

A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT MODES OF SUPPORT TO EMPLOYMENT

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Abstract

The objective of the research is to elaborate a comparative scheme of support and assessment procedures in Vocational Education and Training programmes according to ASSESS project partner's countries. It is a comparative study between the different modes of support to employment and a conclusion between the existing programs and measures in the ASSESS project partner's countries, investigating the strengths and weaknesses, assessment and evaluation of employability, methods that have been used and degree of performance. The research provides important information on different programs that includes assessment show the needs, realities and what improvements can be done. This analysis makes it possible to model key steps that will be included in an assessment tool of key skills for employment.

Key words: training, employability, assessment, accompaniment measures

1. Introduction

To date, in the Vocational Education and Training, course evaluation is most often done in the final phase [1], after support, by measuring success rates in terms of returning to work or entering qualifying training [2]. Longer term monitoring can sometimes identify the retention rate [3].

The formal learning modules offer a sequence of assessment of learning with, in general, suggestions for further learning according to the results [4].

It is shown a lack of evaluation tools adapted to different types of training situation, especially in a dynamic dimension on the duration of a course of training and insertion [5, 6].

On the one hand, the formal learning modules offer a sequence of learning assessment with of suggestions for additional learning outcomes in general [7, 8]. On the other hand, the coaches and trainers on the duration of the course of social and professional integration are today much more poor to measure the progress of social skills and employability of the beneficiaries to assess job-related technical skills [9, 10].

A methodology and assessment tools in continuous of employment support courses will allow them to more precisely follow the progressions, to implement the necessary adjustments as quickly as possible and increase both their own level of professionalization and efficiency of the integration process [11, 12].

The project entitled „Continuous improvement of employability assessment” (ASSESS) [13] is an initiative of six European partner institutions:

Professional Training Center of Midi and IDE project in France, Institute for Vocational Education and Training from Austria, Institute for the Promotion of Development and Training from Spain, Lund University from Sweden and University of Medicine Pharmacy, Sciences and Technology of Târgu Mureș from Romania. It contributes to the professionalization of the workers in training and professional insertion by raising awareness and by equipping a shared assessment tool and a method of key skills for employment.

2. Continuous assessment of skills

Transversal skills can be found and be relevant or expected mainly in all jobs (e.g. people skills like communication competences, organizational skills, motivating or leading a team, technical skills related to computer programs, data skills like good record keeping or research, etc.) in some way or another [14]. Specific skills are directly job related and sometimes more technical (e.g. qualification, diploma, use of equipment, tool, method, etc.) [15].

The process of continuous assessment of skills [16], close to the continuous improvement of the quality approach, give opportunities to advance and greater responsiveness of support players who will be able to more effectively manage the evolution of the course and propose adjustments, adapted to the individual situations of the people.

Indeed, different types of brakes block access to employment for young people and adults little or

unskilled, low level of education (NEETS) often little incentive to participate in training schemes. To overcome these problems it is essential to work to reduce the gaps of learning which contribute to marginalise them by providing appropriate responses in terms of content and innovative pedagogical approaches, but especially to come to enhance their knowledge and their progress so they are invested on the duration and that they can measure the impact of their efforts on their professional future [17].

The purpose of the management and training remains the strengthening of “employability” and assessment formative ongoing implementation on the duration of the course will be a tool to measure the achievements and readjustment of the learning of key competences for employment particularly of informal or non-formal learning [18].

As advocated by the European framework of Reference of quality for education and professional training (EQAVET) agencies it is required to involve all stakeholders and particularly businesses in all phases of the process [19].

This evaluation process will be based on the method of the “spiral of improvement continues” used as part of the quality management process and will be just like the wheel of Deming (PDCA) 4 phases:

- The identification of skills and the putting into perspective with the skills expected by the company which will allow to plan (P) actions or steps to be implemented to access the job concerned;
- The implementation of activities and training both formal and informal (Do);
- The assessment of progress and measurement of filled gaps (Check);
- Action and the means to mobilize (Act) to achieve the objectives and planning of new activities knowing that this phase will be again followed by an assessment and so on way continues throughout the process of support and/or training.

3. Objectives

The objective of the research is to elaborate a comparative scheme of support and assessment procedures. It is a comparative study between the different modes of support to employment according to the 5 partner countries. Identification of actors, roles and responsibilities, organizational diagram showing path evaluation situations and tools already used if existing, by highlighting similarities and differences of approach. Each partner contributes, according to a framework (analytical grid) defined by partners, to identify the constituent elements of the comparative scheme.

This paper is a conclusion between the existing programs and measures in the project partner’s countries. The research has investigated the strengths and weaknesses, assessment and evaluation of employability, methods that have been used and degree of performance.

The analysis makes it possible to model an overall diagram of the support and key steps that will be included in the ASSESS assessment tool.

4. Method

The partners in the project have made desk research to identify different accompaniment measures or programs that are currently existing and being implemented in their own country at national or local level dedicated for young or adults clients. To implement this task each partner have constituted a steering committee with stakeholders, employment services, in order to develop an analysis of practices with a particular focus on the dimension of skills assessment and in a second time to identify which could be possibilities of using ASSESS continuous evaluation tool.

