Validation of Service related Learning Outcomes with an IT based Assessment and Evidencing System

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VITA intends to provide a system to validate personal and social competences that are mostly neglected by formal validation systems. VITA makes use of the LEVEL5 system which is specifically designed to assess and visualise personal, social and organisational competence developments in rather non- and informal learning settings.

Relevance of personal, social, and organisational competences

It appears that there is an ever-increasing interest concerning personal, social, and organisational competences (SPOC). Employers are very aware of the importance that employees' SPOC have for their carrying out of their jobs, and they see SPOC as an increasingly important area. These are the very clear indications that have come out of a survey carried out by partners in the VITA project. In addition, SPOC are also seeing a growing interest in the world of education.

This emphasises the relevance of not only developing SPOC, but also systematically following its development in various types of learning and training programs. The VITA partners have worked with the development of SPOC in eight very different learning contexts and measured the SPOC development of the individual participant. This has been done through the use of LEVEL5, a method that allows for the description of competences across three dimensions: cognitive, activity and affective dimensions. LEVEL5 can also be used in the formulation of what makes up a given competence, just as it can be used as a measure of the learner's competence development.

The VITA pilots

In the VITA project, LEVEL5 has been applied in very different learning contexts ranging from 11th-12th-grade volunteer students in a "Club GREEN" (Turkey) to students on an obligatory practice placement during their BA education as counsellors (Lithuania) and workplace-related courses for supermarket employees (Germany) and managers in day-care centres (Denmark) whose employers had a strong expectation that they were going to participate. Furthermore, two very different job training programs for long-term unemployed people were part of the project's piloting activities: job training for hotel and restaurant employees (Austria) and a men's group from a deprived local area, where networking activities were arranged. The final two projects were done in relation to a sewing course for a group of prisoners (France) and in a project aiming at validating the competences of adult educators (Greece).

You can find further information on each of the pilots in the following posters:

VITA
Validation of informal and non-formal psycho-pedagogical competencies of adult educators

ABSTRACT I SUMMARY

"Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Psycho-Pedagogical Competencies of Adult Educators" responds to the European needs by developing specific measures, instruments, strategies for recognition, validation and certification of the competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings and contexts – *especially for adult educators. One of the* aims was the validation of social, personal and organizational competences as part of the psycho-pedagogical competences of adult educators in Greece. The following competences were assessed: communication, self-reflection and problem-solving.

RATIONALE I BACKGROUND

As the profession of adult educator is not recognized unless the training is formal, the involvement of social partners in the recognition of competences becomes a priority. Frequently, these competences have been acquired in less traditional learning contexts and through a variety of working experiences. Thus, they become difficult to be standardized and validated, especially as in different countries there are different contexts.

TARGETGROUP I CONTEXT

Validpack is directed to all educators defined as trainers. That means, if someone is an adult educator who has trainer experiences for more than one year / 150 h of working with adults, they are entitled to use the Validpack and to get their adult educators' competencies be validated.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

These took place in 2 Adult Education Centres (KEEs) and 2 CVET Centres (KEKs) in Thessaloniki (1 urban KEE), in Athens (1 urban KEK), and in Crete *(1 rural KEK in Chania and 1 urban KEE in Heraklion).* During the implementation of the pilot the aim was to look at modes of validation of social, personal and organizational compentences as part of the psycho-pedagogical competencies of adult educators and trainers in continuing VET. 80 days in total was the duration of the whole piloting process. This counts to 150 hours over the period between 2 May and 19 July 2013.

OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the project was to create a set of instruments for the validation of competences of adult educators to make a contribution to the professionalisation of adult educators in Europe and to quality management in the field of Adult Education in Europe.

EVALUATION

Validpack is organised around three main validation steps: (i) self evaluation, (ii) external evaluation and (iii) *consolidation. The adult educator has to* prove the indicated competences that define an adult educator. This can either happen through self evaluation or through external evaluation. Some of the most important competences needed in adult education are not directly observable, but can be proved through self evaluation, whereas some competences cannot be easily self assessed, but they need to be observed by an external evaluator.

