THEMATIC ANALYSIS

08
Accumulating, transferring and validating learning

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Informal learning undertaken outside the formal education and training system has become a growing focus of attention in Germany since the end of the 1990s. There is an increasing awareness of its necessity to capitalise on all skills both for individual career planning and to realise their value to society. As yet, there are few mechanisms at national and federal state (Land) level for recognising informally acquired skills. However, a trend has recently developed to record and document cross-cutting skills for social recognition, i.e. recognition below the official regulatory level. Recording may make use of tools such as training passports, which are understood as mechanisms for documenting not only formal learning but, more importantly, any non-formal and informal learning undertaken.

The vocational field in Germany is largely served by formal education and training. The system tends to view qualifications in terms of certificates rather than competencies. The German education system has no standardised system for awarding recognition or credit for competencies acquired through informal or non-formal learning, e.g. a credit transfer system.

The dual system in IVET, because it includes occupational work experience, closes off career progression for those who acquired their competences in a non-formal or informal way. The concept of *Beruflichkeit* (aligning training with state-recognised skilled occupations) guarantees training relevance but has a restrictive effect on flexibility. It results in a reduced level of vertical and horizontal mobility. This could be alleviated by documenting and taking account competencies extending beyond the bounds of a formal occupation alongside traditional certificates.

At company level the situation is different. Assessments and personnel interviews include questions about competencies acquired through informal and non-formal learning. Large companies often operate their own competency frameworks.

In Germany there are a large number of different programmes, initiatives and projects to validate informal and non-formal learning although there are no generally accepted assessment methods.

**1. STRATEGY JOINTLY AGREED BY FEDERAL AND LÄNDER GOVERNMENTS**

In July 2004, the *Bund-Länder* Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) agreed a national Strategy for Lifelong Learning in the Federal Republic of Germany. Due to the conditions imposed by constitutional law (under the federal system), a strategy for lifelong learning cannot be presented in terms of a coherent national strategy. Nevertheless, it is possible to have a jointly agreed strategy which highlights areas of broad consensus across federal states (Länder) and between the Länder and the Federal Government, regardless of their respective spheres of responsibility.

The objective of the Lifelong Learning strategy is to set out how all citizens can be encouraged and supported to participate in learning through all life phases, in different places and through different forms: whether formal, non-formal or informal. There are 8 focuses of development:

- recognition of informal learning: ‘Lifelong learning for all cannot be organised and promoted as a continuous series of formal institutionalised learning processes. As most learning takes place informally in everyday life and work situations outside educational institutions, informal learning must be included to a large extent in the fostering of lifelong learning. Learning within and outside institutions should be complementary; the interaction of both types of learning is to lead to an enlarged understanding of lifelong learning.’ (BLK Strategy);
- self-directed learning;
- development of skills;
- networking;
- modularisation;
- learning guidance;
- new learning culture/popularisation of learning;
It is left to the responsible actors in Länder and Federal Governments to flesh out the framework defined by this strategy paper according to their own education policy priorities and domains of competence.

2. FEDERAL AND LÄNDER GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

- The Lifelong Learning programme was a pilot scheme set up by the BLK which ran from 2000/2005. The aim was to test projects which brought about a change in the culture of learning and supported the necessary process of reorientation of the German education system. The scheme included incentives to improve people’s learning capabilities through informal, self-directed learning.

- Learning Regions - Providing Support for Networks programme (http://www.bmbf.de/pub/learning_regions_providing_supports_for_networks.pdf). The aim of this project is to:
  - strengthen learners’ self-responsibility and self-management;
  - reduce inequalities of opportunity;
  - motivate disadvantaged groups and those less involved in education.

- Interpenetration of the formal education system with informal learning, particularly for people who have difficulties in engaging with the formal education system, can help to create a new awareness of and facilitate individual access to education, and thus help to improve social integration and life chances.

- Development of a further education passport for the identification, recording and recognition of informal learning – ProfilPASS. Under another BLK study, research was conducted into a further education passport with certification of informal learning. ProfilPASS is now available and provides a tool to identify, record and recognise informal learning in Germany. (www.profilpass.de) See also section 0807.

- Learning Culture for Skill Development research and development programme runs from 2000/2007. It aims to clarify the prerequisites and conditions for lifelong learning in terms of how learning processes and environments can be designed to stimulate learner interest and to run pilot tests.

In parallel to these political developments, changes can be observed in companies. Companies still regard certificates from educational and training establishments as necessary for access to working life. Increasingly, though, their arrangements for documenting competence do not specifically enquire whether they were gained through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

080201 - IMPACT OF EU POLICY COOPERATION

Since 2002 the Federal Government has been implementing its Lifelong Learning for All action programme, the major impetus for which was drawn from the resolutions passed by the Council of Europe and the European Union education ministers in the year 2000 and subsequent years. In the European Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, one of its central messages was a new appreciation of learning. In particular, non-formal and informal learning processes are to be made visible and certified. The EU Commission’s paper Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (November 2001) confirms this.

