

*ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS
IN VOCATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION*

HANDBOOK FOR CANDIDATES



ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS IN VOCATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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Editorial:**Ruud Duvekot**

In the current knowledge society, interest is slowly but surely shifting from 'hard' factors production such as machines and instruments to 'soft' factors, human capital and the learning society. Of primary interest are human learning potential, capacity and flexibility. It makes no difference whether one is working, learning or seeking work. In the present society learning is still predominantly economically driven and focusing on employability. The transition to the Learning Society encompasses also the social dimension of learning: knowing who you are and how to use your talents. This empowerment of the self is precondition for employability. It changes the nature of learning and challenges us to design lifelong learning strategies for different societal purposes.

Nobel prize-winner in economics Amyarta Sen formulated¹ that learning fits well into societal developments that contribute, directly or indirectly, to the overall freedom people have to live the way they would like to live. 'Social opportunities' as one of the main instrumental freedoms refer to the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so on which influence the individual's substantive freedom to live better. These facilities are not only for the sake of conducting private lives but also of more effective participation in social, economic and political activities. Learning affects people's private as well their public lives. Therefore, it is vital for people to have access to all forms and phases of learning in order to shape their own destiny. As a supporting role, the state and the society have extensive roles in strengthening and safeguarding human capabilities, both for the self as for the society.

Having stated this vision on the learning society and the specific focus on the people themselves, this handbook for APL candidates offers a clear opportunity for individuals to start investing in themselves by finding out who they are, what they did and how this shows a further development road for them. It is the assessment of prior learning achievements that matters, not only for society but especially for the citizens themselves!

¹ A. Sen (1999) *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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FOREWORD

*One must learn by doing the thing
for though you think you know it, you have
no certainty, until you try (Sophocles).*


This *Handbook* aims at motivating VET teachers to reflect, self analyze and get the recognition for their prior learning and to assist them to identify the knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings, as well as to prepare for the assessment of prior learning (APL) process by gathering evidence on prior learning.

The book will try to answer the following frequently asked questions: *How do we perceive the assessment process? What do we gain from APL? How to collect the evidence on achievements of non-formal and informal learning and to get prepared for the APL? How to survive the APL?*

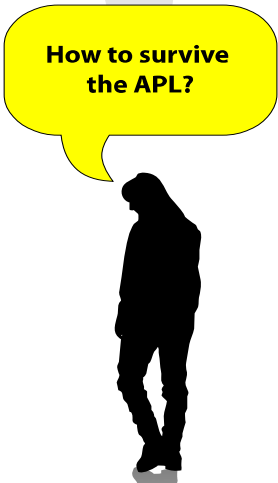
The aim of the present handbook does not extend to providing practical recommendations for shortening the study process of VET teachers. The premise of this book is that the prior learning situation (*formal, non-formal or informal learning*) is not of paramount importance. The important issue is whether the individual is able to perceive their learning needs, participates in the learning processes with the deliberate aim of improving their professional activity, and reflects on the previous learning experience.

First, the *Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements in Vocational Teacher Education. Handbook for Candidates* is dedicated for those who considering Lifelong Learning processes agree that *learning achievements* are more important than either the location or the timing of learning.

Secondly, the *Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements in Vocational Teacher Education. Handbook for Candidates* will be useful for those teachers who actively participate in lifelong learning processes, planning and implementing their professional growth in either formal, non-formal or informal learning settings. The context of teachers' pedagogical activity referring to work and learning is all-inclusive – reflecting reality and



**What do I get
from APL?**



**How to survive
the APL?**

dealing with existing social conflicts. The workplace environment, in particular, creates impressions, experience of which becomes the basis both for learning and decision-making.

The primary goal of APL in VET teacher education is the improvement of the effectiveness of VET teacher education programmes. This effectiveness is achieved by increasing accessibility and flexibility of formal learning programmes, as well as promoting participation in Lifelong Learning processes by providing teachers with opportunities to enrol in study programmes according to personalised study plans. Secondary goals are:

- to avoid double learning;
- to match the choice of the study programme to individual learning needs;
- to reduce learning costs;
- to evaluate the relevant value of previous learning based on experience;
- to increase self-esteem and self-confidence of learning teachers;
- to ascertain which knowledge and skills are to be improved;
- to promote a more positive attitude towards learning at the workplace by emphasizing particular achievements rather than the institution or country where they were made.

The Assessment of Prior Learning Achievements in Vocational Teacher Education. Handbook for Candidates is one of the outcomes of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme project “Transfer of Innovative Methodology for Assessment of VET 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>.

TO ASSESS OR NOT TO ASSESS PRIOR LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS?

The benefits we receive from assessment greatly depend on how we perceive it as a procedure. Throughout their life people encounter situations such as examining, control or assessing, and they have etched in one's memory as more or less significant, useful or not, pleasant, but mostly alarming and stressful occurrences. In these situations an individual acts and reacts in accordance with their experience, person's individual features and the assessor's professionalism.

If you have experienced unpleasant emotions while taking a test or conducting an open lesson, you are bound to perceive each similar situation with a certain concern and alarm. The unpleasant emotions are usually created by:

- heightened pressure (due to time limits; responsibility for consequences; unfamiliar circumstances; the assessor's inconsiderate behaviour etc.);
- uncertainty whether the achieved results are consistent with the demands and will generate a positive evaluation;
- embarrassment about mistakes;
- the knowledge that in other, more relaxed circumstances the activity would be more productive;
- the risk that the received evaluation could not only lessen the professional self-regard but also affect the general self-esteem.

To protect themselves from such emotional turmoil, an individual creates a kind of psychological safeguard mechanism or a manner of reaction, the aim of which is to maintain emotional balance by either diminishing the significance of the particular situation or justifying one's behaviour.

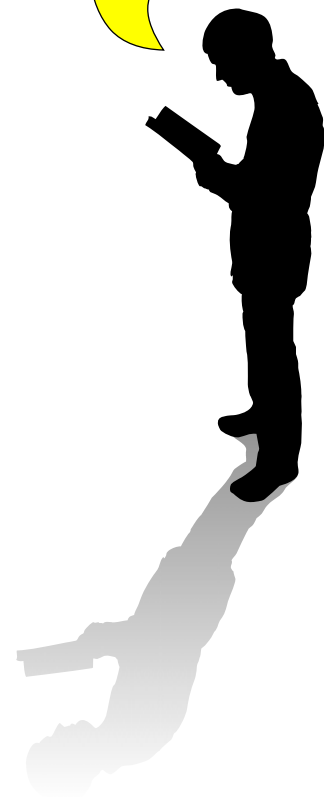
The typical behavioural styles in the circumstances when our activities and work results are assessed by third persons may be defined as follows:

- the passive defensive style;
- the aggressive defensive style;
- the anxious defensive style;
- the constructive style.

Let us give a brief description for each of the aforementioned behavioural styles.

The Passive Defensive Style. The individual obediently and without demur does everything that is required (*“I do what must be done, or else they won’t leave me alone, at least I will be able to add something to my resume!”*); tries to conform to the assessor’s behavioural style; shows no initiative and tries to stay in the background; answers questions in a relatively laconic manner; willingly listens and agrees to any suggestions; stresses their readiness to concede or rectify mistakes; does not argue; leaves the impression of a person who is too submissive or evasive; seriously considers all failures and criticism. Appreciation is the best incentive. In assessment situations the main motivation for such a person is to get through the situation as painlessly as possible and to avoid an embarrassing failure (*“The most important thing for me is to leave a good impression so that people would praise me and leave me alone!”*).

**Again these bureaucrats
have cooked up
something new,
as if we had
nothing better to do!**



The Aggressive Defensive Style. Generally the attitude towards assessment procedures is negative (*“Again these bureaucrats have cooked up something new, as if we had nothing better to do! If they worked at school for a while, they would know not to teach others!”*). Every task is perceived critically, with suspicion. These people are always ready to dispute the objectivity of a task or assessment. They like to participate in arguments. Their reaction to criticism or suggestions is aggressive, they defend their opinions. They like to instruct the assessors. They listen only to express a counter opinion. They are dissatisfied with the process and the participants. Recognition of their achievements seems self-evident to them, but they do not accept criticism. The basic motivation in assessment situations is to defend their opinion! The best defence is a good offence (*“No matter what you say, my way of working is still the right one!”*).