RESULTS

The reflection on biography acted as a smooth introduction to the whole process. The mind map is a useful way for the user to concisely illustrate what was previously mentioned. Finally, the attachment of the validating documents, fosters the objectivity and validity of the research and helps the user understand which competences he/she "officially" has. As the majority of participants see it, it is organized in a correct way as the self-evaluation introduces the user to the whole process. Subsequently, the external evaluation acts supportively to the first stage by enabling the researcher to draw more objective conclusions.

Validpack
Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, GREECE
Lifelong Learning

VITA

SEWING QUALIFICATION – Vocational training in prison, Bordeaux-Gradignan

ABSTRACT | SUMMARY

This training course is sponsored by the Prison Administration and related with the Aquitaine Regional Council which finances the project to the same degree as the European Social Fund.
The project is in line with the expectations of the Public Authorities in terms of rehabilitation of individuals placed in the hands of Justice.

TARGETGROUP | CONTEXT

The vocational training involves a group of prisoners condemned by the French Justice system to heavy sentences, of up to 30 years in some criminal cases. They are placed in training by the Prison Administration after approval by the INSUP training centre. These trainees receive full training delivered from a partnership between the Education Department for general subjects and the training sector for the technological aspects.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

LEVEL5 was integrated in the learning activity through following activities.

- Trainees' competencies (leadership and tolerance) to be assessed as part of the learning activity were determined in consultation with the teachers and the trainer.
- The competencies were contextualized in line with the project goals and activities.
- The trainer was asked to fill out the LEVEL5 assessment tools for each detainee (a total of 5 due to turnover).
- Assessment for each dimension in LEVEL5 was done for each trainee to summarize the development for each competency.

EVALUATION

Group: 5 detainees
Competences: leadership and tolerance
Methods: observation and regular feedback within the team (note taking and minutes), discussions with Education Department teachers, individual interviews with participants based on the assessment grids
Process: assessment for each dimension in LEVEL5 was done for each detainee to summarize the development for each of us

RESULTS

- The competencies selected for assessment were selected specifically to create a debate within the group and the stakeholders
- The contextualization of the competencies appears to be important in relating the common descriptors to the ones that are relevant to the context of learning activity.
- Trainer and teachers used the LEVEL5 system in assessing trainees' competencies in spite of the regular turnover of detainees.
- Multiple methods of data collections were effective to do the assessment.

RATIONALE | BACKGROUND

It is an innovative project in French prison: the vocational and education training and the education department (school) are working hand in hand to carry out this action: one trainer (technological aspects) and three teachers (general subjects) plus two coordinators. After a ten-months the trainees/detainees have the opportunity to obtain a diploma and probably a better situation as prisoners.

OBJECTIVES

For the Prison Administration:
- to generate activity for prisoners to limit tensions in detention.
For the trainees:
- to obtain an Education Department qualification;
- to continue incarceration in another type of prison, where they will be given work involving sewing;
to have access to work experience placements.

INSUP Training centre, Bordeaux, FRANCE

VITA

SuperMAN
Supermarkets meet accessibility needs

ABSTRACT I SUMMARY

SuperMAN aimed at opening the theme of accessibility to the social level, promoting accessibility especially for cognitively disabled people.
In 2007 in France, some supermarkets implemented training courses to enable their staff to deal with mentally disabled people. SUPER MAN's goal was to transfer the good practice developed in France to Italy and Germany in the framework of a Leonardo transfer of innovation project running from 2011-2013.

RATIONALE I BACKGROUND

Within SuperMAN the French concept was adapted to Italian and German conditions - about 100 employees of CONAD in Italy and tegut... in Germany were trained. The 60 participating markets were awarded with the symbol of social accessibility which enabled them to communicate their engagement for an inclusive society towards their clients. The future perspective is to spread the initiative to other public spaces in accordance with the European priority of promoting inclusion and equality combating discrimination based on disability.