European activities under the framework of the Bruges-Copenhagen process, such as the development of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF), a European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and EUROPASS, have provided the initiative for national processes despite national sovereignty over general and vocational education. Thus, the national consultation process on the EQF gave momentum to thinking about the concept of a national qualifications framework, including discussion of such questions as how to record informal learning and work processes, and how to describe qualifications and competencies. A question of crucial importance is how the existing occupational system, geared towards formal certificates, will relate to a competency-based system, i.e. the debate over Beruflichkeit (alignment with recognised occupations) and modularisation.
The legal foundations of the initial and continuing vocational training system in Germany are the Vocational Training Act (Berufsbildungsgesetz, BBiG), the Crafts Code (Handwerksordnung, HWO), the Law on the Protection of Minors at Work (Jugendarbeitsschutzgesetz, JarbSch) and the Distance Learning Protection Act (Fernunterrichtsschutzgesetz, FernUSG).

As part of the development and updating of initial and advanced training occupations which is carried out on the basis of the Vocational Training Act, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung, BiBB) continuously examines and extends options for conversion to other, related occupations. The more recent occupational profiles, e.g. the mechatronics fitter or the specialised IT occupations build in experiential learning elements, and hence forms of competence-based learning.

Mobility between occupational sectors is not high, and is steered more by demand from companies or by the activities of the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA) and private recruitment agencies.

Certificates from formal education and training courses (rather than actual competencies) are the benchmark for entry to the labour market; little notice is taken, legally or administratively, of skills acquired through non-formal or informal learning. Nevertheless, larger companies often operate their own competence frameworks.

 Salary agreements are essentially regulated by collective agreements negotiated between the social partners.

The transition from school to IVET is considered risky given the high number of apprenticeship dropouts (almost 30% in craft trades), the increasing number of unqualified young people, and the declining supply of in-company training places, among other factors.

One instrument to ease the transition between general schooling and IVET, particularly for young people with learning difficulties or social disadvantages, is the qualification modules approach (the basics of vocational proficiency are taught in the form of modules, i.e. broken down into curriculum and time units). Module content is developed from the curricula for recognised training occupations or equivalent IVET programmes. If all parties agree, particularly the company and chambers, credit for the completed qualification modules can be awarded towards a subsequent initial vocational qualification. The legal foundation for this is the Ordinance on the certification of basic vocational skills within the framework of preparation for vocational education and training (Berufsausbildungsvorbereitungs-Bescheinigungsverordnung, BAVBVO).

An important instrument allowing differentiated transitions between initial and CVET are additional qualifications (BBiG Section 49). Their distinctive feature is that learning in formal, non-formal or informal contexts is complementary to state recognised qualifications in the vocational training system. Any of the standard national qualifications can be brought up to date and tailored more closely to requirements. Additional qualifications can complete an IVET programme, extend an initial training profile, or even prepare for a formal advanced training occupation. They consist of:

- professional competencies which are not part of the standard initial training programme;
- key competencies in the areas of organisation, communication and cooperation; and
- specialised skills needed for career advancement, e.g. in foreign languages or cross-cutting industrial-technical and business management competencies.

The use of differentiated types of learning (both formal and informal) and open, flexible learning pathways, leading from IVET to either CVET or higher education, creates transition points which stimulate the acquisition of higher-level qualifications. (A variety of concepts and mechanisms were tested in a series of pilot projects: http://www.bibb.de/de/4928.htm). Another potential use of the additional qualifications concept may be for retrospective recognition of informal learning or professional experience. After obtaining a vocational qualification and gaining subsequent work experience, it is possible to take an upgrading qualification (e.g. as a technical engineer, master craftsman, business specialist or certified senior clerk - BBiG Sections 53 ff). At Federal level there are currently around 200 such qualifications, of which master
craftsman qualifications account for 170. This formal advanced training should be distinguished from CVET which differs from other parts of the education and training system in the diversity and volume of providers (i.e. it is organised as an open market; there are no formal access requirements; learning programmes and courses can be organised flexibly and geared to people’s individual needs, their prior learning and their work experience).

**IVET - HE / CVET - HE**

Access to universities is obtained by means of the Abitur or Hochschulreife (higher education entrance qualification), the upper secondary leaving certificate from the Gymnasium (university-track secondary school) awarded after completion of 12 or 13 years of schooling. This coexists with forms of restricted entitlement to enter higher education, namely the Fachgebundene Abitur or the Fachhochschulreife (subject-specific entrance qualifications to higher education, giving access to particular courses of study at universities or universities of applied sciences).

In the Federal statute, the Framework Act for Higher Education (Hochschulrahmengesetz, HRG), Section 27 expressly provides that vocationally qualified applicants may also furnish proof of their qualification for entry to higher education ‘in another form, subject to the provisions of the relevant Land’. So far, some but not all Länder have made limited use of their legislative powers. In the most wide-ranging provisions, the federal states of Lower Saxony and Hesse broadened the access entitlement to higher education by enabling qualified candidates with outstanding advanced vocational qualifications, such as the master craftsman’s certificate, to gain unrestricted access to both university and university of applied sciences without any subject constraints.

**080302 - LEGAL FRAMEWORK FROM NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL --> FORMAL**

Legally, the recognition of competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning is not on an equal footing with the recognition of formal learning. There are barely any regulatory provisions governing the recognition of cross-cutting competencies, or specialised competencies (as distinct from occupation-specific qualifications and skills). Moreover, the issue is widely viewed as less important by those involved in policy and practice.

The federal system has few nationwide provisions on the recording and certification of informal education. Little use is made of competencies acquired informally for the formal education system (in terms of admission procedures, training and study programmes, and certification at upper secondary level and in higher education). The various qualitative and quantitative certification procedures (examination boards, assessments etc.) are not used in a differentiated way, and any coordination of such procedures is non-existent.