The Anxious Defensive Style. It is usually characteristic of highly emotional people with the heightened anxiety level. They perceive the assessment procedures as a great trouble they need to get rid of as soon as possible. The behaviour, depending on the subjective perception and significance of the situation, can be certain and convincing as well as timid or even aggressive. Sometimes people with this particular style of reacting may get confused while performing the simplest tasks, but stay calm in much more complicated circumstances. The main feature, characteristic of this type of people, is inconsistent behaviour and unpredictability. Sometimes,

when feeling threatened, they start manipulating, demonstrating their helplessness and incomprehension, make excuses about their health problems or other circumstances, ask for additional allowances, miss appointments, flatter the assessors etc. The main motivation in assessment situations is *“I shall get through this, whatever it takes!”*

**How to develop
a constructive
behavioral pattern?**

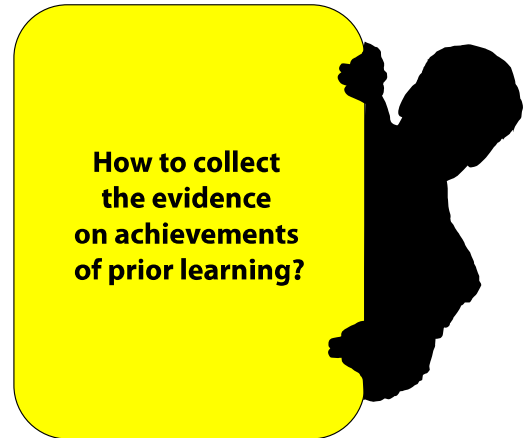


The Constructive Style. Assessment and examination situations are perceived as a chance to receive new information, test one’s skills and find inspiration for further activities. A relatively high self-esteem ensures the ability to develop a dialogue with the assessor when both are in equivalent positions. These people do not only expect acknowledgment from the assessors; they are also able to listen to critical remarks and constructive suggestions. They show interest in the results of evaluation and are not too shy to express their opinion on the assessment process and tasks. Basic motivation is a desire to benefit from the experience as much as possible.

If you recognize your behaviour in one of the aforementioned styles, it only confirms that this typology is based on realistic observations and you possess the characteristics of a human being. Each of these behaviour models has its strengths and weaknesses; it is an approach that has been approbated in the real life and is not always successful, but it is still individual, personal. Each educator must assess their students’ achievements and monitor their behaviour during the tests. There are supposedly no major differences in teachers’ and students’ behavioural patterns during assessment situations if these situations are not conceptually different. The first three (passive, aggressive and anxious) defensive styles show a person’s attitude towards assessment as a troublesome, emotionally traumatic and useless activity. The constructive behavioural style during assessment process is more common for people who are ready for professional development and who simply like their job.

WHAT IS THE RESULT OF ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING?

Assessment of learning achievements is a process that assesses person's knowledge, skills, attitudes and value dispositions, applying various methods and processes. Evaluation reflects assessor's decisions concerning distinctive professional values (achievements) of a candidate that have been identified as well as concerning the spheres that need improvement. It is related to the concept of 'value' or worth and denotes attribution of a certain value or decision making (Kraujutaitytė, 2003; Knight, Yorke, 2003). Within the concept of Assessment of Prior Learning, the identification, recognition and accreditation of non-formally and informally acquired competencies aims at the recognition and accreditation of prior learning and promotion of further development. This concept is regarded as the main organising principle for lifelong learning strategies. It is not designed to highlight the lack of knowledge and skills, precisely the opposite, it aims to examine the existing knowledge and skills and value dispositions. In other words, rather than being half empty, the focus takes the view that the glass is half full (Duvekot, 2009)!



Assessment of prior learning (further APL) is conceptually different from other traditionally existing assessment procedures by its tendency for consultations among colleagues. It is more than just the evaluation of knowledge and skills. The most important benefit for a teacher is a good-quality analysis of their professional activities and the consultative support in their professional development. If you wish to improve your pedagogical experience, you will appreciate the opportunities offered by APL and in the course of the assessment process will be able to develop a constructive behavioural pattern. Assessment strengthens also your diagnostic competencies; that will in turn stimulate individual learning processes.

“The three whales” that form the basis of a teacher's professional self-development are:

- **creativity;**
- **experience;**
- **reflection.**



If after the APL procedure you have managed:

- to improve your ability to recognize your experience and the essence of your work;
- to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of your professional activities;
- to get inspiration for new ideas, you may assume that it has fulfilled the goals set.

To achieve the best possible results from the assessment and to ensure the optimal personal / professional development, you must reflect on your personal motives for participating in the process of assessment. Ideally you should set your own

personal goal and develop a plan on how to use the assessment results in further personal and professional development.

It is important to remember that in the process of assessment not only your knowledge and skills, but also your attitudes and ambitions will be examined, as well as the ability to reflect on your experience!

Analysing their professional activities, teachers can start by using a model of reflection that consists of 4 parts:

Exploration part:

1. What have I achieved? (result)
2. How have I achieved it? (means)
3. Why did I do it?

Critical part:

1. Did I achieve what I wanted?
2. Did I do it the way I wanted?
3. What is my attitude towards the gained and achieved?

Normative part:

1. What will I do in the future in similar situations?
2. How will I do it?
3. Why will I act in the way I planned?

Practical part

1. What are my goals?
2. How are they related to my professional development?
3. How to develop and implement my personal development plan?

Finding answers to these and other questions related to teaching activities may effectively stimulate the ability to solve problematic situations and also develop the self-examination skills.

The fact that APL can be seen as an excellent incentive for personal growth is the most important stimulus!

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR ME AS A TEACHER?

According to its purposes, the assessment can be normative, criteria-based, formative, diagnostic, or summative. In the process of normative assessment the person's achievements being assessed are graded comparing them to the achievements of other representatives of the appropriate group, aiming to determine 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 developed beforehand.

Diagnostic (formative) assessment identifies the level of achievements, i.e. how many and what kind of achievements the person holds. During this kind of assessment the person's needs and abilities to improve professional knowledge and skills or/and acquire new ones are discussed. Formative assessment should be applied aiming to critically evaluate and improve the professional activity (see Fig. 1). Formative assessment determines the progress of learning and provides detailed feedback information about learning and development possibilities. It is worth noting that feedback, characteristic of this assessment, is its essential aspect. Such assessment is geared to learning efficiency and is related to continuous diagnosing of learning achievements, whereas feedback allows the learner to perceive the aspects of professional activity that need improvement (Ramsden, 2000; Black, Wiliam, 2001; Stobart, Gipps, 1997; Dunn, Morgan, O'Reily, Parry, 2004; Breier, 2005). Formative assessment should be based on constant initiative of teachers and their involvement into the process of assessment.

Formative assessment, used as diagnostic assessment, defines individual learning needs, difficulties and proposes a range of solutions, such as individual programmes, special educational methods and necessary support for learners to choose. It can be stated that formative assessment is characterised by change or progress measurement, educational and diagnostic functions that determine motivation for continuous learning.

Summative assessment is used to summarise and generalise learner achievements. Dunn, Morgan, O'Reilly and Parry (2004) indicate that the learner can judge about their progress on the basis of summative assessment conclusions themselves; however, in contrast to formative assessment, these results cannot be corrected. Ideally the aim of summative assessment is the final assessment of various learning activities, the assessment of which was formative during the learning process (Biggs, 1999; Dunn, Morgan, O'Reilly, Parry, 2004).

In particular, APL makes it possible for a person to make an inventory of their competencies, evaluating and recognizing those competencies; it is not a direct requirement for instant development, as this is up to the individual to decide. Recognition and quantitative evaluation of competencies is also known as the passive or summative APL approach. When APL also stimulates further learning – that is, ascribes value to competencies – it is called activating or formative APL. These are the two main approaches in APL.

The summative approach focuses on recognizing competencies within the framework of existing certificates and diplomas. Based on this approach, APL is an alternative route to certification. Summative APL is limited to recognizing competencies (evidenced in portfolio). This APL approach is mainly found in vocational education as a kind of exemption policy.

APL can also be used as an instrument for career formation: formative APL. Awarding diplomas and certificates is then not a goal but merely a mean of recognizing the progress a person has made in their personal development as a learning individual and determining what further progress can still be made. In other words, this approach mainly focuses on the development and implementation of an individual's personal development plan. Formative APL is strongly linked to career formation at all levels of an individual's social participation: paid or unpaid activities and civil education. Formative APL links career formation that is mostly individual to the requirements of the labour market or in labour agencies (Duvekot, Brouwer, 2004).

The essential difference between both approaches is that a summative APL process focuses on recognising someone's development in the form of 'paper pats on the back'. Thus, as if a snapshot is taken of someone's status quo and documentary evidence such as diplomas, degrees or certificates is awarded as the official recognition for learning accomplishments. The formative process, however, takes a deeper look. Formative assessment allows directing your own movie. The formative approach, using its focus on career formation, nevertheless considers a much broader field of recognition and appreciation: in addition to recognition through certification, value is also ascribed to career steps, job rotation, successful reintegration, prevention of work disability,

initiating independent entrepreneurship, etc. In essence, summative APL can be considered a part of formative APL. The reverse is almost impossible (Duvekot, 2009).