TARGETGROUP I CONTEXT

The participants are staff of partner supermarkets. In particular, employees in contact with clients, market leaders, department heads and security staff. Most fullfilled a vocational training as salespersons but hardly any participants had academic or theoretical background about learning or the social psychology of customers, but much experience in practically dealing with people of all kinds. The SuperMAN training made them aware of their capability to deliver good service to all clients and stenghtened their motivation to do so.

OBJECTIVES

The word accessibility often is associated with the elimination of architectural barriers. SuperMAN dealt with the topic of accessibility from the perspective of those who are affected by cognitive disability or dementia. By training persons working in public spaces how to meet their needs is a concrete contribution to promote an inclusive society. The logo on the right visualises this engagment.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The informal learning about how to adequately support persons with cognitive disabilities or dementia in doing their shopping happened at the supermarket. In a short theory session participants learned what difficulties these clients may have in everyday life - and how you can help them when shopping. Practical exercises completed this part of the training. In the practice phase the participants transferred their new skills into the supermarkets. This process of sharing experiences and thus adressing and reflecting the theme of the training guaranteed the sustainability of the training.

EVALUATION

Competence evaluated: "client orientation in relation to clients with cognitive disorders".
The competence development of 40 participants is assessed with the LEVEL5® method.
Methodology: mix of self-evaluation (questionnaires and learning diary) and peer evaluation. External supervision of a level5 expert.

RESULTS

Through LEVEL5 it was possible to demonstrate the great competence development of each participant involved. Many had taken the initative to learn more about disability and dementia and felt obliged to share their knowledge and experience with colleagues and others in order to contribute to an inclusive society. In regard to their attitudes fears of interaction and alienation decreased and confidence to be able to do a good job incrased.

BUPNET blinc **BUPNET & blinc eG, Göttingen, GERMANY**

Lifelong Learning

VITA

BA students of Career Guidance going to practical work placement

ABSTRACT I SUMMARY

2nd year BA students of Career Guidance as part of their formal training went for a practical work placement to different organizations, mostly secondary schools. The placement lasted from February to May, 2013.

TARGETGROUP I CONTEXT

Undergraduate students in their formal higher education receive high amounts of theoretical knowledge. However, their future work contexts will require high levels of personal and social competences, especially communication.

OBJECTIVES

To assess the social competence of the BA students before and after their practical work placement.
The future work contexts of these students will require high levels of personal and social competences.

EVALUATION

The activity is initiated by the Department of Education, where students study for fours years. As part of their placement students watch lessons in schools and later organize career guidance and other activities for the secondary school students.

RATIONALE I BACKGROUND

LEVEL5 system was used to assess students' social competence before and after the practical work placement. The system allowed to increased levels of social competence for the students who participated.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

170 hrs, usually 1 day a week, students spent in their future real job environment. For most of them this was a first encounter with professional relations and communication. Students had the possibility to increase their social skills.

RESULTS

LEVEL5 allows to document progress of the key non-formal social and personal competences for HE students that are not otherwise documented as their learning outcomes.

Vytautas Magnus University, LITHUANIA

VITA

Southill Men's Shed skill challenge
Limerick- Ireland

ABSTRACT I SUMMARY

South Hill Men's Shed is a men's group offering a number of learning activities: carpentry, cookery, the "skills challenge" (personal development). As community education is an inclusive practice, learners have been involved in the learning process by discussing with them the course content and arrangements. Learners have been evaluated before and after "the skills challenge" course.
Furthermore, a learner has been involved in the steering group and his input was fundamental in adapting the competences framework: the framework language was too complex and the tutor adapted it.

RATIONALE I BACKGROUND

The aim of the learning activity is to upskill long term unemployed men:
· Provide further education opportunities
· Improve their self-esteem
· Increase their chance of getting into the labour market
· Provide/improve learners social skills
The aim of the learning activity is also exploring new ways of working with the leaners and keeping them interested in the course.

