



# Lost in Validation: Analysis of the French and German Systems

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Konzepte, Erfahrungen, Herausforderungen

Thema

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## Summary

The idea that we learn everywhere and all the time is not new and is largely accepted on a wide scale by researchers, policy makers, practitioners, employers, workers' organisations and the general public (e.g. families and applicants). Learning contexts other than formal ones have received much attention in the scientific literature and the field of policy. Such learning contexts are called non-formal or informal, and there is little consensus about their respective definitions. This paper makes the claim that both France and Germany have a system for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes. They are more or less unified and more or less developed, leading to different outcomes, focusing on different aspects of individual competences and taking place in different contexts. An analysis is proposed that explains these differences in countries that have different systems along with a strong historical attachment to vocational preparation for the labour market. The analysis shows that the approaches are derived from the same philosophy that we learn everywhere and all the time and that the corresponding learning outcomes should be given currency, especially on the labour market. However, the complexity of the systems coupled with a lack of information and guidance for its users both before and after enrolment as well as the large variations that exist in the implementation of this philosophical principle mean that there are good reasons to be lost in the validation procedures.

# Lost in Validation: Analysis of the French and German Systems

**Mona Pielorz and Patrick Werquin**

**It seems that recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes enables flexible learning pathways and, in particular, can provide individuals with multiple entry and exit points. However, neither of the two countries have fully provided for these opportunities.**

## **Background – Validation and Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes is a Philosophy**

### **Both France and Germany Have a Validation<sup>1</sup> System, but They Are Different**

Most countries face similar challenges regarding the production and identification of learning outcomes and competences in general. The past two decades have seen the amplification of approaches that allow the exploitation of competences acquired by individuals outside of the formal education and training system (see Coles 2015; Duvekot/Schuur/Paulusse 2010; Harris/Wihak/Kleef 2014; Werquin 2010a, 2010b). In this context, France (see Feutrie 2008; Merle 2007) and Germany (see Annen 2011) are interesting archetypical cases that help to understand possible options to make visible non-formal or informal learning (see Burger/Harring/Witte 2015; Rohs 2015; Hanak/Sturm 2015) i.e. at the workplace or in private life. Their attempts are based on their respective historical and cultural backgrounds and on a different starting point in terms of objectives. Such a comparison provides an understanding of the broad spectrum of possible

applications of what is in fact a philosophy: the acceptance of the idea that we learn everywhere and all the time and that all learning outcomes should be given currency. For this purpose, validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is a policy tool because it allows for flexibility in responding to the needs of specific target groups.

### **Economic and wider purposes**

When looking at the topic from an economic perspective, the issue is not so much the absence of individual competences but the lack of visibility of these competences to employers, who are often flying blind when it comes to recruiting employees or organising effective jobs/competences that match within their company. This is because it is likely that a fair share of the competences of economically active individuals have been acquired in working situations after the individuals have left the initial education and training system; therefore, this initial system is not in a position to assess and validate the corresponding learning outcomes. They are at high risk of remaining invisible, and by organising recruitment and work on the sole basis

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term “validation” will be used as short for “Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes”.

of qualifications achieved during youth, employers neglect many human resources that could be tapped into if they were visible and recognised thanks to a quality assured validation process.

The fact that a fair share of competences are acquired at the workplace is even more obvious with competences that are connected to know-how as opposed to pure knowledge because it is mainly everyday practice through which they are acquired (as opposed to classroom-based education and training). In addition, a competence is social by definition and may only be understood in context, and working contexts are difficult to fully simulate in the initial education and training system.

Finding a way to make learning outcomes and competences visible is of paramount importance for employers (e.g. to make better use of human resources) and for the individual workers (e.g. to reap the benefits of these non-formally and informally acquired competences, typically for a better wage or more promotion opportunities). This way is often called recognition of prior learning (RPL<sup>2</sup>) or, more precisely, recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes (RNFILO) (see Werquin 2010a, 2010b). It is entirely based on the idea that adults<sup>3</sup>, especially participants in the labour market, learn everywhere as well as at all times and that new competences, however they are acquired, should be given currency.