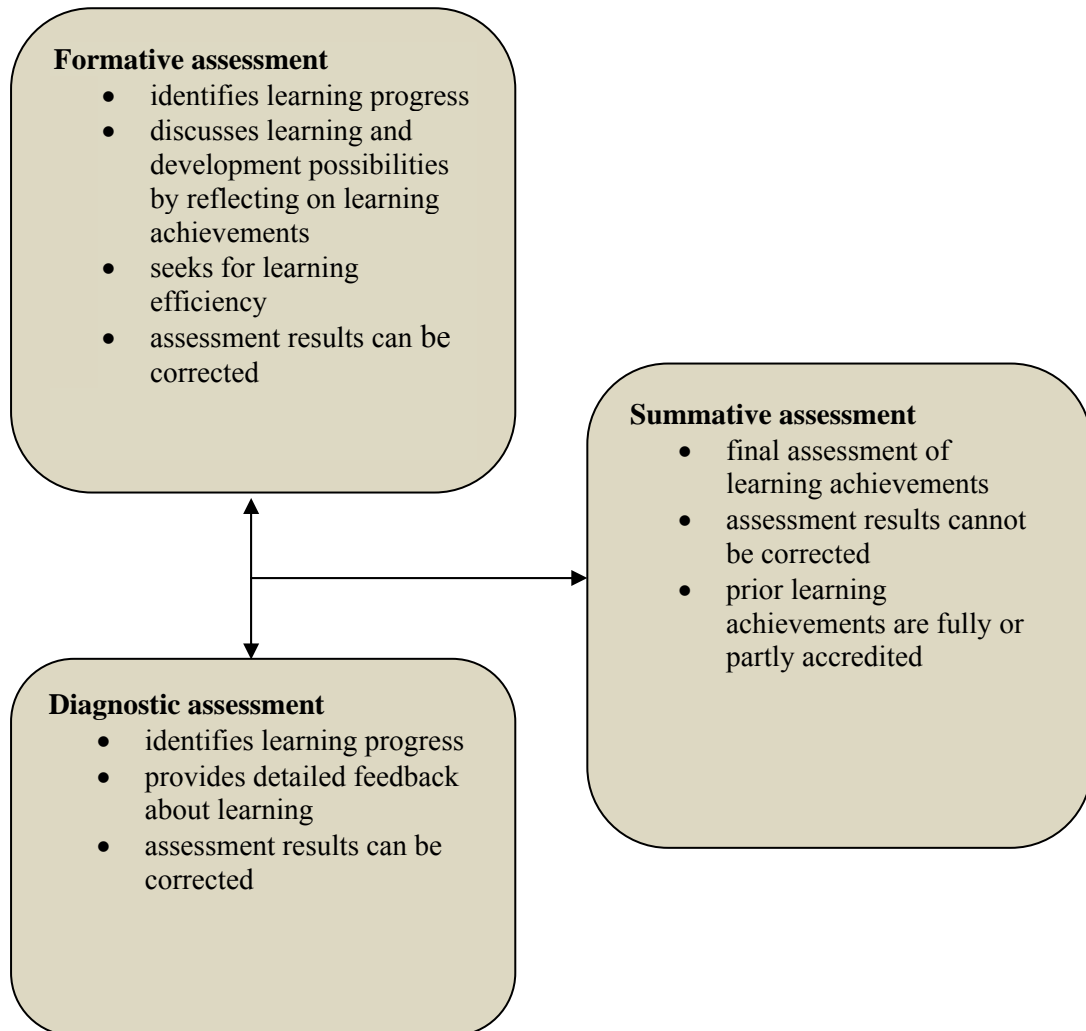


Fig. 1. Nature and relationship among diagnostic, summative and formative assessment

Assessing achievements made not only in formal but also in non-formal and informal learning, all kinds of assessment – diagnostic, formative and summative – should be applied.

Development of assessment methodology involves such processes as:

- setting the assessment criteria (which are described as attributes, on the basis of which the evaluation decision is made). Competence (being an attribute of the person) can be assessed singling out particular competencies of a teacher (formulated as requirements for knowledge, skills and attitudes, necessary for implementing a certain professional activity);

- selecting assessment methods (suitable for assessing the knowledge, skills and attitudes being components of a certain competency) considering that competency can be evidenced in actions, behaviour and activity results of the teacher (see Fig. 2).

Competency components	Evidence of competency in:		
	<i>actions</i>	<i>behaviour</i>	<i>results</i>
<i>Knowledge</i>	→	→	→
<i>Abilities and skills</i>	→	→	→
<i>Attitudes</i>	→	→	→

Fig. 2. Assessing competency components

The idea of assessment of prior learning is to recognize that teacher’s competence has been developed in a variety of learning situations through job and life experience. Assessing teachers’ prior learning slightly differs from traditional formal learning assessment. Assessment of teachers’ non-formal and informal learning could be described as a holistic form of assessment as it assesses a number of related knowledge, skills and value attitudes simultaneously. Therefore, a number of methods exist which allow comprehensive, flexible and effective assessment of teachers’ knowledge, skills and value attitudes.

Criteria for assessment require that the evidence should:

- be based on actual performance and not just theoretical knowledge;
- demonstrate an acceptable level of competence against performance indicators (such as learning outcomes in a study programme or the list of competencies in a professional standard);
- demonstrate an ability to transfer knowledge and skills in pedagogic situations in different environments;
- be up-to-date;
- be sufficient to prove competence in different types of attesting, for example, in research and continuous professional development activities;
- be presented together with the samples of work performed, e.g.
 - a learning programme the teacher has designed;
 - evaluation sheets;

- reports;
- be presented together with the feedback from learners, colleagues, line managers etc.;
- reflective analysis of the teacher's professional activities should be attached.

WHAT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING?

Assessment of prior learning is a complex process, which consists of certain stages and involves certain actors, which may vary depending on tradition culture. Therefore it is important to ground APL processes on common principles.

Principle 1: Learning outcomes based approach. Learning outcome is the statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate upon completion of the learning process. Learning outcomes formulated in the study programme being designed are seen as a starting point for assessment of the achievements of non-formal and informal learning. Learning outcomes are a kind of “check-list” describing good teaching practices, and a “yardstick” to compare personal achievements with the required ones. Learning outcomes are based on the definition of competencies, and they are formulated as the required results within the framework of the study programme. Those achievements, acquired during the non-formal and informal learning are also compared to the requirements of the formal programme, so that the evaluation solution could be made – do they match together.

Principle 2: Integrity / Process approach is based on a series of procedures which set up the design and development of the APL system. It is emphasised that all the step-by-step procedures of the recognition of non-formal and informal learning must be taken into account, and the entire process should be clear and unambiguous both for the candidate and the assessor.

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

Principle 4: Stakeholder participation in the assessment and recognition process. *Assessment* is described as a pattern to ensure permanent links between labour market, vocational teachers and vocational teacher education institutions. Stakeholders are persons or groups, interested in the quality of learning at a certain study programme, or in recognition of non-formally

or informally acquired competencies. Stakeholders are represented by the following groups: academic and administrative staff of the institution, learners, graduates, employers, representatives of professional associations, governmental institutions, trade unions, etc. Stakeholders can be involved in identifying competencies that are necessary for VET teachers, and these competencies form the basis for the definition of learning outcomes.

Principle 5: *Exactness and validity.* This principle ensures the reliability of the results of assessment.

Principle 6: *Versatility of assessment methods* emphasizes the diversity of learning methods, and the triangulation, seeking to substantiate the assessment results on deeper analysis of cognitive, psycho-motoric and affective learning achievements. The assessment methods should include both assessment of the written information and examination of the empirical evidence of the competencies to be recognized.

Principle 7: *Transparency,* emphasizing the quality assurance mechanisms, built on certain methodology.

Principle 8: *Principle of volunteerism and consciousness* states that the process of assessment and recognition is complex, time-consuming and requires candidate endeavour, therefore it should not be compulsory, but based on possibility to choose.

Principle 9: *Principle of trust (assuring the competence of assessors)* states that trust to the assessment process is associated with the persons, implementing the assessment, and their formal qualification and real competence.

Principle 10: *Periodic renewal.* The APL procedure is open for change and development; therefore it should undergo periodic renewal. The necessity of APL procedure, its expedience, feasibility, propriety and accuracy, as well as the effectiveness of assessment methodology, and the quality of assessors' activity should be periodically examined. The evaluation results show strengths and weaknesses of the APL procedure, and its improvement includes the enhancement of the identified strengths as well as the elimination of the discovered weaknesses.

Most often the APL procedure involves several consequent and integrated stages such as: *informing, consulting, assessment, and decision making* (see Fig. 3).

The stage of informing is intended to familiarize the candidate with the APL procedure, APL principles, assessment criteria, possible assessment results. The stage of informing requires establishing qualitative criteria and indices in order to ensure the APL accessibility. Accessibility is also the assurance of equal opportunities, which are the essence of APL procedure,

it provides the explanation of particularity, and thus gives the opportunity to discuss possible assessment results.

It should be noted that the stage of informing is not always attributed to the APL procedure as information processing is very extensive and labour-consuming activity. The information (concerning further steps, assessment criteria, etc.), received at this stage also influences a candidate's decision whether they can get prepared for the assessment alone, independently, or they will need help of the consultant.

