Study on Existing Frameworks to Validate Competence of Career Guidance Practitioners

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1. Foreword

Career guidance practitioners play a fundamental role in fostering adults participation in education[1], but in most European countries the qualifications of careers guidance practitioners are mainly based on informal and not formal learning and not formally recognized[2].

The aim of this study is to examine some best practices for officially recognizing which are, amongst the many, the career guidance practitioners whose performance or personal attributes complies with a predefined standard.

This is precise but a bit too long, so it can be shortened as:

The aim of this study is to examine some best practices in validating competent career guidance practitioners.

A short Glossary is provided at Chapter 16, please refer to it for the definitions of the main technical words.

This study has been written for the project *IMPROVE Improving Validation of Not-Formal Learning in European Career Guidance Practitioners*[3]. The project intends to develop and pilot a set of guidelines for validation of not formal learning in career guidance practitioners. The project proposal provides for a:

Study on Existing Frameworks to Validate Competence of CG Practitioners. The Study on Existing Frameworks is an account of the several frameworks existing to validate not formal learning of CG practitioners and of their approach to validation of not formal learning. The Study (40 pages spaced 1) will be produced in English in electronic format.

For this purpose, some general (meaning not expressly focused on career guidance) and specific (expressly developed for career guidance practitioners) frameworks will be described. A grid to classify and evaluate them will be presented. In the IMPROVE project this Study will be used, amongst other resources, to develop a set of guidelines to be used for assessment and validation of competent career guidance practitioners.

Validation of not formal learning can be used for two different goals[4]:

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[1] Lisbon European Council, Presidency Conclusions (2000). Retrieved on April 3, 2011 at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm; European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission (2002). The Copenhagen Declaration. Retrieved on April 3, 2011 at http://ec.europa.eu/education/pdf/doc125_en.pdf; Council of the European Union (2004). Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe. Retrieved on April 3, 2011 at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004_en.pdf; Council of the European Union (2008). Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. Retrieved on April 3, 2011 at http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:319:0004:0007:EN:PDF

[2] CEDEFOP (2009). *Professionalizing Career Guidance. Practitioners competences and qualification routes in Europe*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

[3] Website retrieved on April 3, 2011 at http://www.improveguidance.eu.

[4] Evangelista, L. (2010). Perché e come certificare l'apprendimento non formale. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://orientamento.it/orientamento/8g.htm.

1. to give somebody an educational qualification. In this case the validation of not formal learning is usually used to shorten or to skip the period of formal study and assessment and validation are focused on accreditation of prior learning. As educational qualifications are usually granted to whom can demonstrate a specific level of knowledge and the mastery of a set of skills mostly of cognitive nature (reading, understanding texts, writing texts, remembering, synthesizing, evaluating, producing original ideas and concepts, calculating, etc.), when the aim of the procedure to give somebody an educational qualification assessment measures these.

2. to recognize a worker is able to carry out specific job tasks up to a predetermined standard (i.e. to identify competent workers). In this case assessment and validation should not be restricted only to not formal and informal learning, but to learning in general, because performance depends (also) by knowledge, notwithstanding if it has been acquired in formal, not formal or informal way. But as knowledge is only a prerequisite of good performance, and performance is what matters here, the assessment of knowledge can be skipped in favor of direct assessment of performance.

This Study is focused on the second option, because to professionalize the career guidance sector in Europe using the first one would require all career guidance practitioners that have not already done to turn to an educational organization to get and educational qualification. This doesn't look feasible and, besides, we think to identify competent career guidance practitioners there are better ways.

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2. Executive summary

This Study presents the findings from a research that has examined some frameworks used at national or international level to recognize competent career guidance practitioners or competent workers in general.

The following frameworks have been examined: EVGP Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner (chapter 10), MEVOC and ECGC European Career Guidance Certificate (11), EAF European Accreditation Framework for Career Guidance Practitioners (12), UK's National Occupational Standards and NVQs for Advice and Guidance (13), EuroPsy, the European Certificate in Psychology (14), ISO/IEC 17024 General requirements for bodies operating certifications of persons (15).

Chapters 1-9 describe how the frameworks can be structured. Every framework is structured with:

1. something that is gained by the successful applicant. It could be an occupational title (such as Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner) or a specification in an occupational title (Registered EuroPsy Psychologist, Career Guidance Practitioner Accredited for -name of the main task-), or a certificate (Award in Career Guidance, European Certificate For Career Guidance Counselors)

2. A set of elements that the successful applicant must possess or master to be accredited that are assessed during the assessment procedure. These can be A. qualifications, B. experience, C. personal features (such as knowledge, technical and transversal skills, attitudes, and so on) or D. main job tasks to master (chapter 3). Each different set corresponds to a specific approach, even if elements of different approached can be requested in the same framework (chapter 5).

3. A procedure for assessment of the elements at the previous point. During the assessment process, evidences of possession of the elements featured in each framework will be collected or elicited. The assessment procedure will change depending from the elements.

Of the examined frameworks, EAF and NVQs for Advice and Guidance proved to be truly performance based, while EVGP, MEVOC and EuroPsy are mixed. ISO/IEC 17024 is instead a set of guidelines on how to structure a general system for accrediting workers.

Of the four approaches highlighted above, the one based on performance proved to be the most reliable because based on direct observation or reconstruction of performance, while the others are indirect, based on possession of antecedents that are only probabilistically related to performance (chapter 3). Possession of qualifications and experience are a useful shortcuts for a first screening of applicants, but on our opinion they don't suffice for identifying competent workers. Frameworks based on possession of personal features (so called 'competencies based frameworks') proved to be more mistake prone (chapter 7) and cumbersome in assessment.

In developing a framework, two sources of mistakes should be avoided (chapter 6). The first is poor individuation of the elements the candidate to validation has to possess or to master to get accredited. This directs assessment towards elements external to the sector, minor or too much aggregate, this way causing the results of the validation procedure to be unreliable even if the assessment procedure is effective.

The second source of mistake depends on the method of assessment of the elements the candidate must possess or master. If the method of assessment is not effective the results of the validation procedure will be unreliable even if the elements the candidate to validation has to possess or to master have been properly identified.

A final point worth considering when developing a framework is the tradeoff between effectiveness and cumbersomeness of the assessment procedure. A methodology very effective but too costly or lengthy (as it could be approaches C and D) has little possibility to become widespread, except in the case it is imposed by a public authority. On the other side a methodology light but not reliable (as approaches A and B) is of little utility.

3. Main approaches in validation of competent workers

To recognize and assure jobs are carried out well is a constant concern in our modern societies. We define competent the person that is *able to do something well*[5] or, if we want to be more precise, to a predetermined standard.

There are several approaches to assure an occupation is carried out by competent people (Evangelista, 2008)[6]. For example we can recognize as competent:

1. Who holds a specific educational qualification
2. Who holds a specific experience (usually measured in terms of time length of the experience)
3. Who holds specific personal features -skills, knowledge, etc.
4. Who can directly prove a good performance in the specific job.

Case 1 can be defined as 'The educational qualifications based approach to validation of competent workers'.

Case 2 can be defined as 'The experience based approach to validation of competent workers'.

Case 3 can be defined as 'The competencies based approach to validation of competent workers'. or 'The American approach to validation of competent workers' because has been developed in the US by McClelland (1973)[7], Boyatzis (1982)[8] and others. The personal features are called 'competencies' (singular competency). For an in-depth analysis see next chapter.

Case 4 can be defined as 'The performance based approach', 'The task based approach' or 'The UK approach to validation of competent workers' because it is used in UK's NOS National occupational Standards[9] and in the related NVQ, National Vocational Qualification framework[10] (now transformed in the QCF Qualification and Credit Framework[11]). The focus here is on how the person performs his/her job.

Approaches 1 and 2 are the traditional ones, but they are increasingly recognized as not fully satisfying. Approach 1 is discriminating with whom has not the time or money to attend an educational course or has a preference for learning outside a classroom or has gained an educational qualification (for example in another country) that is not recognized. Approach 2 doesn't take in consideration different speed of learning and different context of experience (some contexts can be more learning inducing than others) and ignore experience that cannot be officially proved.

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[5] Competent. (n.d.). Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary Online. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/competence); one of the examples of the entry is *a competent secretary/horse-rider/cook*

[6] Evangelista, L. (2008). The quest for competence. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://orientamento.it/orientamento/8d.htm.

[7] McClelland, D. C. (1973). Testing for competence rather than intelligence. *American Psychologist, 28(1)*, 1-14.

[8] Boyatzis, R. (1982). *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*. Chichester: John Wiley.

[9] Skills for Business. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.ukstandards.org.uk/

[10] DirectGov. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from at http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039029

[11] Qualifications and Credit Framework. (2011, February 3). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 16:13, February 6, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Qualifications_and_Credit_Framework&oldid=411777546

It is worth to highlight differences and similarities between the approaches 3 and 4. The table 1 below[12] shows that personal features (antecedents) cause performance. Approach 3 focuses on validation of the antecedents, while approach 4 focuses on validation of tasks performance. Approach 3 is usually adopted when is not possible (for example in recruiting or in career guidance) to observe directly the person carrying out a job and when the person has no previous work experience

Table 1. Personal features and task performance

KNOWLEDGE	ATTITUDES	SKILLS	ETC.		TASKS PERFORMANCE
Knowl. # 1 Knowl.. # 2 Knowl. # 3 Knowl. # 4 etc.	Attit. # 1 Attit. # 2 Attit. # 3 Attit. # 4 etc.	Skill # 1 Skill # 2 Skill # 3 Skill # 4 etc.	Etc. # 1 Etc. # 2 Etc. # 3 Etc. # 4 etc.	cause →	Task # 1 perfor. Task # 2 perfor. Task # 3 perfor. Etc.

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[12] The table has been developed thank to the discussion with the Partners of the project EAS. See Evangelista, L. (2008). How EAF Accreditation Framework for the European Career Guidance Practitioners was developed. *Orientamento.it* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.orientamento.it/orientamento/1a.htm.

4. Competence and competencies[13]

Before 1973, the word competency didn't exist in English (McClelland, quoted in Adams, 1997[14]; Repetto, Ferrer-Sama, P. & Manzano, N., 2008:13[15]; Competency Development Guidebook[16]). The only existing form where competent and competence. Competent meant, as said, *able to do something well*. (*a competent secretary/horse-rider/cook*)[17]. Competence here should be understood as *a generic quality imagined to be possessed by a person able to carry out professionally an occupation or job main task*, in the same way beauty and goodness are the imagined qualities respectively of beautiful and good people. A person is not more or less beautiful because it has a certain amount of beauty inside. This is to say there is not a cause effect relation between beauty and beautiful and between competence and competent: beauty, goodness (and competence) don't exist as antecedents. If we assume that beauty, goodness and competence exists on their own (i.e. to be beautiful depends on beauty), we fall in a logical error called reification, when an abstraction (abstract belief or hypothetical construct) is treated as if it were a concrete, real event, or physical entity [18].

This can be difficult to grasp at first sight. Some examples can be useful.

- 'The boat sunk because the sea was angry with the sailors' is a fake causal relation. The sea has no emotions.

- 'That person is beautiful because it has beauty [a substance] inside' is a fake causal relation. Such a substance 'beauty' doesn't exist (somebody is more beautiful than somebody else because it has a higher quantity of 'beauty'?)

- 'That person is competent because it has competence [a substance] inside' is again a fake causal relation. Somebody is more competent than somebody else because it has a higher quantity of competence? No, it is more competent because it has more knowledge or skill or because it performs better. So to be competent (i.e. to be able to do something well) is not caused by something called competence, but depends on personal features or on level of performance.

In his seminal article of 1973 the American psychologist and consultant David McClelland asserted intelligence and aptitude tests and school grades are not good predictors of success in education, job and life (McClelland, 1973[19], a summary is available in Evangelista, 2008[20]). The new approach

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[13] See also Evangelista, L. (2006). Competencies and Career Guidance. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://orientamento.it/english/competencies-guidance.htm

[14] Adams, C. (1997). Interview with the founding father of the competency approach: David McClelland. *Competency, vol. 4 no.3, Spring 1997*, pp.18–23. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://orientamento.it/orientamento/8c.htm

[15] Repetto, E., Ferrer-Sama, P. & Manzano, N. (2008). Setting the scene: competencies for training counsellor practitioners. *Int J Educ Vocat Guidance*. Repetto et. Al. affirm that 'One of the first uses of the term competency was by McClelland' and that 'In Europe, the term competency appeared in England during the 1980s'.

[16] Competency Development Guidebook . Retrieved on April 14, 2011 from http://www.scribd.com/doc/4587790/1-Competency-Development-GUIDEBOOK

[17] Competent. (n.d.). Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary Online, op. cit.

