



**Implementation of identification and validation  
of non-formal and informal learning -  
a critical issue in a strongly structured VET-  
system**



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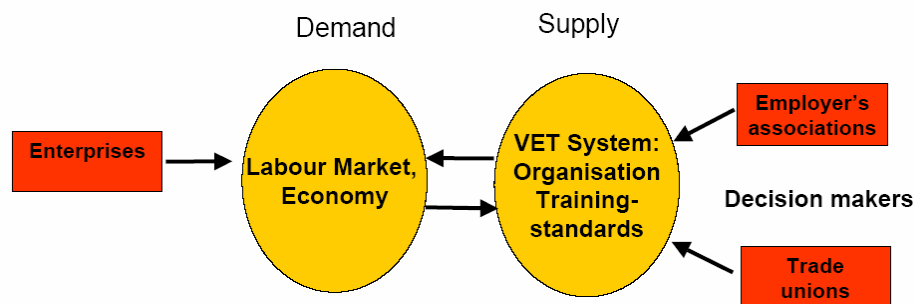
## Index

<b>1 SOCIETAL PRECONDITIONS IN A CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF VET AND CVT.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 RELEVANCE OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN A CORPORATE STRUCTURE – GERMANY AS AN EXAMPLE .....	3
1.2 RELEVANCE OF NON-FORMAL LEARNING IN THE (DUAL) APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM	4
<b>2 RELEVANCE OF NON- FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING FOR CVT AND LIFELONG LEARNING- GERMANY AS AN EXAMPLE .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN A STRONGLY STRUCTURED VET AND CVT-SYSTEM? .....	6
2.2 STRONGLY STRUCTURED SYSTEM: MODEL OF A PORTFOLIO FOR LIFELONG LEARNING – METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS .....	6
2.3 MODEL OF A PORTFOLIO FOR LIFELONG LEARNING - CONTENTS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR A STRONGLY STRUCTURED SYSTEM .....	7
2.4 STRONGLY STRUCTURED SYSTEM: MODEL OF A PORTFOLIO FOR LIFELONG LEARNING – EXAMPLES .....	7
2.5 “KOMPETENZBILANZ” - PORTFOLIO FOR IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF INFORMAL LEARNING .....	7
2.6 MODEL PROJECT FOR IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING: „PROFILPASS“ .....	8
2.7 MODEL OF A PORTFOLIO FOR LIFELONG LEARNING - „KOMPETENZHANDBUCH“ AS AN EXAMPLE – PART ONE .....	8
<b>3 SOCIETAL CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A PORTFOLIO OF LIFELONG LEARNING IN A STRONGLY STRUCTURED SYSTEM.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4 CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5 SELECTED WEB SITES .....</b>	<b>10</b>

# 1 Societal preconditions in a corporate structure of VET and CVT

In Germany the VET and CVT are embedded in societal preconditions within a corporate structure. The VET and CVT- structure is connected with a strongly structured system of labour relations. VET and CVT are mostly governed by employer's association and trade unions. As a result VET and CVT- certificates have an impact on the legal labour rights of the employees. Therefore any accreditation of non-formal and informal learning has to be treated according to the laws and agreements in labour relations!

## Influence on content and organisation of VET



Source: OECD „Education at a glance“ 2003

Because non-formal and informal learning has to be treated according to the laws and agreements in labour relations most of the European Principles are partly secured. In this respect validation of non-formal and informal learning is already an integral part of human resource development based on social dialog. Guidance is not required. Impartiality is required although not always secured (with respect to training of assessors). The unions are included, however often not on an operational level. The individual is entitled to his/her right to appeal.

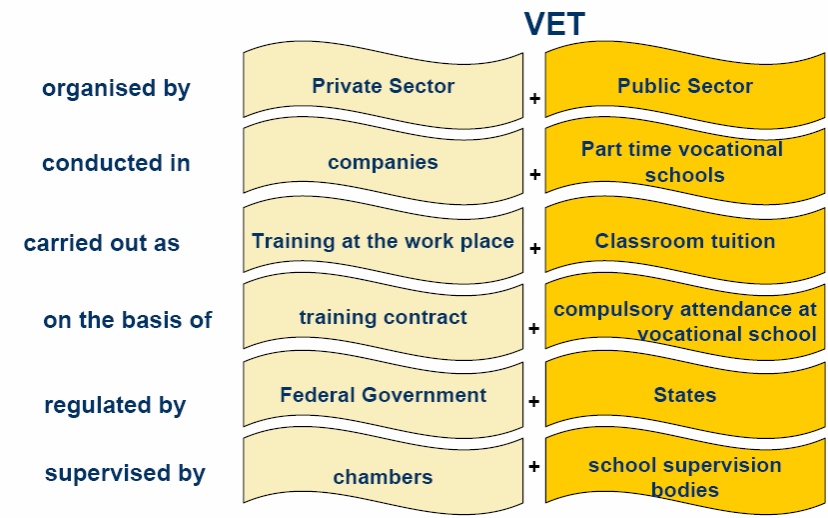
## 1.1 Relevance of non-formal and informal learning in a corporate structure – Germany as an example

