

Case Study Switzerland

Equivalence assessment for the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training

The case study was compiled as part of the Observal Project. It shows one example of a qualification procedure in Switzerland. The case study was put together in collaboration with people working in the field and was drafted by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET).

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1. Documents used

The case study makes reference to the documents listed below. Emphasis is placed on interviews. Rather than providing details regarding the tools and qualification procedure, we only provide the information needed to gain an overall understanding. References to relevant documents and/or Web sites are given in each section for anyone wishing to obtain details or further information.

Detailed information and documents on the qualification procedure can be found at www.alice.ch (direct link: www.alice.ch/001alc_02050102_de.htm). These are available in German, French and Italian. There is also some information available in English.

Name of document	Content (key words)	Type
General information on the procedure		
Validation_Prior_Learning_EN	The Validation of Assessing Prior Learning Report in English on the building-block system and the qualification procedure	ppt
AdABaukastensystem_VA_DE	Structure of the building-block system Equivalence assessment procedure	ppt
Info_SVEB_EN	SFAL (Swiss Federation for Adult Learning) levels are presented and described in English	pdf
Merkmale_Kandidaten_EN	Survey of candidates, summary in English Various candidate characteristics are examined prior to and during the qualification procedure => survey	pdf
Merkmale_Kandidaten_lang_DE	Survey of candidates involved in the qualification procedure Various candidate characteristics are examined prior to and during the procedure => survey Detailed representation of the data and results	pdf
Resources, tools used		
Wegleitung_DE	Guidance notes for candidates Description of the requirements, prerequisites and procedure	pdf
Info_Selbstbeurteilung_DE.pdf	Self-assessment guide	
Kompetenzenprofil_Modul1_DE to Kompetenzenprofil_Modul5_DE	Competency profiles for modules 1-5	pdf
Anbieteridentifikation_1_DE to Anbieteridentifikation_5_DE	Conditions for course providers (formal route) Provider prospectuses 1-5	pdf
Modulidentifikation_M1_DE to Modulidentifikation_M5_DE	Module prospectuses 1-5 Description of prerequisites, objectives, contents and competencies	pdf
Gebuehrenordnung_DE	List of costs associated with the qualification procedure	pdf
Statistik_Dossiers_DE	Statistics relating to the submitted portfolios and completed modules	xls

2. Background information

This case study is intended to present the qualification procedure for the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training, which was referred to as an *Equivalence Assessment Procedure*. The information contained in this case study is based on interviews with four respondents as well as various documents and information from the www.alice.ch Web site. The first two respondents, who examined the procedure from a meta-perspective, were asked questions regarding the qualification procedure: how it came about, how it developed and other general aspects. The third respondent had gone through the qualification procedure and the fourth respondent was a skills advisor responsible for providing assistance and guidance to candidates undergoing the qualification procedure.

At this point, I would like to thank all four respondents for their willingness to take part in this case study.

The *Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training* is an ISCED tertiary level type B qualification (referred to in Switzerland as professional education and training or PET). It is intended for those who wish to specialise in education and training, particularly to adults. The institution responsible for assessing candidate qualifications for the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training is the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SFAL).

In order to obtain the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training, candidates must first complete five modules. Candidates normally gain the necessary competencies by attending a course at a recognised educational institution for each module. However, an alternate approach would be for the candidate to undergo the qualification procedure, presenting a portfolio of his/her competencies, gained formally or otherwise, and obtain credit for one, several or all five modules. In other words, it is possible for candidates to demonstrate and obtain recognition of existing competencies and formal education for some modules and attend the required courses for other modules.

The competencies required for each module are clearly defined and represent a complete set of competencies. This is intended to ensure that those who have completed the module and those who have gone through a qualification procedure are able to demonstrate the same competencies at the end. Once all modules have been completed, candidates can apply for the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training. Module providers are accredited by SFAL and experts are selected and employed on the basis of a formal application and selection process.

Further references and documents

The legal principles can be found in the guidance notes ("Wegleitung_DE").

Module descriptions can be found at:

<http://www.alice.ch/001alc_02050202_de.htm>

All key information on the qualification procedure can be found at:

<http://www.alice.ch/001alc_02050203_de.htm>

3. Procedure

SFAL designed the qualification procedure for each of the five modules leading up to the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training to take place in four stages, which are mentioned in the National Guide on the Validation of Prior Learning issued by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET)¹. SFAL's qualification procedure is organised nationally. It is possible to complete the procedure in any of Switzerland's three language regions. The requirements are standardised.