[18] Reification (fallacy). (2011, January 16). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 15:30, February 3, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Reification_(fallacy)&oldid=408267367

[19] McClelland, 1973, op. cit.

[20] Evangelista, L. (2008). A summary of McClelland, D. C. (1973). Testing for competence rather than for "intelligence." American Psychologist, 28, 1-14. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.orientamento.it/orientamento/8b.htm

('testing for competence' as opposed to the traditional 'testing for intelligence') should consider others factors, such as 'reading, writing, calculating' but also 'personality variables' such as 'communication skills', 'patience', 'realistic goal setting', 'Ego development', etc. As these factors are related to the 'testing for competence' approach, for referring to them McClelland creates the word 'competency' (plural 'competencies', McClelland, quoted in Adams, 1997[21]). In English the appendix –y is added to nouns and adjectives to form abstract nouns denoting a state, condition, or quality[22]. In his article, McClelland doesn't define competencies precisely, but a definition can be inferred. A competency is:

Each of personal characteristics which (usually combined with others) allows the effective execution of a particular task in a given organization.

In McClelland (1973) competencies are 'task and organization specific', that is to say they are described and singled out only with reference to a specific work-related task carried out within a given organization. For example the fluency in German language is a competency only if it constitutes an essential element for the effective carrying out of a given role in a particular organization. So for McClelland in each given organization a specific and unique group of competencies (a 'competency model') can be identified.

The term competency is only a generic term (a label) used to indicate the personal characteristics which, from all those possible (for example knowledge, transferable skills, technical ability, character traits, attitudes, aptitudes, etc.), are considered important each time. The term competencies allows reference to such factors without having to list them every time.

Searching for common elements and a global definition, in 1982, Richard Boyatzis, a colleague of McClelland, examined the competencies identified in the hundreds of, by then, established competency models and defined a competency as (Boyatzis, 1982)[23]:

'an underlying characteristic of an individual, which is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job' which could be 'a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses'.

In addition, in his study, Boyatzis identifies a core of transferable competencies which all effective managers, whatever their line of work, tend to possess[24].

Even though for Boyatzis competencies remain task and organization specific, his extremely broad definition, for better or worse, paves the way for the concept of competency as a generic personal characteristic unconnected to a specific work context, yet still connected with 'effective or superior performance'.

In this new acceptation, we can define a competency as:

Each personal characteristic which (usually combined with others) can lead to good general work performance.

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[21] Adams 1997, op. cit.
[22] -y. (2011, January 16). In Wiktionary. Retrieved 16:41, February 3, 2011, from http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/-y
[23] Boyatzis, R. (1982). *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance*. Chichester: John Wiley.
[24] For a list see: Boyatzis' management competencies. *Changing minds.org*. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://changingminds.org/disciplines/leadership/actions/boyatzis_competencies.htm

1 and 2 are the standard definitions used in Human Resource management. In recent years, in the fields of careers guidance, education and training, a further definition which does not contain the reference to good work performance has become widespread in Europe. In this case, competency means:

Each personal characteristic generally utilizable in the workplace, in school or in ordinary life, regardless of the nature of the work or level of performance achievable through its use.

In this 'updated' definition, the term 'competencies' ends up meaning all those personal characteristics generally utilizable in the different life contexts (work, school, etc.), regardless of the performance achievable through their use. The reference to good work performance has been left out because many of those on education or training courses or undergoing careers guidance are still a long way from a work environment (and so the quality of their work performance is neither measurable nor predictable), or are not necessarily in a position to provide a good work performance level. So, competencies have simply become personal resources to be used in the life regardless of the performance level they succeed in providing.

Formulating a profile of competencies then becomes simply a matter of working out a 'set' list of those characteristics (personal resources) possessed by an individual which the adviser, based on his/her frames of reference, considers useful for work purposes.

Over the years the competencies approach incorporated various theoretical developments originating from the study of personality and thought processes. For example, it has been possible to easily include (among transferable skills or character traits) meta-cognition, meta-competencies, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence that were not initially present in McClelland.

Meta competencies are personal attributes resulting from integration of several other personal attributes. For example the meta competency 'Managing for Results' may involve the ability to stress accountability, continuous improvement and customer service to make timely and effective decisions, and to produce results through strategic and tactical planning and the implementation and evaluation of programs, policies, and processes. Some authors use the term competencies to refer only to combinations of more basic personal features [25].

At the end of this chapter, we can say that the terms competency (plural competencies) and competence (plural competences) have different meanings. Notwithstanding all the developments highlighted in this chapter, the personal features stressed by McClelland and its followers have the common feature to be the antecedents of performance (left end of the table), while the term competence refers only to the quality to be able to provide a good performance, with no relation with what causes the performance itself. So the two terms competency and competence cannot be used interchangeably.

Some authors confuse competency/competencies with competence/competences, thinking different spelling reflects not different meaning, but only difference between US and UK English. For

[25] For example B.J. Buiskool, S.D. Broek, J.A. van Lakerveld, G.K. Zarifis, M. Osborne (2010). *Key competences for adult learning professionals. Contribution to the development of a reference framework of key competences for adult learning professionals. Final report* affirms that 'Competences should be understood as a complex combination of knowledge, skills and abilities/attitudes needed to carry out a specific activity, leading to results.' Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://pure.pascalobservatory.org/sites/default/files/keycomp_0.pdf

example CEDEFOP (2007)[26] under 'Spelling and use of English' advices authors, when submitting manuscript for publication, to use 'competence' and 'competences' instead of 'competency' and 'competencies'. Also the European Commission use routinely competence/competences, see for example European Parliament (2006)[27].

[26] CEDEFOP, (2007). Presentation of CEDEFOP manuscripts for publication in English. Dated March 2007. Thessaloniki: CEDEFOP. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/upload/etvnews/news/3020-att4-1-style_manual.pdf .

[27] European Commission, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. In: Official Journal of the European Union. No. L 394/10, Bruxelles: European Commission, 2006.

5. Main approaches in the validation of competent workers

In case 1 'The educational qualifications based approach to validation of competent workers', validation is carried out simply asking the person to produce the prescribed educational qualification.

In case 2 'The experience based approach to validation of competent workers', validation is carried out simply asking the person to provide evidence of the prescribed experience (could be for example a declaration of the employer).

In case 3 'The personal features based approach to validation of competent workers' the human factors by which competence depends can be assessed (and later officially recognized if assessment is successful) by different means depending on their nature:

1. candidate's CV or narration of its professional biography
2. personality tests
3. attitudes tests
4. oral or written tests (for technical and general knowledge),
5. interviews focused on transferable skills such as the BEI Behavioral Event Interview developed by McClelland
6. individual and group based activities focus on transferable skills such as the ones contained in the Assessment Center.

In the classic BEI (McClelland 1998)[28] the person is requested to describe six episodes – three positive and three negative – occurred at work focusing on what they said, thought, felt and did. Then the interview is transcribed and scored for previously defined human factors (competencies). The scoring considers frequency and level of each factor.

As the BEI is time intensive, other BEI inspired practices have been developed:

- transcripts and scoring may not be used and questions are more directly focused on personal features, elicited by episodes occurred at work such as: 'Describe the worst project you worked on', 'Describe a time you had to work under stress'; 'Describe a successful outcome you accomplished working in a team'
- questions can be directly focus on personal features using question such as: 'What motivate you in work?', 'What do you think are your strong and weak points?', 'How do you deal with stress?'
- the episodes can be described and examined in writing, as in Bolles 2005:317-326[29]
- panels of experts can be used to 'brainstorm' the competencies needed in particular jobs, and then to rate individuals against them [30].

In case 4 'The performance based approach to validation of competent workers' we assess performance in carrying out job tasks (tasks are the actions that can be identified in a flowchart describing how a job is carried out) and the overall performance results. Personal attributes can be

[28] McClelland, D. C. (1998). Identifying competencies with behavioral-event interviews. *Psychological Science, 9(5),* 331-339, Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.
[29] Bolles, R.N. (2005). *What Color Is Your Parachute?* Ten Speed Press, Berkeley/Toronto
[30] On the pitfalls of using panels of experts instead of BEI to identify competencies see McClelland, D. C. (1998), op. cit.. and McClelland quoted in Adams (1997), op. cit..

assessed too (for example technical knowledge) but only related to a specific task (for example 'How you choose your tools when cutting seasoned wood?').

In this approach, most used methods for assessment are a combination of the following evidences:

1. direct observation of the person whilst carrying out his/her work
2. professional discussion
3. discussion of case studies
4. testimonies from colleagues and supervisors
5. examination of documentation produced by the person whilst carrying out his/her work
6. examination of portfolio based evidence
7. PFI Performance Focused Interview
8. simulation of tasks and work situations (in most of UK' NVQs simulation is not considered acceptable[31]).

The professional discussion can be defined as 'A conversation in which candidates describe and reflect on their performance and knowledge in relation to requirements of the standards' (Read H., 2006) [32]. Professional discussion differs from BEI because in BEI the questions are focused on personal features and not on performance itself. PFI is a kind of standardized professional discussion: the questions are focused on specific predetermined aspect of performance and all the candidates are submitted the same list of questions, even if the evaluator can add more questions for a better understanding.

Personal features based frameworks can be recognized because the elements to be assessed are knowledge, skills, attitudes, personality traits, etc. In performance based frameworks instead the elements to be assessed are highlighted with verbs of action.

An important point to stress is when dealing with assessing performance of people at work, the task based approach scores best, because the first three approaches are all indirect, that is to say speculative. 'If the candidate holds the prescribed qualifications / experience / personal qualities than PROBABLY will be capable to carry out the main task(s) for which accreditation is sought.' The performance based approach instead focuses and assesses directly what we are interested in, good work performance that is to say competence at work.

As to the other two, approach one (The *educational qualifications based approach*) uses an indicator that is related to knowledge (left end of table 1) while approach two (*The experience based approach*) uses an indicator that is be related to good performance (right end of the table 2).

Approaches 1 and 2 can be used when time, money or expertise are insufficient for a more thorough validation or as first step to spread validation amongst practitioners when diffusion has been planned bottom-up (see chapter 7. The tradeoff between effectiveness and weight of the assessment procedures).

Educational qualifications and experience can also be used, both in personal features based and in performance based assessments, as elements that contribute to the general picture of the candidate, but on the other side they can bias the judgment of the assessor.

[31] Read, H. (2006). *Excellence in assessing*. Reads On Publications, p.62.
[32] Ibid., p.9.

Knowledge (in itself an element of the personal features based approach) can be used to shorten the assessment of the performance. Direct enquiry about specific knowledge is a way to avoid to wait for observation of the performance where that knowledge is used.

6. Sources of mistakes in the validation of competent workers

In general, as said in the previous chapter, personal features based frameworks are less effective in identifying competent workers, because focused on the antecedents of performance and not on the performance itself.

This said, when validating workers we can incur in two sources of mistake. The two mistakes cause the procedure of validation to be of little or no effectiveness and results not reliable. The mistakes are the following.

Mistake 1. Poor individuation of the elements the candidate to validation has to possess or to master to get accredited. These elements, depending on the approach, can be personal features (approach 3) or job tasks (approach 4).

For example in approach 3 we'll get ineffective validation if the chosen personal features antecedent of performance have a weak relation with performance or can usually be taken for granted, as for example respectively accuracy and honesty in career guidance delivery.

For example in approach 4 we'll get ineffective validation if the tasks against which the candidate is assessed are not main tasks or at a too general level, as for as for example respectively *Prepare to represent advice and guidance clients in formal proceedings* (this was one of the main elements in the old National Occupational Standards for Advice and Guidance, Employment NTO 2002[33]) or *Handling difficult target groups* (this is one of the elements of the MEVOC standards[34]). To identify the significant tasks, a thorough job analysis (Evangelista 2007[35]) has to be carried out. The job analysis allows identifying a hierarchy of tasks, from the most important and general to the minor ones.

Poor individuation of the elements the candidate has to possess or to master to get validated cause the results of the validation procedure to be unreliable even if the assessment procedure is effective because it directs assessment towards elements external to the sector, minor or too much aggregate.

Mistake 2. Ineffective assessment methodology. The second source of mistake depends on the method of assessment of the elements the candidate must possess or master. If the method of assessment is not effective the good individuation of the elements is not worth and again the results of the validation procedure will be unreliable.

[33] Employment NTO (2002). National occupational standards what are they? Contained on CD *Advice, Guidance & Advocacy Standards*.
[34] MEVOC Standards. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://mevoc.net/EN/htm/fs.htm.
[35] Evangelista, L. (2007). Job description, job analysis, task analysis, profili professionali: cosa sono e a cosa servono. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.orientamento.it/orientamento/6n.htm.

