Accreditation and Validating Outcomes of Informal and Non-Formal Learning Projects

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1. Introduction

1.1 REVEAL

Research and Evaluation group for Validating, Evidencing and Assessing of informal and non-formal Learning.

REVEAL is a transnational community of European experts and practitioners working in 19 organisations from 14 European member states.

In the framework of three EU-funded projects our community has been developing a unique validation approach ("LEVEL5") for informal and non-formal learning between 2005 and 2010.

The approach, titled has been piloted and applied in more than 40 learning projects and scientifically evaluated in the framework of two international PhD thesis.

It has been created to serve especially target groups that learn outside formal education contexts and their learning facilitators, be it adult learning providers, care organisations, grassroot projects and others.

1.2 Vision

REVEAL is a transnational network of experts from research and practice to create substantial contributions to the "Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning".
Against the background that especially the adult (or lifelong)learning community should profit from these learning modalities we unite behind the following principles:
Non-formal and informal learning should gain more attention in the European learning community
It should be recognised on an individual and purely voluntary level
It should reflect the living and learning contexts of the individuals
It should ground on action research principles and include all stakeholders (experts from the field, the learners) in the evaluation process
It should not only evaluate learning following a utilitarian approach, e.g. against the principle of employability; but should also recognise a free learning which is not directed to specific job-related competences.
In the first place the validation of IL shall support the individual by highlighting the developed competences to raise motivation to learn in informal learning contexts.
It shall also contribute to a recognition of good informal learning practice in terms of learning outcomes to motivate learning providers to increase their efforts to create good informal learning offers..

1.3 Mission

REVEAL offers a system for evaluation and evidencing of learning outcomes with the help of a well developed, unique approach that has been scientifically approved and applied in a large scope of learning projects in non-formal and informal contexts.

The specifically created LEVEL5-software that is incorporated in REVEAL facilitates the comprehensive documentation and visualisation of learners' competence developments in all kinds of learning arrangements. The REVEAL evaluation procedure is on the one hand standardised and enables at the same time learning projects to establish an individualised reference system for assessing and evidencing relevant competence of their beneficiaries in a process-orientated way. It also allows the learning providers to evidence the impact of their

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work according to a standardised procedure while, at the same time, keeping up the specifications of their informal learning projects in their individual contexts.

1.4 Networking and community building

REVEAL contributes to the general goals by providing a stable European wide structure for support of learners and learning facilitators be it teachers, trainers, helpers, counsellors, accompanying persons, assessors, evaluators etc.

In this connection it has created a European wide community of experts providing help and guidance for stakeholders in the field (e.g. citizens' communities, grass-root projects but also providers of extracurricular activities etc.).

The composition of the REVEAL network reflects the idea of a mutual cooperation:
Executive members are being invited according to their specific expertise, to their area of work and to their geographical location. They take over commonly defined tasks in REVEAL Community partners may join the network on basis of their informal learning projects and use the services offered by REVEAL.

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2 Accreditation in the framework of REVEAL

2.1 Accreditation and Validation according to LEVEL5

2.1.1 The Term "Accreditation"

Accreditation is a rather general term and only seldom used in the context with the "validation of Informal Learning". This is not astonishing since there are diverging concepts of "informal learning" and also the terminology of "validation" varies according to the context and the purpose[1]. Accreditation mainly focuses on organisations but it can also be the formal attestation that a *model* is acceptable for use for a specific purpose, in our case the appropriate utilisation of the LEVEL5 approach as assessment and evidencing tool. Accreditation is the formal procedure used to determine the competence for performing certain kinds of measurements by taking into account the set criteria[2] (REVEAL evaluators).

Accreditation is the establishment of the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, a programme (i.e. composite of modules) or module of study. Accreditation is the formal evaluation of an organisation according to accepted criteria or standards. Accreditation may be done by a professional society, a non-governmental body, or a governmental agency.

Accreditation is the process of external quality review to scrutinize learning programmes and activities for quality assurance and quality improvement. Success results in an accredited institution and/or learning activity (CHEA, 2001)[3].

2.1.2 Purpose of the REVEAL accreditation:

As owner of the system the REVEAL community is responsible for the accreditation of the evaluation of learners' competence developments according to the LEVEL5 approach.

In accordance with the quotations above REVEAL is heading towards:

o   Installation of quality standards
o   Securing that the LEVEL5 approach is used in an appropriate way
o   Accreditation of good learning and evaluation practice
o   Creating an extra value for learners and project owners
o   Accreditation of evaluators according to the LEVEL5 procedure

The REVEAL accreditation is heading for the

o   Evaluation of non-formal and informal learning projects and programmes on regional and national levels and the
o   Evaluation of learners' competence developments in informal and non-formal learning settings

2.1.3 Accreditation Levels

The accreditation in of non-formal and informal learning projects and activities (certification) supported by REVEAL will take place on two levels

    ■   Level 1:   Internal Evaluation („Support")
    ■   Level 2:   External Evaluation
                          (-> Counselling by REVEAL members)

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[1]   See Annex Terms and Definitions
[2]   Development of Quality Assurance System in Higher Education (QUASYS, 2001);
     http://www.unizg.hr/tempusprojects/glossary.htm
[3]   Harvey, L., 2004–9, *Analytic Quality Glossary*, Quality Research International,
http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/

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2.2   Evaluation Instrument: LEVEL5

REVEAL will make use of the LEVEL5 approach and software: The evaluation approach is based on a five step procedure:

1.   Micro Project Description
- Describing the properties of the informal learning project in a preformatted pattern. The informal learning project is described in a predefined template.

2.   Selecting topics
- Selecting relevant learning topics from an open inventory and further refinement. Learning topics are chosen from an open inventory system which offers the scope to evaluate areas applicable to the learning activity. Topics can be further explored at an in-depth level.
- Creating a project specific topic set or creating a unique one for the learning project. Topics can be chosen for projects or can be tailored specifically for an individual learner.

