation in and achievements of (formal, non-formal or informal) learning, in order to raise awareness of its intrinsic worth and to reward learning is known as the ‘valuation of prior learning’, (adapted from cedefop. gr) This process is the organising principle for designing these strategies. Valuation in this sense implies development of individuals, organisations and society, with and without formal validation in working and learning systems (VPL-network 2004).

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