The benefits of validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcome systems affect many components of society. For individuals, it has economic benefits (e.g. finding a job, better wage, promotion), educational benefits (e.g. shortening of training periods, lateral entry into the formal education/qualification system, resuming or starting new formal education pathways), and personal benefits (e.g. self-esteem, motivation, confidence). For employers, competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning opportunities are free, and recruitment processes become easier. Other stakeholders, such as governments, also

benefit from a more qualified population, e.g. it improves the business climate and attracts foreign investment.

### **Different solutions to similar challenges**

Even if they share the same challenges, countries do not necessarily adopt the same solutions when it comes to identifying, assessing, validating and recognising learning outcomes and competences. From this point of view, France and Germany are interesting archetypical cases. In France, the focus is on the non-formal and informal learning outcomes acquired after the end of the initial education and training; the practice is rather old (since 1934). In Germany, there is also a strong attachment to experience since the entire dual system for the vocational preparation of young people is based on the acquisition of experience. However, this takes place before the end of the initial education and training. The interest for competences acquired after the end of the initial education and training is more recent, with the notable exception of the External Examination (Externenprüfung), which is also relatively old.

The description of existing approaches also published in this issue shows that France has a rather general system called Validation of Experiential Learning Outcomes (VAE, Validation des acquis de l'expérience) (see for instance Chassard et al. 2008), and two specific systems that co-exist in the tertiary education system (see Werquin 2012, 2015 for details on the three approaches. In Germany, there are several systems with different scopes: External Examination (Externenprüfung), the university credit system (Anrechnung an Hochschulen), Validation of competences (ValiKom) and a specific provision for migrants.

### **Conceptual Clarification and International Overview**

These approaches fall under the category of a generic approach to validating and recognising non-formal

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<sup>2</sup> In English alone, the terms are numerous: RPL, PLAR, RNFILO, VAE, APL, APEL.

<sup>3</sup> Developing validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcome systems for young people is a promising option, but it will not be addressed here as it refers to different concepts (e.g. side learning taken into account in qualifications) and approaches to implementation (e.g. assessment).

and informal learning outcomes. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is more a philosophy than a precise method. Indeed, systems for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes are often wrongly presented as designed in a similar way. Different countries use different approaches and they need to be spelled out to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, especially regarding their outcomes, possible applications, and practical arrangements.

## Diversity of outcomes

In terms of outcomes, the main [non-mutually exclusive] options for successful applicants are:

- Second chance for a school certificate (e.g. upper secondary qualification; e.g., Canada, Chile, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United States)
- Exemption from academic prerequisites for access to a formal study programme (e.g. to access tertiary education without an upper secondary qualification; Belgium, Ireland, Spain, South Africa and United Kingdom)
- Exemption from part of the curriculum in a programme of studies in formal learning (e.g. credits on the basis of experience and exemption from some tertiary education courses; Belgium-Flanders, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom)
- Certificate of labour market competences: This document permits one to work in a given region, industrial sector or large company—especially if there is a bilateral agreement between labour market stakeholders and the institution that awarded the certificate—but does not have currency in the formal learning system (e.g. Belgium, Chile, Germany, Malawi, the Netherlands, Slovenia, South Africa and Uruguay).
- Partial qualification (e.g. if a qualification is composed of several [blocks of] competences, only some of the blocks/competences might be validated): This approach overlaps with the one above as this partial qualification may correspond to the awarding of credits, and/or

permits one to work (e.g. Australia, Bangladesh, Namibia, Norway, and France).

- Full qualification awarded to successful applicants on the sole basis of the assessment: This is the most extreme approach as there is no other requirement (e.g. tuition, continuous assessment). Countries usually implement an eligibility condition (e.g. individual applicants have to prove that they have been active in a related field for a minimum duration (usually set by law; e.g. Andorra [Law in preparation], Austria, France, Mauritius, Namibia [rare], the Netherlands [rare] and Tunisia [forthcoming])).