3.   Establishing an individualised reference system
- Developing an individual reference system on the basis of the three dimensions (cognitive, affective, activity related) with five individualised stages.
- A reference system is developed on the basis of the three dimensions (cognitive, activity related and affective) for the 5 competence levels.

4.   Assessment
- All kind of different assessment methods can be applied; a toolbox containing different kinds of methods is available. Assessment is made through a variety of processes in order to ascertain the development of the project or learner in relation to the selected topic. Information on assessment methods are available.

5.   Rating/Documenting/Visualisation (Online Documentation System)
- After inserting the ratings in the individualised reference system, the learning outcomes are displayed in the LEVEL5-CUBE.
- Following assessment the competence level ratings for the topic are defined and inputted into the software system.
  In addition to analysing and storing data the software also produces certificates that are automatically generated in PDF format for learners. Projects may be accredited in a PDF or online
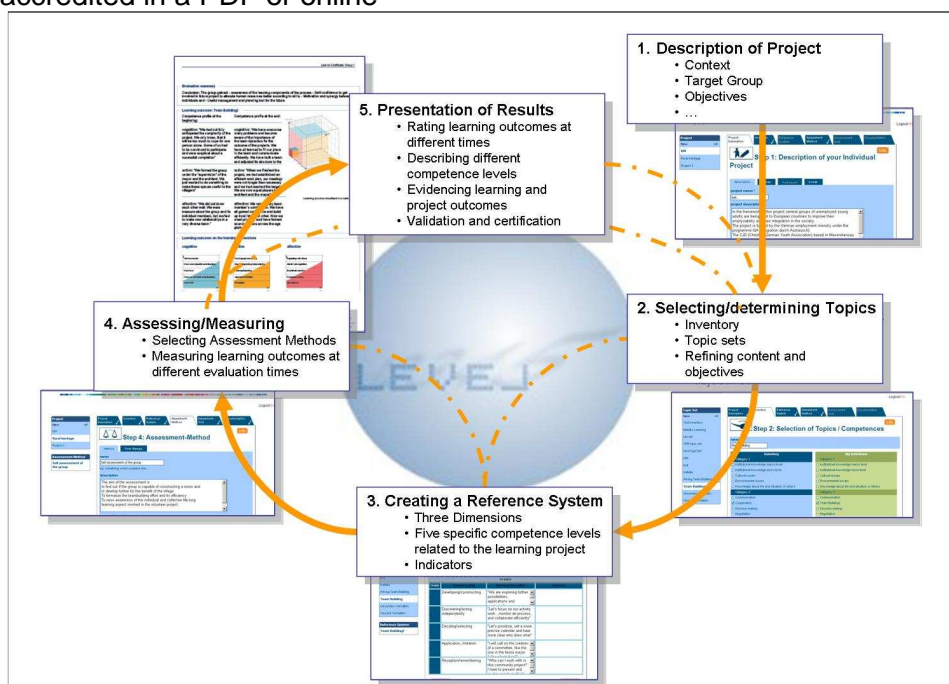

Figure 1: **LEVEL5**; cyclic procedure

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2.4   Philosophy:

We feel that it is an important quality criterion to fine-tune and improve the individual reference systems while evaluating. One cannot expect that a "perfect" evaluation system in informal learning contexts can be developed from the shelf. This is why there should always be the opportunity to modify some elements of the reference system (may it be some descriptors or indicators) during the evaluation. In the following steps 1-3 and 5 will be described. Assessment methods (step 4) is being presented as separate tool-box.

The LEVEL5 system is based on action theory principles and therefore works as a cyclic procedure. Therefore, during the course of the evaluation processes may be amended and developed

3   Accreditation Procedure

Like in quality management systems REVEAL offers two ways of evaluation, a self (internal) evaluation (like in EFQM) in which the project owners and experts in the field evaluate the learners and an external evaluation carried out by REVEAL evaluators in close cooperation with the project owners.

1. Auto-evaluation of learners' competence developments with LEVEL5 (by using the LEVEL5 software, quality assurance by REVEAL-evaluators; Internal certification)
2. External evaluation by accredited REVEAL evaluators

There will be two different levels of certificates since the external evaluation offers a bigger reputation, objectivity and reliability. However in some cases also the internal evaluation may be of bigger value, especially if the focus is on informality.

Value:

For the learners the evaluation with LEVEL5 offers for the first time the option to show results of informal learning and competences acquired in informal learning contexts.

For the learning providers the evaluation and learners' certificated offer for the first time the opportunity to give a value to these learning activities that could not be certified before.

It can be expected that informal and non-formal providers profit from the LEVEL5 evaluation and certification since there may be a higher motivation of learners to participate.

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3.1   Support and Counselling

- **Level 1:** Auto-Evaluation (-> Support Model)
    - The evaluation will be carried out entirely by the experts in the field rather independently. As such it is based on an internal evaluation of the participants and the external assessment of quality criteria by the REVEAL group along the results in the software.
    - The internal evaluation is based on the manual and limited check and support activities by REVEAL evaluators
    - REVEAL members only check of contents in LEVEL5 software according to the quality criteria.
    - This internal evaluation is specifically suitable for organisations with a limited financial capacity and it comprises the following services:
        - project account (50 €) incl.
            - user administration
            - topic set
            - reference system
            - Learners certificates
        - basic quality check[4]/topics (2 hrs/65 €)
        - basic quality check of reference systems/certificate (2 hrs/65 €)
    - Minimum fee of the internal accreditation will be 310 € including the check of topics and reference systems of 2 independent REVEAL evaluators
    - Successful projects receive the REVEAL accreditation after fulfilling the quality criteria.

