

Methodology for assessment

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1- Who are these “young people with no qualifications”?

The public we are concerned about in this project is made up of young people who leave school with no qualifications and who apply variously to welfare structures, career centres or training centres. The names and forms of these structures vary from one European country to another and we are not going to list them here.

The young people we met while experimenting our project came from different contexts:

- some were applying to employment integration organisations,
- some were on a training course in a recognised training centre,
- others were following courses within the national school system,
- some were registered with job centres,
- others still were on the streets and in no social structure.

These young people had school, money and social problems. They often had a negative image of themselves and found it very difficult to describe their competences. This is why it is particularly important to help these young people to put their knowledge into words and explain how they go about accomplishing a task or doing an exercise.

It is thus easy to understand the importance of the individual assessment procedures based on techniques that teach them how to explain. These procedures help the young people to gain

awareness of their acquired knowledge, their progress and the procedures they use to accomplish a task. **This work on how to explain is an important way to strengthen feelings of competence in these young people and their motivation to learn and to act.**

2- Validating knowledge acquired through experience

Recognising and validating knowledge is in fact close to an assessment process. We therefore took our inspiration from methodologies related to this field.

*Validating knowledge acquired through experience (VKE)*¹ “is a measure enabling every person, of whatever age, educational level or status, to have the knowledge s/he has acquired through professional experience validated to obtain, totally or partially, a diploma, title or certificate of vocational qualification registered in the National Vocational Qualifications Repertory (the French R.N.C.P.). In most cases, the candidate must complete a file detailing his professional experience and the competences acquired. He then goes before a commission who decides to validate all or part of the targeted diploma. If the validation is only partial, the candidate is given recommendations for obtaining the diploma in full.”²

Any request for recognition and validation of professional and personal competences is part of that individual’s personal project. Various techniques or procedures can be used to identify a person’s acquired knowledge and competences. The use of our reference list of competences requires a combination of 2 methods:

a) Observing behaviour and achievements in real situations or role-play.

If the young person is in training or on work experience, observing him or her can be done directly in real social and professional situations. The assessment is ideally conducted in consultation with all the adults accompanying the candidate: teacher, in-company tutor, supervisor, social worker, psychologist, etc.

But our reference tool also offers the possibility of placing the candidate in a role-play situation: role-play and exercises make it possible for the appraiser to assess the young person’s competences.

In all cases, the assessment criteria cited in the reference list charts must be presented to the young person in a comprehensible language. It is essential for the person to know what s/he is being assessed on.

¹ In France, VKE (or VAE) is an individual right, instituted by the law on social modernisation of 17 January 2002, so that every person in active or civic life can ask for his knowledge to be recognised to validate a diploma without taking part in the training needed to obtain it. VAE is part of the labour laws. It is recognised as the 4th method of qualification, on a par with mainstream education, further education and block release training.

² [<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid1106/fonctionnement-de-la-v.a.e.html>]

The young person must therefore feel included in the assessment process, as part of a clear educational contract that defines:

- the **objectives of the assessment**: e.g. assess the young person's competences with a view to recognising and validating them; measure any gaps between his present level and his plans for training, etc.;
- the **teacher's roles**: the teacher helps the young person to understand the results of the assessment, he helps him to explain how he found the answer to an exercise or the difficulties he encountered while accomplishing a task;
- and the **roles of the young person**: the young person starts the assessment procedure knowing what the objectives are, which encourages him to do his best, and to try to understand how he goes about solving a problem or accomplishing a task in order to make progress.

b) Collecting information from what the person says.

If the young person asks for his competences to be validated outside a learning or training context, the assessment can only be in the form of interviews between the candidate and the appraiser.

Most often, the people concerned find it difficult to describe their competences in any detail. To facilitate and support their description, therefore, it is necessary to introduce explicitation aids or techniques. Structured forms of interview can be used, based perhaps on the explicitation interview technique by Vermersch (Vermersch & Maurel, 1997)³.

³ Vermersch, P., & Maurel, M. (1997). *Pratiques de l'entretien d'explicitation*. Paris : Editions Sociales de France.