Stage 1: Information and advice

In addition to the qualification procedure guide, necessary information such as module descriptions, competency profiles, fees and the application form can be found on the www.eduprofis.ch or www.alice.ch Web site. The office in your language region will be able to answer any questions you may have.

It is possible to apply for and carry out a qualification procedure at any time. There are various provider organisations that can advise and help candidates put together an assessment portfolio.

Stage 2: Preparing the assessment portfolio

The candidate must show evidence of their competencies by comparing the competency profile with their own work as an adult educator and their existing competencies. A self-assessment form must be filled in for each module for which the candidate seeks credit. All of the documents are collected and filed in the assessment portfolio. There are two different ways in which candidates may demonstrate the competencies that they gained through formal or informal means.

1. Providing supporting documents: Candidates use the self-assessment form to clearly present their competencies in delivering adult education in written form. Relevant supporting documents are enclosed as proof. These may take the form of continuing education and training certificates and/or work references attesting that the candidate possesses the necessary competencies. With this option, the assessment outcome will be based on the merit of these supporting documents alone.

2. Demonstrating competencies: Candidates use the self-assessment form to clearly present their competencies in delivering adult education in written form. However, the candidate has no relevant supporting documents to prove that he/she possesses the necessary competencies. With this option, the assessment outcome will be based on the competencies demonstrated by candidates (e.g. observation of the candidate's classes). This is described in the provider's prospectus.

The assessment portfolio is compiled in the same manner regardless of which of the two options is chosen. The only difference between the two options is the lack of supporting documents and the need to demonstrate the required competences with option 2.

¹ OPET's National Guide on the Validation of Prior Learning currently makes explicit reference to ISCED upper secondary level vocational education and training (VET). However, the qualification procedure for the Federal PET Diploma is actually intended to provide candidates with a tertiary level type B qualification.

Candidates may attend a course to learn how to compile an assessment portfolio and illustrate their competencies. It is also possible to obtain individual assistance.

Stage 3: Assessment

Once candidates have submitted their portfolio, they will receive confirmation of receipt and an invoice. The assessment committee appoints an expert to examine the portfolio. The candidate is given information regarding the name, occupation and experience of the appointed expert.

The expert checks the completeness of the portfolio, analyses the content and assesses the candidate's competencies. The expert then drafts a detailed assessment report containing his/her recommendation to the assessment committee. This assessment report is based exclusively on the competency profile. Discussion with the candidate regarding the portfolio is not part of the assessment.

Stage 4: Charges, certificate of equivalence and certification

Upon receipt of the assessment report, the assessment committee then decides whether the candidate's competencies are at the level required to obtain credit for the given module(s).

If the assessment committee decides to recognise the candidate's competencies, then the candidate will be issued one or more module certificates together with the assessment report. If the assessment committee decides that the candidate's competencies are not yet at the level required to obtain credit for the given module(s), then the candidate will be given information regarding the steps that need to be taken in order to obtain certification for the given module(s).

Module certificates are official documents certifying that the candidate has achieved the level required in this area of competence.

As soon as a candidate possesses all five module certificates and meets the criteria for the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training, he/she may submit the relevant application to the corresponding Qualification Commission to obtain his/her Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training. The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) will then issue the official papers and corresponding professional title.

SFAL regional offices carry out the administrative procedures and ensure that assessment portfolios are complete. After the candidate pays the assessment fee, his/her portfolio will be submitted to an expert who will then draft a detailed assessment report. For each module, the expert explains his/her reasons for recommending that the assessment committee grant or deny credit for the given module(s). The assessment committee then makes its decision on the basis of the assessment report submitted. If the assessment committee decides to grant credit for the module(s), the candidate will be issued a certificate for the given module(s) along with the expert's assessment report. The procedure from the date payment is made to the date when the report is submitted takes 12 weeks.

The assessment committee's decision may be appealed.

Further references and documents

An illustration of the Swiss procedure can be found in the national guidelines drafted by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology. This can be found at:

<www.bbt.admin.ch/themen/berufsbildung/00106/00404/index.html?lang=de>

The qualification procedure can be found in the guidance notes ("Wegleitung_DE").