- **Level 2**: External (REVEAL) Evaluation (-> Counselling Model)
    - The external evaluation is based on active counselling of REVEAL experts at the spot or with online counselling.
    - In the minimum version the evaluation will also be carried out by the experts in the field but after an intensive briefing by REVEAL experts..
    - REVEAL accompany the evaluation process and check of topics, reference systems and valuations on paper and in the LEVEL5 software
    - This external evaluation is specifically suitable for medium and large organisations and projects
    - project account (100 €) incl.
        - user administration
        - topic set
        - reference system
        - Learners certificates
    - basic quality check/topic; ¼ a day
    - counselling project description, ½ a day
    - counselling topic set, ½ a day
    - counselling reference system, 2 days
    - counselling indicators 1 day
    - basic quality check/certificate, 1 day
- Scope and conditions can be negotiated between client and REVEAL member
- **Methodology**: Face to face and distance (online) counselling

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[4]   Quality criteria to be found in annex #

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3.2   Quality criteria Catalogue

3.2.1   Introduction:

The ACT-project created a first Impact Assessment System (later LEVEL5) in order to assess and validate competence development of people in informal learning settings of all kinds. Along its creation process the system was applied and tested on a number of 'micro projects' in the different project partner countries. The follow-up project ACT-NET refined and further developed the approach, tools and procedures.

A first step in this process is the creation of quality criteria that should be applied when using the evaluation approach.

The following catalogue is based on central issues and questions ("FAQs") that necessarily come up during the evaluation process:

- **Objectivity/inter-subjectivity, representation:** How can we assure the objectivity of the results when applying the approach?
- **Validity:** How can we assure the validity of the results when applying the approach?
- **Reliability:** How can we assure the reliability of the measurements?
- **Efficiency:** What is the cost benefit balance of the assessment?
- **Effectiveness in view of the goals of the evaluation:** Will the assessment lead to improvement?
- **Efficiency and Effectiveness as a learning process:** How can we assure efficiency and effectiveness?
- **Transparency:** How can we assure transparency?
- **Consistency of the categories:** How can we create consistent categories?

3.2.1   Objectivity/inter-subjectivity, representation

How can we assure the objectivity of the results when applying the approach?
Competence development assessment can hardly be a process that delivers objective proof of what has been acquired. The methodology available usually is not sufficient to deal with the complexity of the situation, created by the uncountable number of variables and in regard to the external factors influencing the objectives of the assessment. The relatively small number of respondents or cases often makes it impossible to provide full proof evidence.

The assessment is done to gain as much understanding as possible of the impact of informal learning and the level of the acquired (citizenship) competences. It should be achieved that the obtained proof is plausible, to a certain extent transferable and follows scientific criteria.

This implies that one has to be very much aware of which data one may collect in an objective way and how these data can be processed in a reliable way.

When objectivity is at stake, there is always the solution of inter-subjectivity. One could conduct the measurement as well as the evaluation and the evidencing of the results in the cube by two or more different persons and compare the results. A high similarity would be an indicator for a high objectivity. There is not one single way of doing this. It will however be clear that it has to be a deliberate and conscious decision, taking into account for whom the evaluation is meant, and what the goal of the evaluation is.

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3.2.3 Validity

How can we assure the validity of the results when applying the ACT approach?
The term "validity" indicates the extent to which a measure accurately reflects the concept that it is intended to measure. Sometimes different actors have a different understanding of the issues and the concepts that are going to be assessed. Validity is about that. Basically it comes down to two questions:

- Are we all clear about what we want to know?
- Is what we are measuring indeed what we want/need to know to get the right answers?

In order to get good and shared definitions of concepts it is important to set up a discussion with all actors involved, asking the right questions: what is important and why. Concepts and interpretations should however also be linked to a broader theoretical frame, otherwise it will be impossible to compare results and transfer of experience to other sectors.
Instruments made or chosen and the debates held about the data, will always have to be looked at critically, asking the central question over and over again: Is this what we think the assessment is about? Is this showing us what we want to know?
All the elements in the assessment plan should also show a great coherence and internal consistency. Basically the questions to which one has to pay attention are:

- Is what we are doing still according to the goals of the evaluation?
- Is the involvement of everybody still doing justice to our intention to involve various parties?
- Is our process serving the right target groups?

Not only the assessment method should consider the criteria "validity", but also the reference system should be a valid system. Are the concepts used as stages clear for all actors involved? Do they relate to a broadly recognized reference system? A possible way to assure validity of the reference system could be to compare the defined stages with statements of experts in the respective field. The stages could also be built on existing level models (e.g. for cultural competence).
When it comes to evidencing it is also important that the indicators, giving proof that a certain level has been reached, are commonly understood and shared.

3.2.4 Reliability

How can we assure the reliability of the measurements?
Reliability describes the degree to which scores and results are consistent and repeatable. A possible way to assure reliability of the reference system could be to carry out the measurement twice (either at two different points of time or with two different assessment methods) and to assign the results to the same reference system. Similar assignments would indicate a high reliability of the reference system.

3.2.5 Efficiency

What is the cost benefit balance of the assessment?
Are we doing what we can, to reduce the investment of time in executing the evaluation, and yet to provide worthwhile outcomes?

- Is it necessary to involve as many respondents as we do or can we work with samples?
- Is the method chosen for data gathering (Interview, questionnaire, observation etc.) efficient?
- Have we chosen a sensible level of detail in our instruments or in our analyses and our reports?

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Realise that efficient evaluation gives quicker answers. By doing so the evaluators better serve the learning process of the people involved. Efficiency definitely is a quality!

3.2.6 Effectiveness in view of the goals of the evaluation

Will the assessment lead to improvement?
If learning and change are desired effects of the assessment process these effects should be defined and included in the evaluation of the assessment. That is why it is so important to identify some intermediate results to be accomplished during the evaluation process in order to raise the question of effectiveness at an early stage.
- How much of what we want to find out have we revealed so far?
- How does that compare with what we intended?
- What can we do to raise the effectiveness of our next step?