Main steps in assessing teachers' knowledge and skills:

- informing, the initial advisory interview;
- consulting, identifying sources of evidence;
- preparing and submitting the portfolio;
- assessment;
- verification and certification;
- further development.

The next stage of the APL procedure is **consulting**. Consulting in a broad sense is a process during which a consultant helps the candidate to prepare for the APL. This stage requires transparency and fairness as regards the candidate, i.e. a person has to know what their input will be during the assessment procedure, how much time it will take, what assessment criteria will be employed, how definite situations will be regarded, and other aspects. Consulting can be individual or group. At the stage of consulting the procedure of assessment is introduced in detail. In contrast to the stage of informing which informs about the stages and principles of the assessment procedure, at the stage of consulting the candidate is advised on the assessment procedure paying particular attention to the submitted evidentiary material of learning achievements and analyzing their compliance with the professional standards, or learning outcomes in a particular study programme.

In the process of individual consultations the help is also provided in compiling a *portfolio* of the documents or other evidence that prove personal knowledge, skills and value attitudes. The consultant can advise in what logical sequence all the documents, reflections, sketchbooks, certificates, diploma copies, or any other competence attesting evidence should be arranged.

The stage of assessment and evaluation (as decision making) is the last stage of the APL procedure. This stage of assessment involves the analysis of the candidates learning achievement evidence provided in the portfolio, and the analysis of its compliance with the learning outcomes identified in the study programmes. In the process of the assessment of the portfolio it is considered whether there is enough evidential material to attest the desirable competencies, whether it is authentic, i.e. whether it reflects precisely individual factual knowledge and skills.

If the learning achievement portfolio lacks evidential material to prove the candidate's desirable competencies, the assessor chooses other methods of empirical assessment. It can be an interview, test (oral or written), practical tasks and the observation of practical tasks, the analysis of reflections, etc. The assessment methods can be various and selected according to the situation in order to identify as many as possible achievements of a candidate and provide a comprehensive picture of their competencies.

Decision making is the final stage of the assessment procedure. The decision on what 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 or particular study programme, they are awarded the certificate that attests the qualification, or, if the candidate aims at acquiring additional knowledge and skills, a personal study plan can be developed and the candidate can choose only those study programme modules or subjects that are necessary for the acquisition of a desirable qualification.

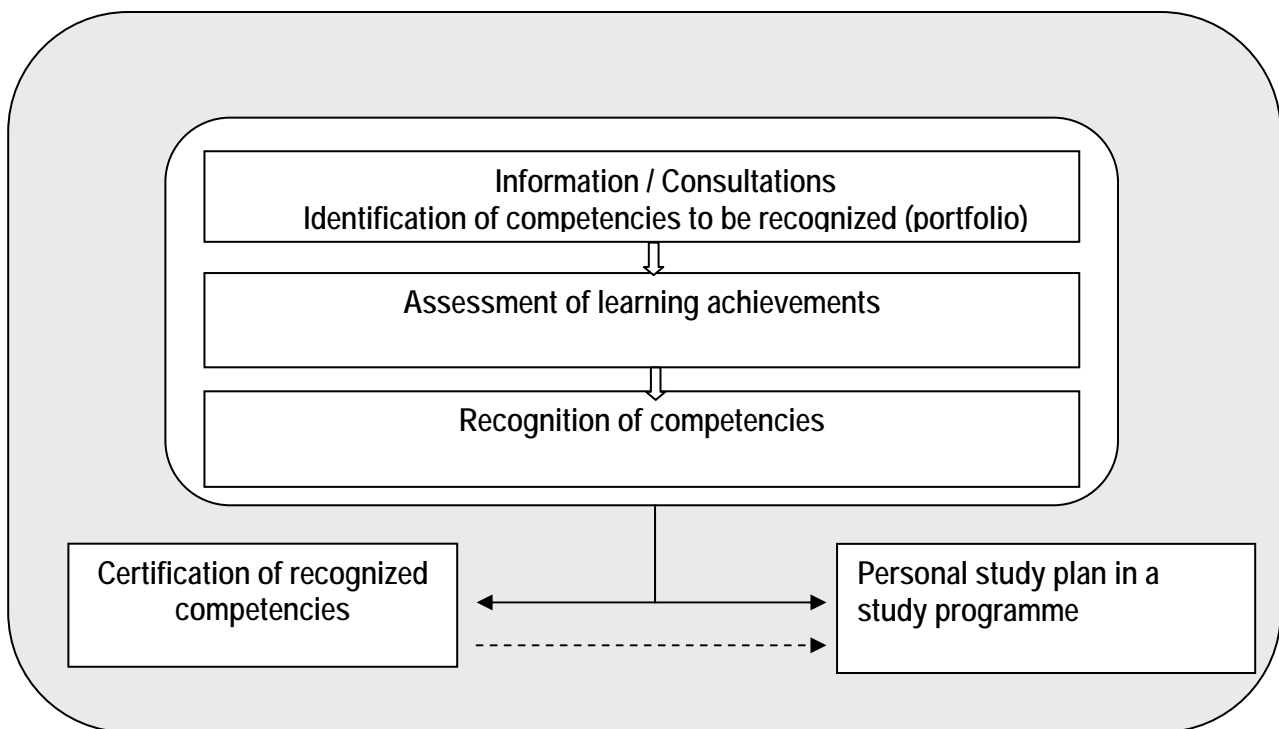


Fig. 3. The APL Process

It is important that the assessment committee gives feedback information about the final decision. In the process of assessment, irrespective of the assessment methods or the assessment results, the candidate 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 implies not only positive references and remarks, it emphasises what should be improved. Feedback is important because it performs the function of formative assessment.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING?

The entire procedure of APL concerns not only recognizing the competencies, it is also the communication among the candidate, the consultant and the assessor (or whatever other actors might be involved in the process) in order to find the effective personalised learning path.

The main actors in the APL process are:

- VET teacher (APL candidate)
- Consultant
- Tutor
- Assessor

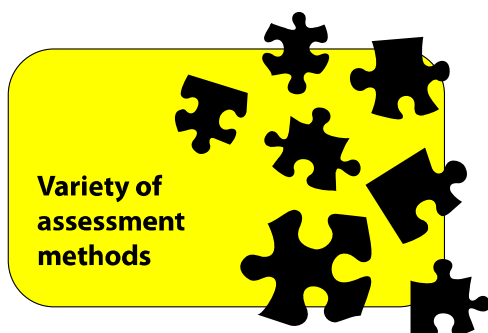
Various actors can contribute to the success of the assessment of VET teachers' non-formal and informal learning achievements, but the key persons to be mentioned are the VET teacher themselves, who both is the APL candidate and the initiator, the consultant, tutor, and, finally, the assessor, who makes the decision considering the assessment results (see Table 1).

APL candidates themselves are the most important and the key persons in the entire process of APL. The quality and the success of APL mainly depend on the purposes and the attitudes of the candidate. The candidate should understand the role of APL in their own career development. The initiating candidate should have enough information on APL and motivation to collect and to demonstrate the evidence of their professional development results, i.e. carry out the self analysis of their own learning achievements.

Consultant. Even though the Lifelong Learning ideas are being actively promoted, one can admit that learning and planning of professional career is not the common activity in the VET teacher education culture yet. Therefore the role of the consultant as the facilitator becomes very important for the APL candidates as they have little or no experience in planning learning activities or gathering the evidence of learning, which is happening on-job. The assistance of the consultant is central at the information gathering stage and while preparing to present it to the assessor.

Tutor is one of the actors in VET teacher education who works at university and is responsible for the design and development as well as implementation of the VET teachers' education programme (in academic perspective) and education process at university. At the preparation for APL stage tutor could provide consultations on the entire study programme and become one of the stakeholders, considering the rules and requirements of the study programme.

Assessor (subject lecturer) is the expert in the subject, the APL candidate applies. The



task of the assessor is to make a decision whether the demonstrated knowledge, skills and attitudes correspond to the learning outcomes of a study programme (or competencies, listed in the professional standard). The assessor is responsible for analysing the candidate's portfolio and for selecting appropriate assessment methods in order to attest the evidence, presented in portfolio.

Table 1. APL actors and their tasks at concrete stages

Stages of APL	Tasks	Actors	Challenges
Preparation	Initiation	Candidate (VET teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Be aware of the benefits of APL – Be aware of the curriculum structure
	Informing	Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use various methods of providing information – Explain the APL process
	Consultation (for compiling portfolio of evidence)	Consultant + Candidate (VET teacher)	<p><i>Consultant:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of consulting strategies and techniques <p><i>Candidate:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Formulate their expectations and aims
Assessment	Portfolio analysis	Assessor + Candidate (VET teacher)	<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 evidence portfolio
	Selecting assessment methods	Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Choosing assessment methods for each competency component (knowledge, skills and value attitudes)
	Formative and summative assessment	Assessor + Candidate (VET teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Personal contact is important – Constructive feedback and dialogue
Decision making	Full / partial recognition	Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Matching assessment results with the learning outcomes of a study programme
	Personal learning plan	Assessor +Candidate (VET teacher) + Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Discussions and negotiations considering personal aims and results of the assessment
Quality assurance	Internal quality assurance	Assessor + Consultant + Candidate (VET teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Open discussion on improvement of the procedure, considering the feedback from all APL actors
	External quality assurance	External expert (not discussed in this Handbook)	

HOW DO I START THE ASSESSMENT OF MY PRIOR LEARNING?