Competency profiles for each module can be found at:

<www.alice.ch/001alc_02050202_de.htm>

or "Kompetenzenprofil_Modul1_DE" to "Kompetenzenprofil_Modul5_DE"

Funding is explained in the document "Gebuehrenordnung_DE".

The provider's prospectus can be found in the documents "Anbieteridentifikation_DE_1" to "Anbieteridentifikation_DE_5".

4. Origins of the qualification procedure

Work to develop the qualification procedure began around 10 years ago. At the time, unlike in other occupations, there were no federally recognised national professional examinations to certify the training given to adult educators. There was no examination commission responsible for the tasks that are currently being handled today. Initially, efforts to introduce a qualification procedure encountered resistance. Representatives of traditional, external types of examination feared that the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training would be awarded too freely.

The basic idea was to tailor the procedure to the needs of adults and to create a qualification procedure. A pilot project enabled innovative ideas to be implemented and initial experiences to be gathered. The project was implemented in all three language regions under the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Commission. In 2005/2006, a new national assessment committee was formed as part of restructuring operations. The tools and material were developed into a project group based on the experience with language portfolios. Members of the Quality Assurance Commission and provider organisations also worked together on this. They brought with them their own personal experiences and principles regarding the recognition of competencies that were developed during the women's movement. CH-Q² also provided a classification system that could be consulted. Therefore, it is now possible to freely put together the portfolio or compile a folder in accordance with the CH-Q system. Since 2003, work has also been done with the newly founded association Valida.

The qualification procedure was created prior to development of national guidelines for qualification procedures and was therefore a pioneering achievement. This resulted in the pilot project being used as a national source of information. The procedure and tools were then (2005/2006) adapted on the basis of national guidelines and the experiences gained up until that point, such as the switch from the requirement profile to the competency profile. In addition, a new self-assessment guide was drafted to serve as a manual and provide assistance to candidates.

Another change is that portfolios must now be compiled in accordance with the new competency profile. Application forms for the qualification procedure can now also be submitted for the Advanced Federal PET Diploma in Education and Training Management.

Further references and documents

The **paper on self-assessment** referred to is the document [Info_Selbstbeurteilung_DE.pdf](#)

A document on the graphical representation of the qualification procedure in accordance with the procedure specified in the national guidelines can be found at: http://www.edupers.ch/001alc_02050203_de.htm

The qualification procedure for the Advanced Federal PET Diploma in Education and Training Management can be found at: http://www.alice.ch/001alc_02050302_de.htm

² CH-Q is one of the organisations in Switzerland (such as Valida, ARRA) that deals with the issue of illustrating competencies.

5. Tools

Competency profiles

Competency profiles are the key documents used to describe competencies featured in the self-assessment form. They list the competencies required in order to obtain credit for each of the five modules. Competency profiles enable candidates to evaluate themselves (self-assessment) against the requirements specified. At the same time, competency profiles enable experts to carry out an anonymous, criteria-based assessment.

Competency profiles should indicate that each individual competency required is present by providing clearly structured evidence based on personal knowledge, capabilities and skills (resources). Firstly, competency profiles should contain a description of where the competencies were acquired and how they have been implemented in practice. Secondly, theories and models that form the basis for the candidate's work as an adult educator should be specified. Furthermore, any documents to be used as evidence must be listed and copies must be enclosed, e.g. education and training credentials, work references, courses certificates and copies of learning diary entries.

Module	Brief description
Conducting educational events with adults	Those who have passed the module are capable of preparing, conducting and evaluating educational events with adults in their specialist field, within the framework of predefined concepts, curricula and teaching aids.
Facilitating group work at educational events	Those who have passed the module are capable of recognising, reflecting upon and providing sufficient intervention in study group processes.
Providing information and support to students	Those who have passed the module are capable of providing people with information regarding opportunities for further education and training in their specialist field and supporting students in their learning.
Planning educational events for adults	Those who have passed the module are capable of planning and evaluating educational events in their specialist field (incl. conceptual, financial and organisational aspects) in accordance with the administrative guidelines of the institution to which they belong.
Using didactic principles to organise educational events for adults	Those who have passed the module are capable of organising didactic educational events for adults in their specialist field.