3- The appraiser's attitudes

The main objective of the appraiser must be to help the person become aware of his or her capabilities and progress to help them develop a feeling of self-efficacy.⁴

The assessment philosophy which guides the practices we advocate here, are inspired from:

- learning conceptions developed as part of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1976, 1977; Carré, 2004)⁵ ;
- and the results pursued in procedures of validation of knowledge acquired through experience (Liétard, 1999 ; Farzad & Paivandi, 2000)⁶.

This assessment philosophy implies the following attitudes on the part of the appraisers:

- **Inform the candidate and involve him or her in the appraisal process:**
 - Have the candidate explain his/her reasons for taking the assessment
 - Inform him/her of the type of assessments s/he will undergo
 - Explain how the assessments will be conducted
- **Take into account the situation and level of the candidate:**

The conditions must be made as equitable as possible for candidates who are of different sex, ethnic and cultural origin or who suffer from some socio-cultural handicap. It is therefore important to:

 - Make sure that the people can read, that they understand what is asked of them, know how to answer, know how to go on to the next question,
 - Give examples, vary the situation, explain differently, etc.
- **Practise active listening:**
 - Listen, reformulate, place in a dialogue situation
 - Show a positive attitude, encourage.
- **Make sure the material conditions are right:** calm, bright space, equipment available, etc.
- **Organise a time for reconstruction** so that the person assimilates the results of the assessment:

⁴ Albert Bandura underlines the importance of belief in your own capabilities (or efficacy) in learners: the fact that they feel capable of succeeding in a given area aids their learning behaviour in this domain. These feelings of competence or efficacy develop from experiences which have led to success (on condition that we feel we played an active part in this success), and as a result of learning opportunities during which we have been able to observe a person doing tasks they can accomplish successfully.

⁵ Bandura, A. (1997). *Self Efficacy, the exercise of control*. New York: WH Freeman & Co.

Bandura, A. (2004). "I will do it: the beliefs of self-efficacy." *Sciences Humaines*, 148, 42-45.

Carré, P. (Dir.) (2004). *From social learning to self-efficacy. The work of Albert Bandura*. Savoirs-an international review of adult education and training research. Special edition. Paris: L'Harmattan.

⁶ Liétard, B. (1999). La reconnaissance des acquis, un nouvel espace de formation? In P. Carré & P. Caspar (dir.), *Traité des sciences et des techniques de la formation* (pp. 453-469). Paris: Dunod.

Farzad, M., & Paivandi, S. (2000). *Reconnaissance et validation des acquis en formation*. Paris: Anthropos.

- Encouraging a verbal exchange between the appraiser and the person is indispensable. If the person finds it difficult to express himself because of his cultural origins, find any means to help him, and if necessary ask for the help of an “interpreter”, friends, members of the family, teachers, intermediary...
- Use all the aids and modes of expression likely to help the person understand the message

4- How to conduct the assessment

Since most would agree that any assessment is a complex procedure which has to take into account at least three main parameters (diversity of situations in which the assessment applies, individuality of the people it concerns, specificity of the appraisers), the methods proposed here should not be considered as a rigid set of rules but as simple recommendations.

Professionals working in the partner institutions of this project have tested the reference list and their recommendations, collected during interviews, are presented here.

4.1 The context determines the use

The reference list is a tool that can be used before, during and/or after a course. It can also happen that a candidate wishes to have an assessment of his/her competences without intending to follow a training course. The context will dictate the various methods for use.

- **If the assessment takes place before beginning a training process or if it is intended as a simple appraisal without any training course in mind**, it will take the form of an explicitation interview based on the reference list. The appraiser will direct the interview to be able to mark off in the different charts the competences that the young person has already acquired. If it proves necessary to check the acquisition of a particular competence in more detail, the appraiser will suggest that the person does one or more exercises illustrating the competence.
- **If the assessment takes place during a training course**, it will allow the candidate and the facilitator to assess what has been acquired and which competences remain to be improved. It will take the form of a positive interview which aims to:
 - find out what s/he has acquired,
 - understand why s/he has not understood,
 - list the objectives s/he has still to meet.
- **If the appraisal takes place at the end of a training course**, it is intended to validate the competences acquired by the young person during the course. This assessment will allow him to:

- Either begin another course,
- Or go to see an employer with a document proving his competences.

