



Case Study – Germany

Accreditation- Professional Competences

Within the setting of a developmental project by the nationwide ANKOM- initiative (a programme of the Ministry for Education and Research), methods to increase the recognition of informal professional competences, as well as skill enhancement qualifications, were developed, tested and implemented.

The Context

Sector/Institution/Organisation

Tertiärer Sektor (Universität)

Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg), Arbeitsbereich Weiterbildung und Bildungsmanagement

Web links:

<http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/>

<http://web.web.uni-oldenburg.de/>

Weiterbildender Bachelor-Studiengang „Business Administration in mittelständischen Unternehmen“

Web link:

<http://www.bba.uni-oldenburg.de/>

Background

The continuing education study programme „Business Administration in mittelständischen Unternehmen“ mediates knowledge and competences in the field of business management. The study programme is fully accredited and is completed with a BA. Managers and potential junior managers in small and medium sized businesses are the main target group.

The study programme is structured into modules and is completed alongside work. Course work is minimized through extensive phases of Elearning. The modules concentrate on combining theoretical and practical knowledge. In each module, participants are required to make use of their theoretical knowledge when working on practice projects, in which participants are confronted with realistic, everyday problems dealing with their field of work.

In terms of the Bologna process and the strategies of lifelong learning, the study programme's ambition is to recognize and acknowledge competences, which students may have acquired prior to their studies in different contexts.

Through support from the Ministry of Education and Research, the *Verbund-Projekt „Anrechnung beruflicher Kompetenzen auf ein Hochschulstudium – Qualifikationsverbund Nord-West“* could be realised, in order to develop accreditation methods and implement them in this study programme.

This project comprises a cooperation between the University of Oldenburg, the University of Bremen, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and the professional education institutions of the region.

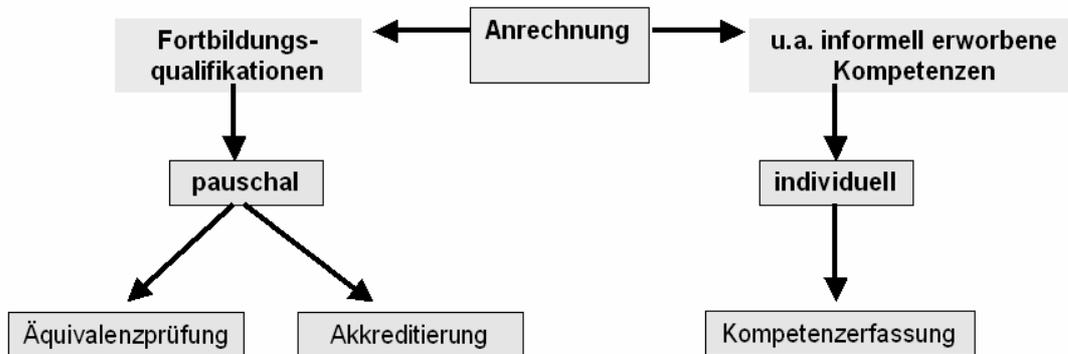
Web link:

<http://www.web.uni-oldenburg.de/anrechnung/>

The project developed:

1. A method to enforce the comparison of equivalent aspects in professional continuing education qualifications and the modules of the study programme „Business Administration in mittelständischen Unternehmen“. In this method, study results from both sides are identified and compared. When equal results in regard to level and content are determined, certain study modules do not have to be attended. In order to clearly determine the level of the study results, a „Module Level Indicator“ was established, which is mainly based on the description / guidelines of EQF. The accreditation generally takes place when the continuing education degree is presented, and with out further consideration of the applicant's individual competences.
2. A procedure for the individual recognition of competences acquired through experiences in professional working life. In this case, the candidate presents a personal portfolio and has to successfully solve a complex task, showing that specific competences (usually learnt in the modules) have already been acquired through experiences made in working life. The process of recognition is accompanied by “Handreichungen”, which developed in the course of the project.

Abb. 1: Schematische Darstellung der pauschalen und der individuellen Anrechnung



Im Folgenden wird nur auf den Punkt 2, also das Verfahren zur Anerkennung von in beruflicher Praxis erworbenen informellen Kompetenzen, eingegangen.

