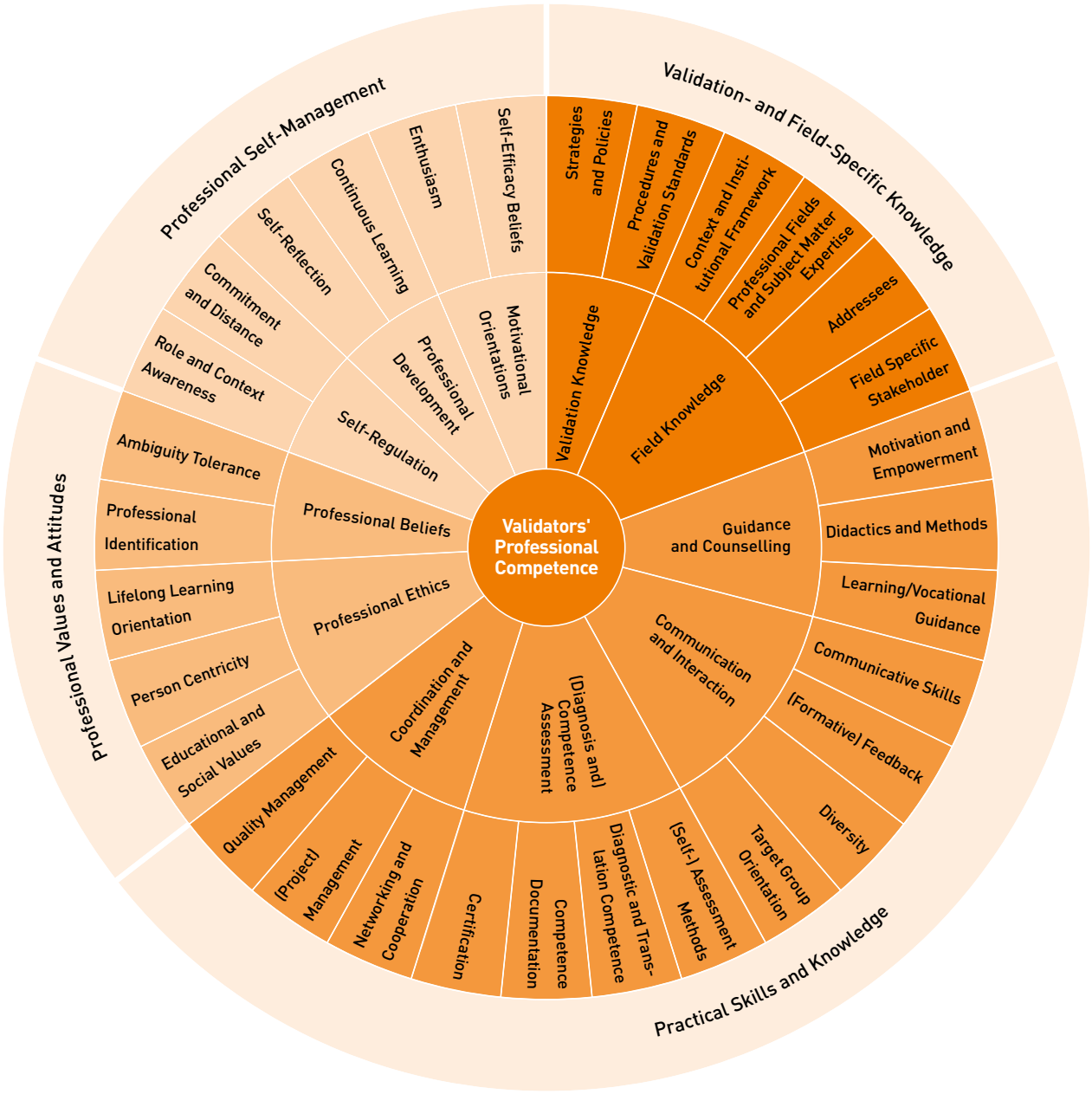
PROVE

Professionalization of Validation Experts

PROVE Competence Model for Validation Experts - A brief Overview



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The EU-project PROVE "PRofessionalization Of Validation Experts" contributes to the professionalization of staff involved in the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) by developing a generic competence model for validation professionals. The model is a starting point for further project materials (e.g. self-evaluation tool) and provides a structure for competence standards every country or organization can choose from or prioritize depending on their requirements and needs.