7. Specific pitfalls of the validation frameworks based on personal features

Validation frameworks based on the assessment of personal features (so called competencies, see previous chapters) have some other pitfalls additional of being indirect, based on the antecedents.

Mistake 3. The multiplication of personal features through listing all the personal features that can harm performance: as we have seen in previous chapters, the concept of competencies was created by McClelland to identify the best performers. In this case the focus is on few more developed personal features (1-5, often transversal skills) amongst the many that each worker possesses at acceptable level.

When we want to identify and validate competent workers, we are instead interested in the many more workers whose performance is not lower than a minimum set standard. While according to McClelland and his followers there are few 'strategic' personal features determining high level performance, acceptable performance depends by many. There are really many factors that, below the standard, can harm job performance. For example poor ICT skills, poor writing and communication skills, poor personal hygiene, attention deficits, substance addiction, specific chronic diseases, inability to cope with stress and frustration, lack of punctuality, bad temper, restlessness, tardiness, inability to summarize, dishonesty, and many others.

This way in many competencies based frameworks very long lists of personal features (sometimes called competency profiles[36] or, less often, competence profiles[37]) are drawn up. For example EVGP (see chapter 9. EVGP Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner) lists 91 'core and specialized competencies' and MEVOC (see chapter 10. MEVOC and ECGC) 140 'competence standards'. This affects assessment, because the more elements you have to consider, the less accurate or the more cumbersome the process will be.

EVGP tries to solve this limiting assessment to only about 20 (20%) of the personal attributes of the list, to be chosen by candidates. MEVOC instead extracts 35 (still too many in our opinion) 'highly required' personal features[38].

A better way would be to ignore the many personal features that most people possess at acceptable level (honesty, good health, writing and communication skills, ICT skills, ability to cope with stress and frustration etc.) and list (and validate) only the personal features specific and prominent for the job examined, i.e. not all the necessary personal features but only the ones that are specific and prominent to the job and that the practitioner must possess at higher lever compared to the layman.

The multiplication of personal features through listing job activities: a skill can be defined as[39] *an ability to do an activity or job well, especially because you have practised it.*

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[36] 'A competency profile is, essentially, a listing of the competencies of an individual (or those needed to be fulfilled by an individual) relevant to some purpose. Some competencies (such as possession of a driving licence) can have a Boolean nature, and be simply true or false, claimed or not, while other competencies may be measured on some scale – for instance, there are various measures available of proficiency in the use of the English language.' E-framework. Retrieved on the 10 April 2011 at http://www.e-framework.org/Default.aspx?tabid=795.

[37] 'The Competence Profile is designed to give a very detailed view of personality related competencies and skills in relation to a given job profile.' The Competence Profile. Retrieved on the 10 April 2011 at http://www.garudahr.com/tools_comp.htm

[38] MEVOC Final Standards. Retrieved on the 10 April 2011 at http://www.mevoc.net/EN/htm/fs_standards.htm

[39] Skill (n.d.). Cambridge Dictionaries Online, retrieved on the 10 April 2011 at http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/skill

The point is at which level the skill applies and how to distinguish between the personal attribute (the ability) and the activities to which the personal attribute is applied.

To explain better, consider that any cognitive or practical activity is made of different bits. Does it exist a specific skill for each bit or only skills of general nature that applied to specific activities allow for specific results? For example it exist a 3 + 2 = 5 skill? And then a 1 + 1 = 2 skill, a 1 + 2 = 3 skill and so on? Or there is a more general skill 'calculating' allowing to carry out the four arithmetical operations? McClelland himself criticizes a project referred to a mill man apprentice where 50 diverse separate skills were identified for assessment. 'They include skills like "measures angles," "sharpens tools and planes," and "identifies sizes and types of fasteners using gauges and charts." (…) What one ends up with is hundreds, even thousands, of specific tests for dozens of different occupations.' [40]

In our opinion what is called skill is a personal feature only if general in nature, not too detailed or too similar to a job task. If what is described is a an action specific to a job (an action that can be identified in a flowchart describing how a job is carried out) then we have a job activity to which more general skills are applied. For example have to be considered personal features: literacy, calculating skills, conceptualization, problem solving, active listening, plan and manage activities and so on. Are instead job activities (quoted from EVGP, see chapter 9. EVGP Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner): 'diagnose clients' needs based on different assessment tools and techniques', 'Identify situations requiring referral to specialized services', 'Maintain up-to-date listings of referral sources' or (quoted by MEVOC, see chapter 10. MEVOC and ECGC) 'identify clients' training needs to advance their career', 'provide relevant information on specific fields', 'identify clients in difficult situations' and so on.

Many competencies based validation frameworks (EVGP and MEVOC amongst the others) list as skills specific job activities and so operate a multiplication of personal features. In these cases assessment switches from personal features assessment to performance assessment.

[40] See McClelland (1973:9), op. cit.

8. The tradeoff between effectiveness and weight of the assessment procedures

In the assessment of competent workers there is always a tradeoff between effectiveness and cumbersomeness of the procedure. This has to be considered because a methodology very effective but too costly or lengthy (as it could be approaches 3 and 4) has little possibility to become widespread, except in the case it is imposed by a public authority. On the other side a methodology light but not reliable (as approaches 1 and 2) is of little utility.

A framework can be spread simply by a norm of law, prescribing that all the people that want to carry out a specific occupation have to pass through an accreditation procedure. But this is not always the case. In some cases the Authorities don't want to regulate directly or don't care about a sector, or the competence over a sector is spread at different levels. For example in Italy regulating competence over career guidance is spread between 2 ministries (labour and education) and Regional authorities.

On the contrary, a framework can be spread also from the bottom, by free agreement of the practitioners of the individual sector. In these cases it is very important to structure the framework in a way that practitioners are encouraged to join the framework. For example two levels can be provided. The first one can be based only on documents and a practitioner's statement, and have medium reliability, while a specific face to face examination and/or other cumbersome but effective evidences will be required for a second more trustful level.

9. Specific issues in the accreditation of career guidance practitioners[41]

Usually accreditation in the career guidance field is focused only on practitioners delivering the services, i.e. delivering information, facilitating small groups and delivering career advice or career counseling in face to face interviews. This service delivery is the more common and practitioners delivering the services are at direct contact with the clients, so their low competence can harm the clients more than practitioners not at direct contact.

In many countries career guidance delivery is entrusted also to people whose main activity is different from career guidance and their occupational title is not directly related with career guidance, such as teachers, social workers, and so on. Decision to accredit only practitioners who deliver career guidance full time and whose occupational title is directly related to career guidance puts a number of practitioners outside control, so it is not good solution.

When examining career guidance services users, several groups can be identified. Each group is homogeneous and differs from the others in terms of culture, age, gender, employability, etc. For each main task, standard accreditation could be granted for mainstream (same culture of the practitioner) students and adults, both employed and unemployed. Practitioners could ask to be additionally accredited for working with other clients groups such as immigrants, disabled, offenders and ex-offenders, native minorities.

[41] See also Evangelista, L. (2007). Up patriots to arms! Why and how to structure an European framework for accrediting career guidance practitioners. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://orientamento.it/english/patriots.htm.

10. EVGP Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner

EVGP is the framework for accrediting career guidance practitioners at international level launched on the 2007 by IAEVG International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance[42]. Compliance with the framework has no legal value, and it doesn't entitle to work in the career guidance field.

What is accredited and official name

The framework accredits the Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner certified[43] by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance.

Features of reference for accreditation

Every system of accreditation has a set of features that is taken as reference and that who wants to be accredit has to possess or master. EVGP is a mixed system. To be certified the candidate needs both personal features and should be able to master several job activities. Amongst the elements we find:

- *Knowledge,* such as Knowledge of updated information on educational, training, employment trends, labor market, and social issues (core competency n.8)
- *Attitudes*, such as Demonstrate awareness and appreciation of clients' cultural differences to interact effectively with all populations (core competency n.3)
- *Skills,* such as Ability to communicate effectively with colleague or clients, using the appropriate level of language (core competency n.7)
- *Job tasks,* such as Identify situations requiring referral to specialized services (specialized competency n. 1.3.). Job tasks are listed only as specialized competencies.

The elements are grouped in core competencies and specialized competencies. The core competencies are the following:

1. Demonstrate ethical behavior and professional conduct in the fulfillment of roles and responsibilities
2. Demonstrate advocacy and leadership in advancing clients learning, career development and personal concerns
3. Demonstrate awareness and appreciation of clients' cultural differences to interact effectively with all populations
4. Integrate theory and research into practice in guidance, career development, counseling, and consultation
5. Skills to design, implement and evaluate guidance and counselling programs and interventions
6. Demonstrate awareness of his/her own capacity and limitations

[42] IAEVG website. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.iaevg.org/.
[43] IAEVG (no date). Application for Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner EVGP, pg.10. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.cce-global.org/Downloads/EVGP/app-en.pdf

7. Ability to communicate effectively with colleague or clients, using the appropriate level of language
8. Knowledge of updated information on educational, training, employment trends, labor market, and social issues
9. Social and cross-cultural sensitiveness
10. Skills to cooperate effectively in a team of professionals
11. Demonstrate knowledge of lifelong career development process

The Specialized Competencies are 80 and are grouped in areas. The areas are the following:

1. ***Assessment***: Analysis of the characteristics and needs of the individual group to whom the program is addressed, and also of the context where they are inserted, including all agents involved. The aim is to integrate and evaluate data from inventories, tests, interviews, scales and other techniques that measure an individual's abilities, aptitudes, barriers, life roles, interests, personality, values, attitudes, educational achievements, skills and other relevant information. This specialization includes the related but distinct competency of test interpretation, that is, explaining to a client the results of an assessment and their implications.
2. ***Educational Guidance***: Assisting individuals to select courses, make educational plans, overcome learning difficulties, and prepare for post-secondary education, training or entry into the workforce. Guidance is often done in large groups, in contrast to counseling which is more often done with individuals or small groups.
3. ***Career Development***: Fostering the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies that facilitate mastery of vocational development tasks, the ability to plan and adaptation to work-role transitions over the life-span. It typically uses a developmental model.
4. ***Counseling:*** Prompting self-reflection to clarify self-concepts, identify options, make decisions, and resolve difficulties.
5. ***Information Management***: Collecting, organizing, maintaining, and disseminating information pertinent to education, training, occupations, and employment opportunities; coaching clients in its effective use.
6. ***Consultation and Coordination***: Providing information, guidance, and professional advice to parents, teachers, school administrators, and employers who wish to facilitate the educational progress and career development of their charges. Organizing and managing school and community personnel to create referral sources for students regarding programs, services and networks.
7. ***Research and Evaluation***: Studying issues related to guidance and counseling, such as learning processes, vocational behavior and its development, values, etc. Examining the effectiveness of interventions.
8. ***Program and Service Management***: Designing, implementing, supervising and evaluating interventions to address the needs of a target population.
9. ***Community Capacity Building***: Encouraging collaboration between community partners to assess human capital and community needs, as well as developing plans to address the economic, social, educational, and employment goals of the community.

10. ***Placement***: Supporting individuals in their efforts to obtain occupational positions by teaching job search skills and creating employment opportunities.

For example the specialized competencies of area 1 Assessment are:

1.1 Accurately and thoroughly conceptualize and diagnose clients' needs based on different assessment tools and techniques
1.2 Use the data derived from assessment appropriately and according to the situation
1.3 Identify situations requiring referral to specialized services
1.4 Facilitate effective referral by means of initiating contacts between referral sources and individuals
1.5 Maintain up-to-date listings of referral sources
1.6 Conduct a needs assessment of the clients' contexts

In general the candidate is considered to possess each specific competency if he/she has participated to a training focused on that or if two experts declare he has that (see the Applicant self assessment contained in the Application for Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner EVGP pag.10-19). If none of them applies, then the candidate to prove his/her competence can submit 'artifacts' (pag.5) proving extensive professional experience in the areas of specialization.

Preliminary requirements for accreditation

In EVGP minimum requirements are a combination of formal education and experience. For example High School Diploma must be coupled with a minimum experience of 4,000 hours (estimated 4 years) (p.4). On the other extreme Graduate Degree in guidance and counselling, or equivalent (e.g., Master's, Doctorate) is coupled with a minimum experience of 1,000 hours.

Another requirement is the candidate proves to be competent in all the core competencies and at least in one area of specialization (pag.2).