People (candidates)

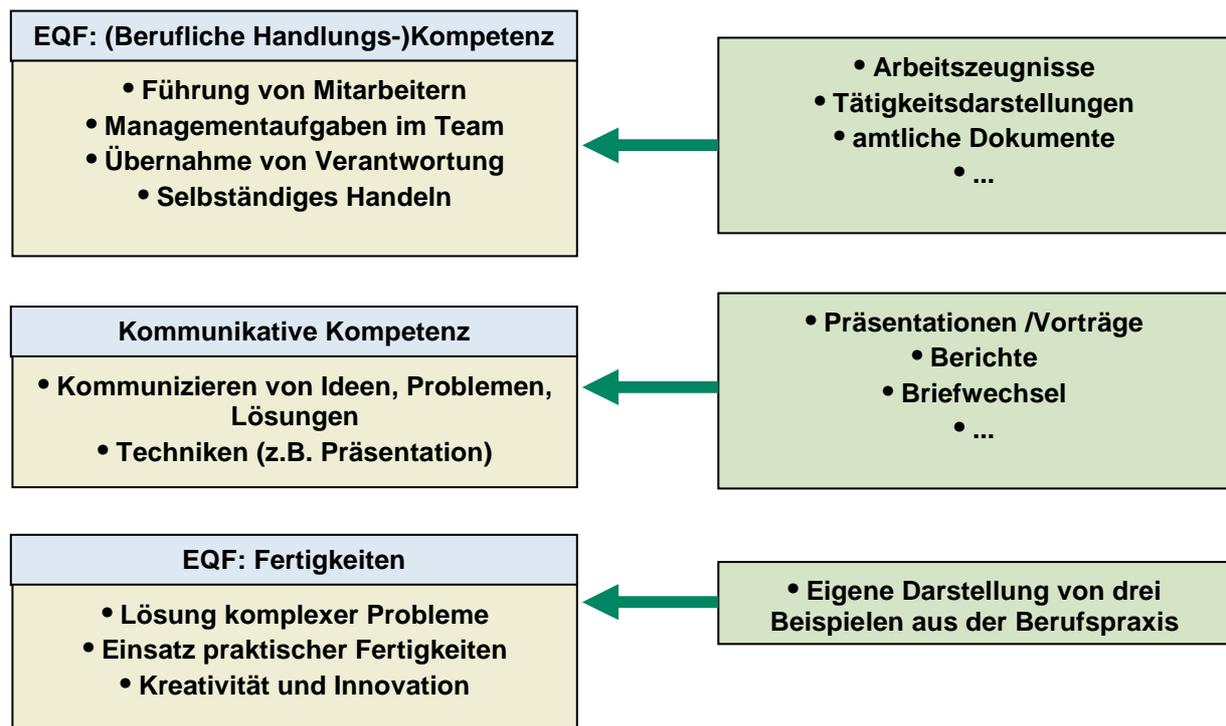
Demonstration of an individual accreditation process:

The candidate makes an enquiry in the programme administration, if he/she can have the module: “Unternehmensgründung, -führung, -übernahme“ accredited, because he / she has already gained experience in the foundation and management of numerous businesses. In order to cope with challenging tasks in his/ her work, he / she has already had to deal with the topics covered and discussed in the module.

The administrator now explains the procedure to the candidate and offers information materials to assist in preparing the portfolio and to give an overview of the complex task which is to be solved. The candidate prepares the portfolio i.e. documents and records of previous work, which in his / her opinion are relevant for the topics dealt with in the module.

The administration checks to make sure the portfolio is complete and that all formalities are clear. Then the responsible lecturer examines the portfolio and decides, whether or not the records are relevant (in reference to the topics dealt with in the course) enough to be accredited.