Similar to every important situation associated with professional activities and their assessment in the process of APL it is also expected that candidates are prepared both formally and psychologically. Assuming that you already have some experience in similar situations and certain understanding of APL, we will mention the most important stages and aspects of the preliminary preparation.

First: Establish the aims of the APL procedure, as well as your responsibilities in it!

Second: Determine requirements, tasks, assessment criteria and form! It is best to discuss the assessment models (time, the number of tasks, form of assessment, feedback reception forms, recommendations) with the APL consultant. The better you understand the entire process, the easier it is to behave in a constructive manner.

Third: Consider your attitude and behavioural tactics! The most important aspects of behaviour and attitudes characteristic of constructive behavioural style are the following:

- motivation – APL is an opportunity to ascertain what one knows and is able to do, as well as a way to get important information regarding one's professional development;
- flexible, convincing behaviour without losing the individual style;
- a positive, respectful attitude;
- willingness to maintain dialogue;
- ability to rationally justify own opinion, even if it does not agree with the assessors' viewpoint;
- ability to perceive, accept criticism;
- knowing own rights (legal as well as basic human rights);
- ability to consider and reflect on the self-assessment;
- ability to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the APL procedure.



Important question before starting APL

What is my goal: to improve my teaching competence, or to shorten a certain study program?



Admittedly, some of these aspects are easy to realize, but some may cause considerable difficulties. For example, many people feel emotional stress if they receive a critical assessment. The typical psychological mistake in this situation is the desire to defend oneself or, feeling shame and lack of self esteem, to agree with everything just to get through the unpleasant situation as quickly as possible. It would be more constructive not to hasten the response; it is better to reflect on the information (“*I will take it into account.*”) or to ask clarifying questions. Remember – you have the right to ask questions!

Another widely spread phenomenon is that people may mix up or misunderstand instructions, mishear questions or forget important things in an assessment situation. Remember – you have the right to take a pause and change the circumstances by discussing your feelings with the assessors.



HOW CAN MY PRIOR LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS BE EVIDENCED AND ASSESSED? WHAT ARE THE ASSESSMENT METHODS?

It's worth emphasizing that the entire idea and the APL process is based on the initiative of the candidate, who makes the decision to receive recognition of non-formally and informally acquired learning achievements. This decision should be based on the results of *self-assessment*. Therefore, before starting to compile the portfolio, the candidate, with the help of the consultant, goes through self-assessment and indicates their professional goals, ambitions, revises the professional development opportunities in the past, present and future.

Self-assessment contributes to the range of existing assessment methods. This method may overlap with the reflective

method because it typically involves a narrative that summarizes candidate's work as a teacher and explains the relevance of the evidence included in the portfolio. It is the key method of APL, as it provides the information on already acquired competencies of a teacher, their strengths and weaknesses in their daily pedagogical practice. The information obtained in the course of self-assessment can be used in three ways: 1) to identify areas for improvement; 2) to compare personal perception of competencies with the results of assessment by assessor; 3) to develop a personal learning plan in collaboration with the consultant. Teachers benefit from using self-assessment when trying to identify priorities for their professional development and progress.

To make self-assessment a more reliable method, it is necessary to define the areas of competence or the list of items they should refer. The self-assessment form can be loose and reflective or formal and rigidly structured.

A sample of semi-structured reflective self-assessment questionnaire

1. What qualities do I possess that make me an effective teacher?
2. What strong points characterize my teaching practice?
3. What is my greatest weakness that I need to overcome for continued success as a teacher?
4. What knowledge, skills and value dispositions do I need to become a better teacher?
5. What are my pedagogical beliefs? What educational philosophy is behind it?

The formal self-assessment process makes it more clear and concrete: What will be assessed? Who will design questions and develop a set of criteria?

Example of rigidly structured reflective self-assessment form

The following scale could be used to determine the scores for each indicator and competence area:

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 the 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.

Teachers could be asked to evaluate the following statements by ascribing the above describes

What qualities do I possess that make me an effective teacher?



scores.

1. I am an expert in my subject field.
2. I am aware of modern teaching and learning theories.
3. I formulate learning outcomes according to state and school priorities.
4. I integrate knowledge, skills and value attitudes across curricula.
5. I use innovative teaching methods appropriate to learning outcomes, including the use of technology.
6. I select teaching-learning activities to accommodate individual differences among students.
7. I select and use pedagogical resources relevant to course purposes.
8. I use accurate, up-to-date information in my course.
9. I use interactive teaching methods to enhance students' active learning.
10. I assess my students' progress regularly.
11. I give constructive feedback on my students' progress.

12. I use assessment results to determine whether the objectives have been achieved.

13. I use assessment results to modify my teaching.

14. I use assessment results to modify the curriculum.

Portfolio is based on self analysis systematically structured collection of evidence of learning achievements made inside or outside the formal training or in the work environment. It reflects the needs of personal learning and development.

Here after the most popular assessment methods that are used in the APL procedure will be presented and discussed.

Portfolio

Generally speaking, a portfolio is a collection of reflections and speculations on individual experience as well as assignments accomplished over a period of time and gathered into a file. Portfolio method is used to help individual learners capture, organize, integrate and reuse the

achievements of their formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences acquired over a certain period of time; to allow learners to take advantage of this accumulated information when planning and assessing the progress of their learning (Stefani, Mason, Pegler, 2008). In the context of APL, portfolio can be defined as a comprehensive report that describes and documents the achievements of a person's prior (non-formal and informal) learning. Being self-assessment based, portfolio method enables learners to become the stakeholders of their individual learning progress.

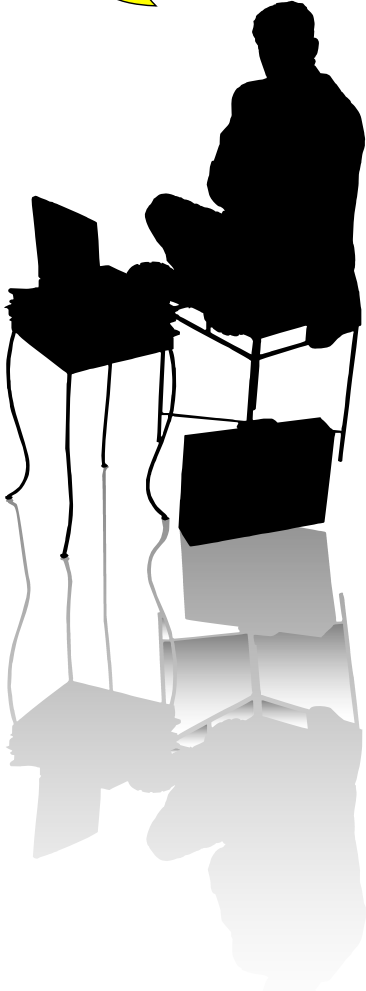
It is important to emphasize that in case of APL, a portfolio of a teacher is used both for self-assessment and external review. Therefore, the information in portfolio should address and be clear for both "audiences" – a teacher (APL candidate) and the assessor, who has to do the external review. Table 2 describes three main types of portfolios, which can be characterized by their purposes: professional growth, accountability and marketing.

*Table 2. Typology of Portfolios
(adapted from Hartnell-Young, Morris, 2007; Bullock, Hawk, 2005)*

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES		MARKETING PURPOSES (Showcase portfolios)
Formative (Growth portfolios) Supporting learning	Summative (Accountability portfolios) Evaluating learning needs	Obtaining employment
<i>Aim:</i> to get consultations / awareness on improving own teaching activity	<i>Aim:</i> to take evaluative decision about qualifying against requirements	<i>Aim:</i> to get an award / position
<i>Audience:</i> an individual and learning facilitator / mentor	<i>Audience:</i> an individual and assessor	<i>Audience:</i> (potential) employer
<i>Features:</i> - Includes issues to be discussed with the learning facilitator (teaching philosophy, classroom management plans, teaching strategies, etc.)	<i>Features:</i> - Based on professional standards or learning outcomes in the curriculum	<i>Features:</i> - Includes best examples, illustrating one's professional activity
<i>Examples of usage:</i> - Professional development planning - Recording of continuing professional development - Appraisal of achievements: lifelong learning	<i>Examples of usage:</i> - University admission / Course requirements - Performance review and promotion - Professional certification	<i>Examples of usage:</i> - Job application - Introduction to "clients" - Organizational skills (skills of the staff, presented for school's community)

A teacher portfolio is the collection of documents that represents the best of one's teaching practice and provides the person with an opportunity to reflect on their professional behaviour as well as to claim for its recognition.