The features and the process of the assessment (pag.5)

Applicants seeking designation as an EVGP must apply to the Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) with a portfolio containing at least the following components:

1. A Personal Reflective Statement outlining the candidate's career guidance philosophy
2. Documentation of formal or informal education relating to this credential. (optional)
3. Self-assessment of competencies.
4. Verification of career development experience, signed by an employer
5. Artifacts (evidence) applied to each of the competencies with rationales[44].
6. Copy of diploma, degree, or transcript for highest educational level completed.

[44] According to the Application, applicants should indicate on the self-assessment, or in another similar way, which documentation supports their conclusion that they have achieved an acceptable level of competence for each of the competencies they rate as acceptable. Applicants must do this for all of the core competencies, and for the competencies in each of the specializations that they wish to have reviewed. The self-assessment need not be completed for specializations which applicants do not want to be reviewed.

7. Open-book Jurisprudence Assessment documenting the applicant's familiarity with the ethical standards. The Jurisprudence Assessment is under development and will not be required of initial applicants.
8. Competency Review by two individuals qualified to assess the applicant in cases where no documentation of formal training exists (pag.10).

The granting organization, cost, duration

The EVGP application process is managed on behalf of IAEVG by the Center for Credentialing and Education (CCE). CCE is an American organization specialized in credentialing. The cost of the Application Review is 90 dollars. EVGP certification is valid for three years.

An appraisal

The main pitfall of EVGP is that it allows to credential people not delivering career guidance (mistake typology 1. *Poor individuation of the elements the candidate to validation has to possess or to master to get accredited* described in chapter 5). Let see how. Amongst the so called core competencies, only 2 (number 2 and number 8) are directly related to career guidance delivery.

Core competencies 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 are not specific to career guidance, so, basing on them, also people working in other sectors could be credentialed. For example a person in charge of IT assistance could prove competent on Demonstrate ethical behavior and professional conduct in the fulfillment of roles and responsibilities (1), Demonstrate awareness and appreciation of clients' cultural differences to interact effectively with all populations (3), Integrate theory and research into practice in its activity (4), Demonstrate awareness of his/her own capacity and limitations (6), Ability to communicate effectively with colleague or clients, using the appropriate level of language (7), Social and cross-cultural sensitiveness (9), Skills to cooperate effectively in a team of professionals (10).

Core competency 5. Skills to design, implement and evaluate guidance and counseling programs and interventions is focused not on career guidance delivery, but on management of career guidance services.

Core competencies 8. Knowledge of updated information on educational, training, employment trends, labor market, and social issues and 11. Demonstrate knowledge of lifelong career development process are related to knowledge, so a practitioner could prove competent here even if she/he has never delivered career guidance.

Core competency 2. Demonstrate advocacy and leadership in advancing clients learning, career development and personal concerns is related to a specific but partial aspect of career guidance delivery (advocacy of clients and leadership).

In synthesis, core competencies are not enough focused on career guidance delivery, and so not effective in recognizing competent practitioners in the main career guidance activity, delivery. But EVGP requires the practitioner to prove competence also in at least one specialist area. Is this going to change the picture? Unfortunately not. Many areas of specialized competencies have the same pitfalls of the core competencies.

Area 4 counseling is concerned with counseling on personal issues, and so mostly external to career guidance. The fields on which the candidate has to prove competent are the following: 4.6.1 Prevention of personal problems, 4.6.2 Personality development, 4.6.3 Personal problem solving,

4.6.4 Decision making, 4.6.5 Sexual identity, 4.6.6 Social skills, 4.6.7 Health education , 4.6.8 Use of leisure time.

Area 6 Consultation and Coordination and 9. Community Capacity Building are respectively secondary or external activities in career guidance (no career guidance practitioner earns a living with these).

Area 7 Research and Evaluation and 8.Program and Service Management are different by career guidance delivery (and by the way credentialing as researcher is granted by universities).

Summing up, EVGP makes possible to get credentialed as Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner people that have never delivered one hour of career guidance, but instead have been involved in sexual identity or health education, research, management, local development. True, some of the core competences are related to career guidance, but to prove possess of a competence, participation in a training course is considered enough. This way a sexologist that has attended a training course on career guidance could be credentialed as Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner.

This result probably comes out also by necessity to create a manageable assessment procedure in a system with too many elements to assess (multiplication of personal features due to the choice to list all the personal features that can harm performance and to include in the list also job activities - mistakes 3 and 4, see chapter 6. Specific pitfalls of the validation frameworks based on personal features). The apparent solution is limiting assessment to only about 20 personal features of the list, 11 common elements plus the specialized competencies (7-10) contained in one area, for a total of only 20% of the total of 91 elements. Unfortunately some of the areas contain mostly elements that are marginal to career guidance, and assessment is all paper based (there is not direct assessment of the candidate), and not focused on performance. Attending a course, a declaration of an expert[45] on candidate competence, a prove of a minimum predetermined experience suffice to be licensed. This way what the assessment process proves is not competent performance, but only training and work experience. This in a process of assessment can be only a first step (see what said at chapter 7. The tradeoff between effectiveness and weight of the assessment procedures). However, no additional steps are provided with EVGP. If the final result of all the assessment procedure is just to license practitioners who have a set experience and training in CG, all the framework (core and specialized competencies) looks quite superfluous.

An additional pitfall is same title 'Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner' is attributed to people carrying out very different activities. This design fault is probably due to the desire to develop a framework allowing all the members of IAEVG to be credentialed. IAEVG is an association to which everybody 'concerned'[46] in CG guidance can enroll, even without specific practice in CG delivery.

[45] According to the application (p.21) 'Competency reviewers will normally be people who have observed the applicant using the competency, and who by virtue of their training or position in the organization, would be viewed as competent to judge the adequacy of the competency. Such people normally would be direct supervisors of the applicant's work, managers of an agency, practicum or internship supervisors, or colleagues with specialized training in the area under consideration.' However, the form doesn't require the 'expert' to describe its position on regard to the applicant, nor its expertise. The only question about expertise is if the expert is Certified/Licensed and by whom.

[46] 'Guidance counsellors or any other professional person concerned with educational and vocational guidance'. See the page Membership on IAEVG website. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://iaevg.org/iaevg/nav.cfm?lang=2&menu=3&submenu=1

A final point is the assessment and credentialing is currently been entrusted to a single organization (CCE, Center for Credentialing & Education, based in the US).

- Control of credentials of their own members is one of the main task and power of every professional association. EVGP in its present form disempowers the national practitioners' associations, where existing.
- It is open to scrutiny if an organization located in a specific continent (in this case North America) can well evaluate training and education attended in a different one (for example in Europe, Asia or South America). The examination of national practitioners credentials (including the training they underwent) is by far better evaluated by local (same country) organizations.
- EVGP can compete and interfere with national accreditation schemes (where existing). Let see some cases:

    - Countries, like France, where the requisites of the guidance counselors are set by the law. EVGP accredits people that don't have the minimum requisites requested by the national law to work in the field and confuse the consumers.

    - Countries, like Italy, where the requisites of the guidance counselors are not set by the law, but by practitioners' associations. EVGP accredits people that don't have the minimum requisites set by national associations.

    - Countries where no accreditation scheme, nor set by the law neither by practitioners associations exists. This is the case where EVGP is most useful.

11. MEVOC and ECGC European Career Guidance Certificate

MEVOC is a framework created through a Leonardo da Vinci European project with the same name. The project lasted 2003-2006 and was coordinated by the Institute for Research on Qualification and Training of the Austrian Economy (IBW)[47]. The project produced a set of quality standards for educational and vocational counselors[48], reproduced at the end of this chapter. The successive European Project ECGC - European Career Guidance Certificate[49] (2007-2009) intended to introduce a European certificate for career guidance counselors based on MEVOC standards. Compliance with the framework has no legal value, and it doesn't entitle to work in the career guidance field.

What is accredited and official name

The framework allows to get a *European Certificate For Career Guidance Counselors* (Petermandl, no date:7)[50].

Holders of the certificate are awarded a total of 60 ECTS points, which thus corresponds to an academic degree (in Austria: the level of Academic Expert) (Petermandl, no date:9)[51]. It is not foreseen that the Certificate is the prerequisite for exercising the profession. But it is meant to document the quality of professionalism for the public (Petermandl, no date:10)[52].

Features of reference for accreditation

Every system of accreditation has a set of features that is taken as reference and that who wants to be accredited has to possess or master. MEVOC is a competencies based framework, that is a set of personal features considered antecedents of performance. In MEVOC we find:

- *Skills* (i.e. Having the skills to motivate clients or Being able to provide relevant information on specific fields of study/training. The reasons for the two different ways –having the skills and being able are not clear)
- *Knowledge* (Knowledge of formal and informal job application processes)
- *Attitudes* (i.e. Not being afraid of new experiences or changes)

These features, called competence standards, amounts to 35 and are grouped under four main categories: Education and Career, Counselling Practice, Personality, ICT-Skills. An initial version of 140 elements was produced (MEVOC's All Standards), than 35 'highly required' personal features (MEVOC's Final Standards) where extracted using a Delphy Survey[53].

Preliminary requirements for accreditation

The prerequisite for participation in certification exams is relevant professional activity as a career

[47] MEVOC Website retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.mevoc.net/EN/htm/fs.htm
[48] MEVOC final standards. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.mevoc.net/EN/htm/fs_standards.htm
[49] Website http://www.ecgc.at/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5&Itemid=13
[50] Petermandl M. (no date). ECGC Strategy Paper. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.ecgc.at/images/stories/SPAPER/ecgc-strategy%20paper-en.pdf
[51] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.17.
[52] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.17.
[53] MEVOC Final Standards. Retrieved on the 10 April 2011 at http://www.mevoc.net/EN/htm/fs_standards.htm

guidance counsellor by furnishing proof of at least 500 hours of counselling activity (Petermandl, no date:7)[54].

No formal training course with compulsory attendance has been developed. The Certificate confirms the fulfillment of the quality standards independent of how they were acquired (Petermandl, no date:10)[55].

The features and the process of the assessment

The Certificate is based on a three-step examination Petermandl M. (no date:8-9)[56] with respective appropriate examination formats in relation to exam content:

- Online test: examines the specialist and methodical knowledge relevant for career guidance counselors. It is structured with an automated assessment of answers. The test must be taken by candidates in an exam centre to ensure that they take it in person (Grün and Tsamakos, no date:6[57]).

- Assessment centre: aims to assess social competences and personal skills, also referred to as 'Personality'(Grün and Tsamakos, no date:6[58]). The assessments should be held at assessment centres that are integrated into appropriate educational institutions. The procedure takes about half a day.

- Written paper: examines the ability to deal with issues of educational counselling and career guidance based on theory; this exam is at an academic level and will be supervised by universities.

Should candidates have already completed other relevant programmes or acquired certified sub-qualifications, the respective examination modules can be waived (Grün and Tsamakos, no date:5[59])

The ECGC certificate is based on individual marks assigned for every test section. In the online test, marking is conducted according to the Austrian school grading system, i.e. a "one" is the best mark and a "five" means "not sufficient". To pass the online test, candidates need to answer at least 70% of the questions correctly. In accordance with common assessment centre practice, the module sat at the assessment centre is graded as "passed" or "failed". It is also planned to assess the written paper in line with the grading system. In principle, it is to be located approximately at Bachelor level (Grün and Tsamakos, no date:7-8[60]).

A Self Assessment-Tool for checking counsellor competences and skills and identifying deficits is available on MEVOC website.

The granting organization, cost, duration

[54] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.17.
[55] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.17.
[56] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.17.
[57] Grün G. and Tsamakos N.D. (no date) Manual for Candidates. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.ecgc.at/images/stories/EXMATERIALS/ecgc-manual%20for%20candidates-uk.pdf
[58] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.18.
[59] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.18.
[60] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.18.

It is not yet clear what countries and institutions will administer the certificate in future (Grün and Tsamakos, no date:7-8[61]). On the ECGC website homepage is currently written that the Donau-Universität Krems has started in 2011 a new postgraduate course that allow to get the ECGC Certificate[62]. The cost of the course is 5.700 EUR.

An appraisal

MEVOC accredits only career counselors (as already said, at least 500 hours of counseling activity are mandatory for participation in certification exams). This way the framework doesn't cover practitioners delivering CG information as a standalone activity. This is a pitfall for frameworks that want to rise the competence of the entire CG sector.