This brief overview contains short descriptions and definitions of each competence facet of the PROVE competence model, which provides insight in the related knowledge, skills and attitudes of validation experts.

The project is being coordinated by the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen as the coordinating institution, in cooperation with partner organizations in Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Portugal and The Netherlands. The project consortium represents a broad spectrum of validation providers, promoters of VPL and research institutes focusing on VPL, professionalization and competence development. The products developed as part of the project and further information are available for free on the PROVE home page:
https://uni-tuebingen.de/de/174546

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Validation- and Field-Specific Knowledge

Validation Knowledge	Strategies and Policies	Knowledge about public strategies and policies as well as policies, laws and regulations on validation. To be aware of Validation of Prior Learning (VNFIL) as part of a national and international validation strategy and of recent developments in the field. The ability to search for and to develop appropriate techniques / approaches / strategies regarding the EU certification approach and instruments. The knowledge how to apply this in a situation-specific way with the aim of stimulating and promoting validation accordingly.
	Procedures and Validation Standards	Knowledge about the validation process including the objectives, purposes, and practice of validation. Knowledge about validation standards, available procedures, concepts, methods, requirements (e.g. temporal and financial expenditure, process, deadlines, available support), costs and funding opportunities. The knowledge how to apply this in a situation-specific way with the aim of stimulating and promoting validation accordingly.
Field Knowledge	Context and Institutional Framework	Knowledge about the context and the institutional framework in which validation is embedded. Knowledge about (inter-)national educational systems, vocational sectors, (issues and opportunities in the) labor market; vocational education and training, educative policy. To be aware of recent developments and needs in the field and the ability to search for actual and relevant information. The knowledge how to apply this in a situation-specific way with the aim of stimulating and promoting validation accordingly.
	Professional Fields and Subject Matter Expertise	Knowledge about policies, standards and legal conditions, issues and opportunities in the professional fields and about alternative career or validation opportunities. Knowledge of structure and classification of occupational areas. Understanding what labor processes entails with its shift towards flexible labor, self-directed working, etc.. Knowledge about the subject matter and the requirements in certain professions; knowledge about the underlying set of competences and their assessment indicators. Strategic knowledge on how to transfer the EU validation approach and instruments and the concept of evidencing competences with validation outcomes to other domains of life and work and to blend them with other approaches. To be aware of recent developments and needs in the fields and the ability to search for actual and relevant information and to further develop knowledge. The knowledge how to apply this in a situation-specific way with the aim of stimulating and promoting validation accordingly.
	Addressees	Knowledge about the demands and requirements of addressees or beneficiaries; about their subjective motives, interests, expectations, and barriers to taking advantage of validation. The ability to plan validation activities as close as possible to the experience and interests of the addressees and to orient on their specific wishes, needs and expectations. The knowledge how to apply this in a situation-specific way with the aim of stimulating and promoting validation accordingly.
	Field Specific Stakeholder	Knowledge about the relevant field specific stakeholders and their demands and requirements. Knowledge about contact points that are available in the country for validation processes. Knowing how to mobilize external resources. The knowledge how to apply this in a situation-specific way with the aim of stimulating and promoting validation accordingly.

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Practical Skills and Knowledge

