RECOGNITION MANAGEMENT FOR PROMOTING AND ACCELERATING THE ACADEMIC CAREERS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT
The challenge for the future of teaching and training is the development of the competence-oriented output of educational processes qualifying learners for professional fields. One of the key aspects for planning and implementing educational models of increasing efficiency and accelerated academic careers is the recognition management.

The knowledge and skills acquired by the professionals outside the formal teaching and training in the universities and schools by non-formal procedures have to be included in the processes of learning and should be recognised as part of the course assessments.

Thus, the motivation of professional learners to continue their academic career by studies as well as further education will be promoted. The inclusion of the professional and informal absorbed experiences and skills in the course work and assessments will increase the quality and practical relevance as well as accelerate the processes of graduation.

Approved models of recognition management of different course offers in the national and international context will be described and evaluated. The future of recognition management as part of the course development will be explained and discussed.

KEYWORDS: Academic career, Professional learners, Recognition management

COMPETENCE ORIENTED OUTPUT INSTEAD OF INPUT ORIENTATION

One of the main goals of the Bologna reform as the most serious transformation process for a common system of higher education in Europe of the last decades was the change from the input to the output orientation. The input is realised by the lectures and teachers; the output is characterised by the results achieved by the students and learners. Output orientation means that the learning and training processes are more focussed on the targets of the students than on the academic plans of the intellectual world. The consequential effects are new challenges for the educational target system such as:

- General paradigm shift for the curricula and course planning
- More professional qualification degrees instead of common academic education
- Intensified competence orientation instead of memorised knowledge
- Restructuring of the evaluation and assessment systems
• Reorganisation of the educational quality standard development and certification.

Especially the competence orientation is essential for the alumni for a successful transition from the academic training to the everyday professional life. It urges the educational institutions to improve the connection between theory and practice by preservation of the highest academic standards in relation to the requirements of the future job challenges. The competence output should already become part of the curricula planning. For each module the learning content indexes are listed and characterised by the three competence dimensions: knowledge, performance, and personality development. The dimensions are structured into sub-dimensions. If a subtopic contributes to the competence development in a sub-dimension, then it will be marked by crosses. (Fig. 1)

In this way, the dialectic antagonism between knowledge acquisition and personal development, learning and education, autonomy of research and applicability, etc. could be better matched and controlled in the curricula planning as well as in the real-time processes of teaching and training.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modules</th>
<th>Learning Content (short description)</th>
<th>Analytic Competence</th>
<th>Conceptual Competence</th>
<th>Design Competence</th>
<th>Control Competence</th>
<th>Know</th>
<th>Comprehend/Apply</th>
<th>Analyze/Evaluate</th>
<th>Synthesize/Engross</th>
<th>Reflexive Competence</th>
<th>Communicative Competence</th>
<th>Social Competence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsary Modules 1. - 5. Semester</td>
<td><strong>Finance Processes</strong></td>
<td>• Introduction to business accounting and classification in the business process</td>
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<td>• Basics of accounting, balancing, cost accounting, finance and investment</td>
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<td><strong>English in Business</strong></td>
<td>• Training of the abilities to read, speak, hear and write</td>
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<td>• Acquisition of on-topic word fields</td>
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<td>• Improvement of the ability to learn independently</td>
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<td>• Functional extension of existing grammatical knowledge and skills in economical contexts</td>
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<td>• Acquisition of communicative competences in economical context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compulsary Modules 6. - 7. Semester</td>
<td><strong>Special Aspects and Methods:</strong> <strong>Market-Oriented Management</strong></td>
<td>• Leadership skills (elocution of leadership, body language of leadership, mental attitude of leadership)</td>
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<td>• Strategic management skills (business goals and strategies, competition analysis, marketing-mix, product life cycles, launch and relaunch of products, market entry in new markets, calculation of special businesses)</td>
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<td>• Intercultural marketing and management skills (basics of internationalization and intercultural marketing, culture as a factor of contingency)</td>
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Figure 1. Matrix of relations of contents and anticipated competences
**Key Success Factors in Qualifying for a Profession**

The recent development of the society is driven by the dynamic of science and technology including the mass creation and consumption of information and knowledge in all areas of life. The knowledge society influences our whole life. This main stream should be followed and promoted by education and training processes. But, education and profession will become extremely complex and complicated fields. It is necessary to be able to reflect the issues and to react on the situations in real life and social development characterised by myriad factors of influence.