Listing together only the elements related to activities (the ones worded with 'having the skills' and 'being able') we obtain:

1	identify clients' training needs to advance their career
2	provide relevant information on specific fields of study/training
3	handling difficult target groups
4	identify clients in difficult situations which impede their career decision-making abilities (e.g. health, drugs, housing etc.) and being able to refer them to relevant specialists
5	promote individual initiative in taking responsibility for career management
6	express information and advice in a clear and understandable way
7	motivate clients
8	help but also remain detached
9	Interviewing
10	telephone communication and counseling
11	analyse clients' needs
12	administer aptitude, skills and interest tests and to correctly interpret the results of those tests and to give appropriate advice based on those results
13	sustain a positive and motivated attitude when dealing with difficult clients and situations
14	think positively (also in less encouraging situations)
15	Active listening
16	to plan and manage activities
17	set priorities, focus on activities, identify urgency and change the time table if necessary
18	cope with stress and frustration
19	ICT skills

Only the one highlighted ones are directly related to CG. Some looks too general (for example 9, interviewing) or too generic (for example 3. handling difficult target groups). Elements 1 and 11 partly overlap. 15 (active listening) is a sub activity of 9 and 10. A hierarchy of skills is missing. We can try to group the elements related with interviewing on the base of a job analysis:

11. analyse clients' needs
4. identify clients in difficult situations which impede their career decision-making abilities and being able to refer them to relevant specialists
1. identify clients' training needs to advance their career
2. provide relevant information on specific fields of study/training
12. administer aptitude, skills and interest tests and to correctly interpret the results of those tests and to give appropriate advice based on those results

[61] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.18.

[62] Donau- Universität Krems. Bildungs- und Berufsberatung. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.donau-uni.ac.at/de/studium/bildungsberufsberatung/index.php

Some important tasks/ technical skills (the one related to career guidance delivery) are missing, for example facilitating groups, supporting the client in setting career goals, supporting the client to figure out an action plan, supporting the client in job search, providing ongoing support to help clients meet their goals. Here we have mistake 1 at chapter 5: *Poor individuation of the elements the candidate to validation has to possess or to master to get accredited*. This result probably comes out also by necessity to create a manageable assessment procedure in a system with 140 elements to assess that form the All Standards (multiplication of personal features due to the choice to list all the personal features that can harm performance and to include in the list also job activities - mistakes 3 and 4, see chapter 6. Specific pitfalls of the validation frameworks based on personal features). The apparent solution has been to extract the 35 using a Delphy Survey, but this way some important elements were lost.

Another pitfall in MEVOC is related to mistake n.2. As we have already said, the technical skills taken in consideration in MEVOC are partial, but even if partial, apparently they are not checked in the assessment. Actually, the assessment is carried out through an online test about knowledge (it examines 'the specialist and methodical knowledge relevant for career guidance counselors'), with a written paper (it examines 'the ability to deal with issues of educational counselling and career guidance based on theory') and with an assessment centre ('aims to assess social competences and personal skills') (Petermandl, no date:8-9[63]). So technical skills are not assessed.

The MEVOC Final standards[64]

Knowledge, skills and competence Categories		**Competence Standards**	
Education and Career	Education and training	Up-to-date knowledge of education and training opportunities	
		Being able to identify clients' training needs to advance their career	
		Being able to provide relevant information on specific fields of study/training	
	Labour Market Information	Knowledge and active monitoring of labour market developments and trends of relevant information sources in this field	
		Knowledge of occupations and its key actors, requirements, prospects and training opportunities of these occupations; having access to relevant information sources in this field	
		Knowledge of existing job opportunities and of relevant information sources for finding vacancies	
Counselling Practice	Communication with the client	Knowledge of general characteristics of different target groups and the skill to develop appropriate counselling strategies adapted to the characteristics of the target group	
		Basic social skills and specific skills for handling difficult target groups	
		Having the skills to identify clients in difficult situations which impede their career decision-making abilities (e.g. health, drugs, housing etc.) and being able to refer them to	

[63] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.17.
[64] Petermandl M. (no date), op. cit., p.16.

		relevant specialists	
		Having the skills to promote individual initiative in taking responsibility for career management	
	Coaching skills	Having the skills to express information and advice in a clear and understandable way	
		Having the skills to motivate clients	
		Having the skills to help but also remain detached	
	Assessment	Interviewing skills	
		Basic telephone communication and counselling skills	
		Having the skills to analyse clients' needs	
		Having the skills to identify a client's competencies for self-employment and entrepreneurship and being able to offer relevant information	
		Knowledge of what aptitude/skills tests and interest tests exist that are used in career counselling	
		Having the skills to administer aptitude, skills and interest tests and to correctly interpret the results of those tests and to give appropriate advice based on those results	
	Job Matching and Placement	Knowledge of a client's opportunities on the labour market and being able to integrate this knowledge in the counselling process	
		Knowledge of formal and informal job application processes	
		Knowledge of how to filter job offers in accordance with a client's identified abilities and resources and being able to teach clients how to do so themselves	
	Ethics	Being aware of ethical standards and codes of conduct	
	Personal skills	Having the skills to sustain a positive and motivated attitude when dealing with difficult clients and situations	
		Having the skills to think positively (also in less encouraging situations)	
		Not being afraid of new experiences or changes	
		Active listening skills	
		Being aware of clients' body language and able to manage own body language	
		Being tolerant to and aware of cultural backgrounds and differences	
	Time Management	Management of activities: Being able to plan and manage activities	
		Self-management: Being able to set priorities, focus on activities, identify urgency and change the time table if necessary	
Personality	Stress and Frustration	Having the skills to cope with stress and frustration	
	Further development	Being aware of one's own capacities and able to address or manage one's limitations	
		Being willing to attain life-long training	
ICT-Skills	ICT-usage and information management	Basic ICT skills (Word, Internet search engines, E-Mail)	

12. EAF European Accreditation Framework For Career Guidance Practitioners

EAF is a framework for accrediting people delivering career guidance, developed by Leonardo Evangelista, following his participation in the European Project 'EAS European Accreditation Scheme for Careers Guidance Counsellors' carried out in 2006-2008 (Evangelista 2008[65]). Compliance with the framework has no legal value, and it doesn't entitle to work in the career guidance field.

What is accredited and official name

EAF accredits performance in each of the 3 main tasks carried out by practitioners when delivering career guidance. The EAF certificate is structured this way:

I, Ms./Mr……., EAF assessor on behalf of ……..(national practitioners' association name and address) declare Ms./Mr. ……..has been accredited for the following main task(s) on career guidance delivery (list of main task(s)).

The official name is 'Career Guidance Practitioner Accredited for (name of the main task(s) in which accreditation has been obtained)'

Features of reference for accreditation

Main tasks

Every system of accreditation has a set of features that is taken as reference and that who wants to be accredit has to possess or master. EAF takes in consideration performance in each of the 3 main tasks carried out by practitioners when delivering career guidance. A main task (or key activity) is defined as *the main identifiable and self standing activity a person delivering career guidance can accomplish* (Evangelista, 2007[66]).

The main tasks identified by EAF are the following:

1. Deliver information related to career guidance as a separate activity. This activity is usually carried out by interactions lasting few minutes at the counters of career guidance services or by telephone or electronic mail. In this main task the practitioner does not examine in deep the situation of the client, and only information is delivered.
2. Perform career guidance interviews This activity is usually carried out on appointment in a reserved space. During the interview the practitioner carries out a in depth analysis of the situation of the client and assist him/her in drawing out a realistic and effective action plan.
3. Carry out career guidance activities in small groups This activity is usually carried out with students (often focused on improving knowledge of self, of educational opportunities and on improving decision making skills) and adult unemployed

[65] Evangelista, L. (2008). How EAF Accreditation Framework for the European Career Guidance Practitioners was developed. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.orientamento.it/orientamento/1a.htm#document

[66] Evangelista, L. (2007). MTF, A Possible EAS Framework. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.orientamento.it/english/EAS3.pdf

(often focused on improving job search skills).

The main tasks have been identified thanks to a study carried out on existing frameworks for accrediting career guidance practitioners (see table 1 A taxonomy of main typical career guidance activities in Appendix 2 of Evangelista 2007[67]) and discussion between EAS project partners. Then have been validated during the pilot carried out during the project with over 100 career guidance practitioners and decision makers of 18 countries, and further refined by the Author after the end of the project EAS.

Mosaic structure

EAF has a mosaic structure, that is to say each practitioner can choose the main task(s) in which to be assessed and possibly accredited.

For example career guidance practitioner A can be accredited for Main task 2 *Perform career guidance interviews*. Career guidance practitioner B can instead be accredited under Main task 1 *Deliver information related to career guidance as a separate activity*,

Differentiation by client group category

On each main task, accreditation is granted to the practitioner for working with mainstream (same culture of the practitioner) students and adults, both employed and unemployed. Accreditation can be extended to working with other specific clients groups such as immigrants (differentiated by region of origin), disabled, offenders and ex-offenders, native minorities.

For example career guidance practitioner C can be accredited under Main task 1 *Deliver information related to career guidance as a separate activity*, *including to migrants coming from North Africa.*

Preliminary requirements for accreditation

Each person delivering career guidance (notwithstanding its official job role or title) can seek accreditation on one or more main tasks. EAF accreditation is competence based, i.e. not conditional on formal education. An experience of at least 1.000 hours (estimated corresponding to 1 year of full time activity) in each of the main tasks for which accreditation is sought is strongly recommended; the experience should be current or not ended by more than two years. Once obtained, accreditation lasts for three years.

The features and the process of the assessment

EAF assessment is based on main tasks performance. This is to say during the assessment, the candidate must demonstrate to be capable to carry out the main task(s) for which he/she seeks accreditation. For each main task on which accreditation is sought, the candidate has to provide evidence to comply with specific elements.

[67] Evangelista, L. (2007). *Orientamento.it.* A comment on WP2. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.orientamento.it/english/EAS1.pdf

The elements in table 1 are specific to each main task (they are assessed only when accreditation for that specific main task is required).

Table 1. Elements to be assessed specific to each main task
Main task 1. Deliver information related to career guidance as a separate activity. Specific elements to be assessed: • 1.1. collect, organize, produce and disseminate information related to career guidance • 1.2. deliver information related to career guidance, face to face and/or at a distance, and/or in groups
Main task 2. Perform career guidance interviews. Specific elements to be assessed: • 2.1. Use appropriate interview techniques to manage the interview • 2.2. Assist clients to identify professional or learning goals • 2.3. Assist clients to determine action plans related to work or learning • 2.4. Assist clients to implement the action plans developed, including job search
Main task 3. Carry out career guidance activities in small groups. Specific elements to be assessed: • 3.1. Use appropriate group techniques to facilitate small groups (up to 30) of clients • 3.2. Assist clients to identify professional or learning goals • 3.3. Assist clients to determine action plans related to work or learning • 3.4. Assist clients to implement the action plans developed, including job search

Please note in main tasks 2 and 3 the elements 2.2./3.2., 2.3./3.3., 2.4/3.4 are respectively the same.

To get a better overview of the candidate, in every task assessment also additional elements related to professional history, current activity, knowledge of information related to career guidance, sensitivity to continuous improvement, ethics and to clients empowerment are examined.

The elements in table 2 are common to every main task and are always assessed.

Table 2. Elements to be assessed commonly to every task
• 0.1. Candidate's educational and professional history. General description of the activity and of working relationships of the Candidate with all the persons involved in the guidance process, internal and external of the Candidate's organization • 0.2. Deliver updated and reliable career guidance information • 0.3. Develop clients' career skills • 0.4. Develop and apply ethical practice • 0.5. Continuously improve own knowledge and skills and the service

To sum up, a person asking for accreditation under Main task 2. Perform career guidance interviews will be assessed under the following elements:

Common elements

- 0.1. Candidate's educational and professional history. General description of the activity and of working relationships of the Candidate with all the persons involved in the guidance process, internal and external of the Candidate's organization
- 0.2. Deliver updated and reliable career guidance information
- 0.3. Develop clients' career skills
- 0.4. Develop and apply ethical practice
- 0.5. Continuously improve own knowledge and skills and the service

Specific elements for Main task 2

- 2.1. Use appropriate interview techniques to manage the interview
- 2.2. Assist clients to identify professional or learning goals
- 2.3. Assist clients to determine action plans related to work or learning
- 2.4. Assist clients to implement the action plans developed, including job search

The process of assessment

In Step 1 evidences such as educational qualifications, experience, self administered learning, testimonies from colleagues and supervisors, documentation produced by the person whilst carrying out his/her work, etc. are collected and submitted in a portfolio by the applicant and evaluated.

In Step 2 the candidate is examined through a PFI Performance Focused Interview. PFI is a kind of standardized professional discussion: the questions are focused on specific predetermined aspect of performance and all the candidates are submitted the same list of questions, even if the evaluator can add more questions for a better understanding (see chapter 4. Main approaches in the validation of competent workers). PFI can be carried out vis a vis or in video conference using Skype or Messenger.