3.2.7 Efficiency and Effectiveness as a learning process

How can we assure efficiency and effectiveness?
A special focus in the approach chosen is learning as the ultimate process to which evaluation should contribute and by which it should be supported at the same time. Because of the importance of this element in this approach we once more focus on this aspect. The quality of evaluation from this perspective consists of the following:
1. Good self evaluations are motivating events.
- They include a variety of activities.
- They have clear goals and purposes known and supported by the people involved and concerned.
2. They provide the people involved with a richness of information or experiences they can benefit from
- Lots of sources
- Clearly structured information
- Involving all senses
3. They provide opportunities for exploration, articulating ideas, experimentation and feedback on these experiences.
- Opportunities for brainstorms
- Opportunities for thinking
- Opportunities for discussing and sharing ideas
- Safe and secure feedback on initial "theories and actions", meaning feedback on how the facts found related to what people originally did or thought, or both.

3.2.8 Transparency

How can we assure transparency?
Two basic assumptions serve as the basis for our evaluation approach. The first is that evaluation is an element in processes of individual and organisational professional learning. The second is that it will clarify interest positions and serve as a basis for negotiation among all parties involved.
It serves both learning and democracy. For both these purposes the process of self evaluation should be as transparent as possible.

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3.2.9 Consistency of the Categories

How can we create consistent categories?
The construction of the reference system could be based on approaches for category construction like in a qualitative content analysis or in a structured observation (using a fixed set of categories).
This means that categories of a variable should not overlap, all possible results should be clearly assigned to a category and the assignment to categories should be precisely regulated.
The following checklist might be used for checking the quality of your categories:

- Are your levels exclusive? – They should not overlap!
- Are your descriptions comprehensive, precise and concrete? – Be aware that a clear assignment should be possible!
- Are your levels complete? Any possible learning development should be representable in the levels!

Do the intervals between the levels have to be exactly the same? How can we make sure?
The intervals between the levels do not have to be exactly the same, (this is nearly impossible. But the levels should indicate a clear ranking (e.g. level 2 should indicate a clear progress compared to level 1).

Why are there numbers for the stages in the cube? Does that indicate any quantities?
Although there are stages in the cube it is still clearly a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. For naming the levels in ordinal scales numbers can but must not be used. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordinal_scale) In the case of the ACT cube the levels could also be named ABCD instead of 1234.

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4 Annexes

4.1 Definitions: Validation, Accreditation, Evaluation

Rationale:
The topic "validation of informal learning" has become increasingly important in recent years. The Council of Europe (14 June 2002) adopted a work programme and the European Commission published funded calls for the development of ways to validate the respective learning experiences[5].
However, a comprehensive evaluation and validation approach for informal learning was not available by the end of 2008.
In informal learning a standardisation in regard to contents (*topics*), learning objectives and envisaged outcomes (*competences*) is nearly impossible due to the uncountable life situations, demands of learners and needs of the beneficiaries.
This is why most of the countries rather concentrate on validation of non-formal learning competences that can be put in relation to a kind of standardised learning outcome.

An evaluation or a validation of Informal Learning can lead to completely different approaches:
1. focused on the informal and non-formal learning processes
2. focused on the informal and non-formal learning outcomes

But even this differentiation is only convincing at first sight since also the supporters of the first approach will certainly claim that their ultimate goal is the learning outcome of the learner in an informal context.

One can state that there is a two-folded discussion going on – on the one hand there is the party that looks on informal and non-formal learning from a rather holistic approach focusing on learning (and validation of learning) in a comprehensive real life approach whereas the other party is rather utilitarian and employability oriented.

There are a number of fundamental questions arising:
Can competences acquired in those informal learning settings like in a neighbourhood project or a shelter for victims of violence or a European course be assessed and even validated?
And can we validate exactly those competences that were developed by the learners specifically in this learning environment?
Are we still in the area of validation of informal learning?

The constant utilisation of different concepts under same titles, the different meanings of a theme (for instance different definitions on "informal learning") is a phenomenon that can be seen as a major thread throughout the current discussion.

To answer the questions raised above, to avoid meaningless discussions and to lower down the political implications behind these approaches it seams useful to clarify some basic terms and definitions – or at least to show that there are different connotations of the same terms and expressions.

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[5]   E.g. in the 2009 Lifelong Learning Programme Call.

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Obviously there is a huge gap between the two concepts presented in chapters one and two. As soon as they are combined different connotations of central terms lead to a rather confusing discussion.

This is why in chapter three basic terms and definitions in regard to validation, assessment, accreditation and evaluation will be presented and discussed in order to create an awareness what different educational stakeholders mean when they talk about "Validation of informal and non-formal learning". In the end this understanding is crucial in order to assign the right approach to the task of the project.

4.1.1 Validation

"The term validation is used in a very specific sense in the above text but is used differently in the Member States. For some, the term is broadly used to encompass the identification as well as the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning" EU Com 2004[6]).

Apart from different geographical interpretations the term "validation" has not a clear definition.

It may be: the act of validating; finding or testing the truth of something, or to prove something to be sound or logical.

Validation means that a product or a service satisfies the needs of the stakeholders. It "confirms that something …(e.g. … a service (the author)) consistently fulfils the requirements for a specific use"[7].

A basic characteristic of validation is that it serves to certify the conformance to a standard.

The corresponding verb "to validate" has also different meanings[8]:
o validate - declare or make legally valid
o validate - prove valid; show or confirm the validity of something
o validate - give evidence for

    or:
o the process of gathering evidence to provide a scientific basis for proposed score interpretations from a measure or an instrument[9].