These are approaches that could truly be called validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes despite the fact that they are different in essence and do not necessarily lead to the direct awarding of a qualification.

## Diversity of applications

It is therefore not surprising that there are plenty of possible applications of recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, for example:

- Create a more inclusive lifelong learning system, where opportunities for second chance qualifications are available throughout one's life. This may be particularly relevant in order to deal with high numbers of early school leavers (France), to provide a way back into the labour market after an 'uneven' career path for lateral entrants, vocational training dropouts or low-skilled workers (Germany) and to create opportunities for changing careers throughout one's life.
- Create a multiple entry/exit lifelong learning system, which leads to more flexible education and training systems and therefore improves the connection between the world of work and the world of education. This may be particular relevant in countries where senior workers are being made redundant relatively early in life (around 50 years of age, as in France) or when the declining demography of a country calls for immigration (Germany).
- Revisit the technical vocational education and training system so that it delivers RNFILO-friendly qualifications, e.g. when assessment is mainly



based on a final examination (as opposed to continuous assessment), and therefore promote bridges between the academic tracks and the vocational tracks, especially at level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework.

### **Diversity of guidance and assessment arrangements**

Practical arrangements mainly concern eligibility, guidance and assessment. Here again there are plenty of options. Eligibility could be defined in terms of the number of years of experience in a field that is relevant to the target qualification; this may also be decided after an initial pre-assessment. There is evidence that guidance is of paramount importance. In France, not only are the applicants who received 20 hours of guidance more successful in achieving a full qualification, but they are also more efficient in reaping the benefits of their newly achieved qualification later on when they are in the labour market. Assessment could take a variety of forms as well, for example:

- A portfolio of competences, either as the main output of the preparation process for the assessment or as the first step in self-assessment (e-portfolios have started to become quite widely developed),
- Interviews—individual or collective—with one assessor or a panel of assessors,
- Observation at the workplace,
- Simulation of the workplace in a training centre (with practical texts), or
- Written examinations (especially in tertiary education).

### **More a ‘philosophy’ than a method**

In short, a multitude of opportunities exist, and reducing recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes to a specific practice or approach would be detrimental to innovation when building flexible and equitable lifelong learning systems. What matters is that the approaches focus on learning outcomes and competences and not only on learning. Individuals may learn for a long period of time and never reach a satisfactory level. In this respect, it is important that standards for the assessment of learning outcomes are defined. They

could be existing standards (typically from the formal initial education and training system, i.e. from the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labour) or they could be elaborated intentionally for the system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Both approaches have pros and cons.

What matters is that the outcomes of the recognition process—e.g. a qualification or credits—are recognised by society and employers, i.e. that they are accepted as a piece of currency for the labour market and as evidence of individual competences. If a country builds a mere technical system of recognition—for example run by educational experts or professionals alone—that delivers credits or qualifications that are not widely recognised, the system will soon collapse. This is why recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is more a philosophy than a method because it is about recognising that learning outcomes acquired outside the formal education and training system have value and should be given currency and awards should be recognised by the society. All the rest is flexible open and should be adapted to the local context.

A comparative analysis of France and Germany (Table 1) proves to be a very relevant approach to better understanding this point and the range of possible options. It helps to understand to what extent the local context (the strength of the dual system and presence of a large number of recent migrants in Germany, the large number of early school leavers and strong attachment to qualification in France) cannot be overlooked when designing and implementing a system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. This discussion will show the importance of creating a sense of ownership and therefore to bring all relevant stakeholders together early on and involve them in the design of the validation and recognition system, its implementation and the validation process.

### **Analysis of the French and German Systems – So Close So Far**

This analysis is based on the description of existing approaches also published in this issue.