The challenge is to create educational and learning models for optimising the training and knowledge transfer processes including the development of competences. Because of the preferred output orientation the programs and curricula should be themed according to the objectives of the target groups of learners and students. Since too many factors are influencing the solution it is only possible to consider the key success factors. They are small in number and helpful to explain the majority of the variance in perceived value and the relative use of resources (Grunert, Ellegaard, 1992).

The key success factors for qualifying students and learner in the best way for the future professional work are individualised in relation to the human beings as well as the learning and training situation provided by different educational organisations. General key success factors from the viewpoint of output orientation can be defined by the experiences of several study offers based on output oriented planning of training and learning (Figure 2).
In addition, general guidelines for qualifying students and learners of different levels of competence and skills are described in the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (European commission, 2008). They could help to define the key success factors for qualifying professionals in higher education.

**Integration of Formal and Non-Formal Education and Training**

The classic forms of education implemented as formal education are initiated by the nursery as well as primary education and will be continued by secondary and higher education. It is the recent standard education received by persons in the different types of schools followed by visiting colleges or universities. The formal education provides the transfer of information, knowledge, and skills to the learners usually in a sequential mainstream. The secondary school qualifications open the access to the college or university level, respectively. In practice, the school career could also be realised by the intermediate stage of vocational training and education or master craftsman qualification followed by occupation and accompanied by evening class courses as second-chance education. Higher education is divided into undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels.

The formal education will be complemented by other kinds of education, of which a special type is the non-formal education. It includes educating and training one through informal communication and knowledge transfer outside the formal education.

After getting the first degree qualifying for a profession, the following steps of educating someone lead to the adult education including general literacy as well as special kinds of skills and competences. The forms are class-room instructions, e-learning and self-study. Recently, the traditional e-learning as computer or web-based training is extended by special forms of mobile and online learning applying the latest technological achievements.

It will be complemented by informal learning based on the daily social activities of individuals in the working, leisure, and family environment without using the methods and structures of the formal and non-formal learning and training.

Formal and non-formal learning and training should be treated as a dialectical unit in the educational systems. Therefore, the Council of the European Union on the validation of non-formal and informal learning recommended that member states should create appropriate procedures for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in order to offer the opportunity to make use of that learning for careers and further learning. The goal is to facilitate the access to formal education by recognizing prior learning and therefore promoting the process of lifelong learning (The Council of the European Union, 2012). The integration of different kinds of formal and non-formal learning and training using the opportunities of the informal learning in a modularized framework will be the result.
RECOGNITION MANAGEMENT AS ESSENTIAL KEY SUCCESS FACTOR

There are many different possibilities to gain competences in a formal, non-formal or informal way, respectively. They key issue from the individual viewpoint is to find professional and/or educational programs, organisations, processes with similar or supplementary quantity or quality of the competences offering a similar or supplementary perspective for the personal development. The development of the competences will be scaled up to a key success factor. On the other hand, the recognition of the central importance of serendipity, organisational learning, knowledge transfer and core competences will become one part of the capability approach of the organisation in the tide of a turbulent environment in order to imbed a competitive advantage in the organisation’s set of capabilities. The core competences as result of the organisational learning and knowledge transfer become fundamental and strategic for the organisation. The organisation should be able to share parts of competences with other partners and stakeholders. The precondition for developing a network of competence is to reveal the competences of the own organisation or person to be able to present the true intrinsic value as basis for finding the equivalent partners. Furthermore, the singularisation of the own competences will promote the person or organisation to focus their activities on what it does excellent, it makes different and successful (Rivard et al., 2004).

The visions of the UNESCO guidelines for the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning are characterised by the following aspects (UNESCO, 2012):

- RVA is a key lever that lifelong learning become reality
- RVA provides visibility and value to the hidden and unrecognized competences that individuals have obtained through various means and in different phases of their lives
- RVA improves significantly the individuals’ self-esteem and well-being
- RVA motivates further learning and strengthening labour market opportunities
- RVA helps to integrate the broader sections of the population into an open and flexible education and training system.

