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Setting our Sights on the Accreditation of Prior Learning.

Practical experiences with the *validation des acquis de l'expérience* in the sector of personal care in the Northwest of Germany.

Summary of a presentation at the Final Conference of the project

VAE, from prior experience to professional qualification

December 13th, 2011, CJD Maximiliansau, Würth, Germany.

1. Project background

The aging of the population in the European countries stimulates an increasing demand for several personal services, esp. personal care. So in Germany the health sector is also called "Jobmaschine". Unfortunately the demographic change also effects a lack of qualified employees in the sector of personal care (and other sectors of economy).

In the sector of personal care we have a very strong proportion of female employees. Especially in Germany these employees are often part-time-workers and not qualified in this vocational field. Nevertheless many of these unqualified workers were skilled by informal or non-formal learning processes during many years.

In France there is the possibility to validate the results of such informal and non-formal learning processes as an particular part of the vocational education system. The procedure called *validation des acquis de l'expérience VAE* is providing a direct access to a vocational certificate. In view of the sector of personal care it is possible to increase the proportion of qualified employees in a way which is very adequate to the daily life of these female employees. In view of the female employees the benefit of this validation procedure lies in the access to a higher qualification and positive psychological impacts on self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-concept ability and internal control of reinforcement.

2. Key activities

Since October 2009 HeurekaNet is realising one subproject of the innovation transfer project *VAE, from prior experience to professional qualification* in the northwest of Germany. The consortium of this international project consists of four further organisations, the *Groupement d'Intérêt Public Formation Continue et Insertion professionnelle – Alsace*, *Consortio Provincial de Desarrollo Económico de Cordoba*, *Bydgoski Zakład Doskonalenia Zawodowego (BZDZ)* and *CJD Maximiliansau im Christlichen Jugenddorfwerk Deutschlands e.V.*

The subproject of HeurekaNet is addresses to unqualified women in personal care who are either working in ambulant or stationary settings of personal care or are seeking such an employment opportunity. On this background HeurekaNet is part of a local network built up of personal care providers, vocational education and training services and labour market institutions.

In close collaboration with one local vocational education and training provider *Caritas Altenpflegeseminar Rheine*, the German professional association for health care *DBfK Nord West*, the employers association in the sector of personal care *bpa Nordrhein-Westfalen* and the regional agency for implementing the labour market policy of the state North Rhine-Westphalia we assimilated the French *validation des acquis de l'expérience VAE* to the German expectations and attitudes and the German occupational profiles in the personal care. In a first step we build up the basic, a body of knowledge, skills and attitudes for one occupational profile in the sector of personal care, called *Altenpflegehelfer/in*. In a second step we defined the validation procedure following the French model and worked out all needed materials for the candidates and the professional commission. In a third step we tested the assimilated VAE in an experimental setting. This implementation was supported and evaluated by the Saxion University of Applied Science (Enschede, Netherlands).

3. Results

Looking on the results we can state, that the French procedure of validation of prior learning is well disseminated in the local network of personal care providers and labour market institutions. Many members of the target group are informed about this specific access to a qualification in the French system of vocational education.

In close relationship with key actors in the field of personal care and an innovative VET institution we have experience and knowledge concerning the VAE in a German context. Several tested materials as the competency orientated occupational profile with bodies of knowledge, skills and attitudes, handouts for the candidates, handouts for the professional committee and process descriptions are available.

The exploitation of results is directed on educational policy, labour market policy and vocational education science. We are now preparing in collaboration with an university in the Northwest of Germany a proposal for a pilot project which leads to a real accreditation of informal and non-formal learning results.

4. Evaluation

The implementation of the assimilated VAE in an experimental setting was supported and evaluated by the Saxion University of Applied Science (Enschede, Netherlands).

5. Closing Remarks

We want to say thank you to all the people who contribute to the success of the project. Many people were engaged, it is not possible to mention everybody at this moment. Nevertheless we want express our special gratitude to Ms. Patricia Drube (DBfK NordWest) and to Ms Petra Berger (Caritas Altenpflegeseminar Rheine).