In Germany there is no legal framework for lifelong learning. Initiatives for validation of non-formal and informal learning within continuing education are without formalized legal framework. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of the lifelong learning initiative is gaining more attention in Germany. Even though there is a rising awareness of the individual's responsibility and self-organization capabilities in continuing education a legal framework only becomes important when certificates are used in connection with an actual employment.

## 1.2 Relevance of non-formal learning in the (dual) apprenticeship system

In Germany there is a strong legal framework for lifelong learning in formal context.

### Characteristic Elements of Dual VET-System in Germany

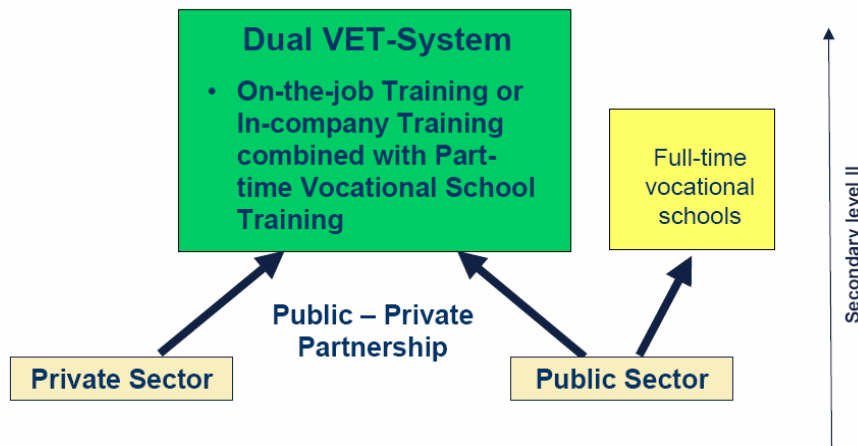


Source: BIBB "The Dual Vocational Education and Training System in Germany" 2005

Due to the dual apprenticeship system there are two learning environments which provide the necessary highly qualified workforce:

1. **Vocational training places outside school** (on the job) are offering formal learning options, e.g. cooking according to the instructions of the „Meister“ (master) and non-formal learning options, e.g. observing and participating in the daily work process. Based on the *Ausbildungsordnungen* (training regulations), the training companies impart specific and general technical skills for practical application on the job.
2. **The School-based learning (training at the Berufsschule)** is offering mainly formal learning options. In the context of the dual system of vocational education the Berufsschule is an autonomous place of learning. It works together on an equal footing with the companies participating in vocational training. The function of the Berufsschule is to provide pupils with general and vocational education, having particular regard for the requirements of vocational training. *Berufsschulen* are also expected to offer courses preparing for vocational education or accompanying professional activities. Berufsschulen equip their pupils with basic and specialised vocational training, adding to the general education they have already received. The purpose is to enable them to carry out their occupational duties and to help shape the world of work and society as a whole with a sense of social and ecological responsibility.