Validation or **validity** may refer to different purposes:
o Validity, in logic, determining whether a statement is true or false
o Validity (statistics), the application of the principles of statistics to arrive at valid conclusions
o Validation and verification, in engineering, confirming that a product or service meets the needs of its users
o Verification and Validation (software), checking that a software system meets specifications and fulfills its intended purpose
o Validation (drug manufacture), documenting that a process or system meets its pre-determined specifications and quality attributes
o Data validation, in computer science, ensuring that data inserted into an application satisfies defined formats and other input criteria

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[6]   (Footnote Draft Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning, May 2004)

[7]   http://www.answers.com/topic/validation

[8]   wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

[9]   www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/assessment/iar/glossary.php

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The context of a validation may vary, but the common element is the standard – in connection with social science sector and education the following definitions may apply:

o   Social validation (psychology), compliance in a social activity to fit in and be part of the majority (!)
o   Validation of foreign studies and degrees, processes for transferring educational credentials between countries

One can derive that "validation" means different things in different contexts and that the purpose of validation may vary.
In the educational sector, one may understand validation of informal learning as

1.   a system to prove valid; show or confirm the validity degrees and credits (and competences) in order to facilitate mobility among Europeans or
2.   as a system to prove valid; show or confirm the validity of a learning approach, a learning environment or an informal educational activity

There is no reason why validation of informal learning should only refer to the first purpose.

The EU states that "the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning serves the needs of the individual learner. They support social integration, employability and the development and use of human resources in civic, social and economic contexts. They also meet the specific needs of those individuals who seek integration or re-integration into education and training, the labour market and society" (European Commission, 2004).

However in most of the literature circulating in the year 2010 Validation of Informal learning is only connected with the accreditation of prior acquired competences and completely neglects the learning aspect (by definition).
One could ask why this concept is still called "learning" since it contains no element of learning anymore, neither from the part of the learner (mostly "unintentional" nor from the learning provider (never mentioned in the literature)).

Hence the term "Validation of Informal Learning" is somewhat confusing and one should consider to use clearer terms, e.g. "Evaluation in Informal Learning Contexts" or "Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning" or "Recognition of Prior Learning" to avoid useless discussions and rather politically driven conflicts.

4.1.2 Assessment

Educational assessment is the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs[10].

Assessment is a process integrated into the instructional activity, innovation or programme designed to improve the quality of instruction and the resulting learning outcomes[11].

In some definitions assessment is very closely connected with evaluation:
"To assess - measure: evaluate or estimate the nature, quality, ability, extent, or significance[12]".

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[10] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assessment
[11] (see also instructional assessment) www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/assessment/iar/glossary.php
[12] wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn

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However - in contrast to evaluation - when assessing learners' performance, assessment is not placing value or judgment on it — this would be grading. Assessors simply report a learner's profile of achievement (Wiggins, 2010[13])

In this sense assessment is a part of the evaluation process, it goes together with evidencing (documenting/visualisation) and contributes to the process of grading or rating.

One may differentiate summative and formative assessment (and evaluation):

Summative assessment is administered for the purpose of obtaining a final, comprehensive evaluation of student knowledge and skills, often for accountability purposes, rather than for short-term instructional decision making[14].

In formal education the assessment event contributes to the award of a grade and/or mark.

Summative assessment leads to a snapshot of a learner's level of achievement in relation to a programme of study. Usually, summative assessment is carried out at the end of a period of time, or the end of a programme of study[15].

Summative assessments are method of choice when validating or recognising the informally acquired competences.

Formative assessment provides feedback to the learning provider for the purpose of improving instruction.

Formative assessment is aimed at understanding and improving learning along the progression of students' studies. It involves gathering and interpreting evidence of student learning from at least one point prior to the end of the programme

Formative assessments are not a type of assessment but the way in which the assessment results are used. Formative assessments are administered for the purpose of measuring progress toward a goal[16].

Formative assessments is best choice for improvement (individual or program level) rather than for making final decisions or for accountability[17].

4.1.3   Evidencing

Evidence in its broadest sense includes everything that is used to determine or demonstrate the truth of an assertion[18].

To evidence:
o   To indicate clearly; exemplify or prove.
o   To support by testimony; attest.

To evidence learning outcomes acquired informally this may be demonstrated through a portfolio of evidence through to make one's case for credit or through a more conventional assessment format e.g. essay/report or presentation[19].

To evidence informal learning at the workplace an initiative of the f-bb (research institute vocational education in Nuremberg developed specific procedures and tools to make competences transparent, not important where and how (formal, non-formal or informal) they have been acquired (Morawietz, 2010).

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[13] http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/assessment/studentprogress.htm).

[14] (mdk12.org/process/cfip/Assessment_Literacy_Glossary.html)

[15] www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/assessment-in-inclusive-settings/assessment-in-inclusive-education-files/glossary.doc

[16] mdk12.org/process/cfip/Assessment_Literacy_Glossary.html

[17] www.oaklandcc.edu/assessment/terminology.htm

[18] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidencing

[19] www.arts.ac.uk/docs/cltad_learningoutcomes.pdf

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When evidencing competences in informal learning one should be aware that, apart from the written documentation of learning outcomes (in summative evaluation against set standards) the visualisation of competence developments could also be of value for the learner[20]:

4.1.4 Recognition

Important stakeholders and authors for the Commission (OBSERVAL, Werquin, 2010[21]) state there is some confusion around the term of "validation" and rather concentrate on the expression "recognition" of prior learning which seems meaningful.

Recognition in sociology is public acknowledgement of person's status or merits (achievements, virtues, service, etc)[22].
In the context of validation it is used similar to the concept of approval; "to give recognition for achievements or status of performance; to give credits for the achievements.

This meaning reflects the central objective of the EU's concept of "Validating informal learning" – the accreditation of informally acquired learning outcomes.