Guidance and Counselling	Motivation and Empowerment	The ability to develop, choose and apply appropriate motivation methods and techniques to empower people in their access to validation and during the validation process. This requires knowledge about the main principles, the concept of motivation and about its impact on validation processes.
	Didactics and Methods	The ability to plan and design learning and reflection environments to enable effective learning processes during the validation process according to the requirements and previous knowledge of the participants. This requires knowledge of how to integrate learning activities into validation offers and to design participant-oriented teaching/learning processes and knowledge of how to use the appropriate learning concepts, methods and media to achieve the desired learning outcomes (competence orientation).
	Learning/ Vocational Guidance	The ability to accompany the validation process in an advisory capacity in order to support the participants in their individual development. The individual professional situation and the competences of the participant as well as vocational support and learning needs should be identified and reflected upon together with the participant. The participants should also be supported in the (further) development of their self-learning competence. This requires knowledge about theories and methods for guidance and counselling and about methods that stimulate self-control of the participants. It also requires knowledge of how guidance/ counselling can be appropriately integrated into validation services.
Communication and Interaction	Communicative Skills	The ability to moderate and control communication processes with the aim of activating and using the performance potential of the participant(s). This means also to create a trusting communication atmosphere, to deal constructively with communication and interaction dynamics. This requires theoretical and practical knowledge of different communication styles, methods, and techniques and how to use them in a situation-specific way.
	(Formative) Feedback	The ability to provide and receive feedback during and after the process to and from participants, colleagues, and stakeholders. The participants should be enabled to make a better assessment of their own abilities regarding the necessary requirements/standards of the desired activity. It is important to identify new learning fields and to point out development opportunities. This requires theoretical and practical knowledge of evaluation and feedback methods and instruments and how to use them in a situation-specific way.
	Diversity	The ability to value, respect and support that humans are different for example in terms of age, ethnic origin and nationality, religion, and worldview, of gender, of a possible disability or sexual orientation, and identity. To gear validation activities (planning and implementation) not only towards content, but also towards different social characteristics of the participants, the respective life situations, individual learning experience and interests of the participants. This requires theoretical and practical knowledge about connections between different backgrounds (e.g., educational, religious, age, gender, cultural, validation styles etc.) and related preferences, attitudes, and behaviors in a group, about strategies for diversity management and an openness to other communication styles, techniques, and perspectives.
	Target Group Orientation	The ability to continuously align all the validation activities (planning and implementation) with the needs, expectations, and requirements of the beneficiaries and to design validation processes together with the participant. This requires theoretical and practical knowledge about the target group, about how to transfer methods and techniques to new target groups or validation contexts and about how to provide information that is clear and comprehensible for all involved persons (candidates, assessors, stakeholders).

Practical Skills and Knowledge (II)

(Diagnosis and) Competence Assessmen	(Self-) Assessment Methods	The ability to apply adequate (participant-oriented, context and situation specific, according to the respective purpose) methods and tools to identify (partial) competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. The ability to assess participants needs, backgrounds and resources to design validation process/offer accordingly. The ability to deliver meaningful results that enable a personal assessment of current situation, an identification of strengths and weaknesses and provide suggestions for further development. This requires knowledge about (self-)assessment theories and approaches as well as knowledge about various approaches and methods of competence recognition (e.g., interview techniques, observation techniques, material analyses; self-/peer-/third party-assessment) and its fields, potentials and limits of application. To know that assessment can serve different purposes: for learning, for selecting or for profiling. Also, knowledge of guidelines and principles to guarantee objectivity in execution of identification techniques.
	Diagnostic and Translation Competence	The ability to translate the abilities of participants into competence terminology and to compare individual's validation outcomes against specific reference points and/or standards. Relating the VPL standards and assessment criteria to educational standards and real work life situations. This requires strategic knowledge on how to transfer assessment/the validation approach and instruments to other domains of life and work, to new target groups or validation contexts and to blend them with other approaches.
	Competence Documentation	The ability to design, construct, applicate and evaluate documentation processes, tools, and methods in an appropriate way (participant-oriented, context and situation specific, according to the respective purpose) to issue a written international accepted document that clearly states the candidate's competences and qualifications. This requires knowledge about accepted documentation formats for the presentation of validation experiences (e.g., Europass), about how to build a portfolio including a CV and a career history of the individual, with documents and/or work samples that attest validation achievements. About data protection and security regulations, rules and requirements.
	Certification	The ability to certify the results of the assessment in the form of a qualification, or credits leading to a qualification, or in another form, as appropriate. The ability to define and apply the right indicators for certification and to couple or integrate the certification as closely as possible with the existing systems and/or the EQF-levels. It is important to obtain accreditation or authorization for certification from the competent authorities in case of legally regulated degrees and to ensure that the certification (document) is recognized by relevant stakeholders.

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Practical Skills and Knowledge (III)