To standardize the assessment, a score system for evaluating the evidences presented and a blueprint for the interview are provided.

For example the blueprint of interview for the assessment of the element 2.1. *Use appropriate interview techniques to manage the interview* is the following:

Main task 2. Perform career guidance interviews. Questions	
2.1. Use appropriate interview techniques to manage the interview	1. Why in career guidance can be useful to carry out interviews? 2. Which are the main steps of an interview? 3. In an interview, how do you (one question at time): start the interview / explain your role / explain privacy arrangements / signal time is limited / ask permission to take notes / signal time is expiring / end the interview? 4. In an interview, how do you (one question at time): assess client's needs / agree on the goal of the interview / refer the client to another service (when, to which other services internal or external to your organization, with which words) / help the client to talk / to make a synthesis / to take a decision / give an information / suggest a possible alternative or solution / signal your disagreement? 5. Which authors, theories or principles do you refer to when performing a career guidance interview? 6. What are the main challenges in managing an interview? How do you address them? Could you please make some examples taken by your experience?

Similar lists of questions are provided for each element but for brevity are not reproduced here.

It is possible to require accreditation only for one main task at time. The accreditation of additional main tasks is carried out in reduced form (the evidences already submitted should not be resubmitted again, but only updated and the assessment is carried out only on additional elements).

Applying for accreditation

In each country assessment should be entrusted to local career guidance practitioners' associations.

The candidate has to submit the following documents:

1. List of documents submitted
2. Application form and declaration
3. CV
4. Personal statement on career guidance practice
5. Declaration of experience in the career guidance field by current (or last if not currently employed) employer. Please note if with the current or last employer the work experience in each main task for which accreditation is sought does not reach 1.000 hours, declaration(s) of others employers up to 1.000 hours have to be submitted
6. Code of conduct or ethical practice (if not available at a public website) or link to the webpage where available
7. Any other document the candidate considers useful. For example documents proving:
    i) Participation in educational and professional training, in-service training and continuing professional development
    ii) Internships in career guidance services
    iii) Licence to practice in the career guidance field
    iv) Membership in professional career guidance associations
    v) Participation in career guidance congresses, conferences and other events related to career guidance
    vi) Subscriptions to career guidance journals
    vii) List of articles / books written about career guidance (only title page or index)
    viii) Any other evidence in support of your application.

The documents must be submitted in MS Word, Open Office or scanned. Incomplete applications will be returned to applicants. Should accreditation be refused the reasons for refusal will be passed to the applicant. A further application may be submitted after a twelve month period has elapsed.

The granting organization, cost, duration

EAF has been developed to give a role in competence accreditation to the European national career guidance practitioners' associations. At moment the framework is not in use. ASSIPRO Associazione Italiana Professionisti dell'Orientamento[68] (one of the Italian CG practitioners associations) has adopted the 3 main tasks to differentiate amongst its member. At moment (April 2011) the use of EAF is being discussed at a round table amongst some Italian CG practitioners associations at ISFOL (the research organization on vocational training and CG of the Italian

[68] Website retrieved on February 3, 2011 from www.assipro.it.

Ministry of Labour). The cost of the assessment based on the portfolio and the PFI Performance Focused Interview carried out at a distance could be about 250 Euros.

The career theory underpinning EAF

In career guidance it is useful to differentiate between 'career theories', which explain vocational paths, and 'guidance theories' which explain how to interact effectively with clients (Watts et al.1996:1) [69].

Elements 2.1. and 3.1. are related to guidance theories, that is to say interaction techniques (interview and group work) used with clients. The assessment checks mastery of Rogers' counseling skills and of current techniques for facilitating groups in educational, not therapeutic contexts.

The elements 2.2/3.2, 2.3/3.3., 2.4/3.4 are the same and are based on a set career theories (or career principles) I am going to briefly describe here. The starting point is that in their daily quest for advice (main tasks 2 and 3, main task 1 is concerned only with simple information so it is not considered here), clients usually confront practitioners on one or on a combination of these issues (Evangelista 2007)[70]:

1. How to chose a profession
2. How to rise own employability for the desired profession once the profession(s) has/have been chosen
3. How best to carry out job search for the desired profession(s) once the minimum employability to be enrolled has been reached

The theory outlined here is made up of four subtheories. Each statement of each subtheory can be further explained by subtheories at a lower, less general level. For example axiom at 2.A. can be further detailed recurring to a theory of personality and/or of social behavior. Each axiom can be examined in detail and, if necessary, further improved.

<u>1. A theory of individual freedom</u>

- 1.A. Each individual has a certain amount of freedom in his or her educational and vocational choices and career path.
- 1.B. In any society, the possibility of achieving one's desired professional goals depends on the level of one's knowledge, technical ability, and other personal qualities. It also depends (to a greater or lesser degree according to the society) on other factors such as family background, social class/circle, sexual orientation, religion.

Comment: modern societies attribute value to personal skills and initiative rather than to kinship and class bonds. Career guidance helps people to improve their employability and to make the most of it, this way spreading modernity. (Evangelista 2006[71]). Practical outcomes: a certain margin of freedom must be assumed, other ways career guidance, consisting in advising people on how best to manage their careers, would be impossible to justify.

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[69] Watts A.G., Law B., Killeen J., Kidd J.M. & Hawthorn R. (1996). *Rethinking Careers Education and Guidance. Theory, Policy and Practice*. Routledge

[70] Evangelista, L. (2007). A general Theory of Career Guidance. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://orientamento.it/english/general.htm

[71] Evangelista, L. (2006). Multicultural Career Guidance. *Orientamento.it.* Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.orientamento.it/orientamento/multicultural%20guidance.pdf

2. A theory of personal choice

- 2. A. Every individual possesses characteristics (for example, knowledge, aptitudes, abilities, preferences, professional interests and values) which are relatively unchangeable.
- 2. B. Every occupation requires specific personal characteristics in order for it to be performed well.
- 2. C. In making vocational choices, one must consider ability, interests etc, and also how easy (or difficult) it is to enter a given profession depending on factors indicated in points 1.B. and 3.

Practical outcomes: to help the client to choose a profession, the practitioners has to invite her/him to assess its own strengths, weaknesses and preferences, and to relate them to the existing opportunities in the labour market and in education.

3. A theory of employability

Employability is the value of a person to the labour market in relation to a specific occupation. It depends on:

- 3.A. The relationship between supply and demand for that occupation
- 3.B. Unchangeable personal factors: age, gender, physique, health, personality, belonging to particular groups which attract government incentives for employers.
- 3.C. Changeable personal factors:
    - 3.C.1. Knowledge and technical ability
    - 3.C.2. Flexibility
    - 3.C.3. Looking after oneself

Practical outcomes: to help the client to improve its employability, the practitioner should invite her/him to modify one or more of the elements listed under 3.C.

4. A theory of job search

- 4.1. In many countries, there is no single place where all job offers are compiled. So, in order to increase one's chances of finding work, it is necessary to contact as many employers as possible using all available channels, including direct approach and word of mouth.
- 4.2. When employers decide to look for employees/collaborators, they look first at those they have come in contact with through internships and those who have approached them directly, so these methods must always be preferred.
- 4.3. Mediation on the part of individuals and organisations known to employers and the use of channels of enquiry which assure direct contact succeed more readily in overcoming the natural wariness employers feel towards job candidates.

Practical outcomes: other factors (listed at points 2 and 3) being the same, to help the client to improve its possibilities to get a job, the practitioner should invite her/him to contact as much as employers as possible, using all the existing channels for job search, especially direct approach, word of mouth, internships. Mediation is required for clients with low employability.

The assessment of the elements 2.2/3.2, 2.3/3.3., 2.4/3.4 checks in detail awareness of these principles and their practical use to support clients.

An appraisal

Compared to other frameworks, EAF is easy to understand, to operate and 'light' and effective in assessment.

Thanks to its performance based and mosaic structure, it allows recognition of competence acquired also through not formal learning and to compare the many occupations with different names existing in the field of career guidance in Europe. Its approach and its assessment methodology can be used to assess competence and accredit people working also in other sectors.

The PFI Performance Focused Interview has been chosen because it proved easy to carry out and effective, but also other means could be added, such as the observation on the workplace as in the NVQ.

A pitfall of the system is that so far the criteria for the evaluation of the answers have not been made explicit, and the judgment is left to the evaluator. This require that the evaluator are well experienced practitioners. At moment the evaluator compares its own practice with that of the candidate over a set of predetermined elements. This can create disparity of judgment between different evaluators. Possible solutions are to explicit the criteria or to involve two assessors in the evaluation of the candidate or to supervise tightly the assessors.

13. The UK National Occupational Standards and NVQs for Advice and Guidance

In the UK, 'National Occupational Standards' set out measurable performance outcomes to which an individual is expected to work in a given occupation. NOS set out the skills, knowledge and understanding required to perform competently in the workplace' (SSDA, 2007:1[72], quoted on Wikipedia)[73]. 'NOS, which are approved by UK government regulators, are available for almost every role in every sector in the UK' (…). All NOS are based on a framework of individual standards (known as a 'suite') with each standard representing a function or activity in the workplace. Within each unit the required standards of performance and related knowledge and skills for that activity are described in the form of outcomes of effective performance and statements of required knowledge and understanding. Some standards also feature a range of typical behaviours underpinning effective performance. (quoted from LLUK) [74]

The NOS are developed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) state-sponsored, employer-led organizations. Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), is the new sector skill council for career guidance. It has replaced Employment NTO.

'NOS units are first developed from using organisations' role profiles (job descriptions) and the experience of industry practitioners, which help inform the development of Functional and Occupational Maps. A Functional Map describes the broad work activities that take place across an occupational sector. It describes these work activities in general terms to build up a picture of the type of work that is carried out by individual members of staff. The purpose of an Occupational Map is to chart the broad area of the NOS project by identifying accepted, broad job roles at all levels (of seniority) within the sector. Working Groups, consisting of 10-12 practitioners, are set up for NOS projects and members help inform and review the draft NOS. These are also presented for a wider industry consultation' (quoted from Financial Services skills Council[75]).

Since 1986 in the UK employees can gain a qualification (a NVQ, National Vocational Qualification award -SVNQ in Scotland) simply through assessment of competence on the job, without attending an educational or vocational course[76]. There are five levels of NVQ ranging from Level 1, which focuses on basic work activities ('Competence that involves the application of knowledge in the performance of a range of varied work activities, most of which are routine and predictable'), to Level 5 for senior management (Competence that involves the application of a range of fundamental principles across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts. Very substantial personal autonomy and often significant responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of substantial resources features strongly, as do personal accountabilities for analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution and evaluation ')[77]. The assessment is carried out against the corresponding NOS. NVQs qualifications can be preferred by the employers in recruitment or made

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[72] SSDA (2007). Draft Guidance to Sector Skills Councils on Developing, Reviewing and Promoting National Occupational Standards

[73] National Occupational Standards. (2009, September 25). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 10:05, January 25, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=National_Occupational_Standards&oldid=316086647

[74]Webpage National Occupational Standards. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.lluk.org/standards-and-qualifications/standards/national-occupational-standards/

[75] Financial Services skills Council (no date). Frequently Asked Questions on National Occupational Standards. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.fssc.org.uk/faqs_about_national_occupational_standards.pd

[76] Webpage NVQs - national vocational qualifications. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.businessballs.com/nvqs_national_vocational_qualifications.htm

[77] National Vocational Qualification. (2011, January 7). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 18:50, February 6, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=National_Vocational_Qualification&oldid=406548846

mandatory in government funded services such as Information Advice and Guidance delivery in the UK (TAQA Professional Development, no date[78]).

Since 2011 NVQs have been replaced by the QCF Qualifications and Credit Framework[79]. The current suite of NOS for career guidance[80] is at moment under revision[81]. In this chapter, we deal with the old NVQ and the current suite.

What is accredited and official name

In this framework there is no accreditation. The successful candidate gains an award in (name of the sector) level X, for example Advice and Guidance NVQ Level 3.

Features of reference for qualification

ENTO (2006)[82] lists 30 units. During the assessment, depending by the NVQ level, some units are compulsory, some others optional and can be chosen by the candidate. For example in Reid (2007)[83] AG3, AG14, AG16, AG18 (in bold) are listed as compulsory and other four can be chosen by the candidate. The Author doesn't specify to which NVQ level she refers.