It was collected information from 4 programs in Austria: Competence Check, Consulting and Supporting Project step2job, Job Workshop, Starter Package German & Integration; 2 programs in France: Cap for future, Guarantee for youngsters; 3 programs in Romania: Risk assessor and auditor in health and safety at work, Caretaker for the elderly, Integrated educational services for rural communities; 4 programs in Spain: Development of basic skills for professional insertion, Project for Social integration of the migrant population of Madrid Region, Programme for labour counselling and advice for groups in situation or risk of social exclusion, Equal Lamegi; 5 programs in Sweden: The short way – Fast forward towards the employment you are trained for, Self-assessment with support from counsellors, Industry model, Vocational skills assessment, Swedish as a second language teaching.

In order to collect information about programs it was used analytical grids, on the following example:

Partner: „Petru Maior” University of Tîrgu Mureş.

Country: Romania.

Funding (s) stakeholders: Self-financing.

Name of the program: Risk assessor and auditor in health and safety at work.

Duration: 252 hours.

Target group: Adult graduates eager to acquire knowledge about compliance of the work place with the health security Law.

Organization(s) in charge of accompaniment: „Petru Maior” University of Tîrgu Mures http://cip.upm.ro/Curs-postuniversitar-Evaluator-riscuri-auditor-domeniul-securitatii-sanatatii-munca_c0019.

Professional profile of tutors or advisers: Labour inspectors in safety and health at work.

Different steps (if existing): 192 hours for theoretical and practical preparation. 60 hours for elaboration of graduation work, that is a project for evaluation of risks in a company.

Methods used: Lectures; Discussions; Case Studies; Practical work; Drafting the graduation.

Place of evaluation during the training or accompaniment step: University; Work placement

Type of evaluation: Assessment of a project elaborated on a case study on which it is evaluated the risks in a workplace.

Strong points: Personal education plan that are adapted to the market needs on this job; Completion of the program allows graduates to start their own business who offers a new chance in the labour market.

Weak points: Only for high educated graduates

Improvement possibilities: On-line development of course for a national selection of participants.

Research revealed also a good example for Portfolio of Qualifications from Sweden. For applicants seeking positions on the academic staff at the University of Borås, a model has been worked out to help them organise their documents and other information into what is called a Portfolio of Qualifications [20]. In addition to scientific, artistic, teaching, and administrative qualifications, the University of Borås also emphasizes the applicant's professional qualifications, i.e. qualifications acquired by the applicant outside of universities and university colleges.

5. Main findings

Public Employment Service and European Social Fund are the founding's that are most represented in the compared programs.

The duration time for the different programs vary a lot, but a common factor is that the program that are 5-6 weeks is too short, the programs need more time for mapping of competences and evaluation.

The target groups in the different programs that the partnership have done research on one can see that it mainly are unemployed and migrants, people at risk of social and labour exclusion, low skilled youngsters.

Concerning the methods in the programs they are very different depending on the program and the participants, some of the methods that are used are mapping of competences: Job coaching, Language learning, Civic orientation and Work placement.

Evaluation types depends mostly of the duration time and the focus of the program and some evaluation methods occurs more than other such as continuous monitoring, feedback questionnaire, evaluation of competences/skills and self-assessment.

Weak points:

- Sometimes positions demanded by companies cannot be covered due to the lack of experience and preparation of the users, lack of time, needs of the participants don't match with the programs;
- It could be a risk in preparing portfolios which is lack of focus that can occur when applicants prepare them alone or with little mediation from a counsellor;

- For migrants there can be some problems sometimes for example if the assessment and mapping is given in the host country language this can led to misunderstanding between the trainer/teacher and the participant, so it is possible the assessment should be done in the participants' language or in a way that the participant understands the assessment;
- The assessment of soft skills are mostly done theoretical, in comparison with hard skills this could sometimes be a weak point.

Strong points:

- Individual program Coaching, workshops etc. in native language with native trainers/coaches;
- High acceptance by participants due to inclusion of important topics for their (professional) integration/inclusion;
- Reengineering of the project aim and target group after evaluation of migrants needs;
- Increase employer's awareness about their role in facilitating labour and social insertion of migrants;
- Focus not only in low qualification or lack of experience of target users, but in analyse and enhance their social situation, personal promotion and their basic skills.

6. Conclusion

Personal education plan and program that are adapted to the participant's needs and individual approach are the strong points in the programs and that is something one should strive to have in education programs.

Another aspect to consider are early building of network and better matching between users' needs and conditions, and positions demanded by companies.

The use of portfolios can include evidence extracted through a combination of methods. It is argued that the kind of reflection and investigation associated with portfolio methods empowers people undergoing validation, which helps them obtain jobs or choose appropriate further education.

The methods that are used in the programs depending on the target group, they need to be adapted to the needs of the participants. For example for migrants groups the language is an important issue for assessment and to get a good result in the program.

Recourses are a crucial subject to success in the programs the most important resources in the different programs seems to be the competences and experience of the trainers/teachers and the time.

Romania's programs differs a little bit from the other partners programs, the evaluation methods are theory and practical tests while the other partners programs focus more on self-assessment, feedback questionnaires, focus on learners motivation, measures of skills and competences [21].

The research shows that some of the most common evaluation methods are: Checklist of social integration

variables through individualized interview; Qualitative analysis focusing on key elements defining employability: basis skills, social factors, learning process; Follow up and evaluation of the job placement process; Regular language tests; Individual feedback; Continuous monitoring.

The research in the partner countries provides important information on different programs, which includes assessment, show the needs, realities and what improvements can be done.

This is the first phase of the project ASSESS from this the partners will identify skills and associated indicators constituting a database of resources for the construction of the tools to ASSESS.

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