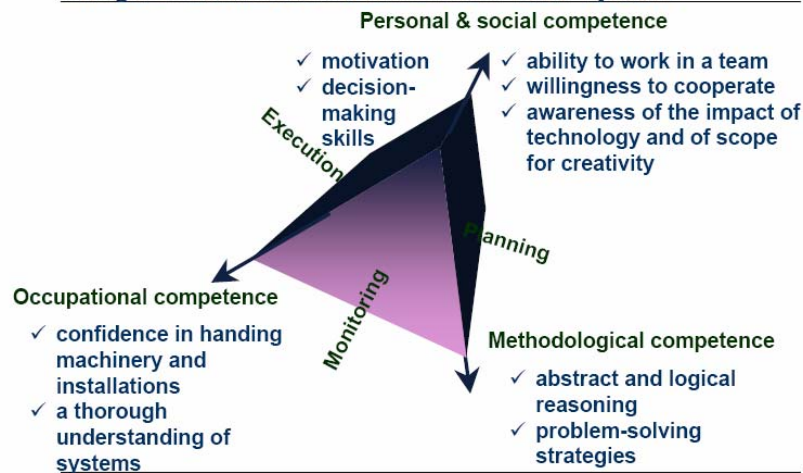
## The German VET-System



Source: BIBB “The Dual Vocational Education and Training System in Germany” 2005

The final examination at the end of the 3 ½ year turn of vocational training is only testing some specific abilities, skills and knowledge. It is expected that the background and competence of the trainee is much broader than shown in the final examination. This goes back to an **“input oriented idea of VET”**. Therefore non formal and informal learning is no alternative to an apprenticeship in the dual system and a separate accreditation of non-formal and informal learning only becomes relevant in CVT!

### Range of Qualifications obtained in Dual System



Source: BIBB “The Dual Vocational Education and Training System in Germany” 2005

## **2 Relevance of non- formal and informal learning for CVT and lifelong learning- Germany as an example**

Most CVT courses are similar to the IVET-principles where non-formal learning is included in the formal learning („Meister“ in the crafts and industry). The accreditation is only complementary to the formally accredited occupational certificates. The „profiling“ schemes are the most important case of identification of non-formal and informal learning in Germany.

The „Profiling“ schemes on behalf of the labour office assess competences and skills for the re-integration into the labour market including eg. former occupational experience, content related knowledge, curriculum vitae, mother tongue, foreign language(s), IT-skills, personal and key-competences. The „Profiling“-schemes have no formal system of accreditation and the fact that the profiling-sheet is owned by the labour office is contradictory to European Principles.

### **2.1 Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in a strongly structured VET and CVT-system?**

One major initiative by public authorities recently promoting the topic of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Germany is the „Weiterbildungspass“/ „ProfilPass“ initiative. This initiative is a study on the feasibility of a „Weiterbildungspass“ (model of a national pass certifying informal learning) on a national scale. It is a model project of the „Federal and States Committee on Planning Education and Promoting Research“ („Bund-Länder Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschungsförderung“) financed and commissioned by the „German Federal and States Ministries of Education“ („Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung- BMBF“).

### **2.2 Strongly structured system: model of a portfolio for lifelong learning – methods and instruments**

There are two different types of methods and instruments the passes use. The first pass operates with an open recording system. This means that the performed activity is described in a concrete context, the duration is registered and both are certified by a third person or organization. The open list of suggested competences (e.g. ability to work in a team or to work independently etc.) can be completed by the person who fills it out. The second type of pass is based on a closed recording system. A complete list of competences is given so the person who fills it out and additional recordings can not be added.

## **2.3 Model of a portfolio for lifelong learning - contents and conclusions for a strongly structured system**

In regard to the assessment stage in the open and closed system the first and main step is the documentation of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The assessment stage consists mostly of self-evaluation of the pass owner along a given list of competences. There are little systematic and checkable procedures and the assessment stage does not go beyond describing learning efficiencies and competences. Institutions that scientifically measure the recorded competences are not involved.

The pass owner collects and documents e.g. school leaving certificates (formal), formally accredited occupational certificates, formally accredited certificates of further Education, formally accredited certificates of continuing education (particularly including non-formal learning), work certificates issued by the employers (comprehending mostly non-formally acquired competencies).