Unit	Title
AG1	Establish communication with clients for advice and guidance
AG2	Support clients to make use of the advice and guidance service
AG3	**Develop interactions with advice and guidance clients**
AG4	Interact with clients using a range of media
AG5	Assist advice and guidance clients to decide on a course of action
AG6	Prepare clients through advice and guidance for the implementation of a course of action
AG7	Assist clients through advice and guidance to review their achievement of a course of action
AG8	Advocate on behalf of advice and guidance clients
AG9	Prepare to represent advice and guidance clients in formal proceedings
AG10	Present cases for advice and guidance clients in formal proceedings
AG11	Negotiate on behalf of advice and guidance clients
AG12	Liaise with other services
AG13	Enable advice and guidance clients to access referral opportunities
AG14	**Manage personal case load**
AG15	Review own contribution to the service
AG16	**Evaluate and develop own contribution to the service**
AG17	Provide support for other practitioners
AG18	**Operate within networks**

[78] TAQA Professional Development (no date). CPD Events 029 Managing and Developing the Competence of People who Deliver Information, Advice and Guidance. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.taqapd.co.uk/cpdevents/event_details.php?id=58

[79] Qualifications and Credit Framework. (2011, February 3). In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 16:25, February 6, 2011, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Qualifications_and_Credit_Framework&oldid=411777546

[80] ENTO (2006). National Occupational Standards for Advice and Guidance. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.ukstandards.org.uk/File_Download.aspx?SuiteId=766&FormMode=DownloadFile&FileId=19099

[81] Webpage Review: Career Development NOS. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.lluk.org/standards-and-qualifications/standards/career-development-national-occupational-standards/

[82] Quoted in Reid, H. (2007). Study on the Accreditation Schemes of OECD Countries. Mimeo. Reid 2007, p.26. ENTO was a UK organization (now dismantled) in charge for developing the standards in career guidance until 2009.

[83] Ibid.

AG19 Undertake research for the service and its clients
AG20 Design information materials for use in the service
AG21 Provide and maintain information materials for use in the service
AG22 Promote the position of Careers Education Guidance (CEG) within the organisation
AG23 Identify the contribution of Careers Education Guidance (CEG) to the achievement of the organisation's values, aims and objectives
AG24 Integrate Careers Education Guidance (CEG) within the curriculum
AG25 Promote Careers Education Guidance (CEG) within the community
AG26 Negotiate and maintain service agreements
AG27 Facilitate learning in groups
AG28 Prepare and set up mediation
AG29 Stage the mediation process
AG30 Manage the process of mediation

Each Unit is further divided in subunits, still described as actions. For example AG3 Develop interactions with advice and guidance clients is divided in

- Element 3.1 Enable clients to explore their issues
- Element 3.2 Sustain interactions with clients
- Element 3.3 Bring interactions to an end.

For each subunit a list of sub subunits ('you must be able') and, for each of them, a list of knowledge (' you must know') are provided. For example the sub subunits and the knowledge requested for Element 3.3 Bring interactions to an end. under AG.3 are the following:

Unit AG 3	Develop interactions with advice and guidance clients

Element 3.3	Bring interactions to an end

You must be able to:	You must know:
1. Provide clear opportunities for clients to signal their desire to end the interaction	a) how clients might signal their desire to end the interaction
2. Manage effectively any tensions between the time and resources that are available and clients' requirements	b) how much time and resources are available for interactions c) what types of tensions could emerge with clients
3. Allow clients to decide what their next steps will be	d) why it is important to allow clients to decide their next steps
4. Encourage and acknowledge clients' reactions and feelings about the ending of the interaction	e) what the different reactions and feelings are that can occur in clients
5. Summarise the interaction and the outcomes achieved	f) how to summarise interactions
6. Identify and clarify opportunities for providing further support for clients	g) what further support might be available
7. Agree with clients any further activities that are necessary to clarify their requirements	h) what other activities might be necessary
8. Identify and agree requirements that cannot be met and facilitate access to additional or alternative sources of support	i) what other sources of support could help the clients
9. Record interactions in the appropriate systems	j) what the systems are for recording interactions k) why it is important to use the systems l) what the procedures are that relate to the use of the systems

Requirements for accreditation

There are no preliminary known requirements.

The features and the process of the assessment

Assessors are appointed by Assessment Centres, each of them is linked to an awarding body. The awarding bodies are organization that monitor the assessment process and award NVQs and unit

certificates. They can be for example associations, professional associations, training associations, firms, universities[84].

The assessor works in cooperation with a supervisor (Internal verifier) based on the Assessment Centre (6). External verifiers, employed by the awarding bodies, can review the activity of the Assessment Centres (6).

According to Read (2006) [85] the assessment should be focused on evidence resulting from main tasks the candidate carries out in their normal workplace role (pag. 4) The choice of the methods for assessment is up to the evaluator (pag.7). A variety of methods should be used (4). Rather than taking an element by element approach, looking at each of the performance criteria in turn, the assessor encourages candidates to use evidence across as many units and elements of NVQ as possible. Candidates don't have to store all their evidence in one place (or put together a huge portfolio full of their work where competence has to be inferred by the assessor, creating an unnecessary paper trail). Wherever possible and practical, seeing and assessing the evidence in the place where it occurs naturally and/or is usually kept –in the workplace (5).

Read (2006:9)[86] lists the following main assessment methods:

1. Direct observation. Watching candidates perform in the workplace

2. Professional discussion. A conversation in which candidates describe and reflect on their performance and knowledge in relation to the requirements of the standards.

3. Evidence from others (witness testimony). Another person's account of what a candidate has done in the workplace. Can be used to confirm consistent performance over time.

4. Questioning. Using a range of questioning techniques, either spoken or written. One of the main methods to find out if candidate has the necessary underpinning knowledge

5. Examination of products of a candidate's work activity

The granting organization, cost, duration

The granting organizations are the awarding bodies already described above. We have no information about cost and duration.

An appraisal

The NVQ approach, based on the assessment of performance, looks very effective (see what said at chapter 4. Main approaches in the assessment of competent workers). The main assessment methods looks convincing.

[84] See a list at Federation of Awarding Bodies. Full List. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.awarding.org.uk/public/membership/full-members.
[85] Read, H., 2006, op. cit..
[86] Ibid.

A source of concern is the great freedom of the evaluator in carrying out the assessment, that could result in the same candidate being valued differently by different assessors. This risk could be minimized by working in pairs, tight supervision, sharing of practice with other assessors.

The weak point of the framework in our opinion is the description of the activities (the 30 units). Job analysis results in 3-5 main tasks (key activities) that then with a tree like structure are further subdivided in smaller, subordinate tasks, each of them further subdivided in sub subtasks. Most of the units are not main tasks, but subtasks. This can result in assessment being ineffective because focused not on the main activity, but only on a part of it (*mistake 1. Poor individuation of the elements the candidate to validation has to possess or to master to get accredited*).

14. EuroPsy, the European Certificate in Psychology

EuroPsy is a European standard of education and professional training in psychology set by EFPA, the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations[87]. EFPA covers associations of psychologists in 35 countries, with a total of some 250.000 individual psychologists[88]. EuroPsy has been developed with the support of two project grants from the Leonardo da Vinci programme of the European Union in 1999 and 2001.

As EuroPsy does not represent a licence to practise and is not intended to supersede or replace national licensing regulations[89], and in most (all?) European countries psychologist is a regulated profession it aims to create a set of European Standards for Psychology that will serve as the basis for evaluating the academic education and professional training of psychologists across the different countries of the EU[90]. According to the Promoters, it is hoped that it will be taken into account in future changes of licensing regulations[91].

What is accredited and official name

It is possible to obtain a Certificate and be included in the Register of European Psychologists[92]. The official title is Registered EuroPsy Psychologist[93]. There are two different Certificates: a basic EuroPsy Certificate and a EuroPsy Certificate of Specialized Expertise.

The basic EuroPsy Certificate is differentiated by area of activity; four areas are identified: Clinical & Health, Education, Work & organizations and Other, used to encompass other more specific applications that do not fall within the previous areas.

The EuroPsy Certificate of Specialized Expertise requires additional education and professional training and is differentiated in the two specialist areas of psychotherapy and work & organizational psychology[94].

Features of reference for accreditation

Every system of accreditation has a set of features that is taken as reference and that who wants to be accredit has to possess or master. EuroPsy takes in consideration a set of so called 20 'Primary competences' and 9 'Enabling competences'[95]. Nearly all the Primary and Enabling competences are job tasks.

The primary competences are focused on:

A. Need analysis and goal setting (primary competences 1, 2)
B. Assessment with individuals, groups, organizations and situations (3-6)

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[87] FAQs on EuroPSy. Retrieved on April 13, 2011 at http://www.efpa.eu/europsy/faqs-on-europsy.
[88] Ibid.
[89] EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. p.7.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] EuroPsy contributors (no date). EuroPsy – the European Certificate in Psychology. Retrieved on April 13, 2011 at http://www.inpa-europsy.it/nuovi.docum.2008/EuroPsy_english.pdf, p.14.
[94] FAQs on EuroPSy, op. cit.
[95] EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. pp. 31-34.

C. Designing and testing the service (7-10)
D. Delivering the service (11-15)
E. Evaluating the service and giving feedback to the clients (16-20)

For example the description of primary competence 4 is *Carrying out assessment by means of interviewing, testing and observation of groups in a setting relevant for the service demanded.*

The enabling competences are instead mostly focused on aspects of professional practice such as marketing its own activity, maintaining contacts with clients, quality assurance, self reflection. For example the Marketing & sales enabling competence is described as *Bringing current and new products and services to the attention of actual or potential clients, contacting clients, making business offers, selling services, providing after-sales services.*

Preliminary requirements for accreditation

The prerequisites for accreditation are[96]

- a successful university education in psychology of at least 5 years,
- at least 1 year of supervised practice of satisfactory performance as evaluated by the supervisor
- subscription to the principles of professional conduct set out in the MetaCode of Professional Ethics of EFPA.

The academic curriculum must cover all curriculum components outlined in Tables 1 and 2 of the document *Appendix II. Framework and minimal standards for the education and training of psychologists*[97]. However, there may be differences in emphasis on fields of study and/or types of educational objectives within the limits set in Table 3 of the same document[98].

Prerequisites for EuroPsy Certificates of Specialized Expertise vary with the field of expertise, but generally speaking the certificate requires at least 500 hours of additional education and three years of additional supervised practice[99].

The features and the process of the assessment

The assessment is carried out in two steps. In the first step the candidate is assessed during one year of supervised practice[100]. The supervisor(s) is a licensed/registered psychologist, recognized by the EuroPsy National Awarding Committee or by the national Association and with at least two years of full-time work or equivalent experience as an independent practitioner within a professional context.

Supervision involves between one and two hours each week of 'protected' and uninterrupted time where the supervisor and the practitioner-in-training (the candidate) work together, discussing the work of the practitioner-in-training, helping to process that work at a cognitive and emotional level, and supporting the practitioner-in-training in the development of confidence and professional confidence. This process may also involve tasks carried out by the practitioner-in-training under

[96] EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit., Art.2 at p.9.
[97] EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. pp. 22-25.
[98] EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. p.29.
[99] FAQs on EuroPSy, op. cit.
[100] See Appendix IV. Supervised practice in EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. pp.36-38, from which most of this description is reproduced.

observation by the supervisor which then form the basis for subsequent detailed discussion and critical reflection as part of the learning process. This might also involved the practitioner-in-training observing the supervisor carrying out tasks, and then using reflection on these as part of the learning and development process[101].

At the end of the period the supervisor will give an evaluation against the full set of primary and enabling competences. The supervisor's judgment should be expressed as a judgment of 'competent' or 'not yet competent' for each primary competence, while the enabling competences are evaluated all together. The judgment is referred to each of the four professional contexts (Clinical & Health , Education, Work & Organizations, Other –to be specified). 'Competent' means able of performing basic or complex tasks without guidance or supervision. Good practice such as the use of portfolios where the practitioner-in-training records their work and the development of competences and identifies professional development needs and review their own learning are recommended.

In the second steps of the assessment the candidate submits an application to the National Awarding Committee. The application must provide information on: the university education, the supervised practice, specifying the professional competences and contexts within which s/he has worked under supervision to qualify for independent practice. The applicant must submit authorized reports by his/her supervisor(s). The applicant must also sign a pledge that s/he will conduct professional activities in accordance with the code of ethics of the national association of psychology in the country of practice. The National Awarding Committee shall examine the evidence submitted and decide whether or not more information is needed from the applicant. If needed, further information could be required.

Guidelines on supervision and Guidelines for assessment are foreseen but for the moment not provided.

On renewal of the EuroPsy the applicant has to show relevant evidence of Continuing Professional Development[102]. A set of guidelines has been for countries where Continuing Professional Development requirements don't exist.