TARGETGROUP I CONTEXT

The target group - Southill Men's Shed- is a Men's group whose members are adult learners (from 23 to 68 years of age) from a disadvantaged background: long term unemployed, lone parents, members of the Travellers community, migrants and refugees. 41% of the population in the Southill area (over the age of 15) have left education with a primary education only or with no formal education; while 6% have a third level education.

OBJECTIVES

Take up a new challenge; learners took part in the project because the group is supporting them. They wanted to build up their skills and increase their chances of finding employment.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

■ Networking event with Tipperary men's shed

■ Table quiz planning and implementation

EVALUATION

10 learners evaluated on the following competences: Leadership, Networking, problem solving. Each session has been documented with notes, videos and photos. The assessment took place at the beginning, middle and end of the course (only the beginning and end were used for LEVEL5).
The assessment consists of a conversation with each of the learners (recorded on flip chart paper and also the final session recorded as a sound recording).

RESULTS

The evaluation of the project was a learning process: it provided the opportunity to explore ways of showcasing the value of, and measuring, community education practice.
The VITA project allows the participating organisation to highlight progress made by learners and therefore it could be a powerful tool to make a case in front of funders/donors.

AONTAS, Dublin, IRELAND

VITA

Customer Orientation

ABSTRACT I SUMMARY

The learning activity was initiated by the Austrian Labour Market Service and the SÖB Top-Lokal in Vienna, Austria.

RATIONALE I BACKGROUND

The learning activity within the scope of the VITA project took place during 3 months with self-assessment, interviews, discussions, workshops, training. Assessments took place before and after the learning activity.

TARGETGROUP I CONTEXT

The target group of the learning activity were long-term unemployed persons who partly already worked in a hotel and restaurant industry before. Ages ranged from 23-40 years, 1 male and 5 female. Customer orientation was chosen to help them to find a new job.

OBJECTIVES

- to support long-term unemployed persons in Austria;
- to support them in finding new jobs;
- to support them in acquiring new attitudes, knowledge and skills;
- to organise a training on "customer orientation".

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Two self-assessments and a workshop regarding customer orientation including SÖB Top-Lokal activities (ordering food and drinks, preparing meals, serving the food to the customers by supervision of professional cooks and front-of-house staff) were carried out.

EVALUATION

The grids were filled in for six persons and two trainers evaluated the learning activity too. The evaluation was conducted via observations, reflections and interviews too.

RESULTS

The results are of high importance, since it has been achieved a positive change in knowledge, skills and attitudes and they were documented in the LEVEL5 grids for certificates. A strong ground has been made for a big change and gained tools and improvement is guaranteed.

die Berater, Vienna, AUSTRIA

Inclusion leadership in daycare centers

ABSTRACT I SUMMARY

In an action learning program over 3 months, leaders of kindergartens/day care centers developed their leadership in relation to including handicapped children – a new task for them and their staff.

RATIONALE I BACKGROUND

The inclusion of handicapped children in kindergartens and schools in Denmark is the result of a law passed by Parliament in 2012, with the intention of stopping increasing expenditures for special classes and schools.
At the same time it is part of an international discourse on inclusion.

TARGETGROUP I CONTEXT

Leaders of kindergartens
Meeting the challenge of including handicapped children - until now they have been segregated in special kindergartens.
In particular leading their staff - part of them recently educated in inclusion.

OBJECTIVES

- Inclusion of 80 % of the handicapped children in the municipal kindergartens
- Development of staff's competences in inclusion pedagogy
- Development of leaders' 'inclusion leading'- competences

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In between four course afternoons, the leaders worked individually and in their teams with 'leading inclusion' as action learning.

EVALUATION

The leaders assessed their competences in settings with peers at the second and the last course day of the action learning program.
The evaluation was introduced as a an activity concerned with reflection on leadership.