## Commonalities – A Strong Attachment to the Vocational Preparation for the Labour Market

France and Germany share some features. Generally speaking, there is a strong attachment to vocational preparation for the labour market in both countries. The certification of competences is most of the time organised in relation to the labour market, and there is some overlap between the concepts of certification and of qualification. Approaches based in historical systems date back a long time. In both countries, there are several key stakeholders involved in the lifelong learning system. For example, there are several ministries that award qualifications in France, not only the Ministry of Education. Moreover, some competences<sup>4</sup> have been devolved to the Regions—even if this is a quite recent development; and the chambers have the competences for vocational preparation for the labour market in Germany (e.g. curriculum, awarding of qualifications<sup>5</sup>). Both countries seem attached to the subsidiarity principle, by which matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralised competent authority.

Both countries recognise the value of experience in learning processes. The validation of experiential learning outcomes in France and the dual system in Germany heavily rely on practicing before being assessed for a qualification. Therefore, both implicitly recognise that non-formal and informal learning is massive and should be valued.

In relation to recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, some stakeholders in both countries are sceptical about awarding qualifications on the sole basis of assessing non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The required cultural shift for full societal recognition of qualifications achieved through recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is considerable in France and Germany even though France was earlier in starting to accept different routes to the same qualification with parity of esteem, duties and rights. Although qualifications are designed in collaboration with employers and active employees, the designers seem to have

difficulties moving away from the concept of inputs (e.g. number of hours in each subject area) despite official rhetoric emphasising competence-based approaches.

Finally, as members of the European Union, both countries are subject to the European Commission's multiple recommendations and guidelines (and ValiKom may be seen as the German response to the European Commission push). In this respect and perhaps not coincidentally, ValiKom is the only validation system in Germany that accepts any kind of learning outcomes, such as the French VAE.

## Differences – Learning Outcomes and Process Outcomes

The countries are also quite different when it comes to validation. If they both exhibit a strong attachment to experience, France is more focused on experience acquired after the end of initial education and training (VAE). The rationale behind this is a search for equity through providing opportunities for a second chance qualification. Germany is more focused on experience in initial education and training (dual system). Fieldwork suggests that the idea of recognising experiential learning outcomes later in life is somewhat difficult to understand in Germany, precisely because this is what the dual system has already been doing for decades. However, accumulation of experience in the dual system may very well be considered to be part of the formal learning system.

This probably illustrates the differences between the two countries because both recognise the value of non-formal and informal learning outcomes but at different phases of life. Even if Germany has a convincing world class system for bringing on board non-formal and informal learning outcomes in the initial education and training system, this does not mean that competences acquired later in life—after the end of the dual system—should not be considered in assessment, validation and recognition; however, this is the case only for the External Examination (Externenprüfung). What seems to be missing is a second chance qualification

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4 Typically technical vocational education and training.

5 Except for qualifications corresponding to regulated occupations.

that does not require the undertaking of learning activities in the formal adult learning system, which has proven detrimental to the motivation of adults to invest in achieving a new qualification.

In detail, the French and German systems for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes are very different. A glance at Table 1 provides information about all the differences. In short, the inputs accepted in the validation process are different; in France, all learning outcomes are considered, whereas this is not the case in Germany, with the notable exception of the new ValiKom Project.

The outcome is in most cases a qualification in France while it is never the case in Germany. Velten and Herdin (2015) show the low acceptance rate: only 38.9% of interviewees agree that the outcome of the recognition process should be a full qualification, 36.7% disagree on the awarding of a full qualification and 20.7% are only partly convinced that a full qualification should be awarded.

France has accepted that several different routes can lead to the exact same qualifications. The distinctive feature of the French approach early on was the idea that a qualification is not strictly attached to a unique learning pathway. A qualification can definitely be linked to the learning content but not to a pathway. In essence, this is the birth of what the French call *acquis*, which is best translated into English as ‘learning outcomes’. What matters is what has been acquired in terms of competences as opposed to where and when they have been acquired. The fact that the concept of qualification is completely and legally disconnected from the learning method (initial education and training versus adult learning at that time, 1971) probably made life easier for the promoters of Validation of Experiential Learning Outcomes.