The most important tool for assessing non-formal and informal learning outcomes is admission to final examinations under Section 45 (2) of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG), known as the “Externe-Prüfung” (examination for external candidates, i.e. those not involved in a formal vocational training programme). Under this provision, people can be admitted to a final examination for a recognised occupation requiring formal training (training occupation) if they furnish evidence that they have ‘been employed in the occupation for which they wish to take the examination for a period at least one and a half times as long as is prescribed for the period of initial training’.

In the higher education sector, mention should be made of the Immaturenprüfung (examination for higher education applicants without a higher education entrance qualification), which is regulated differently in the different Länder. By offering admission examinations they provide for the possibility to recognise informal learning. Both the Externeprüfung and the Immaturenprüfung address admission only; no recognition is awarded which would shorten the length of education or training programmes.

**080303 - BODIES INVOLVED IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Policy making on the accumulation, transfer and evaluation of knowledge is carried out at national level by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF) and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie, BMWi), with advisory support from various research institutions. At the level of the Länder, the corresponding ministries, chambers and other institutions all play a role.

At regional and sectoral level, the institutions and projects are so numerous that it is impossible to give a detailed account of them here (see section 080401 for a sectoral example).
0804 - IMPLEMENTATION OF AND PRACTICES FOR ACCUMULATION, VALIDATION AND TRANSFER OF LEARNING

According to the common European principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning, the methods for measuring and validating them should guarantee all individuals equal access and treatment in respect of learning opportunities and protect their rights. They should emphasise the responsibility of institutions and stakeholders for carrying out measurement and validation, and guarantee the reliability, completeness and legitimacy of measurement and results. However, given the lower priority accorded to the validation of competencies acquired non-formally or informally, there is a lack of impetus for any systematic implementation, management or monitoring of these principles.

The fundamental point can be made, however, that Article 12 of the Basic Law (i.e. the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany) guarantees the right to freely choose and exercise an occupation. All legal provisions on occupations and places of work and training must be measured against this constitutional guarantee.

080401 - IMPLEMENTATION AND PRACTICES WITHIN FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The mechanisms for recognising partial formal qualifications involve shortening the length of IVET training programmes, through qualification modules and certain school-leaving certificates such as the Abitur. These can provide admission to examinations or university entrance (e.g. the Externenprüfung and Immaturenprüfung). In the context of additional qualifications (CVET), credit can be granted towards subsequent upgrading training. All of these are explained in more detail in section 0803. For IVET, the final examination is an all-or-nothing assessment to gain the overall qualification, which cannot be obtained in cumulative stages.

In CVET, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BiBB) supervises the development of a system for further training profiles. It is worth highlighting the personnel certification agency Cert-IT (http://www.cert-it.org) for continuing education and training in the IT sector. The objective is to provide skilled workers in the IT product and service provision and IT applications sector with career paths and career progression via three qualification levels (Level 1: Specialist, Level 2: Operative Professional and Level 3: Strategic Professional). The certification process for Level 1 formally certifies the occupational competencies acquired by an individual in the process of working. Specialist (Level 1) certificates are not regulated in law but are subject to private sector regulation (see section 080303 Cert-IT). Advanced vocational training to Operative and Strategic Professional level (Levels 2 and 3) is regulated by a statutory order which applies nationwide.

This system in the IT sector will improve comparability between vocational qualifications at the Operative and Strategic Professional levels in the IT sector and Bachelor and Master degrees in higher education. This in turn will create opportunities for credit transfer.

DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – HE

In 1998, the amendment to the Framework Act for Higher Education provided for the introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees combined with a credit points system at national universities (HRG Section 15(3)). Credit transfer became possible under reciprocal agreements between 2 or more universities or higher education institutions. 2 years later, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) resolved that Germany would also participate in realising the aims of the Bologna Declaration.

There are more than 2,900 degree programmes offering Bachelor and Master degrees, accounting for some 26% of all degree courses at universities, universities of applied sciences and colleges of art and music. But different credit point systems which are operating are not conducive to universal reciprocal transferability of credit. This could be addressed by applying the European Credit Transfer System which has been developed as a quantitative system in the 1990s within the scope of European education programmes.

The same can be said of implementing the national qualification framework for higher education, as envisioned in the Bologna Declaration which has been developed and was passed by the KMK in April 2005. It also makes provision for an interface with vocational education. The fine details have been left open: this is inevitable given the divergence between the focus on qualifications in the higher education sector and the emphasis on competencies in the vocational sector.

DEVELOPMENTS IN IVET/CVET

As yet there has been no decision or recommendation from education policy actors to develop a national credit points system. Nevertheless, in March 2005 the German Employers’ Organisation
for Vocational Training (Kuratorium der deutschen Wirtschaft für Berufsbildung, KWB) put forward an initial proposal for a European Qualification Framework (EQF) and a credit point system (ECVET). Further proposals were fed into the discussion during the consultation process on the EQF (across all educational sectors) and may contribute to the subsequent development of a national qualifications framework (NQF) or, preferably, a national competence framework.