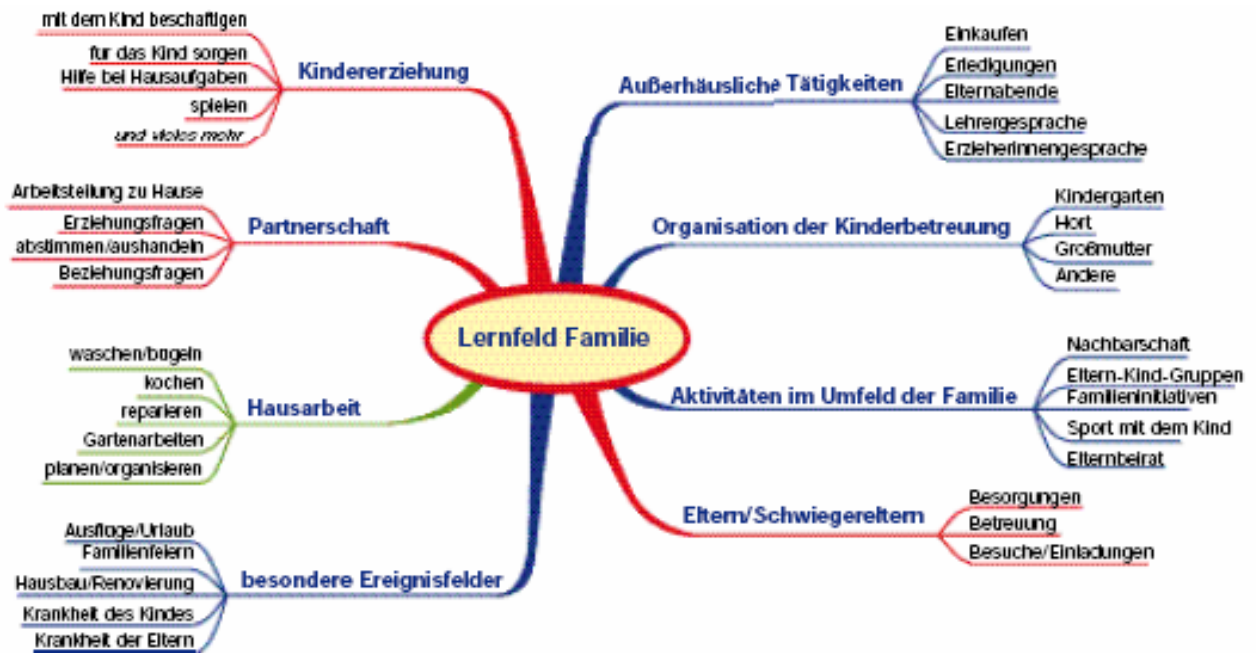
## **2.4 Strongly structured system: model of a portfolio for lifelong learning – examples**

There are several pass initiatives in the honorary sector (related to citizenship) like the portfolio "Nachweismappe Ehrenamt" and "Hamburger Freiwilligenbuch" (Hamburg voluntary booklet) as well as in the public sector, like the "Kompetenzbilanz" (competence record) by the "Deutsches Jugendinstitut" (National Research Centre for Studies on Youth) and like the "Kompetenzhandbuch" (handbook on competences) by "IG Metall" (union for metal workers).

## **2.5 "Kompetenzbilanz" - portfolio for identification and evaluation of informal learning**

The "Kompetenzbilanz" (a competence record by the German national research centre for studies on youth- "Deutsches Jugendinstitut") is the only pass in Germany that uses a real measure instrument for assessing competences. It derives fields of experiences from family related activities and analyses by questions like "What have I learned from this" or "Which competences have I acquired by this activity". These competences are assessed on a five level scale from level 1: "I am very good at it" to level 5 "I am not good at it".

The "Kompetenzbilanz" shows the highest level of complexity with characteristics describing the operational steps including e.g. biographical learning environments, important learning experiences (mind-map), learning experiences drawn from family related learning situations (mind map), coping strategies, field of activity and necessary competences, daily schedule (table showing learning experiences), relation of learning in the family to learning during work, table of personal profile of competencies, self- and external evaluation (friends, supervisor, counsellor) and a checklist for using the competence profile.



Source: DJI “Competence record” 2000

## 2.6 Model project for identification and evaluation of formal, non-formal and informal learning: „ProfilPASS“

The “ProfilPass” wants to bring home to the pass owner that it is important to have an overview of one’s life and to look back at what is important today by documenting competencies gained in fields of activity like hobbies, household, family, school, vocational education, work, voluntary work and special life circumstances.

By documenting the competencies gained in the named learning environments the pass owner can get an overview of his/her abilities and competences (balance) and is able to look at his/her wishes and personal goals, preferred leisure time, work activities as well as interests to be liked to pursued (goals and next steps).

The “ProfilPass” also follows common recommendations for the „Europass“.

## 2.7 Model of a portfolio for lifelong learning - „Kompetenzhandbuch“ as an example – part one

The “Kompetenzhandbuch” (handbook on competences) was originally devised by the metal workers union (IG Metall) for the IT occupations. It gives a list of competences for the following areas: professional, method and social competence. Each competence area comprises between nine and 16 individual skills. Its aim is to „to collect, identify, discover and make visible personal and occupational competences” using three steps:



**First step:**

portfolio (analysis for the individual profile of competences like strengths and weaknesses)

**Second step:**

standardized questionnaire for the analysis of personal „potentials“ including e.g., contentedness with the present occupational situation, fields of interest, key competencies, self-confidence, possible fields of future work

**Third step:**

Action planning looking at aims of personal development and endeavours for realising these objectives.