Abb. 2: Kriterien zur Bewertung des Portfolios

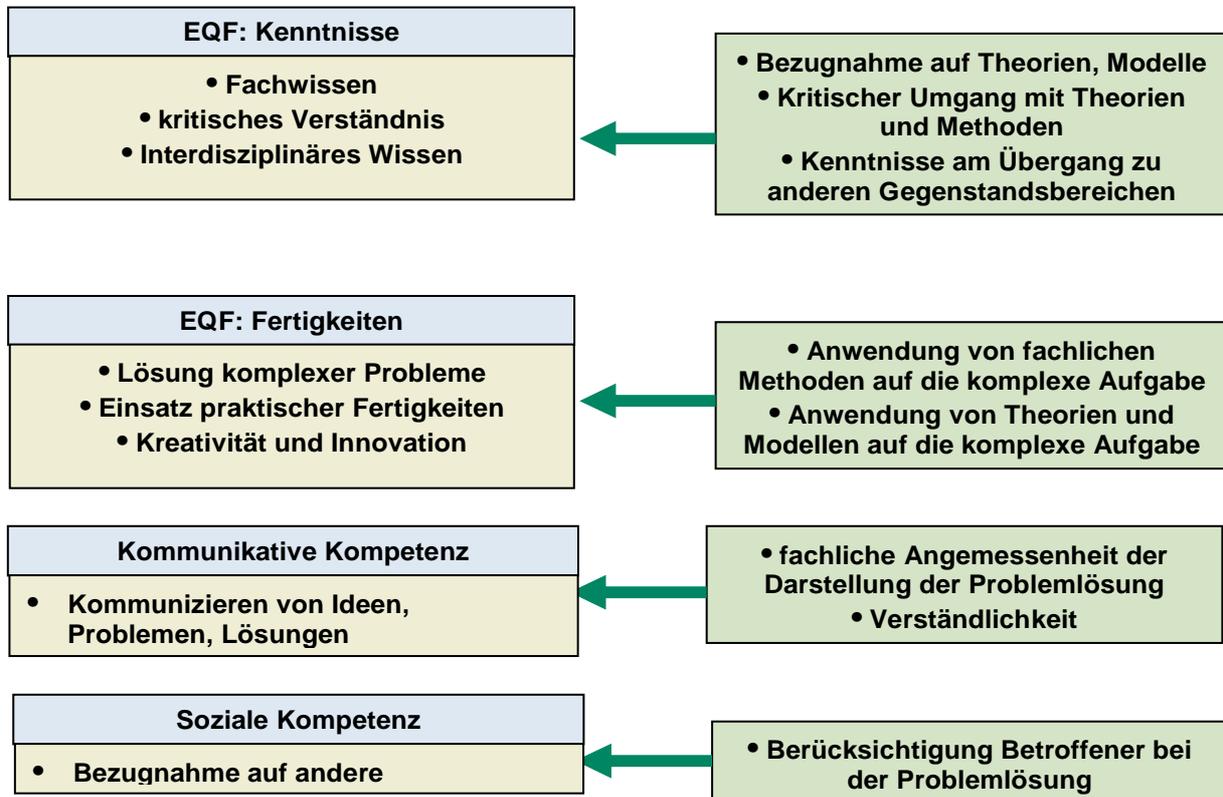


If the lecturer agrees to the accreditation, the candidate is asked to solve a complex task. The assignment of the task should oblige to following criteria:

- Complex tasks are not meant to deal specifically with selected knowledge only and the candidate is not required to only demonstrate basic skills
- Complex tasks are orientated around tasks typical for that field of work and so are practical and realistic tasks
- Complex tasks are also orientated around professional working procedures
- Complex tasks can be divided into smaller subtasks, in which case the subtasks simulate specific steps of work. Nonetheless, all subtasks correspond to one main task.
- The solution process demands the use of different competences acquired in different areas of work

The candidate receives a deadline for the complex task and is required to hand in the solution to the task on time. Furthermore, the candidate is permitted to use the course materials used and provided in the module.

Abb. 3: Kriterien zur Bewertung der Komplexen Aufgabe



After the completed task is handed in and the responsible lecturer gives a positive assessment, the University's examination office officially grants the accreditation of the module.

The task is not graded, so the accreditation takes place without a marked grade.

The relationships/interactions

The process of accreditation is only used by few students. The complexity and necessary effort invested into the process is relatively high for the candidates, as well as for the involved lecturers.

The guidelines and regulations are clearly understandable, but still the consultation and supervision of the candidates is very time-consuming.

The portfolios' informative value often needs to be relativised when compared to the results presented through the complex tasks.

Generally, the lecturers consider the procedure's significance as being positive, although they tend to look at the requirements in a too academic way.

The people involved from the university, mainly the responsible module lecturers, are in need of continuous advice and support, especially when they are going through the procedure for the first time.

Tools

The following materials, guidelines and evaluation sheets were developed for the implementation of the accreditation programme:

1. Procedure for the recognition of practical experience for the module: "Business Administration in small and medium sized Businesses" – a general description of the accreditation process.
2. Individual accreditation of practical qualifications – Guidelines for the preparation of a portfolio
3. Guidelines for solving the complex task
4. Portfolio evaluation sheet orientated on EQF 2005
5. Complex task evaluation sheet
6. General evaluation sheet for individual accreditation

The development took place in the mentioned developmental project "Qualifikationsverbund Nord-West - Anrechnung beruflicher Kompetenzen auf Hochschulstudiengänge".

Because the procedure has not been systematically evaluated yet, the usage of the instruments can only be judged tentatively.

- the information provided through the given materials is judged positively by the candidates
- the procedure's criteria are generally accepted and agreed to by the lecturers. Nonetheless, most lecturers probably use the instruments in a fairly diverse way and they may also tend to make use of more personal, subjective evaluation criteria and standards