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE VOCATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION SECTORS: CVET – HE

The Bologna Declaration also made reference to the interface with vocational education, and this was taken up on a national basis with various resolutions and recommendations. The supplementary goal of enabling credit transfer from vocational to higher education facilitated by the joint implementation of a credit points system in CVET following the model of the IT further training regulation, was declared in March 2002 by the social partners and the BMBF (Federal Ministry of Education and Research - Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung). To implement it, a recommendation of September 2003 was issued by the BMBF, the KMK and the HRK (Association of Universities and Other Higher Education Institutions in Germany) on the award of credit points in advanced vocational training and the transfer of credit towards higher education degree programmes.

At present, the approaches pioneered in IT further training are being refined (see above). The criteria, levels and the principles were generally comparable to the EQF concept, cutting across all sectors of education. Two programmes promote the granting of credit for vocational qualifications towards higher education programmes:

- **ANKOM (Academic course credit for vocational competencies),** commissioned by the BMBF and started September 2005. The programme clarifies the description/recording of vocational and higher education competencies in terms of learning outcomes, the validation/measurement of these competencies, and methods for comparing and evaluating the equivalences between them. Eleven regional projects and a process-monitoring programme (HIS/VDI/VDE-IT) are being funded in the IT, health and social care, industrial-technical and commercial sectors. (HIS = Higher Education Information System - http:www.his.de; VDI/VDE-IT = Verein deutscher Ingenieure e.V./Verband der Elektrotechnik Elektronik Informationstechnik e.V. – Innovation+Technik GmbH (VDI/VDE Innovation+Technik GmbH, a company of the Association of German Engineers and the Association for Electrical, Electronic & Information Technologies; www.vdivde-it.de).

- **Further development of dual study programmes in the tertiary sector commissioned by the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK) which started in April 2005.** This is developing and testing methods for use throughout higher education to award credit for vocational qualifications and for professional experience, taking account the international context including quality assurance.

At the same time, work is in progress on the further development of dual study programmes in the tertiary sector. The results of these programmes could become the basis for establishing a qualitative credit point system across educational sectors. Awarding credit for prior competencies towards more advanced (tertiary level) courses could open up new opportunities for completers of vocational programmes to launch or advance their careers.

DEVELOPMENTS IN ENTERPRISES

Among companies, there is a tendency to offer CVET in modular and often electronic format (e-learning). Short modules are interspersed with intensive phases, which tutors/trainers can facilitate using appropriate measures (simulations, chatrooms, online forums, etc.). Transfer objectives replace learning objectives whereby performance-oriented transfer skills are now taking centre stage in place of qualifications geared towards curriculum objectives.

The German VET system is increasingly creating opportunities for transitions between educational sectors and promoting interchange between educational pathways. The regulations on upgrading training in the information and communications technology occupations already show this horizontal and vertical mobility clearly. Similar routes must be developed for all occupational groups.
The dual system is predominant in IVET provision (approximately 55% of a year group undertakes an apprenticeship). One reason for this is that there are no formal admission criteria, which opens up learning opportunities to school-leavers with widely differing qualifications. The most important tool for assessing non-formal and informal learning outcomes is admission to final examinations under Section 45 (2) of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG), known as the "Externen-Prüfung" (examination for external candidates, i.e. those not involved in a formal vocational training programme). Under this provision, people can be admitted to a final examination for a recognised occupation requiring formal training (training occupation) if they furnish evidence that they have ‘been employed in the occupation for which they wish to take the examination for a period at least one and a half times as long as is prescribed for the period of initial training’. Evidence of the minimum period of employment can be waived wholly or in part if applicants can convincingly demonstrate, by producing certificates or by some other means, that they have acquired the necessary vocational proficiency for admission to the examination. To gain admission, evidence of employment in work relevant to the training occupation must be provided. Credit can be obtained for a higher level of general educational attainment, such as the Fachoberschulreife (entrance qualification for specialised upper secondary school), which shortens the period of employment for which evidence must be produced. A previous relevant programme of IVET in a different training occupation can also be credited towards the required periods of employment. Examinations taken by external candidates accounted for only 4% of all IVET qualifications administered by chambers in 2003 (Report on Vocational Education and Training for the Year 2005, BMBF).

In the higher education sector, students take the Immaturenprüfung (examination for higher education applicants without a higher education entrance qualification), which is regulated differently in the different Länder. By offering admission examinations they provide the possibility to recognise informal learning. Both the Externenprüfung and the Immaturenprüfung address admission only; no recognition is awarded which would shorten the length of education or training programmes. Only about 20% of occupational competencies originate from initial and continuing vocational education and training, and the remainder have to be acquired from personal continuing education in the process of work, in the social environment, or online. Nevertheless, there are no straightforward validation mechanisms, certainly none recognised by the state, by which the other 80% could be measured. The fact that the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning are obviously used in practice, as well as documented by companies in staff interviews, recruitment procedures and assessments, is another matter. The fundamental point is that everyone who takes part in education and training programmes, or who invests in examinations in order to obtain qualifications, certificates and diplomas, is doing so largely in the formal sector.

In all fields in which specific competencies are essential, these are verified – whether by employing candidates on a trial basis or by requesting references from previous employers. In the fields of mechatronics, IT and multimedia, electrical engineering and the metal-working occupations, experiments are taking place involving the integration of experiential and competence-based education and training methods, and appropriate validation methods. These are still broadly based experiments, and not standard validation practice, however.