Eligibility conditions also mark a clear border. In France access is easy: to have the right to apply for assessment, potential applicants must prove they have been active in a field relevant to the target qualification for one year. This is an aspect of the French procedure that is not convincing as the philosophy of VAE is about having hidden

competences and being offered new opportunities thanks to these hidden competences. The threshold of one year was only recently introduced (2017, before which it was three years) to attract more potential applicants. However, it is difficult to believe that one year of experience provides enough competences for individuals to meet the standards required in order to be awarded a full qualification. The German approach is more demanding since it calls for qualifications (University/Recognition Act) or authenticated documents. Only the ValiKom approach includes a self-assessment against the job standards as the basis for an individual assessment that is in line with the philosophy of any validation approach. To make sure ValiKom applicants have enough experience, they must be at least 25. By comparison, the average age of applicants of the external assessment is 37 years (see Schreiber/Gutschow 2012).

As a further difference, France has a general legislative framework, whereas Germany has various laws (e.g. for migrants, for the External Examination, and for the credit system in universities). There is a multiplicity of approaches in Germany. Processes for identifying and documenting competences exist, some of which also allow for their assessment (even if it is rare), but recognition is only concerned with a specific industry. As a consequence, it is the branch that develops the tool(s). There is almost nothing that is transversal and enables portability and mobility; whereas in France, the key tools are shared (e.g. the portfolios called Booklet 1 and Booklet 2 in the VAE system).

Finally, the funding framework for Validation of Experiential Learning Outcomes is part of the overall lifelong learning funding framework in France. The situation is less unified in Germany.

## Food for Thought

There are several lessons to be learned from this comparison. The main one is that the existence of different needs and a different [cultural] background may explain the different approaches to validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes. This is not new in general, but in practice this means that Germany has not addressed its population decline by providing opportunities to

the adult population to achieve a new qualification through validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Nor has Germany addressed the issue of the qualification of migrants with assessing their competences. This system is still seen as a competitor to existing formal systems (e.g. the dual system) whereas elsewhere it is seen as a useful complement, typically for positioning potential learners (e.g. adults, migrants) before they undertake new learning activities. More generally, even in the presence of a perfect initial education and training system, there are reasons to believe that a comprehensive system that provides adults with qualification opportunities is a must, for instance for those who want a fresh start in the labour market and cannot afford to resume full-time learning activities in the formal learning system.

On the other hand, France entered a difficult zone when the number of participants in the Validation of Experiential Learning Outcomes system stopped increasing. In practice, all the individuals 'ready' for validation were qualified in the first decade after the VAE approach was implemented. All those who were competent enough to achieve a qualification were dealt with. It has now become difficult because few individuals are left who could easily expect to achieve a qualification on the sole basis of the assessment of their non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Above all, France has not been able to make its Validation of Experiential Learning Outcomes system a real tool for those most in need. The evidence suggests that successful applicants in the VAE process already had a qualification. The Matthew Effect applies, and the VAE system has not reached out to the adults most in need of a qualification, especially those in the 45 to 60-year-old range, where a large share of the workers are being made redundant and early retirement schemes are creating a heavy burden on the benefit system. It seems that recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes enables flexible learning pathways and, in particular, can provide individuals with multiple entry and exit points. However, neither of the two countries have fully provided for these opportunities.

In France, the provision in the formal learning system is not modular enough. Few institutions are organised to deliver only a course or a module. VAE

applicants that receive only a partial qualification are hard pressed to engage in some form of top-up learning so that they may reapply and succeed in achieving a full qualification the second time. In Germany, the constant reference to the quality of the internationally renowned dual system hinders any potential initiative to develop alternative routes to qualification. Yet solutions exist and quality assured assessment is possible since non-formal and informal learning outcomes are already part of the dual system. Despite the use of formal qualification standards, the fear of poor quality assessment also exists in France.

Validation and recognition systems must be built in piece by piece and systematically meet the expectations of the stakeholders and the market. This is best done by involving them early in the process and all the way through to the assessment. Fieldwork shows that the best possible panel of assessors would contain representatives from the world of education, the world of work and validation experts. Incidentally, this demands capacity building, an issue still overlooked in both countries.