A module prospectus is available for each module which sets out the requirements, competencies, proof of competence and aims.

Equivalence assessment portfolio

The portfolio consists of the following: a completed and personally signed application form for the qualification procedure; the candidate's curriculum vitae containing information relevant to adult education; a self-assessment form for each module; and various supporting documents attesting to the competencies indicated. For supporting documents that contain very little content, it is recommended that candidates specify the objectives, activities, content, duration, etc. in a self-drafted accompanying document. If supporting documents do not indicate the

duration, intended learning outcomes and content covered by initial and continuing education and training courses, candidates may enclose this information in the form of learning diaries, documents, etc.

When submitting the portfolio, it must contain evidence of having worked in adult education. This is made up of 300 teaching hours over the course of 4 years involving groups of at least three people over the age of 18. In addition, candidates must provide evidence of having received 16 hours of supervision (either in module 4 or 5). Examples of documents that may be used are work references, confirmation of employment or signed and dated written references from the relevant employers.

All documents submitted must be relevant to adult education. All documents must be submitted at the same time.

Assessment report

The experts' job is to check the portfolio for completeness, analyse the content and assess competencies. The assessment report is a detailed expert opinion that indicates whether or not the requirements of a given module have been met. The first two respondents emphasised the fact that assessment reports are very detailed and contain very in-depth analysis of the candidate's situation. They feel that it is also important that this report be used to recognise the candidate's achievements.

Guidance notes

The guidance notes describe the qualification procedure and tools. They also define terms and provide candidates with important instructions. Guidance notes are principally designed with candidates in mind and include the qualification procedure application form.

Further references

Descriptions of the competencies for each module can be found at:

<www.alice.ch/001alc_02050202_de.htm>

or [Kompetenzenprofil_Modul1_DE](#) to [Kompetenzenprofil_Modul5_DE](#)

Module prospectuses can be found at <www.alice.ch/001alc_02050202_de.htm>.

or [Modulidentifikation_M1_DE](#) to [Modulidentifikation_M1_DE](#)

Statistics regarding the portfolios submitted and modules completed can be found in the document [Statistik_Dossiers_DE](#).

6. A candidate's view

The following offers insight into the qualification procedure from the point of view of a candidate. The information was gathered during an interview with a candidate. The comments below reflect the viewpoint of a single person.

The Swiss Federation for Adult Learning carried out a survey of candidates in 2006 which provides further information regarding the profile and experiences of different candidates. This report can be found in the annex.

The candidate is a woman with a degree and over 30 years teaching experience in various areas of adult education. The candidate is well into her 50s.

Background information

Ms. K. decided to go through the qualification procedure to obtain credit for modules leading up to the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training. She did this because her employer, an eduQua³ certified organisation, requested that she obtain SFAL Certificate 1 in order to ensure that it could continue employing her. SFAL Certificate 1 corresponds to one of the five modules required to obtain the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training. When Ms. K was told that she needed to produce SFAL Certificate 1 in order to continue teaching, she decided to aim for the full Federal PET Diploma, which she felt best matched her existing skills. She decided not to attend the five modules because she did not want to repeat topics she had already covered. She therefore viewed the qualification procedure as a viable alternative. Ms. K. was nevertheless sceptical about the qualification procedure as she saw herself confronted with a great deal of time-consuming work.

Information

Ms. K. obtained initial information about the qualification procedure from the EB Zurich's⁴ Continuing Education and Training Events catalogue. A course was advertised and it seemed useful to Ms. K to attend the course in order to make a successful start to the procedure.

After calling SFAL to request further information, Ms. K was referred to the homepage, which contains very detailed information. However, Ms. K. would have expected to receive somewhat more detailed advice over the telephone rather than having to find out everything for herself. She made frequent reference during the interview to the difficulty she experienced in obtaining the relevant information. She was not concerned about submission deadlines. All of the information that she found was gathered indirectly for the most part. She exchanged information mostly with people who were also working towards the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training, although many of these people attended module courses instead of undergoing the qualification procedure. She did not receive any information from SFAL, but perhaps regular consultation of the homepage would have been informative, but she had neither the time nor the inclination to do this.

³EduQua: Swiss quality certificate for continuing education and training institutions; www.eduqua.ch

⁴The EB Zurich is a cantonal vocational school that offers continuing education and training courses.