As there is no standardised nationwide system for awarding recognition or credit transfer for competencies acquired through informal or non-formal learning, few studies are available on the profile of users. A study commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) on continuing education and training, information on informal vocational learning outside of formalised continuing education is being evaluated (Berichtssystem Weiterbildung IX: Integrierter Gesamtbericht zur Weiterbildungs situation in Deutschland, BMBF, 2006, p. 188 ff). In 2003, around 61% of all working people took part in one or several informal types of vocational learning. In total, therefore, the level of involvement in informal vocational learning is much higher than the rate of participation in occupation-specific training courses. This underscores the great quantitative significance of these forms of learning. Self-directed learning via observation and practice in the workplace and via reading work-related texts, reference books or specialist journals are mentioned by 38% and 35% of those questioned. The 3rd and 4th most frequent responses refer to on-the-job instruction or crash-course training by
colleagues (25%) or supervisors (22%). Around 1 in 6 members of the German workforce took part in work-related trade fairs or congresses, and about one in eight reported receiving on-the-job instruction or crash-course training from someone from outside their company.

(See below the following attached diagram: Participation in informal continuing vocational training 2003)

In terms of participation in informal CVET, the group-specific differences are similar to those found with formally organised CVET. Underrepresented groups are employees who have not completed an initial vocational qualification, labourers, foreign and older workers. Both socio-demographic factors and employment-related factors have a key influence on informal vocational learning. For instance, public sector employees are more active than those employed in the private sector. Employees in larger firms participate more frequently in informal CVET than employees in small or medium-sized firms. Above-average participation in informal CVET is noted mainly among employees working in chemicals/plastics (71%), medicine/healthcare (69%), banks/insurance (67%) and other services (66%). Participation rates among employees working in the leather/textiles/food sectors bring up the rear (49%), just as they did in 1997 and 2000.

As for formalised learning processes, group-specific differences can be identified by educational level and age. People with a high level of education and younger people are far more frequent participants in informal learning than people with a lower level of education and older people. Informal learning activity declines with increasing age.

080503 - BARRIERS TO ACCUMULATION, TRANSFER AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING

There is comparatively little pressure to take action to recognise informal learning processes and outcomes. The focus on formal qualifications remains (although formal admission requirements do not exist in the dual system, so all people can pursue a formal qualification). The dual system implies an orientation towards professional standards with integrated qualification profiles, a dimension of inter-company transferability, and universal standardisation of curricula as well as standardised and reliable examination arrangements governed by public law.

In the light of demographic change and a shortage of skilled workers, immigration and a pre-existing perception of the dual system’s tendency to exclude poor learners, a stronger demand for change has been seen in recent years.

0806 - TRANSFER AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING FOR VET TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

It is not possible to work in IVET without studying at a university or university of applied sciences (but possibly without gaining a degree), or qualifying in a recognised occupation and/or demonstrating proof of professional experience. However, the number of non-standard entrants is increasing. In publications by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK), the category of non-standard entrants denotes teachers “… who generally have a higher education degree but do not hold the First State Examination for the teaching profession” and who are employed by schools without having completed the standard period of preparatory service.

Over and above their specialist knowledge, they obtain an additional pedagogical qualification on the job. The most common role of non-standard entrants is to teach subjects where there is a shortage of applicants. Non-standard entry of this kind is particularly relevant in vocational education.

The regulations for the First State Examinations developed by the Länder are the formal reference point for entry to the teaching profession. In the area of practical vocational training, especially in companies, much higher numbers of training staff are drawn directly from the workplace and have less pedagogical training (e.g. master craftsmen responsible for instructing apprentices).

0807 - INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR ACCUMULATING, TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING

A trend has developed in Germany over the last few years towards recording and documenting cross-cutting skills as a form of social recognition, i.e. recognition taking place below the official regulatory level. Recording mainly makes use of training passports. These are sometimes understood as mechanisms for documenting formal learning, but are primarily intended for recording any non-formal and informal learning undertaken. For example, a training passport was developed in the context of second-chance qualification measures under a Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) series of pilot schemes in 2001 (www.qualifizierungspass.de).
In the course of a feasibility study (Weiterbildungspass mit Zertifizierung informellen Lernens, BMBF, 2004; http://www.bmbf.de/pub/weiterbildungspass_mit_zertifizierung_informellen_lernens.pdf) commissioned by the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK), these kinds of approaches were analysed for the first time. What emerged in addition to growing enthusiasm was a great heterogeneity in their use. The study found that further education passports were being used at the transition between school and working life, in company-based or inter-company vocational settings, in the voluntary sector or for private purposes. The documentation was usually limited to describing activities or confirming attendance at training events, so that rarely were competencies recorded. So, there was a limited ability for the passport to assist individuals to improve their position in the labour market. Instead, they are viewed as supplementary activities to existing qualifications.

On the basis of this and other research findings, a further education passport concept was recommended, the central goal is to make individual competencies as comprehensively visible as possible, regardless of how they were gained, to support individuals in recognising their own strengths, unlocking potential and finding inspiration for further (learning) activities in both personal and professional contexts. According to the detailed recommendations, a future further education passport should:

- integrate the reporting and guidance functions;
- support individual reflection, reporting and future planning of educational, learning and work biographies;
- ensure that it is usable across target groups and educational sectors;
- have the potential to be open for self- and external assessment;
- ensure that formal, non-formal and informal learning processes from different domains of life are taken into consideration;
- offer motivation for further learning, life and career planning;
- facilitate linkage with developments at European level.