4.1.5 Crediting/Certification/Accreditation

Validation of foreign studies and degrees, processes for transferring educational credentials between countries.
To understand the concept of the validation of informal learning stated by the European Commission, heading towards a recognition of competences acquired in informal and non-formal learning it is crucial to see it in the historic development and in connection with the goals and objectives. For this purpose central creditation systems shall be briefly presented in order to highlight the philosophy, the approaches and mechanisms that finally led to the idea to validate informally acquired competences.

Qualifications tools within the Copenhagen process:
The Copenhagen process (European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training (VET); European Commission, 2002) for enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (VET) sets three main objectives: promotion of mutual trust; transparency and recognition of competences and qualification and the consequent establishment of the basis for increasing mobility and facilitating access to lifelong learning. EQF and ECVET were developed as part of this political process. Both tools are relatively new as their respective European recommendations date from 2008 for EQF and 2009 for ECVET.

Excurse ECTS
ECTS was the first European tool to have an impact on how higher education qualifications are structured and delivered. First tested in the period 1989-95, its primary objective was to ensure that learning periods spent abroad as part of the Erasmus programme were recognised to avoid students having to pass additional courses or examinations when they return to their home institutions.

ECTS has these principles:
> (a) credits are based on the workload students need to achieve expected learning outcomes;

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[20] and may also be important for employers
[21] Patrick Werquin, during the OBSERVAL conference Oct. 13th,2010, Brussels
[22] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recognition_(sociology).

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(b) workload indicates the time students typically need to complete all learning activities;

(c) the measure of volume for ECTS credit is based on the principle that 60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a full-time year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes;

(d) credits are allocated to entire qualifications or study programmes as well as to their educational components (parts of programmes) (European Commission, 2009).

Implementation:
ECTS started as a measure that higher education institutions were adopting on their own initiative. In the first piloting period, 145 institutions were involved; by 2000 over 1 000 institutions were using it (Adam and Gehmlich, 2000). Once ECTS became a pillar of the Bologna process the involvement of higher education ministries accelerated its introduction. In most countries, the use of ECTS is now underpinned by legislation and compulsory for all (accredited) higher education institutions.

Problems:
Annex 5 of the *ECTS users' guide* (European Commission, 2009) shows that the exact measure of volume for one ECTS credit varies from 20 hours of workload (UK) up to 33 hours (Iceland).

ECVET:
ECVET is the equivalent of ECTS in the vocational sector and aims at facilitating the compatibility, comparability and complementarity of credit systems used in VET (Vocational Training) and the European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS; in 1990-1995 in HE).
Historically the first workgroups were installed in 2002, first feasibility studies were published in 2007 (NA BIBB, DE), presenting systems that have been based on complete assessments, others on an accumulation of competences.

State of implementation (taken from IBAK 2010):
The ECVET Recommendation (European Parliament and European Council, 2009) suggests that, by 2012, countries will create conditions for progressive implementation of ECVET. Meanwhile, countries and the Commission are invited to experiment with ECVET (through the lifelong learning programme).

4.1.6 Evaluation

Evaluation is systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of something or someone using criteria against a set of standards. In the workplace, an evaluation is a tool employers use to review the performance of an employee[23].
This gives us a first idea that evaluation may have a different connotation at the workplace (performance) than in "normal" life since evaluation of citizens competences are not being measured according to a specific performance.

"An assessment, such as an annual personnel performance review used as the basis for a salary increase or bonus, or a summary of a particular situation"[24];
Here, it is even more obvious because the "value" of a person is measured by his/her performance and transferred in monetary units (salary).

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[23] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evaluation_(workplace)
[24] en.wiktionary.org/wiki/evaluation)

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Still, this evaluation is systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of something or someone using criteria against a set of standards – but it depends on the context and the purpose what, how and against what should be evaluated.

Evaluation is the systematic value determination and evaluation or objective comparison and performance assessment in relation to previously set criteria. Evaluation is considered to be a process the aim of which is to highlight development needs and suggestions[25].
In regard to the evaluation of the learning processes in Grundtvig courses and partnerships the following explanations seems most appropriate:
"Evaluation is the systematic exploration and judgement of working processes, experiences and outcomes. It pays special attention to aims, values, perceptions, needs and resources." (Smith, 2006).

In this connection Smith emphasises that evaluation:
1. is a research process gathering, ordering and judging information in a methodical way,
2. is more than monitoring since it "involves making careful judgements about the worth, significance and meaning of phenomenon" and
3. also involves developing criteria or standards that are both meaningful and honour the work and of those involved
4. must look at the people involved, the processes and any outcomes that can be identified (in a dialogical way)
5. has both a proving and an improving dimension[26]