Course (introduction to compiling a portfolio)

The course taught Ms. K. how competencies have to be presented. It was also particularly important for her to realise that she still needed to acquire a great deal of supporting documents that she did not have up until this point. Ms. K. believes that the course is useful.

At the start of the course, course participants worked together and then compared their results. Ms. K. enjoyed putting her competencies into words and she found this task easy. She also found it useful on a personal level to have the opportunity to consider her own competencies more closely and to write about them. She considered it an ideal opportunity to gain self-awareness; something that she feels she had underestimated at the start. This motivated Ms. K. and she completed the first module in a very short space of time.

Compilation of the portfolio

Ms. K. submitted the completed first module to the course instructor. The feedback she received motivated her to continue. The first module also provided her with competencies for two other modules with similar content but at a different level.

However, afterwards she was no longer able to work as consistently on the portfolio. As she mostly worked alone on the portfolio, it was difficult for her to stay motivated and make progress, she said. Compiling a record of her competencies was also something that could not be done in two or three hours in a single evening, but rather required a longer period of time without interruption. It always takes time to immerse yourself in the portfolio and write about the competencies required. It was not always possible for Ms. K. to keep enough time free.

Ms. K. was able to approach the course instructor with any questions she had whilst compiling the portfolio. However, it would have been useful to have other contact persons as well. She only exchanged information with other candidates shortly before she had finished compiling the portfolio.

As she had to interrupt her work on the portfolio due to poor health, Ms. K. was only able to resume work on the portfolio a year later. At the time, she was told that the forms were about to be changed and that she would need to complete her portfolio as soon as possible in order for the old forms to still be accepted. As she did not want to have to begin work on the portfolio all over again, she hurried to write the final pieces. She submitted the portfolio in April 2007, i.e. three years after starting it. Ms. K. submitted an application form for the qualification procedure to be carried out for four of the five modules.

Assessment

After submitting the portfolio, Ms. K. was informed that there was a waiting period of approximately 4 months for assessment. After 6 months, she was informed that her portfolio had not yet been processed. This annoyed her and she saw it as somewhat of an impertinence to have to wait such a long time as she had spent a great number of hours compiling the portfolio and had also paid a large sum of money to have her portfolio assessed. She also made her annoyance known and was told that new people had been drafted in. Her portfolio was soon processed and the expert assigned to examine her portfolio had taken the task very seriously.

Reflection

Whilst compiling the portfolio, Ms. K. was unable to see anything positive in the qualification procedure. In her opinion, the only positive thing was writing about her own competencies and her increased sense of self-confidence in her own abilities that resulted. This was demonstrated, above all, by the fact that she spent more time at work reflecting on what she was doing, why

she was doing it and how she went about doing it. In the end, Ms. K. felt that she had proven to herself that she is able to see this type of procedure through to the end. Unfortunately, this feeling did not last very long. This is perhaps due to the fact that the whole procedure is not yet over for Ms. K. She still has one final module to complete. In retrospect, things probably would have been better had Ms. K attended the outstanding module as soon as possible.

Ms. K. does not have the impression that her professional practice has changed after compiling the portfolio. She is not convinced that the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training will give rise to new professional opportunities. The Federal PET Diploma does not have any effect on her current professional situation. Her employer values her work and she has not been requested to undergo further training. She was only been requested to produce SFAL Certificate 1 and she has fulfilled this request by far by obtaining certification for almost all of the modules leading up to the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training.

Ms. K. deems the procedure, i.e. the opportunity to have experience accredited by compiling a portfolio, to be an effective and useful method. However, she would have imagined that competencies could have been demonstrated to a greater extent by describing activities undertaken without the need for additional confirmation. A description of the activity alone should be sufficient; this is the actual point of the qualification procedure in Ms. K's view. However, whilst compiling her portfolio, she was told that formal evidence such as certificates and attestations were becoming increasingly important. It was not sufficient to provide a detailed description of the activity. Ms. K. bemoans this, as, in her view, this contradicts the procedure. Ms. K. was not aware of the portfolio assessment criteria; knowledge of these would have facilitated her work. Being able to consult a contact person occasionally would also have been useful. This would have made it easier to keep up to date, emphasised Ms. K.