THE PROFILPASS SYSTEM

The further education passport was given the name ProfilPASS. It also combined the numerous instruments and methods, already used in various contexts. The ProfilPASS was conceived as a developmental instrument based on user self-assessment supported by professional guidance.

The passport takes into account all learning settings in which learners may acquire competencies during the course of their lives. The assumption is that many individuals can only be guided towards knowledge of their competencies and the value of them through critical reflection on their own lives. It is structured according to 5 sections: (1) my life – an overview, (2) my fields of activity – documentation, (3) my competencies – a balance sheet, (4) my objectives and next steps and (5) a section for collecting references, attestations and other documents. This is supplemented with addresses and links relating to the recognition of informal learning.

Passport users start with section (1) in which they compile an overview of the relevant events and milestones in their professional and personal biographies. They are then encouraged to recount stories, as a means of stimulating a process of reflection on their biography. These then form the starting point for work on the central section (2), which consolidates details from the individual domains of life. It is not essential to complete this in full, rather, the aim is to explore one’s own biography to identify specific individual experiences and associated learning processes. Thus the main emphasis of self-reflection is on the quality of those learning processes consciously identified by the individual.

Skills and competencies are derived from these activities by a process of abstraction, and then assessed on a 4-level scale:

- **Level 1**: activities which can be carried out under another person’s supervision or by following instructions;
- **Level 2**: activities which can be carried out autonomously in familiar conditions;
- **Level 3**: activities which can be carried out autonomously in a different context (other situation, conditions, location, work context);
- **Level 4**: Activities which can be carried out autonomously in a different context, explained and demonstrated to others.

Skills at Level 1 or 2 are still referred to as skills. In contrast, skills at Level 3 or 4, i.e. those which can be transferred to other contexts, are referred to as competencies. Referring to the skills and competencies identified, a personal profile can be drawn up in Section (3) which is, at the same time, the departure point for the planning of future learning on the basis of developmental objectives, culminating in an action plan in Section (4).
THE GUIDANCE CONCEPT OF PROFILPASS

A personal guidance concept is coordinated within this method for identifying skills and competencies. It is driven by principles such as process transparency, biographical relevance, competence orientation, reflectiveness and ensuring biographical continuity in learning and life.

A contract should be signed between the person seeking guidance and their counsellor; several guidance sessions should take place if possible; the matters discussed during guidance should be treated confidentially; and after completing the self-exploration process, users should receive documentation of the outcome.

EVALUATION OF PROFILPASS

From September 2004 to April 2005 the ProfilPASS system was piloted by more than 30 cooperating partner institutions in different regions and settings. The passport was issued by 90 counsellors to 1178 users. The evaluation of the pilot phase showed that users' assessments of the passport were positive with the majority intending to carry on using it.

A significant qualification and age effect was apparent in user assessment: people with higher educational qualifications rate the passport more highly. Likewise, the older they are, the more positively they assess it.

The evaluation also identified some areas of potential improvement. For instance, it became clear that it can essentially be used with multiple target groups, but that difficulties nevertheless arose when working with young people. Therefore the competency identification process was modified. Furthermore, a ProfilPASS specifically for migrants is being developed.

LINKING UP PROFILPASS WITH EUROPASS

The relationship between ProfilPASS and the modified Europass was also examined in the evaluation. Whilst the ProfilPASS is an instrument for individual self-diagnosis and self-reflection which takes account of informal learning, Europass is an instrument for structuring and facilitating the assessment of outcomes of formal and non-formal learning processes, against the backdrop of the growing scale of transnational work and educational programmes within the EU. A further difference is that ProfilPASS offers guidance on the description of informally acquired competencies, which is not available through Europass. The integrated approach pursued with the ProfilPASS is nevertheless good preparation for completing Europass.

In relation to unqualified workers, people with learning difficulties or marginalised groups, the necessity for documentation of competencies and competence training sessions emerges especially clearly, because these people can rarely handle formal examination methods nor access organised continuing education. They are generally "self-sufficient" in explicit and implicit knowledge, though not always at a level which is transferable for work purposes. This must be addressed with developmental initiatives, including institutional efforts: it is not necessarily essential to create more educational establishments, but skills for purposeful, self-sufficient learning must be boosted significantly. What is crucial, however, is what learners, especially unqualified people, actually bring with them in terms of knowledge and competencies. In this respect, the assessment of explicit knowledge is of lesser interest. What is important, once again, is to accomplish an assessment and certification of competencies which is analogous to a qualification.

For unqualified people this is vitally important, indeed almost a matter of survival, because only in this way is it possible to identify, activate and develop the potential competencies they actually possess – at whatever point in their learning biographies these may have been acquired. Thus the challenge with regard to unqualified people is to place the bulk of the emphasis on activity-related basic competencies (shaped by their own initiative and wishes) and to make the capacity for goal-directed self-management and more open-ended self-organisation the pivotal element of exploratory and development processes. This could be achieved by means of moderated and supported learning processes in the workplace, for example.