How to structure my portfolio?



Portfolio for recognition of professional competence sums up manifold aspects of teacher's professional activity. It means that the content of the portfolio should provide an account of the key competencies of the APL candidate. Apart from the account of courses covered, certificates attesting the teacher's professional development, it should contain demonstrative materials that would let the assessor authenticate certain subject didactic or personal competencies.

Assessment might require, in addition to the submission of a portfolio, the production of artefacts, a project, performance, oral examination records, and/or one or more traditional examination(s). Whatever the form of evidence, the assessment process must include a submission of an appendix that would characterise the portfolio in terms of:

- acceptability (is the evidence valid and reliable?)
- sufficiency (are the achievements of the individual fully demonstrated?)
- authenticity (is the evidence clearly the achievement of the applicant?)
- currency (is the learning current, or if not is there evidence of updating?).

The important question is *how to structure the portfolio* in a clear and assessable way. It should be clear to the assessor exactly how each item in the portfolio provides evidence of the candidate's competence (for some items a short explanation may be required).

- Each item of evidence should be given an appendix number and filed in a logical order.
- The portfolio should be compiled following a certain system for clear cross-referencing between items of evidence and individual units, elements, and performance criteria.

Table 3 gives an example how professional experiences and learning achievements can be reflected in the portfolio.

Table 3. Example of portfolio structure

Experience activity	Time period	Assignments and responsibilities	Knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired	Documents possible
1. 2. 3. n.				

Portfolio structure varies depending on what competencies the teacher has chosen for APL. In general, the teacher portfolio consists of the following major components.

Self-assessment (what are the candidate's strengths, what knowledge and skills can be improved, what problems were encountered in meeting the professional goals) of:

- A teaching philosophy (reflective essay on contemporary teaching and learning, reflective annotations of current educational theories, statements of pedagogical thinking)
- Evidence of teaching (sample curriculum, lesson plans, instructional design, teaching materials, methods; samples of completed students work; results of students' evaluations, etc.)

Candidates themselves choose the way they would like to attest the existence of a certain competence. It could be lesson notes, study plans, a teacher's diary containing reflections on pedagogical work, projects, experts' evaluations, students' or colleagues' opinions, retrospective video album, a description of a pedagogical situation and its solution. Consequently, the portfolio can contain:

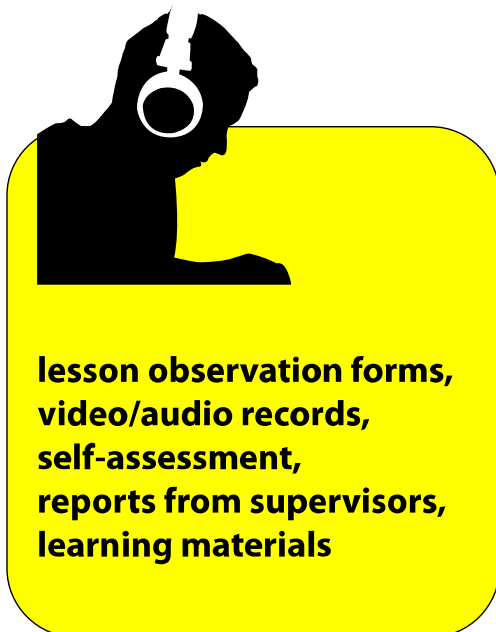
- practice-based documents;
- reports on practice observations;
- video / audio records, with commentary and analysis related to learning achievements;
- analytic and evaluative description of practice;
- reports from supervisors in relation to

IMPORTANT

The portfolio should contain the **reflective commentary**. This component includes statements on teaching philosophy and goals describing your philosophy of teaching and your beliefs about how students learn. The purpose of the reflective statements is to reveal the "pedagogical thinking" behind your teaching and to explain why various items are included in your portfolio and what these items "tell" about your teaching.

aspects of practice;

- documents and experience materials from the courses, seminars, conferences attended;
- lesson observation forms;
- learning materials developed;
- evaluation given by other participants in professional mastery development process;
- assessment and feedback provided by colleagues, students, and the employer;
- self-assessment;
- test results, etc.



Portfolio presentation and discussion.

Presentation of the portfolio can be held in an individual conversation between the candidate and the assessor, or publicly, involving other applicants in a discussion. The assessor should make acquainted with the content of the “portfolio” and evaluated it beforehand. During the presentation, the candidate accentuates the most important aspects and answers the questions asked by the assessor. Those competence aspects, which have not been highlighted in the portfolio, or the candidate admits that some kind of knowledge and skills have to be acquired yet are revealed in the dialogue. It is essential to

understand that “portfolio” is not something completed and that it is the basis for development of a personal learning plan for professional development.

The APL assessor should not base the assessment practice on one method only; moreover, they should be able to identify what are the challenges in choosing one or another assessment method. Although portfolio is one of the most important methods of APL, the candidate should take into consideration both advantages and disadvantages of this method in order to use the portfolio effectively. Having analysed those, it could be easier to overcome the negative aspects or to plan to use the portfolio effectively. Table 4 will help you to consider the advantages and disadvantages of this method.

Table 4. *Advantages and disadvantages of using portfolio*

Advantages of using portfolio	Disadvantages of using portfolio
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holistic – it allows presenting both the professional experience and the learning achievements of a teacher in one file. • Allows the assessors to recognize the candidate as a person, each unique with their own characteristics, needs, and strengths. Portfolios can contain evidence reflecting a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes. • Portfolios can reflect personal development. Most other forms of assessment are more like “snapshots” of particular levels of development. • Serves as a framework, providing a basis for further analysis and planning. Helps to identify areas of professional strengths and weaknesses, and barriers to success. • Serves as a concrete vehicle for communication, providing ongoing communication or exchange of information among the parties involved. • Promotes a shift in ownership; participants can take an active role in examining their own past professional development and consider future achievements. • Portfolio assessment provides an opportunity to address the shortcomings of traditional assessment. It provides an opportunity to assess more complex and important aspects of a relevant area or topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be very time consuming for candidates to prepare and for assessors to organize and evaluate the contents. • If goals and criteria are not clear, the portfolio can appear to be just a miscellaneous collection of artefacts that doesn't reflect patterns of growth or achievements. • 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, the data in portfolio can be difficult to analyze or summarize to show development. • The sources of evidence can sometimes be doubtful. It is usually necessary to combine the assessment of portfolios with 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.

Recommendations for building a Portfolio

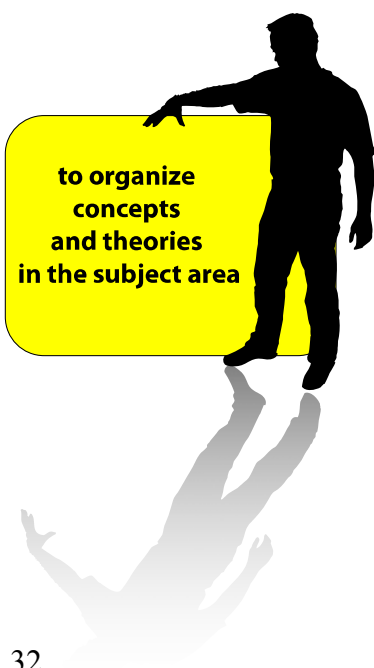
- Be selective in gathering evidence and documentation.
- Be clear and concise in your reflective comments.
- Don't make any claims about your teaching practice that cannot be authenticated.
- View your portfolio as a work in progress – emphasize development and improvement.
- Don't try to include all your teaching materials – your portfolio will become too cumbersome and nobody will read it.



As any assessment methods, portfolio used alone cannot provide the full picture of the prior learning achievements. A number of other assessment methods that supplement the results of portfolio assessment are discussed in the following sub-chapters.

One of the constructivism principles in assessment maintains that in order to perceive meaning one should understand the meaning of the **whole** as well as the parts. Parts should be understood in the context of the whole. Therefore, the APL process should be more focused on candidate's learning achievements in general, not on isolated facts or actions.

Concept map



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. Concept maps are visual representations of links/connections between a major concept and other knowledge teachers have acquired. A concept map is a kind of visualization, i.e. a graphical representation of some knowledge domain. 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. More precisely, concept mapping is a technique to visualize relationships between different concepts. Concepts are

presented as nodes, e.g. boxes and relations are presented by so-called arcs, i.e. lines that are drawn between associated concepts. These arcs are usually labelled (named), i.e. express a kind of relationship, for instance, "results in". In addition arcs can be directional, i.e. one would use arrows instead of lines. Lines are drawn between associated concepts, and relationships between the related concepts are named. These concept maps reveal the structural organisation of the material and provide the big picture. Concept map is recommended to be used to provide immediate visual information of a person's abilities:

- to synthesize and integrate information and ideas;
- to organize concepts and theories in the subject area.