In this case, the appraisal will be conducted by one of the people who have worked with the young person during the course: teacher in a training centre, supervisor, in-company tutor, educator, psychologist, social worker, etc.

The appraisal can also be conducted by the team of facilitators who reach a joint decision on the competences acquired by the young person. Depending on the contexts and the type of competence being assessed, the team will be included in the validation process or not.

In all cases, the exercises relating to each of the items in the competence charts will help the appraisers and the young person to have a concrete idea of the competence concerned.

4.2 How to conduct the appraisal of each chart?

As we have seen, the appraisal conditions vary according to the context, the aim and also the domain to be assessed. Certain charts take the form of a series of exercises that the candidate must do alone, whereas others require the presence of the appraiser who will explain certain things. Still others are an aid for an explicitation interview that the appraiser conducts with the candidate. As for the charts relating to social behaviour, they require direct observation of the candidate beforehand (in class, in training or in company).

The following table lists for each chart the conditions for validation, the estimated duration, the method for the session, the appraiser's role and the validation indicators for each competence.

This information is also shown above each chart and can be downloaded from the website.

Conditions	Duration	Method	Appraiser's role	Validation indicators
1- Communicate in the language of the country				
Master the basics of the language of the country.	1hr 30 min max.	Exercises to be done alone. Possibility to appraise several candidates at the same time.	If necessary, read out the instructions and subjects.	In the case of an end-of-course appraisal, a person who has at least half the answers right could be considered as having validated the module.
2- Mathematical competences				
Master the basics of arithmetic and be able to use elementary measuring instruments.	1hr max.	Exercises to be done alone. Possibility to appraise several candidates at the same time.	If necessary, read out the instructions and subjects.	In the case of an end-of-course appraisal, a person who has at least half the answers right could be considered as having validated the module.
3- Digital culture				
Have already used a computer.	50 to 60 min.	Individual work under supervision of the appraiser	The candidate will be placed in situation. The teacher/appraiser will ask for particular actions during the work if the candidate does not do them spontaneously: copy, cut, paste, open a file, save into a folder, etc.	The decision to validate the module is left to the appreciation of the appraiser. NB: In this chart, linguistic competences must not influence the results.
4- Learning to learn				
Be able to solve simple exercises not requiring reading of instructions. The candidate will be asked to observe his own learning strategies and to express them.	Very variable as it depends on the candidate's ability to do his/her own work and talk about it.	Individual work under supervision of the appraiser.	If necessary explain the exercise. Ask the candidate to do the exercise then express his strategy for solving the problem. Respect the candidate's working speed.	Do not take speed into account. In the case of an end-of-course appraisal, it could be considered that getting at least half the answers right would lead to validation of the module.
5- Personal and social competences				

<p>Have had the opportunity to observe the candidate in a real situation requiring the social competences in the chart.</p>	<p>Left to the appreciation of the appraisers.</p>	<p>Individual work only. Interview with the candidate conducted by the appraiser (The illustrative exercises help the appraiser to find situations to explore with the candidate during the interview.) and/or Basis for discussion with the team of facilitators. (The illustrative exercises help the appraisers to visualise the competence concerned.)</p>	<p>Have had the opportunity to observe the candidate in a real situation. Conduct a positive explicitation interview with the young person and/or complete the assessment with the team accompanying the candidate.</p>	<p>The requirements will of course be different depending on the time of the assessment: at the beginning of the course, at the end or outside any training course. The decision to validate will be left to the appreciation of the appraiser and/or the team of facilitators.</p>
<p>6- Adapting to life in a company (entrepreneurship)</p>				
<p>The candidate must have done a period in a company of 2 weeks minimum. The candidate will already have received a contract. It will list the objectives to reach. It must have been negotiated between the trainer/appraiser and the in-company tutor.</p>	<p>Left to the appreciation of the appraisers.</p>	<p>This chart is completed with the in-company tutor and the referrer of the training establishment. It can be done in presence of the person concerned.</p>	<p>Have had the opportunity to observe the candidate in a real situation. Conduct a positive interview with the candidate.</p>	<p>The requirements will of course be different depending on the time of the assessment: at the beginning of the course, at the end or outside any training course. The decision to validate will be left to the appreciation of the appraiser and/or the team of facilitators.</p>