It was not until later that Ms. K. discovered that it is possible to arrange to have a lesson observed and assessed. This would also have provided her with an opportunity to demonstrate the required competencies. For Ms. K., classroom observation would have been the more familiar route as she had already had positive experiences with this in the past.

Ms. K. would advise anyone wishing to undergo the qualification procedure to set aside the time needed to work continuously on the portfolio. It is very useful to seek regular feedback as exchanging ideas with other candidates provides important motivation.

Further references and documents

The candidate study is available in German in the document [Merkmale_Kandidaten_lang_DE](#) and a short version is available in English in the document [Merkmale_Kandidaten_EN](#).

7. A skills advisor's view

The following presents the experience of a skills advisor who helps candidates to put together an assessment portfolio. The information was gathered during an interview with the skills advisor and the comments below therefore reflect the viewpoint of a single person.

Background information

The skills advisor interviewed is a person with a great deal of teaching experience as a primary school teacher, vocational teacher and educational consultant. Mr B. became a skills advisor after having undergone the qualification procedure himself. At the time, the qualification procedure was still in its infancy and there was a great deal of scope for contributing one's own ideas. A group of dedicated people took part in the first course and completed the procedure.

There are introductory courses for skills advisors. CH-Q, for example, offers courses at various levels that must be passed in order to be able to work as a skills advisor. The qualifications that are needed for each type of skills advisor course are clearly defined.

The course (workshop to help candidates compile their portfolios)

In order to learn how to go about compiling assessment portfolios and demonstrate competencies, there are courses of varying lengths offered by various course providers.

Mr. B. states that the aim of his course is to introduce candidates to portfolio work. As far as his method of teaching is concerned, he uses a simple principle – demonstrate, copy and give examples. The procedure is explained in the first part of the course (group work, lasting approx. 1.5 days). This part of the course deals with terminological issues and provides information about costs and benefits. It also serves to shed light on any potential difficulties. In addition, candidates reflect on their own careers as a whole so that they will be able to provide evidence of the competencies required for the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training. The procedure is not that easy to understand. It also takes a certain amount of time before candidates are able to fulfil the technical requirements that they have learnt about, explains Mr B. If there is a basis for doing so, it is most ideal if the group continues to work together since participants are able to benefit from one another's experience.

Understanding the competency profile is a procedure in itself and cannot be understood in a single evening. Mr. B. tries to demonstrate how to go about recording competencies using individual examples. As far as the process of recording competencies is concerned, each step is demonstrated individually: recording, documenting, providing supporting documents and evaluating. In addition, providing supporting documents is not enough to demonstrate actual competencies, it is also necessary for supporting documents to be accompanied by a self-assessment and an objective assessment by others. Discussions among participants play a very important part in this. For example, participants discuss what constitutes a useful supporting document and what is meant by 'document' in this context. Supporting documents must be scrutinised, evaluated, assessed and correctly classified. Mr. B. has observed that this can result in candidates realising that their competencies are in fact inadequate.

Once the first part of the course (group work) is completed, the focus must then shift to each member of the group. At this point, the course needs to take specific individual circumstances into account in order to address individual needs.

Work as a skills advisor

Mr. B. sees his job as a skills advisor to provide candidates with guidance, assistance and information. It becomes difficult when those attending the course experience personal problems as these can rarely be taken into account during the course.

He does not leave the examination of the portfolios to 'trial and error' either. As a skills advisor, it is his job to provide the necessary 'tools' but not to make any recommendations. Candidates themselves must learn to evaluate whether or not what they have is sufficient.

In his first few years as a skills advisor, Mr. B. had a discussion with the expert at the time, which he found to be very helpful: this made it easier for him to assess what was required.

Mr. B. has found that candidates constantly underestimate what evaluating their own careers means in emotional terms. Gathering documents to be enclosed as proof is time-consuming. It is necessary to find out who is able to confirm which activities and this usually means having to get back in touch with former employers. This can be very troublesome for some people. People also often make false assumptions. The evaluation is neither merely an assessment nor informal. It is a troublesome and rocky path.

In his work as a skills advisor, Mr. B. is always pleased when he can see that candidates realise the extent and range of their competencies. It is nice to see people discover everything that they have learnt and what competencies they possess. It is interesting, above all, to also see how different areas of life are incorporated and how these are combined.