Essay

One of the forms of creative work – essay – can be used to assess the prior learning achievements. To produce such a work the author of the essay needs to possess not only broad and profound knowledge but also an ability to organize the material, analyze and develop the content of the essay, an ability to express a reasoned opinion, clearly state ideas and also an ability to draw conclusions.

In an essay the author gives subjective impressions and views. The main goal of the essay is to demonstrate candidate's opinion on the topic defined by the assessor. The essay allows assessing the ability to organize and integrate facts and ideas, clearly reveals independent thinking.

In the case of assessing professional knowledge and skills *essay* is more like a retrospective description of one's personal experience. Unlike other written expressions of opinion, the *essay* emphasizes your subjective opinion.

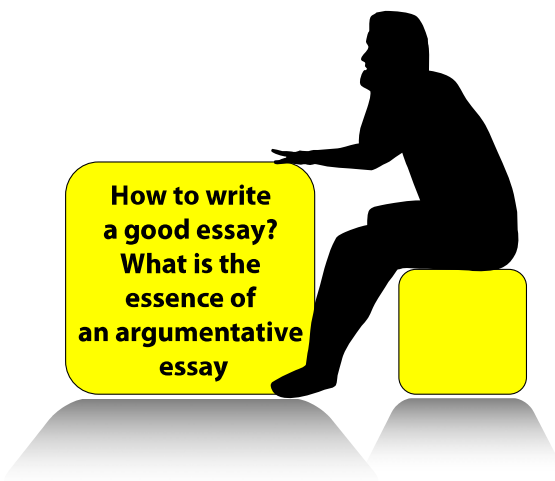
Traditionally the essay contains:

- *introduction* presents the essay's topic and goal, (the first sentence should tell the reader what the essay is going to be about, the next few sentences should outline the range and consistency of arguments). The introduction contains about 4–5 paragraphs;
- *the body* discusses the topic of the essay in a well-reasoned way, (4–5 paragraphs are devoted to developing the main idea or argument, the ideas should be presented in logical sequence);

- *concluding paragraph* is a summary of content (this part sums up the ideas, the essence, it is the topic sentence of each paragraph presented in order to make conclusions, resume);
- *bibliographic sources* used.

In the introduction the main questions, problems, the key hypotheses are formulated, the outline of the essay and sequence of arguments are provided. A weak introduction wipes away possible interest about the work though a good introduction attracts the assessor's attention. Introduction should point out the discussion points or the line of reasoning. The body should develop the main idea, questions; ideas should be logically presented and arranged. It is essential to achieve balance between the narrative and analysis. The facts are essential, though where possible they have to be explained and related to the hypothesis. The most important is to integrate the narrative with analysis where possible, thus proving that the author is able to think independently and make conclusions. If quotations are used, the text of the author cited has to be put in inverted commas with a remark in brackets notifying about the source. The conclusion has to give a clear answer to the question stated, draw conclusions and summarize to give the reader a feeling of completeness.

How to write a good essay?



1. Read the question, consider its goal and the demands to be met.
2. Find indicative phrases (key words) in order to answer the questions asked.
3. Plan and arrange ideas according to their importance. Before starting to write an essay make an outline pointing out all ideas that will be included. Write down all facts, number them according to their importance. Present most relevant information, arrange it logically.
4. Start the essay with stating the hypothesis in which briefly and precisely present the essence of the answer. Support the statement made in the hypothesis with theoretical materials and facts in the rest of the work.
5. Supplement the information with specific details, information that would allow the reader to develop judgement about your competence.

6. Use terminology accepted in the respective field.
7. Beware of verbosity, ambiguity, deviating from the topic, and reiteration of what has already been clarified.
8. The conclusion should be related to the introduction.

Before submitting read the work once again. Make sure that the hypothesis of the essay has been sufficiently explained. Check whether you have missed out some words, left some line of reasoning unfinished. Perhaps it is necessary to include a very important detail, fact, quote, which would substantially improve your essay.

There are two types of essays – **argumentative and free essay**.

Argumentative essay is a substantiated and structured statement of author's (APL candidate's) opinion. The essence of an argumentative essay is to ground and to take a stand for one's own arguments. Argumentative essays are most often assigned to discuss a particular topic. It is essential to read this 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 way for less-gifted students to acquire the profession yet the largest value added is created by the workforce and service providers*. In what way does this contradiction influence the professional activity of a vocational teacher? On the basis of certain considerations the main argument can be put forth, which basically has to be a succinct and relevant answer to the question stated in the essay.

The key words in essay tasks:

- **define** – use certain terminology, reveal the most characteristic features but not explain, not evaluate;
- **describe** – explain the process; reveal its essence, provide examples;
- **summarize** – summarize facts and opinions;
- **compare or contrast** – find the common or different;
- **analyze** – characterize the whole step-by-step;
- **reveal** – in details demonstrate the most characteristic and essential;
- **evaluate and criticize** – analyze, find causes and their consequences, express your own opinion, compare it with opinions of other authors;
- **discuss and consider** – present your views on the experience gained in professional activity, compare, evaluate.

Free essay usually expresses the author's own opinion on a particular topic related to professional development process. The structure is the same as in an argumentative essay, although such precise substantiation of one's opinion is not required. Free essay reveals teachers' general pedagogical thinking, its profundity and ability to define and explain various issues. For example, a topic for a free essay could be as follows – *My contribution to the development process of the future humankind*, in which the VET teachers have to reveal their point of view on the possibilities of the contemporary pedagogical process to develop specialists ready to meet the challenges of the future.

Example of essay assessment criteria:

1. content (specific, convincing, creative, reasonable);
2. opinion (clear, relevant);
3. layout of the essay (logical, coherent, appropriate for the goal, oriented towards conclusions);
4. layout of paragraphs (precise formulation of the topic, different structure of paragraphs, each thought is discussed in a separate paragraph);
5. style (captivating, figurative);
6. lexis (lexis and tone appropriate for the topic, language – precise, lively and imaginative);
7. grammar (punctuation and orthography rules are observed).

Case study

Case study is one of the possible methods to assess the candidate's professional competence. It allows assessing the teachers' skills to apply professional theoretical knowledge in specific pedagogical situations.

In essence, clarifying causes, solving the problems and making decisions, a case study analysis is the teacher's manipulation with the existing and available information. Analyzing cases or problem situations the teacher uses the following consideration procedures:

- comparison;
- analysis;
- synthesis;
- abstraction;
- generalization.

Thus the teacher provides an opportunity for assessing their abilities considering different links which are at the basis of a pedagogical problem situation or a case, as well as the skill to define and devise problem solution technologies using consideration procedures.

Case or problem situation modules

In order to assess different significant elements of the candidate's professional competence and to determine their ability to solve different problems in both the study and education processes purposefully, the following case modules to be considered are offered:

- 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 development processes of the persons involved. This case study can be successfully used to determine understanding of the educational pedagogical situation.

**Do I have
necessary skills
to apply
theoretical
knowledge
in specific
pedagogical
situations?**



Example:

The learner receives an unsatisfactory mark in computer sciences. He asks the teacher to postpone recording the negative mark in the school report because his parents will punish him for this mark. The teacher explains that the basic principle of his pedagogical activity is equal attitude towards all learners, thus he will not violate this principle and all learners with no exceptions will receive the mark they deserve. This means that the result of this conversation between the teacher and the learner is negative for the learner. As a result, the future conduct of this learner in the vocation school changes, he becomes more indifferent towards his group members, more aggressive towards the teachers and often provokes open public conflicts with the computer science teacher.

The critical cases reveal situations in which due to certain objective or subjective factors the pedagogical process is distorted thus reaching the pedagogical goals becomes

troublesome. Such situation solutions provide opportunity to assess the teacher's ability to devise the possible versions for solving the crisis situation.

Example:

The quality of the material technical base for the motor engineer specialty in the VET institution is unsatisfactory. The practical skills are acquired in study laboratories where the learners have no other choice but to work with outdated technology which is no longer in use in contemporary companies. The learners' internship takes place in repair workshops that use modern auto diagnostic and repair technology equipment. Seeing that the learners do not have the necessary skills to work with modern equipment, the internship instructors assign them inessential auto repair operations, and that does not ensure further development of their professional skills.

Paradigmatic situations include cases where the pupils to become competitive in the global labour market or it is necessary to radically change the current pedagogical environment to ensure higher quality, changes in the education and study work principles and approaches in VET institutions should be made. This kind of case study provides the opportunity to evaluate the teacher's awareness of vocational policy approach as well as their readiness to accept the necessity for change and to get actively involved in the change implementation processes.

Example:

The accreditation of the VET institution revealed that the study process oriented towards the subject is the dominating study approach, which gives the pupils the opportunity to acquire satisfactory theoretical knowledge and professional skills, but they lack social skills and the necessary personality traits to perform professional tasks at workplace successfully. The communication among the learners and between the learners and VET teachers demonstrates a receding level of collaborative ethics. In order to eliminate the current shortages, the accreditation report includes an appeal to the school's teachers and staff to consider possibilities for changing the education institution working strategy.