As for work experience, the applicant should show evidence of professional work as a psychologist amounting to not less than 400 hours per year averaged over a period of not less than 4 years over the period of the last six years before the application for renewal. Acceptable evidence includes, for example: employment contracts accompanied by a job description, project contracts, or statements of income for tax authorities (in the case of psychologists in independent practice.)

As for personal professional development a minimum of 80 hours per year is recommended and applicants should be able to show explicit evidence of 40 hours continuing professional development per year. Evidence of a variety of activities is required. Activities can include:

- Certified attendance and participation in accredited courses and/or workshops aimed at further professional development
- Development of specific new skills through practice at work
- Certified attendance in peer supervision meetings
- Certified attendance at a professional or scientific conference

[101] EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. p.38.
[102] See Appendix V. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme. EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. p.39, from which most of this description is reproduced.

- (Co-)authorship and/or editing of publications on research and/or professional issues
- Presentations to professional audiences
- Editorial work on journals and books in psychology.

Registered EuroPsy Psychologists are required to maintain a record of their Continuing Professional Development. In addition to recording the acquisition of experience of practice in the context of new functions, client groups and settings, this should cover training and development from continuing education.

The granting organization, cost, duration

National Awarding Committees evaluate applications and determine the outcomes of applications for EuroPsy. The European Awarding Committee, established by EFPA, has oversight of the National Awarding Committees and the process for the award.[103] EuroPsy was formally launched on Nov 17, 2009 by the EFPA Presidents' Council, and is currently being implemented country by country[104], and the first EuroPsy certificates have been issued in Norway on December 10, 2010[105]. The Register is available at http://www.europsy-efpa.eu/register-certificate. 75 people are inscribed, 73 of which from Norway.

EuroPsy remain valid seven years[106]. Before the end of this period the psychologist has to reply for revalidation and an extension.

In Italy the cost for requesting and maintaining the EuroPsy certificate is currently 50 € for each of the first 2 years. After that nothing has to paid[107].

An appraisal

The standard looks too low, because it refers to practitioners able of 'performing basic tasks without guidance or supervision', while a standard for a full professional should refer only to 'complex tasks'.

The framework requires both educational qualifications, whose curriculum is described in detail, and main tasks, that looks well identified. As the candidates are assessed through one full year of supervised practice the request of an educational qualification with standard content looks quite superfluous, as the competence of the candidates can be directly assessed through their performance.

The frameworks looks effective in identifying practitioners working up to a standard, but is too cumbersome as the assessment requires one full year of supervised practice.

The guidelines about evidences to be provided for re-accreditation are reasonable and well structured.

[103] FAQs on EuroPSy, op. cit.
[104] Current state of EuroPsy. Retrieved on April 13, 2011 at http://www.efpa.eu/europsy/current-state-of-europsy
[105] News. First EuroPsy certificates issued. Retrieved on April 13, 2011 at http://www.europsy-efpa.eu/news
[106] EuroPsy contributors (no date), op. cit. p.9.
[107] EuroPsy Italia. Retrieved on April 13, 2011 at http://www.inpa-europsy.it/

15. ISO/IEC 17024 General requirements for bodies operating certifications of persons

ISO International Organization for Standardization[108] is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to facilitate the international coordination and unification of industrial standards[109]. ISO has produced also a standard relating to bodies operating certification of persons, called ISO/IEC 17024 General requirements for bodies operating certifications of persons[110].

According to ISO 2003:5[111], the standard 'has been drawn up with the objective of achieving and promoting a globally accepted benchmark for organizations operating certification of persons. Certification of persons is one of means of providing assurance that the certified person meets the requirements of the certification scheme. Confidence in the respective certification schemes is achieved by means of a globally accepted process of assessment, subsequent surveillance and periodic re-assessments of the competence of certified persons.' (…) 'one of the characteristic functions of the personnel certification body is to conduct an examination, which uses objective criteria for competence and scoring.'

The standard refers to voluntary certification in professions not regulated by the law.

A set of requirements is set for certification bodies. For example certification bodies shall be independent and impartial in relation to its applicants, candidates and certified persons and have appropriate financial resources, structure and personnel (4.2.). (from now onward are quoted directly parts of ISO 2003 and number of paragraphs).

The certification scheme has to be developed by a scheme committee appointed by the certification body (4.2.3.). The scheme committee is responsible for the development and maintenance of the certification scheme for each type of certification being considered. The scheme committee shall fairly and equitably represent the interests of all parties significantly concerned with the certification scheme, without any particular interest predominating (4.2.3.).

The methods and mechanisms to be used to evaluate the competence of candidates are defined by the certification body (4.3.1.) in agreement with the scheme committee (4.3.3.).

The certification body shall evaluate the methods for examination of candidates. Examinations shall be fair, valid and reliable. Appropriate methodology and procedures (such as collecting and maintaining statistical data) shall be defined to reaffirm, at least annually, the fairness, validity, reliability and general performance of each examination and all identified deficiencies corrected. (4.3.6)

Successful completion of an approved training course may be a requirement of a certification scheme, but recognition/approval of training courses by the certification body shall not compromise impartiality, or reduce the demands of the evaluation and certification requirements (4.3.5.)

The certification body shall examine competence, based on the requirements of the scheme, by written, oral, practical, observational or other means. (6.2.2.)

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[108] Website retrieved on February 3, 2011 from www.iso.ch
[109] Discover ISO. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.iso.org/iso/about/discover-iso_isos-origins.htm
[110] ISO (2003). *ISO/IEC 17024 General requirements for bodies operating certifications of persons*. Mimeo, from which most of this description is preproduced.
[111] Ibid. pag.26.

The certification body shall provide a certificate to all certified persons. (6.3.2.) These certificates shall contain, as a minimum, the following information (6.3.3.):

a) the name of the certified person and a unique certification number;
b) the name of the certification body;
c) a reference to the competence standard or other relevant documents, including issue, on which the certification is based;
d) the scope of the certification, including validity conditions and limitations;
e) the effective date of certification and date of expiry.

The document set also guidelines for the development and maintenance of a certification scheme:

Certification schemes for persons should only be established in response to specific government requirements (i.e. protection of the public) or a demonstrated market need/desire (i.e. credibility, confidence and improvement of the profession). (A.1)

The certification body or organization proposing the certification scheme should consult the interested parties on the following (A.2) :

a) a description of the specific field for which the persons will be certified;
b) a description of the qualification/competence requirements, evaluation requirements and procedures, including those for surveillance and recertification;
c) the degree of support for the scheme by the interested parties and evidence of their acceptance of the contents of the scheme;
d) which organization/body/person should be responsible for the development of the proposed scheme.

A job/practice analysis should be conducted periodically (at least every 5 years) to produce or confirm the following (A.3):

a) a description of the target candidate population and a statement of purpose or intended outcome for certification;
b) a list of the important and critical tasks performed by competent people working in the profession;
c) a list of the certification requirements, including the rationale and the evaluation mechanism(s) selected for each requirement;
d) a specification for the construction of the examination(s), where a formal oral or written examination forms part of the evaluation process, including content outline, type(s) of questions being posed, cognitive level(s) of the questions, number of questions for each subject, time length of the examination, method for establishing the acceptance level of the mark, and method(s) for marking;
e) comments on how the proposed scheme should achieve market transparency.

If the certification body satisfy all the requirements, then it can apply to ISO for recognition. It is not clear how many professions have been so far certified with this system. Looking on the internet was found IPC International Personnel Certification Association, an association of certification bodies[112]. The full members are only thirteen[113], even if each member can certificate many different professions.

An appraisal

[112] Website retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.ipcaweb.org/.
[113] Full members. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.ipcaweb.org/content.aspx?page=37&type=1

Apparently the system is fairly open. The organizations part of the scheme committee (presumably sector organizations) can decide the requirements and the assessment procedure with much freedom.

16. Glossary[114]

This Glossary lists a set of definitions useful to understand the content of the *Study on Existing Frameworks to Validate Competence of CG Practitioners*.

Accreditation: official recognition of the capability to carry out a specific occupation or main task granted by a public authority, a professional association or a nongovernmental agency. Also used to mean the process of recognition. In the Study accreditation has been used as synonymous of certification and validation.

Assessment of learning outcome: The process of appraising knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences of an individual against predefined criteria (learning expectations, measurement of learning outcomes). Assessment is typically followed by validation and certification[115].

Certification: the process through which an organization grants recognition to an individual, organization, process, service, or product that meets certain established criteria. For certification of individuals, the individuals usually have to meet eligibility requirements (such as education or years of experience), pass an examination, and pay a fee. There are also usually ongoing requirements that need to be met, such as retesting or participating in a minimum number of continuing education activities. Certification is voluntary - unlike licensure which is mandatory in order to practice in the licensed role in a given state. However, that's not to say it's not valuable - because some employers require or prefer applicants who are certified. "certification" means that a state of affairs has been stated to be so, by means, most commonly, of a document self described as a certificate[116]. In the Study certification has been used as synonymous of validation and accreditation.

Certification of learning outcome: The process of issuing a certificate, diploma or title formally attesting that a set of learning outcomes (knowledge, know-how, skills, etc.) acquired by an individual have been assessed and validated by a competent body against a predefined standard[117].

Competence (used only at singular): a generic, not real quality imagined to be possessed by a person able to carry out professionally an occupation or job main task, see chapter 3. *Competence and competencies*.

Competency (plural competencies or, erroneously, competences):
1 (McClelland): Each of personal characteristics which (usually combined with others) allows the effective execution of a particular task in a given organization.
2 (Boyatzis): An underlying characteristic of an individual, which is causally related to effective or superior performance in a job' which could be 'a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses

[114] When not stated differently, the definitions have been written by Evangelista.
[115] CEDEFOP (2008). *Terminology of European education and training policy*. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.google.it/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CBwQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cedefop.europa.eu%2Fdownload-manager.aspx%3Fid%3D13126%26lang%3Den%26type%3Dpublication&ei=a9RKTdSLDMXKswa-qNydDw&usg=AFQjCNG44hYTKRNLFGcAaedRD-I42Sb22Q
[116] Answer.com. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_the_definition_of_certification#ixzz1JxREoE2v
[117] CEDEFOP (2008), op. cit., modified.

3.Each personal characteristic generally utilizable in the workplace, in school or in ordinary life, regardless of the nature of the work or level of performance achievable through its use. See chapter 3. *Competence and competencies*.

Competent worker: a person able to carry out an occupation or a job task up to a predetermined standard.

Educational qualification: a qualification granted by one of the following educational systems: primary school, secondary school, university.

Job tasks: the actions that can be identified in a flowchart describing how a job is carried out. See also *main task*.

Key activity: see *main task*.

Learning outcome: The set of knowledge, skills, etc. an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal[118].

Licensure: the act or an instance of granting a license, usually to practice a profession[119].

Main task: each of the main identifiable and self standing activities a person carrying out a job can accomplish.

Occupational activity: a specific occupation. See for example the entry 'Regulated profession' in CEDEFOP 2008[120]: A occupational activity or group of occupational activities access to which, and the practice of which (or to one of its forms) is directly or indirectly subject to legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions concerning the possession of specific qualifications.

Qualification: Any higher education award (degree, diploma, or other type of formal certification) issued by a competent, registered authority attesting the successful completion of a course programme[121].

Standard: A series of elements whose content is defined by concerned actors. Comment:
One can distinguish between several types of standards:

- competence standard refers to the knowledge, skills and/or competences linked to the practice of a job;
- occupational standard refers to the statements of the activities and tasks related to a specific job and to its practice;
- educational standard refers to the statements of learning objectives, content of curricula, entry requirements as well as resources required to meet the learning objectives;

[118] CEDEFOP (2008), op. cit., modified.
[119] The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.thefreedictionary.com/licensure
[120] CEDEFOP (2008), op. cit., modified.
[121] Vlãsceanu *et al*. (2004) quoted in Analytic Quality Glossary, entry 'Qualification'. Retrieved on February 3, 2011 from http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/qualification.htm.

- assessment standard refers to the statements of the learning outcomes to be assessed and the methodology used;

- validation standard refers to the statements of the level of achievement to be reached by the person assessed, and the methodology used;

- certification standard refers to the statements of the rules applicable for obtaining a certificate or diploma as well as the rights conferred.

According to the system, these standards can be defined separately or be part of one document.

Skill: the ability to perform tasks and solve problems[122].

Validation: a process where a competent body assesses and officially recognize that a person, a person activity or a personal attribute complies with a predefined standard. In the Study validation has been used as synonymous of certification and accreditation.

Validation of learning outcomes confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, etc.) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification[123].

[122] CEDEFOP (2008), op. cit., modified.
[123] Ibid., modified.