In contrast, approaches to experiential, on-the-job learning are seen in the NAKIF project (www.nakif.de; NAKIF 2002): “New skills requirements in the field of experiential working and self-directed learning for specialised industrial workers”). This is a BMBF project, implemented by the project management agency Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe - Production and Manufacturing Technologies. (Zeller, B.: "Einfache Tätigkeiten im Wandel – Chancen für Benachteiligte. Früherkennung von Qualifikationserfordernissen für benachteiligte Personengruppen". In: BWP 2002 Heft 1; "Weiterbildung für einfache Tätigkeiten – kein Thema?" In: f-bb Newsletter, 2002 pp. 25-28).

The advance of learning into the work process and working life opens the door to continuing learning for unqualified staff who are wholly fulfilling their responsibilities in terms of operative activities, information and quality processes, process security and industrial safety tasks, whilst

080701 - RESEARCH ON INNOVATIVE METHODS ON ACCUMULATION, TRANSFER AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING

The need for new methods to validate learning is due to changes in labour market requirements whereby the emphasis has moved away from qualifications to competencies. The training market has had to recognise this shift and think in terms of competence development rather than education and training.

Important research work has been carried out within the Learning Culture for Skill Development project, managed by the Association for Research in Professional Development (ABWF; www.abwf.de) and its Management of Qualification Development (QUEM) project. Innovative methods for the transfer and validation of learning have been investigated with regard to: formal, non-formal and informal learning; self-organised learning processes; and competencies as learning outcomes. Different learning venues including continuing education establishments, workplace, social environment and Internet/multimedia were explored to establish their potential for competence development (QUEM (ed.) Zwei Jahre ‘Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung’. Inhalte - Ergebnisse – Perspektiven. Berlin, 2003).

Currently the main focus of academic debate is the following:

• as competencies are bound to individuals, there is a challenge to identify and assess them in a way which can be general and standardised which are accurate for everyone;
• the need to establish criteria for competence comparability requires a defined standardisation of competencies. Such an approach may unduly restrict perceptions of semi-formalised or even non-formalised specialised and cross-cutting competencies;
• competencies are context-dependent, so it is difficult to conceive how they can be transferred to other contexts. What are the necessary preconditions for successful transfer of competencies into other contexts?
• there is some tension between making personal competencies visible and available, on the one hand, and the principle of personal confidentiality i.e. that they can choose what competencies they reveal. This particularly applies to non-work-based competencies: how to ensure that social pressure does not cancel out the principle of choice. (Source: Weiterbildungspass mit Zertifizierung informalen Lernens, BMBF, 2004; http://www.bmbf.de/pub/weiterbildungspass_mit_zertifizierung_informellen_lernens.pdf).

Research into the accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes has been carried out particularly in connection with learning time accounts (Seifert, H.: Lernzeitkonten für lebenslanges Lernen. Bonn, 2002). Company learning time accounts are working time accounts which make use of time credits for in-company continuing education purposes. Employees can contribute the time necessary for their training by either working extra hours, giving up personal time or free time, or using blocks of time agreed under collective agreements. The principle is to encourage more learning and to overcome the time constraints in accessing learning opportunities.

0808 - RAISING AWARENESS ON ACCUMULATION, TRANSFER AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING

Broad awareness of the idea of informal learning and competence development has been created by the slogan of the Lifelong Learning project and the array of public information associated with the project itself (e.g. publications of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) see:

• http://www.bmbf.de/pub/das_informelle_lernen.pdf
• http://www.bmbf.de/pub/strategie_lebenslanges_lernen_blk_heft1_15.pdf
• http://www.bmbf.de/pub/weiterbildungspass_mit_zertifizierung_informellen_lernens.pdf
• http://www.bmbf.de/pub/berichtssystem_weiterbildung_neun.pdf
• http://www.bmbf.de/pub/expertenberichte_des_forum_bildung.pdf
• http://www.bmbf.de/pub/schlussbericht_kommission_lll.pdf
A number of publications have been issued through the Learning Culture for Skill Development project and numerous conferences and workshops have been held which have been given attention from training providers and through the national press. Nevertheless, shortcomings remain in relation to the validation and actual use of lifelong learning, informal learning and competence development, as outlined in previous sections. The widespread knowledge and awareness of the importance of the issue is not yet reflected in practical implementation on the same scale.

In contrast, personnel departments, trainers, service providers and civil society organisations are already using the new ideas extensively and successfully. This is evident, most of all, in detailed studies on learning in the social environment (Bootz, I., Kirchhöfer, D.: (2003): Der Programmbereich “Lernen im sozialen Umfeld”. QUEM (ed.): “Zwei Jahre ‘Lernkultur Kompetenzentwicklung’. Inhalte – Ergebnisse – Perspektiven.” QUEM-report, Heft 79, p. 139-189).

0809 - TRANSFER AND VALIDATION OF LEARNING FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PRACTITIONERS

Guidance counselling practitioners have taken up the themes of transfer and validation far more readily than academics engaged in basic research. One of the reasons is that guidance counselling is not a certified profession: anyone may use the designation “guidance counsellor” or present themselves as a guidance counsellor. As far as their involvement in personnel matters is concerned (from head hunting to mediation), their principal strength lies in discovering, comparing, fostering and reinforcing competencies.

Where they are involved with the validation of learning and the assessment of competencies, it is in their own best interests to be able to inform clients (whether students, employees or the unemployed) about the possibilities – and the limitations – of such validation.