Therefore, recognition management becomes key success factor for the individual as well as organisational development in education and training. The recognition of competences obtained in non-formal and even informal for formal academic careers will be developed as a complex interactive service (Seger, Waldeyer, 2015). Recognition management is the generic term for all different coordinated organisational, working, and legal processes to be able to deliver the services. It includes the credit management as quantitative result of the recognition.
Unfortunately, recognition management and credit management are mostly used as synonym. But, recognition management is more the philosophy and vision of an organisation influencing the strategic orientation. The consequent pursuit of this objective concludes with the result that recognition becomes an important rule for all service processes of the educational provider offering the individuals to promote their professional careers in general and their academic careers in particular. The recognition extends beyond the simple accounting of credits. It includes qualitative as well quantitative aspects (Figure 3).

Primarily, the recognition management is pushed by the competence-oriented output after completing a period of learning, training, and working. The particularity is characterised by generating emotional recognition and motivation of the learners based on the implication of previously and simultaneously acquired knowledge and competences gained outside of the formal educational processes. The application of acquired competences for the confirmation of the quality of individual performance indicators will become part of an overall educational system of assessments and certifications.

Subsidiary, the creditation as earning of credit points in the second level is used for the quantitative description of existing individual competences and last but not least the legal and administrative confirmation of the transformation of competences into credit points in accordance with the Bologna rules.
ACCELERATING ACADEMIC CAREERS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNERS BY RECOGNITION MANAGEMENT

Professional and academic careers could be regard as a sequence of several periods of individual’s life characterised by continuous increase and extension of knowledge, experiences, skills, and competences. Education and training processes are embedded in these lifelong learning efforts. The sub-processes of classic formal learning proceed step by step in a sequence. The recognition of the integration of formal, non-formal as well as informal learning and training reveals for one thing the opportunity of combining several sub-processes of different kinds of knowledge transfer and competence acquisition and for another thing the chance to parallelise temporarily the sub-processes in order to reinforce learning and to save time during qualification periods of the individual career. Exactly, this effect is applied for accelerating the academic careers of professional learners. One of the used and established methods is the recognition management including the creditation and credits earning.

The theoretical background of the method in relation to the recognition management was derived from the experiences of process management. Many different methods of management and controlling are in relationship with the process management. The classic process management was structured in phases executed sequentially. The modelling of complex processes in time-critical projects required partly simultaneous planning and realisation of the phases. Simultaneous Engineering (SE) was created as a method for the integration as well as the time-parallel planning and development of objects and processes. The efforts of gaining time and acceleration of educational processes and certifications are used in the framework of the recognition management. It particularly relieves the professional learners to acquire additional competences on different ways and to accelerate the certification processes in a fair manner compared to the formal learning careers.

The acceleration is provided by the simultaneous acquisition of competences on individual learning trails (Schumann et al., 2008) and their recognition by the educational institutions including the credit accumulation (Figure 4).
The concept will be applied primarily for the individualised learning in a modularised and flexible knowledge transfer environment due to the Bologna philosophy but it is also usable for the acceleration of academic careers of professional learners by recognition management.

**IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING BY INTEGRATION OF NON-FORMAL ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE**

The permanent improvement of the quality in educational systems is one of the most important challenges. The formal learning with all the restrictions and critical issues in particular as the class room instructions and teacher-centred trainings is a successful opportunity to impart knowledge and has proven quality and quality assurance methods. Therefore, innovative approaches are essential for preserving the good experiences and enriching the spectrum of methods for improving the quality. The quality campaign for classic and new kinds of teaching and learning are provided by many educational networks, organisations, and institutions.