4.1.7 Self Evaluation

Self-evaluation of education and/or learning is the process of systematic collection, analysis and exchange of data concerning educational processes of either individuals, groups or organisations (institutions, etc.) in order to facilitate learning among all parties concerned so value judgments and decision-making may be based on evidence rather than on intuition. (SEALLL, 2002)
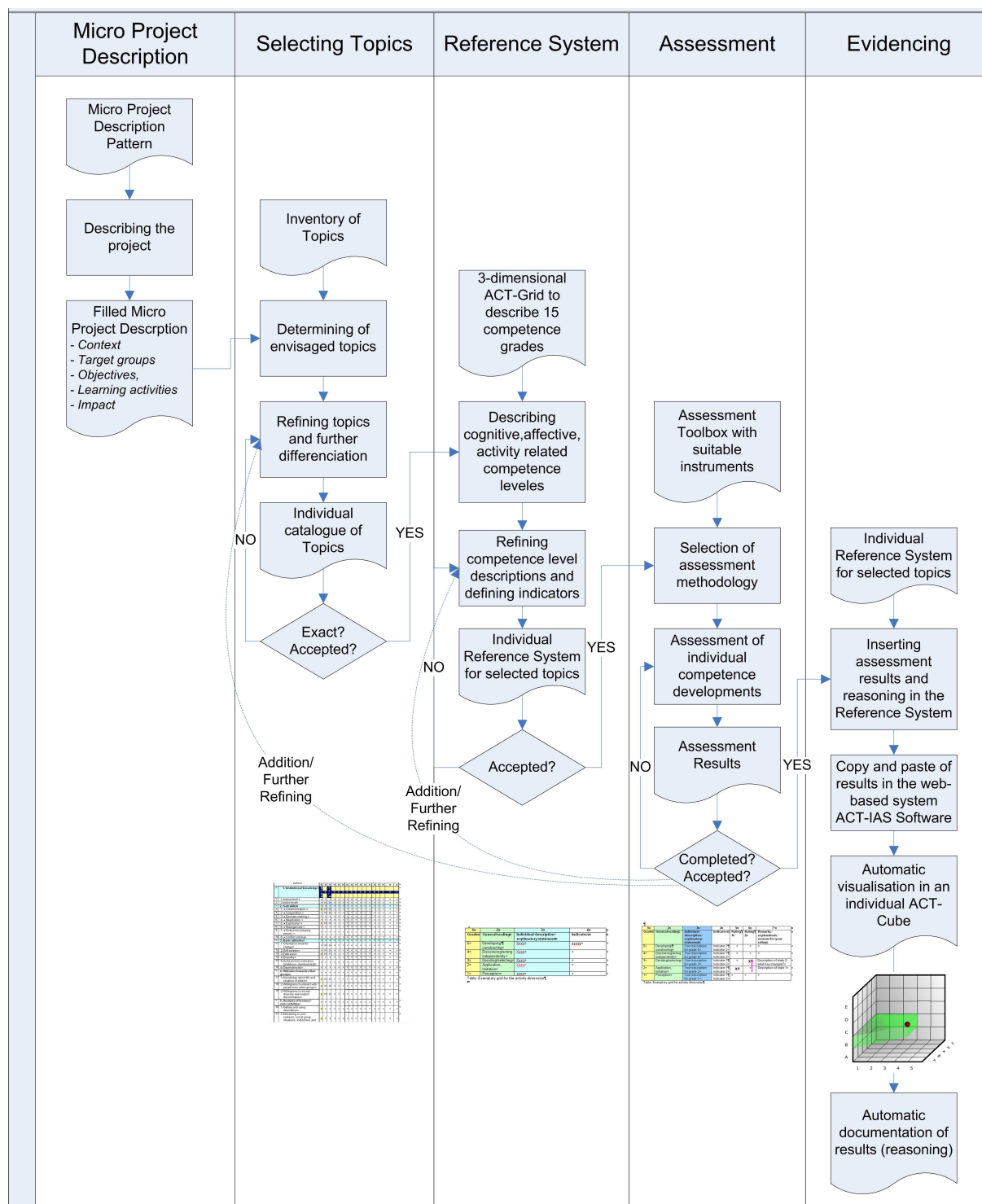
Learning
Self-evaluation focuses on learning, as the definition suggests. The kind of learning referred to is both individual learning and organizational learning. Individuals learn to understand better the situation in which they work and the relationship this has to individual and collective aims. Furthermore, an organisation can learn from the process and the dynamics of the process of self-evaluation. At the same time self-evaluation helps the group of people involved to enhance their understanding of how they may operate more effective and satisfactorily as a team. Also a lot of other people will learn from their colleagues from the process of sharing and dissemination of the results of the self-evaluation. Then they can adopt and adapt these results, which will augment the effects and the impact of the self-evaluation But an organisation is more than a group of individuals - it is an entity in its own right. This entity can also learn from the self-evaluation. In an organisation, self-evaluation may be used as a continuous management tool. Organisations try to deliver quality. That means satisfying the demands and expectations of participants and stakeholders, both internal and external to the organisation. self-evaluation provides information about the needs of current and potential participants and about the way they assess the services provided. A quality organisation seeks to perform efficiently and effectively. Self-evaluation gives information on how to take strategic decisions in these matters.

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[25]   www.laurea.fi/internet/en/031_quality/quality_terms.jsp

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Both the individual and the collective or organizational learning will have an impact so that the quality of work and learning can grow. The innovative capacity of the organization will grow with it. In essence, this implies that those who learn from self-evaluation do better and know how to improve their work and learning.

Self-evaluation is not only a way to explore the dynamics of one's own education activities; it is also a means to provide evidence of the quality a unit or organisation offers to the outside world. By performing self-evaluation a project, an initiative or an organization will be able to account for its actions. Self-evaluation provides evidence which may be used to convince the outside world that things are running well. Funding agencies, the community, and local, national and transnational authorities may be among those in need of convincing. For this accounting purpose, self-evaluation may include actions aimed at providing evidence of good practice, good learning outcomes, good effects and relative performance, in comparison with other similar initiatives

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4.2 Procedural flow chart for Evaluators

Micro Project Description	Selecting Topics	Reference System	Assessment	Evidencing

Micro Project Description column:

Micro Project Description Pattern

↓

Describing the project

↓

Filled Micro Project Descrption
- Context
- Target groups
- Objectives,
- Learning activities
- Impact

Selecting Topics column:

Inventory of Topics

↓

Determining of envisaged topics

↓

Refining topics and further differenciation

↓

Individual catalogue of Topics

↓

Exact? Accepted?

NO / YES

Addition/ Further Refining

Reference System column:

3-dimensional ACT-Grid to describe 15 competence grades

↓

Describing cognitive, affective, activity related competence leveles

↓

Refining competence level descriptions and defining indicators

↓

Individual Reference System for selected topics

↓

Accepted?