### **3 Societal conditions for implementing a Portfolio of lifelong learning in a strongly structured system**

The study on the feasibility of a „Weiterbildungspass“ concludes that employers want documentation and evaluation to be as comprehensive as possible but they are not prepared to provide the necessary resources. On the other hand employees fear that the transparency shown to the employer can lead to their being occupied by the information given to the employer.

Further the study on the feasibility of “Weiterbildungspass” concludes that the goals of the pass initiatives move between individual, societal and corporate demands and that the passes operate incomplete and with little systematic procedures. As a fact additional recordings can not be included or external institutions that measure the competencies are not involved.

One particular demand of the unions is that not only outcomes should be documented but also the processes of learning which show the ability and openness for learning. Some work agreements already contain this requirement laws guiding labour relations and have to be recognised when the portfolio is used by the employers (counselling is substantial).

### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

The portfolio is recognized on individual, societal and corporate level but the legal conditions only allow the accreditation and implementation of non-formal and informal learning to a certain degree since non formal and informal learning is no alternative to an apprenticeship in the dual system and a separate accreditation of non-formal and informal learning only becomes relevant in CVT! Various initiatives show the relevance of the topic in the national arena and willingness on national scale to implement non-formal and informal learning into the legal framework of continuing education. But it is too early compare the efficiency and effectiveness of many initiatives since non-formal and informal learning moves between individual, corporate and societal demands.

## 5 Selected Web Sites

Title	Address
"Vocational Training in the Dual System" - Federal Republic of Germany	<a href="http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/150_base/en/init/ger_3.htm">http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/150_base/en/init/ger_3.htm</a>
"The Dual Vocational Education and Training System in Germany", Keynote Speech on Dual Vocational Training International Conference 2005 Taiwan/ 25. April 2005 by Dr. Gisela Dybrowski- Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training- BIBB	<a href="http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/a23_international_es_dybowski-taiwan_april-05.pdf">http://www.bibb.de/dokumente/pdf/a23_international_es_dybowski-taiwan_april-05.pdf</a>
„Competence record“ („Die Kompetenzbilanz- Eigene Stärken erkennen und beruflich nutzen“)- German National Research Centre for Studies on Youth- DJI	<a href="http://cgi.dji.de/bibs/33_633komp.pdf">http://cgi.dji.de/bibs/33_633komp.pdf</a>
"Handbook on competences" ("Das Kompetenzhandbuch" )- Metal unions workers- IG Metall	<a href="http://www2.igmetall.de/homepages/siegen/leistungennfrarbeitnehmer/infopaket/allesberweiterbildungjobnavigator/kompetenzhandbuchderigmetall.html">http://www2.igmetall.de/homepages/siegen/leistungennfrarbeitnehmer/infopaket/allesberweiterbildungjobnavigator/kompetenzhandbuchderigmetall.html</a>
"Education at a glance" 2004- OECD	Subscribers and readers at subscribing institutions can access the report "Education at a glance" via source OECD (online library). Non-subscribers can purchase the report via the online bookshop of OECD.
Hamburg voluntary booklet (Hamburger Freiwilligenbuch)- Patriotic Society 1765 (Patriotische Gesellschaft von 1765)	<a href="http://www.freiwerk.de/projekte/freiwilligenbuch">http://www.freiwerk.de/projekte/freiwilligenbuch</a> <a href="http://www.patriotische-gesellschaft.de/?doc=117">http://www.patriotische-gesellschaft.de/?doc=117</a>
Voluntary booklet (Nachweismappe Ehrenamt)- Youth Organization of „Hessen“ (Hessischer Jugendring)	<a href="http://www.kompetenznachweis.de/dynasite.cfm?dssid=49&amp;dsmid=586">http://www.kompetenznachweis.de/dynasite.cfm?dssid=49&amp;dsmid=586</a> <a href="http://www.hessischer-jugendring.de/service/veroeffentlichung/arbeit.htm">http://www.hessischer-jugendring.de/service/veroeffentlichung/arbeit.htm</a>