RESULTS

A LEVEL5 reference system for 'leading inclusion' was formulated, tested and adopted in 2 other action learning programs for leaders.
The majority of leaders found the cubes useful and identified with the descriptors and results. 6 out of 36 were skeptical concerning describing and measuring competences, or the assessment of leadership competences without the staff having been asked.

VIA University College, Aarhus, DENMARK

Assessing Informal Learning Outcomes: Climate Friendly School Management Project

CLIMES

ABSTRACT I SUMMARY

The project involved high school students calculating carbon footprint of school and developing strategies to reduce carbon emission. Students were guided by two science teachers. The school put some of these strategies into action to reduce carbon emission.

TARGETGROUP I CONTEXT

All students, teachers and administrators at METU College were targeted to raise awareness about climate change and carbon emission. The school is a private one, where the implementation of the project activities went smoothly.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Calculating the school's carbon footprint and developing strategies to reduce it, developing activities to raise awareness among students of climate change and ways to mitigate it. The project was carried out through collaborative learning, action learning and problem solving.

EVALUATION

Competences:
team learning & problem solving
Methods:
self-assessment, teacher assessment, interviews and observations
Group:
Eight students involved in project
Process:
Assessment for each dimension in LEVEL5 was done for each student to summarize the development for each competency.

RATIONALE I BACKGROUND

Climate change issues receive much attention in Turkey. The project took place in 2012 and 2013. Club GREEN teachers implemented it with students and two professors and a researcher assisted them in developing strategies and activities.

OBJECTIVES

- Calculate carbon footprint of the school and develop strategies to reduce it
- Raise awareness among other students toward climate change and ways to mitigate it
- Assess competencies developed

RESULTS

- Piloting showed LEVEL5 is useful to assess informal learning outcomes that are not measured through traditional assessment.
- Competencies (team learning and problem solving) were the core skills developed.
- Contextualization of competencies was helpful in meaningful assessment.
- Multiple data collection was critical.

METU Foundation College, Ankara, TURKEY

Lifelong Learning

A great variety of learning contexts

As it appears from this, there is great variety when it comes to both target groups and institutional context and thus also the intended aims and learning outcomes of the learning activities as well as participant motives.

For instance, the aim of the French prisoners was to qualify for work in the prison and thus improve their own conditions and – for some – maybe for early release. For the long-term unemployed in Austria and the Irish men's group, the aim was to gain a foothold on the labour market, whereas the students in Turkey were motivated by the possibility to work closely with their teachers and be able to function as tutors for their peers and contribute to e greener environment.

Even though the learning contexts were so diverse, several concrete competences recur across the projects: customer orientation, communication, problem solving, networking, leadership etc. The use of LEVEL5 did have an effect on all the learning activities no matter whether LEVEL5 had been taken into consideration already in the planning of the activity or not included until later. As expected, the reports on the pilots generally show that participants become more conscious and aware of their own competences.

Assessment methods and participant response to the assessment

In the choice of assessment method in the pilots, the different contexts for learning as well as participants' starting points and competences were very much taken into consideration. No matter which methods have been used, the results of the pilots clearly show that participants are affected by the assessment. When participants are assessed by others, they are very much focused on this evaluation, and both went being validated by others and by themselves, this spurs reflection. This is probably also true of the number of other assessment tools; but special to the pilot project at hand is that LEVEL5 has been used actively to support learning processes and that the detailed and fine grained assessment has been effective in helping learners to be aware of, reflect on, and have proof of competences otherwise only assessable with difficulty.

Further impact

Finally, individual pilot partners have seen the effects that reach above and beyond participants' expected learning. The use of LEVEL5 initiated reflections among the teachers, not only on SPOC but also on content, methods and differentiation. Furthermore this kind of assessment of SPOC can show decision-makers that participants actually do develop their SPOC through the learning activities.

The full report will be published on our website: www.vita-eu.org

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