YES / NO

Addition/ Further Refining

Assessment column:

Assessment Toolbox with suitable instruments

↓

Selection of assessment methodology

↓

Assessment of individual competence developments

↓

Assessment Results

NO / YES

↓

Completed? Accepted?

Evidencing column:

Individual Reference System for selected topics

↓

Inserting assessment results and reasoning in the Reference System

↓

Copy and paste of results in the web-based system ACT-IAS Software

↓

Automatic visualisation in an individual ACT-Cube

↓

Automatic documentation of results (reasoning)

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4.3 REVEAL Quality Check Grid

- **Objectivity/inter-subjectivity, representation:** How can we assure the objectivity of the results when applying the approach?
- **Validity:** How can we assure the validity of the results when applying the approach?
- **Reliability:** How can we assure the reliability of the measurements?
- **Efficiency:** What is the cost benefit balance of the assessment?
- **Effectiveness in view of the goals of the evaluation:** Will the assessment lead to improvement?
- **Efficiency and Effectiveness as a learning process:** How can we assure efficiency and effectiveness?
- **Transparency:** How can we assure transparency?
- **Consistency of the categories:** How can we create consistent categories?

Criterion	Rationale/Leading question	Hint/min. requirements	Levels
Objectivity/inter-subjectivity		▪ Conduct the measurement as well as the evaluation and the evidencing of the results in the cube by two or more different persons and compare the results. A high similarity would be an indicator for a high objectivity	All levels, specifically in the internal evaluation the check should be secured by another colleague.
Validity	▪ The term "validity" indicates the extent to which a measure accurately reflects the concept that it is intended to measure	▪ To compare the defined stages with statements of experts in the respective field ▪ the indicators, giving proof that a certain level has been reached must be understood and shared	▪ reference system ▪ assessment ▪ evidencing o
Reliability	▪ degree to which scores and results are consistent and repeatable	▪ several measurement times and methods	▪ assessment ▪ evidencing
Efficiency	▪ cost benefit ratio	▪ concentrate on the core, ▪ avoid many topics ▪ utilise sharp	All levels, specifically: ▪ topics ▪ assessments

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		instruments not a high quantity	
Effectiveness in view of the goals of the evaluation	▪ Will the assessment lead to improvement?	▪ Basic discussion about the use of the evaluation ▪ To be tackled with the previous criterion	▪ Before the evaluation ▪ Step 1, check project description point
Transparency	▪ How can we assure transparency	▪ Objective is a procedural model ▪	▪ (1) Project description
Consistency of the categories	▪ The problem of competency development is not following any fixed standards (e.g. gradual or in plateaus) ▪ Categories should be separate ▪	▪ Are the levels exclusive? ▪ They should not overlap! ▪ Descriptions comprehensive, precise and concrete? ▪ A clear assignment should be possible! ▪ Are the levels complete? ▪ Any possible learning development should be representable in the levels	▪ (3) Reference system and ▪ (5) Rating and reasoning ▪ To be checked in assessments

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4.4　Certificate Pattern

Learner-Certificate: Svetlana Muster
Project-title: Producing a Radio-Programm
BUPNET

Participant
Svetlana Muster, female, born 03.04.1967, Poland
(eventually more background-information)

Informal learning project
Producing a Radio-Programm with Migrant Women
Beginning:	March 2009
Ending:	June 2010
Institution:	Bupnet
Place:	Göttingen, Stadtradio

optional foto

Description of the informal learning activity
Nineteen migrant women produced a radio programme within the framework in a vocational training course. The women are all over 45 years old and come from different cultural backgrounds. The project included:

1. Listening to an exemplary program
2. Visiting the radio station
3. Planning the program
4. Recording the parts of the program

Topics of the evaluation
Expression:
One of the targets was to enhance the language competences of the women (listening, writing and speaking). The women should have the possibility to express themselves in a new way (radio program) and to express their cultural background and their individual situation at the same time.

Self-esteem:
The other objective was to strengthen the self-esteem of the women by giving them a platform to try out new and public ways of communication.

Methods of evaluation
The evaluation was conducted by paticipatory observation during the whole learning process.
The women were evaluated at the beginning and at the end of the course.

Evaluator
Leena Forogh, Trainer, University of Kassel
Kathrin Vent, Assistance, University of Kassel

Location / Date: Kassel, 04.02.2010

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Evaluation summary

Learning outcome: Participating in community with others

Competence profile at the beginning:

cognitive: He was aware that he would have to work with others, despite resistance to the idea

active: He knew he had to traverse a necessary learning stage and rely completely on the technical educator and the rest of the group
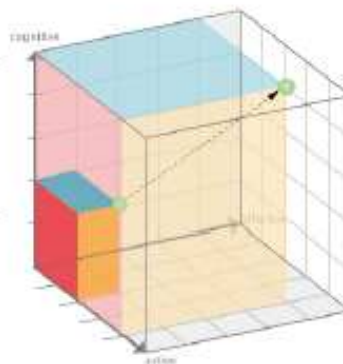
affective: His past experience and argumentative nature prevented him from exchanging with others in a work situation

Competence profile at the end:

cognitive: Thanks to his experience, he asserted his leadership of the group, while keeping a critical but positive attitude

active: He succeeded in taking responsibility within the group and imposing his positive attitude on the group behaviour

affective: The various successes and failures helped him to realise that he could rely on a group, rather than working alone

Learning process visualised in a cube

Learning outcome on the learning dimensions

cognitive

- Intuitive transfer
- Know when (Implicit understanding)
- Know how
- Know why (Distant understanding)
- Know That

active

- Developing/Constructing
- Discovering/Acting Independently
- Deciding/Selecting
- Application/Imitation
- Perception

affective

- Regulating with others
- Affectiv self-regulation
- Empathetic concern
- Perspective taking
- self centered

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