In contrast, writing about their competencies represents a great challenge for some people. Not everyone finds it easy to put their competencies into words. Candidates must have a great deal of self-discipline, be able to work systematically and be emotionally resilient. In addition, it is possible to use the relevant examination certificates to provide evidence of educational qualifications. However, this is not the case as far as acquired skills are concerned. A great deal of painstaking work is required to process and provide evidence of these. The qualification alone is not sufficient. It is necessary to demonstrate what competencies lie behind this.

In addition, difficulties have also recently arisen as some portfolios were rejected when the new experts took up their posts. As far as Mr. B. is concerned, more emphasis was placed on examining the contents and not on the competencies, as was previously the case. As a course instructor, this was difficult to comprehend. It is important to talk to the experts responsible for carrying out the assessment. Initial talks have already taken place. Positive developments are emerging based on a shared understanding of the competencies.

8. Reflection on the procedure

In addition, the conversations with the interviewees always involved reflecting on the procedure. Some of the considerations flowed directly into the respective points. A summary of the interviewees' thoughts and considerations with regard to the procedure in general are given in this section and therefore reflect the different views of all four respondents.

The qualification procedure provides an opportunity to those with many years of teaching experience. Candidates are not required to learn competencies they already have all over again in order to obtain the formal qualification, which helps to avoid repetition. This allows candidates to save time as they do not have to undergo an entire course of training. The fact that it is possible to have informal experience and past achievements accredited also motivates many people. This enables individual educational paths to be recognised.

The procedure is deemed to be transparent as it is clear what is required of candidates. This also provides candidates with the opportunity to determine whether or not they are actually suited to the field of adult education. The qualification procedure is tailored to adults and ties in with the spirit of lifelong learning.

The procedure has proven successful in practice. The number of portfolios submitted has increased. According to the interviewees, those who have obtained the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training through the qualification procedure are viewed no differently on the labour market than those who hold formal qualifications. Precise investigations have not yet been carried out as regards this matter. It is also emphasised that, compared to other types of examination, the qualification procedure allows the achievements/competencies of applicants to be assessed in a relatively cost-effective and comprehensible manner.

Although the procedure is deemed to be comparatively cost-effective, it is still too expensive for some people. The outlay involved in compiling the portfolio is particularly great for candidates. Candidates prefer to attend the five modules to obtain the Federal PET Diploma in Adult Education and Training rather than subject themselves to the qualification procedure.

Another problem is that course certificates issued a few years ago are not informative. They do not specify the skills gained and are therefore not very meaningful. Certificates and other documents are also not yet available in a form that is suitable for carrying out a validation exercise.

It is difficult to keep all experts up to the same level and to implement the portfolio assessment standards that apply to everyone. Moreover, cultural differences exist between the French-speaking and German-speaking parts of Switzerland in terms of where emphasis should be placed when examining the portfolio. Procedural advisors found that they had different views as to what needed to be assessed in the portfolio.

Experts also have to work constantly to ensure that there is no list of 'hard and fast criteria' that can simply be worked through and crossed off. The aim continues to be to understand a candidate's circumstances and to see whether what is presented meets the required competencies.

The emphasis on competencies and recognition is not very well-known and should be made more apparent. The procedure for presenting competencies in a comprehensible manner must be developed further.

The qualification procedure has been adapted to meet the criteria specified in the National Guide on the Validation of Prior Learning drafted by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET). However, OPET's National Guide on the Validation of Prior Learning currently refers to ISCED upper secondary level vocational education and training (VET). In the medium-term, it would be desirable for the qualification procedures for the Federal and Advanced Federal Diploma to also be submitted and recognised officially. OPET has yet to demonstrate its willingness to do this.

It is not currently necessary to make any fundamental amendments to content. Even greater efforts should be made to provide candidates with a comprehensive view of the qualification procedure. An attempt should be made to recognise competencies from as wide a range of situations as possible. However, this requires the procedure not to be overly structured; otherwise it would become very difficult. The overall art lies in finding a structure that is tailored to the competencies required and nevertheless allows a person the freedom to show a wide range of sides to their character. The aim should not be to divide everything into the narrowest sub-competencies and then to check what is present and what is not. For this type of procedure, it is of fundamental importance to approach adults in a benevolent manner and not to be suspicious of the quality of their competencies. It is necessary to demonstrate a willingness to embrace the manner in which a person presents their competencies.