Competence assessment and accreditation for an integrated formal and non-formal learning: A French perspective

Two VET “Instruments” for an integrated Formal and non-formal

Competence Assessment regime
“Bilan de Compétences :BC”

Accreditation of Work-Based Prior Learning regime
“Validation des Acquis professionnels :VAP”
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BACKGROUND

- CVT System framework introduced in 1971
- 1991 Inter-professional Agreement (July the 3rd),
- 1991 Act (December the 31st),
- 1992 Implementation Decree (2nd October).

OBJECTIVES

Basic: Establishing the individual’s right to have a voluntary access to personnel and professional assessment with aim of defining a clear professional, career or training project. The assessment does lead to any formal recognition or certification.

Ultimate: by contributing to:
- The development of learning-path fluidity and complementarity between formal and non-formal learning;
- The promotion of their beneficiaries’ employability, flexibility and mobility in particular, and their socio-professional promotion in general.
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COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT REGIME

“Bilan de Compétences : BC”

BENEFICIARIES

Employed individuals

Access within the framework of the two components of CVT system:

- Dominantly through employee-self directed learning by taking “Leave for Competence Assessment (Congé de Bilan de compétences: CBC);
- Partially, within the employer-directed training scheme. Financed through parity fund collector called OPACIF

Unemployed individuals

Accessed through employment agencies and financed partially or wholly by the state or local authorities.
FUNCTIONING STAGES

Assessment within about 700 accredited “BC centres” (CIBC)  
(in 3 stages)

Preliminary stage (for information collection/delivery), allowing CIBC to:
- Collect and analyse the necessary information about the candidate’s needs and engagement in the process;
- Inform rigorously the beneficiary about the BC process, its stages and the assessment methods and techniques used.

Assessment stage, which allows the beneficiary to:
- Analyse his or her motivations, personal and professional interests;
- Identify his or her personal and professional competencies (including general knowledge);
- Determine his or her project for professional development.

Concluding stage, which allows the interviewee through an interview to:
- Have access to detailed results of the investigation stage;
- Identify the favourable and non-favourable factors for the construction of a professional or training project, and predict the principal steps of its implementation.
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IMPLICATIONS

A- In terms of input/output flow
(contribution to its basic objectives)
(example 125,000 beneficiaries in 1994)

According to the beneficiaries’ status:
- Unemployed beneficiaries: ¾;
- Employed beneficiaries: ¼;
- Inactive beneficiaries: 1%
- Parity between men and women: 52% women candidates

According the beneficiaries’ motivation:
- Professional project: 50%;
- Employment purposes: 20%;
- Access to vocational training: 21%;
- As a 1st step for access for “VAP” regime and formal certification: 1.9%.

According the beneficiaries’ employment sector:
- From the tertiary sector: 44%;
- From the industry: 18%;
- From the construction sector: 7.8%;
- From agriculture: 4.3%.

B- In terms of its contribution to its ultimate objectives

Although BC regime is operative on a large scale with the main aim to clarify the potentials of beneficiaries, there is no direct evidence on its contribution: to:
- The promotion of further learning and career possibilities;
- Bridging the link between formal and non-formal learning.
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BACKGROUND

• 1934 Act: Engineer grade award after 5 years of working experience in the same field of activity.
• 1984 Decree: Promoting access to higher education levels (I, II & III) on the basis of accrediting all prior (work and non work-based) learning.
• 1992 Act: Extended to the remaining levels (IV & V), but restricted, at the same time, to work-based prior learning only.

OBJECTIVES

Basic:
Establishing the individual’s right, who accumulated (continuously or discontinuously) a working experience of a certain number of years in at least one activity related to the targeted certification to apply for an exemption in the required exam-units.

Ultimate: by contributing to:
• The development of learning-path fluidity and complementarity between formal and non-formal learning;
• The promotion of their beneficiaries’ lifelong learning, employability, flexibility and mobility in particular, and their socio-professional promotion in general.
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FUNCTIONING STAGES

Three stages

• Stage of an individualised access to the required information
• Stage of an individualised accompaniment
• Stage of evaluation and decision making
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IMPLICATIONS

A- In terms of input/output flow
(contribution to its basic objectives)
(example 2,551 accreditation applications in 1997)

According to the applicants’ employment status, age and experience:
- Employed beneficiaries: 86%;
- Unemployed beneficiaries: 14%;
- Aged between 25 and 40 years: 71%;
- Accumulated experience of at least 10 years: 58%
- Women applicants represented: 54%

According the applicants’ motivation:
- Having their experiential work related learning recognised: 52%;
- Job-conversion purposes: 17%;

According to the requested form of certification and its sector:
- Higher technician diploma (BTS): 44.5%;
- Vocational competency certificate (CAP): 21.5%;
- Vocational baccalaureate (Bac.Pro.): 15.2%
- Within the tertiary sector: 64%;
- Within the industry: 33%.

According to the rate of intermediary and final success:
- Obtaining partial or full exam-exemption units: 88%;
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IMPLICATIONS

B- In terms of its contribution to its ultimate objectives

☞ Contribution to the development of a dynamic, multidimensional and socially open approach to learning and identity formation by allowing:

- Social recognition of work as means for the individual’s access to LLL and certification;
- Promotion of flexibility and mobility;
- Creation of an external and more objective indicator (combining diploma and occupation referential) for human resources management and development on the level of the firm.

☞ Contribution to the development of an integrated formal and non-formal learning through its role of:

- Widening the scope of diploma delivery modes;
- Establishing a new dynamic and more coherent relation between occupational activity and the existing modes of learning and certification;
- Promoting self initiated and directed matching between vocational education and training, employment requirements and the individual's needs for identity formation and carrier development;
- Development of learning path-fluidity and complementarity within and between different components of the educational and training system as a whole.
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LIMITATIONS

⇒ It is not a "pure" inclusion regime. It excludes:

• Non qualified workers and employees;

• Non occupationally included active people.

⇒ The scope of its application is fairly limited in two ways:

• It does not include all fields of work-based prior learning. This is mainly due to the existence of some powerful, rigid and closed occupational identities (as it is the case the medical and pharmaceutical sector);

• It excludes non work-based prior learning (acquired within the cultural and social sectors). This shortcoming was taken in charge by the adopted reforms within the framework of “Social Modernisation Act” this year.
CONCLUSION
(Three basic remarks concerning BC & VAP)

• Their scope: BC’s scope is wider (personal and professional competencies) than that of “VAP” (limited to professional competencies) which is still not equally applied in all institutionalised sectors.

• Their contribution to an integrated formal and non-formal learning: “VAP” contribution is more explicit and direct (automatic right to formal certification and learning);

• Their performance evaluation (in terms of their contribution to their ultimate aims): It can be empirically tested only through a follow up of the beneficiaries’ learning and professional trajectories.