The case study can be used as a method for ascertaining whether the APL candidate is capable to analyse the problem according to a specific experience. The assessor can also ask the teacher to perform the pedagogical observations themselves. Thus the teacher provides the following for the assessment:

- a self devised case or problem case description;
- a problem or a case study analysis.

Simulation

Simulation - an imitation of a typical work task or situation to assess how well a VET teacher might implement such a task or perform it in a real pedagogical situation. Candidates are asked to pretend that they are engaged in some realistic task. This method provides the opportunity to assess responses in a similar to real life situation. Qualities such as decision making, leadership, analytical thinking, planning skills and others may be observed.

Interview

Interview as a method of obtaining data is traditionally used not only in sociological, marketing and psychological research, but it is also an integral part of recruitment and assessment procedure.

Assessment interviews allow to get acquainted with the APL candidate through direct communication thus supplementing formalized assessment procedures. The main objectives of the interview are as follows:

- To obtain information on teacher's activity, knowledge, skills and value attitudes in a direct conversation;
- To specify documented information presented for assessment;
- To clarify unclear questions;
- To discuss disputable or controversial information;

The main characteristic feature of a *structured interview* is a highly standardized procedure, which requires observing both the



question form and sequence and recording the answers in a registration form. The advantage of this method is that it is easy to acquire and there is an opportunity to multiply data. The interviewer fully follows the instruction requirements.

Semi-structured interview retains the core of standardized questions but allows for a variety in their formulation. This form of interview allows asking extra questions, clarifying and discussing uncertainties. The main advantage of this type of interview is transformation of formal procedure into an informal conversation between colleagues - a dialogue.

The core of the interview is usually formed by 8-10 questions, which allow finding out the main aspects of candidate's professional competence. The questions have to be directed towards determination of candidate's knowledge, skills and value attitudes.

<i>Sample interview</i>	
Interview questions you might be asked:	Assessor aims to receive information on:
<i>Please summarize your background and experience relevant to your position.</i>	... your ability to follow instructions to summarize relevant background and experience.
<i>Name several challenges associated with today's youth that you think would influence your pupils. How would you deal with them?</i>	... an insight into of your philosophy of education.
<i>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?</i>	... your future vision.
<i>Describe your teamwork experience. What was your greatest accomplishment with that team?</i>	... your experience working as part of the team.
<i>There are many new initiatives in education today, from career research to incorporating academic skills into your occupational instruction.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Describe how you might incorporate information about career opportunities in your field into your instruction.</i> • <i>Give an example of the communication skills necessary in your field and how you might teach or reinforce these skills in your instruction.</i> 	... your knowledge of all aspects of the respective field. ... your knowledge of the academic skills needed by those working in your occupational field.
<i>Case Study. Here is a hypothetical situation similar to one we've had in the past. What action would you take if it happened in your classroom?</i> (Provide a short written case study and describe the incident to the teacher.)	... your ability to solve problems; to define the problem; to determine what facts need to be collected, and to reach a logical solution.
<i>We encourage staff to take professional development courses. If you could take any courses, what would you choose and why?</i>	... an indication of your perceived weaknesses.
<i>What strengths do you feel you bring to this job?</i>	... an indication of your perceived strengths.

The answers given by the person interviewed are registered in an inquiry form opposite to each particular question or in a separate evaluation sheet. Questions presented in the example give

an opportunity to analyze both the answers and by observing the overall discourse of the interview, allow the interviewers to conclude on the following:

- interviewee's professional experience strengths and weaknesses;
- interviewee's educational experience strengths and weaknesses;
- interviewee's interpersonal skills strengths.

Observation

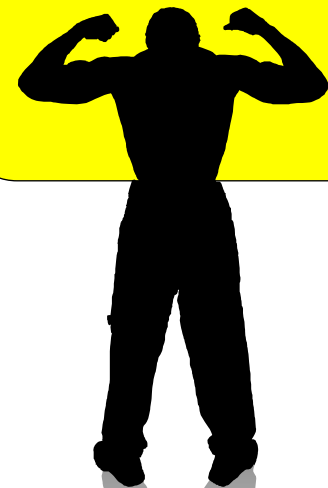
The goal of **observation** is to supplement the available information on the APL candidate's learning achievements. Observation is performed during evaluative interview, assessing the person's practical skills.

During the performance of practical activity candidate's behaviour, character traits relevant to the respective activity, task solutions and activity results can be the object of observation. These objects of observation are indicators, which allow making the decision about the person's learning achievements.

Defining the process of observation, Fullerton (1999) suggests using the three phase model, which consists of Pre-observation Meeting, Observation Session and Feedback / Debriefing Meeting.

Pre observation meeting is an opportunity for the candidate to give background information on the lesson to be observed: how it fits into the curriculum, what previous knowledge the students have, what the expected learning outcomes are, and the general study plan. This is an opportunity for the observer to choose or highlight areas to focus on, for example, presentation skills or the use of audio-visual materials, or the use of questions to encourage the students to participate actively. The candidate and the assessor (observer) can discuss how notes are to be taken by the observer. Pro-forms listing elements to pay particular attention are useful as an aide memoir.

**Am I ready to start
investing in myself
for further
professional growth?**



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

Date of observation:
Lesson observed:

Lesson structure	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Use of teaching means / quality of handouts	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Teaching practices / learning methods	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Learner participation / making the study process active	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Non-verbal communication / Body language	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Voice use	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Feedback from learners	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Usage of examples	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪
Time management	
Was perfectly done: ▪	Recommended to be improved: ▪

The Observed Lesson should start with a brief introduction of the observer making it clear that they are here to observe the teacher’s activity and not the students. It should be noted that as a result of the presence of the observer the students will either misbehave or be too well behaved, or the teacher being observed will give a better or worse than usual performance.

Feedback / de-briefing meeting. After observation session the time for discussion of the person’s practical skills assessment is allocated when the assessor presents the observation analysis and the teacher reflects and analyses their mistakes and shortcomings. The feedback

meeting consist of two parts – giving and receiving feedback. **Giving feedback** is a skill. There is a delicate balance between constructive and destructive criticism. **Receiving feedback** is never easy.

For the teacher being observed it is worth considering in advance how receiving the feedback will affect them. During the pre-observation meeting the teacher should inform the observer what type of feedback would be most helpful to them.



GLOSSARY

Assessment

Systematic process of gathering and analysing evidence information of learning achievements, to determine its appropriateness to learning outcomes, foreseen in the study programme. In prior learning assessment, the goal is to determine whether the prior learning should be recognized for credit.

Assessor

Usually expert in the subject area being assessed using a systematic process to assess skills and knowledge against established standards and/or learning outcomes.

Competence

Proven and demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in a habitual and / or changing work situation, and ability to display appropriate attitude mindful of ethics. It includes: 1) cognitive competence; 2) functional competence; 3) personal competence; and 4) ethical competence (adapted from: www.cedefop.gr: “EU Knowledge system for lifelong learning”).

Competency is an ability of a person to perform a certain constituent part of an activity on the basis of the acquired knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Qualification is the combination of certain competencies.

Curriculum is as 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 leads to the change of the other ones.

Demonstrating Prior Learning Achievements

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.

Evaluation

Making judgements according to assessment results, and/or agreed criteria.

Evidence

Information that gives ground to demonstrate knowledge and skills of an individual who is aiming at recognition of his/her learning achievements.

Formal learning

Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

Identification of prior learning

The identification of prior learning can be considered both from the student and educational institution point of view. Student aims to understand his/her previously acquired learning and analyses it in relation to learning outcomes so that he/she is able to describe and demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills.

Informal learning

Natural, daily learning. Not necessarily previously studied, less organized, less structured. Usually unintentional from the learners 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 www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/Media-Centre/Glossary-of-Key-Terms).

Learning achievements

Knowledge, abilities, skills 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 society

A society in which learning is considered 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 www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues).

Learning triangle

The play ground for lifelong learning strategies. Its constituent parts are the individual, the organisation and the school with their own respective learning responsibilities: self-management of competencies, competence management and competence-steered curricula. The balance of power is flexible and is dependent on the goal and context of learning (Duvekot, 2006).

Lifelong learning

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

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 from: www.cedefop.gr: “EU Knowledge system for lifelong learning”).

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

A process whereby, through assessment, credit is given to learning which has already been acquired in different ways.

Validation of learning achievements

Confirmation by a competent body that learning achievements acquired by an individual have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the agreed standard.

Validation of prior learning

The process of assessing and recognising learning, including non-formal and informal 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: www.cedefop.gr: “EU Knowledge system for lifelong learning”).

Valuation of prior learning

The process of promoting participation in and achievements of (formal, non-formal or informal) learning, in order to raise awareness of its intrinsic worth and to reward learning. (adapted from: www.cedefop.gr: “EU Knowledge system for lifelong learning”). 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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