The creation of a broad system for validating and recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes would also pave the way for creating more permeability between the vocational and academic systems. In a time when more and more German employers select their apprentices for the dual system in the Gymnasium (28.7%, BIBB 2018), recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcome presents a lot of interest as it would provide young people therefore excluded from the dual system in the first with a second chance of qualification.

In principle, validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is a credible option for those who did not go to school long enough to achieve a qualification and obtain a decent job. It has the potential to be a perfect policy tool because it offers a range of options in scope (e.g. credits, qualifications, exemption, positioning) and in target groups (e.g. women, migrants, adults 45-60). It is therefore one of the most equitable and inclusive tools in the field of lifelong learning. It makes competences visible, in particular for

employers, and this is what they usually strive for. In addition, there is strong evidence that achieving a qualification through VAE in France opens the door

to the formal lifelong learning system: successful VAE applicants often resume formal studies, which is an obvious positive externality.

Table 1 (1). The French and German Systems at a Glance

	France			Germany			
Features	VAE	VAP85	VES	Externenprüfung	ValiKom	University	Migrants
Type	Second chance at a qualification at all levels	Access to university (may be used in parallel to VAE)	Qualification in the tertiary education system only	Access to final examination	Certificate of job-related competence from the chambers	Reduced study time	Recognition of qualifications from abroad
Type of learning outcomes accepted	All experiential learning outcomes	All experiential learning outcomes	Prior achievements in any tertiary education system	Length of experience in a relevant occupation	All experiential learning outcomes	Vocational qualification or documents for challenging the course	Qualifications from country of origin or assessment (if proof of qualification is unavailable)
Outcome of the process	Full or partial qualification	Exemption from academic prerequisite for access to tertiary education	Credits toward a qualification or full qualification	Taking the dual system exam	Certificate of labour market competences	Exemption from part of the curriculum (50% max)	Notice of equivalence
Legal framework	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only a project	Yes, state law that has not been fully implemented at all universities	Yes
Social consensus	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Still unclear	Yes	Yes
Recognition of academic knowledge	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only seniority	Yes	Max 50%	Yes
Recognition of informally acquired competences	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes (individual recognition process)	Yes (competence assessment)
Recognition of labour market competences	Yes	Yes	No	Not directly	Yes	Yes	Yes
Information and guidance centre	One per district (first step)	Tertiary education institution	Tertiary education institution	Responsible chamber	Responsible chamber	Responsible university	IQ counselling centres
Guidance	Yes, individual (20 non-consecutive hours, not compulsory)	Depends on tertiary education institution	Depends on tertiary education institution	Yes Fee charged	Yes (in the project)	Study guidance at responsible university	Yes
Eligibility (Right to apply)	1 year of experience in a field relevant to the target qualification	In the tertiary education system for less than 2 years Aged 20+ 3 years of experience	Pre screening of the documents provided	Pre-screening of length of experience and occupation (1.5x longer than training)	Aged 25+ Relevant work experience	Vocational training qualification Relevant work experience	For migrants only (even before granted permission to stay) completed apprenticeship/university degree
Standards used in the assessment process	Existing (from certifying ministries)	N.A.	Comparison of content	N.A. (no standards, authenticated documents)	Existing (job description prepared by chambers for dual system)	Existing (university standards)	Existing (qualification standards)