The key challenge is to combine the different opportunities of formal, non-formal, and informal acquisition of knowledge in such a successful manner that it will become possible to generate a better access to new competences by concurrent improvement of the quality of learning and teaching. The teachers and lectures will be partly coaches and trainers embedding new methods of knowledge and competence transfer in a complex area of new approaches of combined learning (Figure 5).
All mentioned methods and applications are suitable to be combined as kinds of formal, non-formal, and informal learning and integrated with other traditional methodological approaches up to the main streams of electronic and mobile learning. If the teacher, trainer, coach would be able to apply and to control the variety and diversity of methods, then a significant improvement in the teaching and learning quality will result. The learners will inject themselves in the academic courses at a higher rate, enrich the learning procedures and increase the quality in this manner.

**Integration of recognition and credits earning in the assessments**

Since a university had decided that the recognition management should be part of the organisational culture, the leadership of the university has to embed it in the academic and administrative processes. Recognition management has to be integrated into the guidelines and set of regulations of the university discussed and decreed by the academic bodies of the university, for instance, as regulations on the procedure of credit transfer and accumulation in accordance with the ECTS system. It should be regulated:

- Domain, objectives and general principles
- Principles of individual crediting
- Procedure of individual crediting of formally provable competences
- Methods of individual crediting of informally acquired competences
- Principles of the blanket recognition
- Objections proceedings etc.
After this manner, the recognition and crediting management will become part of the assessment and graduation system of the institutions. Based on this regulation the formal creditation will be realised by a detailed description of different forms of the legal acquisition of credits points for competences gained by non-formal or informal learning and training. A method of collecting and/or compensating for the lack of credit points has been proven that operates according to the modular principle (Figure 6).

![Figure 6. System for collecting and/or compensating credits points for academic degrees](image)

The documents could be designed as a handout describing the type of module, its content, the related assessment, the workload, and the acquirable number of credit points. It should be supplemented with documentation records for the attestation of the collected credit points. The concept is embedded into the examination regulations.

**Advanced Models of Recognition Management in Study Programs**

The state of the art in recognition and crediting management is the application as a multi-dimensional and multivalent system included into the overall curricular developments as well as in the study and examination regulations. Multi-dimensional approach means that the recognition and the creditation can be realised in each direction: vertical as well as horizontal with interfaces to other kinds of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Multivalent concepts are based on the recognition and creditation of different kinds of competences acquired by formal, non-formal or informal learning. In this way, complex study programs were developed parallelising and integrating non-academic and academic education as well as formal, non-formal and informal learning and training (Schumann et al., 2014) (Figure 7).
The recognition and cooperation management was tried, tested, evaluated and trusted by a network of several non-academic and academic institutions. The concept was generalised and rolled-out for other study programs and certification and new target groups with new partners in the further education because of the common success of the approach over a long period. Recently, it was reaccredited after five years in a modernised and modified form by a German accreditation agency.

Figure 7. Recognition of competences as part of an integrated study program of an educational network
FUTURE OF THE RECOGNITION MANAGEMENT IN THE COURSE DEVELOPMENT

The development of advance models for recognition management and creditation is in the early stages. There are many exciting ideas and challenges for research, development, and application such as:

- Creation of interoperable instead of integrated modular recognition systems which means that the modules are considered as independent objects interacting together autonomously according to a set of rules
- Highly sophisticated and multivalent recognition and crediting models opening a wide range for the balance of formal, non-formal and informal learning and training
- Global and multicultural approaching of different educational systems facilitating the recognition management and intensifying the competition based on transparency, performance and quality
- Extension and embedding of the latest multimedia and IT-technologies for learning and assessment applications in the context of the digitalised organisations
- Increase of the network and association based developments and cooperation in education concerning knowledge transfer and competence acquisition provided by academic institutions as well business partners, administrative and non-academic organisations
- Planning and control of the continuous change and transformation of the educational organisations, processes and functions including the permanent development of recognition and crediting
- Etc.

Because of the limited resources of single organisations and in consideration of the dynamic and complex development, the future will belong to the most flexible and efficient educational organisations cooperating in network interest clusters and associations supporting the individual demands of the lifelong learning cycle for different target groups with respect to new kinds of recognition and other important educational management fields.
Grunert Klaus, Ellegaard Charlotte (1992), *The Concept of Key Success Factors: Theory and Method*, “MAPP working paper”, n 4


UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2012), *UNESCO GUIDELINES for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning*, Hamburg, pp. 1-7