0810 - FINANCING

In the formal sector all statutory regulations governing the financing of IVET and CVET apply at institutional and individual level. In the area of lifelong, life-wide learning – where accumulation, transfer and validation of learning outcomes really become relevant and necessary – financing is a considerable problem. An Expert Commission on Financing Lifelong Learning discussed a variety of different possibilities and weighed them against each other (BMBF; Final report of the Expert Commission on Financing Lifelong Learning: “Der Weg in die Zukunft” dated 28th July 2004; http://www.bmbf.de/pub/schlussbericht_kommission_lll.pdf).

On the one hand the Commission sees it as a public responsibility to finance measures for continuing education. It views different learning settings as places of learning in a democratic society, where competencies are acquired on a largely informal basis. On the other hand, as a deliberate policy, the only IVET and CVET institutions eligible for support are those which provide formal learning and certification of the outcomes of this learning.

The Commission’s next proposals are to support learners and promote formal qualifications. The idea is to find ways in which the state could encourage educational savings plans and create incentives for groups with less involvement in education, low income and few assets, to invest part of their income in lifelong learning.

They go on to envision a blanket system of basic provision which covers continuing education including the infrastructure for second-chance education, language-learning, supporting the integration of immigrants and supporting the acquisition of international competence (e.g. linguistic and cultural competence). Measures for more advanced competence development or the validation of informal learning or of competencies are not included.

Creating the right conditions for in-company CVET, promoting agreements on company learning time accounts between social partners, promoting the willingness of small and medium-sized enterprises to provide continuing education and developing vouchers for this purpose, supporting semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the workplace – these are all measures which promote formal rather than non-formal or informal learning. Similarly, the proposed creation of recognisable tracks through the education system – by developing accredited training modules and certificates linked to the restructuring of occupations and by means of further training qualifications with nationwide recognition – is not geared towards the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, but towards improving formal pathways.
Although the Commission fully recognises the necessity for the new culture of learning, its financing proposals remain very indistinct: ‘Other major factors are the introduction of certification procedures for the recognition of informally acquired competencies which are equivalent to school or company qualifications, greater flexibility in the timing and subject content of CVET provision for adults (modularisation), forms of work organisation conducive to learning, and raising the incentives for learning... Research on lifelong learning will be extended in order to evaluate experiences and refine mechanisms.’

**0811 - TRANSFERRING AND VALIDATING LEARNING ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES**

There is no standard system of recognition and credit transfer for competencies acquired informally or non-formally within Germany as well as for awarding recognition and credit for learning outcomes achieved abroad. The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (KMK) has set up an information office which deals with questions relating to the recognition of educational qualifications (certificates) – but not competencies – acquired abroad. The validation aspect is the poor relation. Translating competencies acquired abroad for the German labour market is not a trivial task. The EU proposals for international comparison systems are still in their infancy. The Europass is a worthwhile perspective which includes a balance sheet of competencies. It is widely known but still too little used.

The exercise of unregulated occupations and professions is indirectly regulated by the labour market. It is up to recruiting firms to decide which applicants to employ. Large companies have developed their own competence assessment methods.

A number of institutions are involved in promoting international exchange in Germany, including the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*, BA), InWent (*Internationale Weiterbildung und Entwicklung gGmbH*, Capacity Building International), the Educational Exchange Service (*Pädagogischer Austauschdienst*, PAD), the German Academic Exchange Service (*Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, DAAD) and the International Youth Exchange and Visitors’ Service of the Federal Republic of Germany (*Internationaler Jugendaustausch- und Besucherdienst der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, IJAB).

In the area of international training for young German experts and executives, InWEnt supports 7 000 participants every year. They gain experience abroad on practical advanced training programmes, and develop both their professional and intercultural skills. The main target groups are apprentices and junior employees, students, graduates, and staff in vocational and adult education. Programmes are aimed at potential participants from all kinds of disciplines and sectors, although the commercial and technical fields account for the largest proportion of advanced training courses. Experience abroad for apprentices is facilitated especially by the EUs Leonardo and Socrates programmes as well as bilateral exchange programmes with Great Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, the USA and Japan, which take the form of advanced training courses for groups. An online database of advanced training opportunities abroad for Germans is maintained by the Information and Guidance Centre for Advanced Training Abroad (IBS) and supports the transfer process ([www.wege-ins-ausland.de](http://www.wege-ins-ausland.de)).

It is to be hoped that change will come about as the European Credit Transfer System (ECVET) continues to develop. As envisioned by the EU Commission itself, the overall objective of the policy agenda is to treat vocational qualifications ‘as a common currency’ throughout Europe. The goal is to foster mobility within education systems, facilitate lifelong learning and improve opportunities for interchange between the education systems.

Within their own country or within the education systems of other European countries, EU citizens should be able to move freely within and between different learning venues and educational institutions. What they have learnt – whether formally, non-formally or informally in programmes, courses or modules, in school, the workplace, training centres or on-the-job experience – should be transferable from one situation to another. Under the proposals, every individual can accumulate units of learning, training, modules and experience in the course of their own (lifelong) educational path and have them recognised as partial or full qualifications, regardless of how and where the learning took place through awarding credit points. This would make training courses, training phases and informal learning processes transparent, comparable and transferable in that credit points can be awarded or received for every learning outcome. The credit points system is geared towards outcomes (the educational objectives of knowledge, skills and competences) at different reference levels, which are grouped and organised in terms of units.
The combination of the EQF and ECVET could significantly increase mobility in Europe and lead to higher regard for non-formal and informal learning and for competencies in Germany.