Source: proposed by the authors

Table 1 (2). The French and German Systems at a Glance

	France			Germany			
Features	VAE	VAP85	VES	Externen- prüfung	ValiKom	University	Migrants
Process	Information Registration, eligibility Application Guidance, assessment Decision (Recommendations in case of failure)	Information Registration, eligibility Contract and guidance Application Decision Study programme Regular examination	Information and definition of project Registration, eligibility Application Assessment Decision (Follow up in case of partial validation)	Registration Guidance Registration (Preparation courses)	Guidance Application Assessment Guidance Practical assessment certificate	-Information and guidance -Application -Examination application documents -Assessment -Recognition decision	Information and guidance Application Assessment Decision on equivalence
Assessment	Portfolio of competences Panel of assessors (not compulsory but in most cases)	Pedagogical committee	Documents provided and compulsory interview with the panel of assessors	Time of experience based on documents and certificates	(1) Portfolio of competences (2) Practical assessment	Diverse Depends on university	(a) Qualifications from abroad (b) Work samples/expert discussion/ work trial in an enterprise
Miscellaneous	- Specific process for PhDs - Possible all year round	- Only possible at specific times (May-September)	- One application per qualification per year - Full qualification rare	Only possible at specific times (twice a year)	Possible during project	Diverse Depends on university	Possible all year round
Financing	Lifelong learning funds (e.g. Individual Learning Account) (Cost ranges from several hundred to several thousand EUR)	Mostly none (neither possible with the Individual Learning Account)	Connected to the VAE system	<i>Bildungsgutschein</i> (unemployed) <i>Bildungsprämie/ Weiterbildungs-sparen/Weiterbil-dungsdarlehen</i> (employed)	Free of charge during the project	<i>Aufstiegsstipen-dium</i>	Subsidy of max. 600 EUR ( <i>Anerkennung-zuschuss</i> )
Take up	40,000 per year	N.A. on a national level	N.A. on a national level	27,651 (2016)	164 (project test phase)	Data not collected	More than 63,400 (2012-2015)
Success rate	VAE: 50% of eligible applicants	N.A. on a national level	N.A. on a national level	21,885 (79.1%)	-	Data not collected	More than 40,700 (full and equal recognition; 2012-2015)
Main users	EQF 3 and 4, both vocational	EQF 6 and 7, both vocational	EQF 6-7	EQF 3	EQF 3 and 4	EQF 4	70% EQF 6 (2012-2015)
Comparison	- VAE validates prior learning outcomes - Often followed by further studies	- VAPP85 future oriented - Process easier than VAE		Oldest system of the four			For migrants only

Source: proposed by the authors

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# Verloren in der Validierung: Eine Analyse des französischen und deutschen Systems

## Kurzzusammenfassung

Die Vorstellung, dass wir überall und jederzeit lernen, ist nicht neu und findet breite Anerkennung bei ForscherInnen, politischen EntscheidungsträgerInnen, PraktikerInnen, ArbeitnehmerInnenorganisationen sowie der Öffentlichkeit. Lernkontexten, die nicht formeller Natur sind, wird in der wissenschaftlichen Literatur und in der Politik viel Aufmerksamkeit zuteil. Solche Lernkontexte werden non-formal oder informell genannt und über ihre jeweiligen Definitionen herrscht nur wenig Konsens. Der vorliegende Beitrag stellt die Behauptung auf, dass sowohl Frankreich als auch Deutschland über ein System zur Validierung und Anerkennung von non-formalen und informellen Lernergebnissen verfügen. Diese Systeme sind mehr oder weniger einheitlich und mehr oder weniger entwickelt und führen zu abweichenden Ergebnissen, da sie sich auf unterschiedliche Aspekte individueller Kompetenzen konzentrieren und in unterschiedlichen Kontexten stattfinden. Die AutorInnen schlagen eine Analyse zur Beschreibung dieser Unterschiede in Ländern vor, in denen verschiedenartige Systeme sowie eine starke historische Verbundenheit zur Berufsvorbereitung für den Arbeitsmarkt vorliegen. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die Ansätze aus derselben Vorstellung abgeleitet werden, dass wir überall und jederzeit lernen, und dass den dazugehörigen Lernergebnissen Geltung verliehen werden sollte – vor allem am Arbeitsmarkt. Die Komplexität der Systeme gekoppelt mit mangelnder Information und Beratung für die TeilnehmerInnen sowohl vor als auch nach der Einschreibung sowie die Unmenge an Varianten bei der Umsetzung dieses philosophischen Prinzips bedeuten jedoch, dass es gute Gründe dafür gibt, im Validierungsprozess verloren zu gehen.

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