Coordination and Management	Networking and Cooperation	The ability to cooperate and network with stakeholders, cooperation partners, field experts, teams, relevant networks to exchange knowledge and experiences and to ensure the effective use of resources. This requires the ability to be a connector/ matchmaker: To attract participants and relevant stakeholders/partners, to help other people act successfully in different networking structures and to integrate networking into training activities and in the collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders. This requires knowledge about requirements, purposes, and benefits of collaborating and networking activities as well as different networking techniques and practice for sharing, learning, advocacy and building contacts.
	(Project) Management	The ability to manage projects, organization(s), and interfaces according to the respective objectives. This requires knowledge about project management approaches, instruments, tools and about project controlling, monitoring and development, about different ideation and prototyping approaches, techniques related to: spotting opportunities, creating ideas, working towards a vision, valuing ideas, keeping sustainability in mind, and the ability to apply it in a situation-specific way. It also includes the ability to implement public relations and marketing activities.
	Quality Management	Quality management covers ensuring the organizational, assessment and procedural quality in validation. This requires knowledge about quality criteria and quality control regarding the procedure of validation as well as single processes in validation like information, guidance, counselling, competence assessment, documentation and certification, and the ability to operate according to these standards. It also includes knowledge about the different expectations and requirements for validation of different actors as well as the knowledge about the different factors that influence the quality of work in validation. Furthermore, the ability to professionally deal with the two sides of quality in validation – flexibility, individualization, and judgement on the one hand and standardization, reliability and measurement on the other hand - is needed. It includes knowledge how to apply quality management by following the quality circle of planning, designing, implementation, evaluation and improving. The ability to identify development areas in the strategic policies and practices and to use the internal management system to improve and further develop the validation process is also part of this competence facet. Furthermore, it includes the (application) knowledge of scientific tools and methods for evaluation and statistical follow-up as well as knowledge about data protection and the ability to apply data protection directives.

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Professional Values and Attitudes

Professional Ethics	Educational and Social Values	The own ideas and values about people (e.g., participants) and the social and educational interaction. This includes to treat them with respect and appreciation, to understand and empathize with the feelings and concerns of others, to be open to new perspectives/ideas and act in a trustworthy and reliable way. This requires a holistic view of people, the perception of personal responsibility as well as the appreciation of diversity.
	Person Centricity	The conviction that human beings have an inherent potential for personal development and constructive shaping of their lives, which can unfold and be realized in encounters from person to person. This requires a holistic orientation towards participants as individuals, the appreciation of their resources and learning paths as well as an interest in their individual development.
	Lifelong Learning Orientation	The attitude that people learn and develop through their lives, that they learn what they want to learn, and that support can be offered in their self-directed learning. And the attitude that the task of validation practitioners is to encourage participants to develop and realize themselves even if it is in opposition to their environment.
Professional Beliefs	Professional Identification	The development of a professional self-image and an identification with the profession of validation practitioner, in particular with the professional role as a validation practitioner in adult and continuing education. This includes the appreciation of the validation activities/areas and an awareness of the importance of these.
	Ambiguity Tolerance	The awareness that professional action is accompanied by contradictory requirements and not a condition that can be reached or mastered, but an ephemeral professional performance that must be re-achieved in each new situation. This requires the ability and readiness to tolerate ambiguous situations as well as contradictory behavior and to deal with them professionally, i.e., reflexive. This is an important requirement for situation-specific action.

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Professional Self-Management

Self-Regulation	Role and Context Awareness	The awareness and critical examination of diverse expectations, demands, and responsibilities on one's own role, which are put to the validation practitioners by different addressees and within different contexts. It is important to be clear about the set boundaries of each role, one must fulfil, and to respond to them productively. Besides, it is also important to be open to new things and ready for change.
	Commitment and Distance	The ability to deal responsibly with one's own resources in terms of a balanced relationship between commitment and distancing ability in relation to the activity. The combination of high commitment and good distancing ability is important to avoid exhaustion and to be able to handle challenges effectively. This has an impact on the quality of validation activities and professional well-being.
Professional Development	Self-Reflection	Self-Reflection is a conscious process in which a person thinks through and explains his or her ideas or actions in a manner that relates to his or her real and ideal concept of self. Self-reflection is result-oriented when the person develops conclusions for future action or self-reflection. This is an important requirement to further develop own professional behavior and to adapt to changing situations.
	Continuous Learning	The willingness and ability to continuously develop your own competences and being a lifelong learner yourself. This requires knowledge about when and how to adapt the own behavior, attitudes and thinking to changing conditions to cope with a situation.
Motivational Orientations	Enthusiasm	Enthusiasm as a motivational orientation means personal commitment and the enthusiasm of validation practitioners for their work. It describes the degree of positive emotional experience during the exercise of the validation activity. This includes the pleasure of the activity as well as the fact that validation practitioners should act as objective as possible (free from external pressure or control). This also includes an engagement to developments in society, the open-mindedness for digital media and the curiosity and enthusiasm for new topics.
	Self-Efficacy Beliefs	The belief to have the abilities and the resources to carry out actions successfully, which are necessary for the achievement of the objectives. Self-efficacy beliefs are closely linked with the level of ambition and the perception of success, failure, and stress. They are further characterized by goal-oriented action even under challenging circumstances.

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