The German Approach to
Creative planning of a meaningful life
through the appraisal of
Interests and Desires

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Content

1 Context / background

The financial support and the diversity of offers for further education schemes and re-integration schemes for unemployed people or women returners have been reduced to a huge extent during the last years. Furthermore this process of limitation has increased since the labour market and social reforms. These laws which are called HARTZ laws in colloquial language because the head of the working group who developed these laws was Peter Hartz who was at the same time the personnel chief manager of Volkswagen.

Since the beginning of 2005 people who have been unemployed for more than three years receive a benefit which is called Arbeitslosengeld II (ALG II). According to the law which established this type of benefit which is at the same time a successor as well as a combination of the former "Arbeitslosenhilfe" (unemployment benefit) and "Sozialhilfe" (social benefit) this new benefit is called HARTZ IV in colloquial German.

This is for a person who lives on his own € 345 per month. Additionally the rent for an appartment is paid. This means that the amount of the ALG II for the individual is not dependent on his qualifications or his former income. It depends on the living situation of the individual. Aspects like being married or having children or living in a partnership are the relevant features for the amount of support an individual can claim from the state.

Against this background especially people who live in a partnership with someone who is employed are affected because their benefit will be calculated with relation to the income of their partner. Therefore families with one person in employment with low income and one person who is unemployed are disadvantaged.

Regarding the support for being re-integrated in the labour market the reforms include a central aspect which changes the situation of unemployed people who "are on HARTZ IV".

They do not have a legal right to be supported in their endeavours to re-enter the labour market any longer. This means that they don not get any continuing vocational training financed according to the laws of the SGB III[1]. They can only

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[1] Sozialgesetzbuch III

ask for financial support with regard to application costs, mobility costs, job training or vocational education but there is no right to claim it.

The only chance for work and for increasing their income they have is to apply for a so called "One-Euro-Job", which is a job within the local community and which is reimbursed with one Euro per hour. They are allowed to work in such a job 30 hours per week so that they can earn a maximum of 120€ in addition.

This is one central instrument of the activating labour market policy. It originally aimed at keeping the unemployed people busy in searching for a job but in the contrary it turned out the be a problem for the communities.

These "One-Euro-Job" are a raising problem because a lot of persons affected would like to use this offer. Against all expectations a lot of them appreciate the option to work for a couple of hours in order to have a daily structure, in order to meet other people and also in order to increase their income a little bit.

Although the situation is difficult for the clients as well as for the communities we regard this situation as favourable for implementing our Interests and Desires course.

Because the clients need to be organised and looked after during their work it turned out that this process is quite expensive for the local communities. Therefore the local communities have given this responsibility to former training centers. So we face the ridiculous situation that clients have to go to institutions which have carried through continuing vocational training before in order to carry through the "One-Euro-Jobs" under the leadership of these institution.

As before – when the training centers still provided continuing vocational education courses – the quality and the engagement with which the guidance and looking after is carried through differs from institution to institution. While some institutions just take care that clients come in regularly others take the option to discover sensible fields of work within the community and to develop reasonable work projects.

2 From Self-Evaluation to Interests an Desires

Within the previous project Self-Evaluation which was a Reference Material project financed through the Leonardo da Vinci programme and which aimed at the identification of non-formal personal competencies for a better re-integration into the labour market we had already identified a difficult situation within the further education institutions before the coming into force of the HARTZ laws. In January 2005 there were only limited opportunities for field research on the theme of identification of non-formal and informal competencies in courses for unemployed people left because most of the courses for this target group were closed down.

Anyway these circumstances created through the social and labour market reforms led to the fact that all courses we were in contact with showed limitations between their duration, their quality and their implementation of phases for the self-evaluation of informal and non-formal competences. Additionally in most courses a very strict and overloaded structure was identified. Most of them showed the following characteristics: They took place over a period of two weeks full-time, they were carried through by private or half private institutions in the continuing education sector which receive the funding from the labour office (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), the main central subjects of the courses were application writing and connected with this basic skills in using computers and word processing programmes.

The self-evaluation of non-formal and informal competences played a minor role in these courses if it played any at all. The question if the self-evaluation of such competences was taken up at all as a subject was dependent on the interests, the qualification and the background of the trainers who carried through the courses. In some of our cases the trainers were students for vocational pedagogy. In these cases self-evaluation of informal and informal competences were at least taken into account at some point. The participants of the courses were interviewed about their former work experiences as well as about their additional experiences outside of work. In one-to-one interviews the trainers tried to develop future job perspectives together with the trainee.

It has to be mentioned at this point that at the stage of the Self- Evaluation proposal as well as at the beginning of the project we were in contact with courses

which aimed at assisting women returners to develop ideas about future possibilities for occupation. These courses were originally designed to take place over a period of three months. Therefore our former ideas for the implementation of methods and models for self-evaluation had to be reduced enormously and additionally they had to be adapted to the specific circumstances of two weeks courses. Against this background the module presented below can only fulfil the function of an incentive for self-evaluation. It aims at making the access of the participants to their own competences easier because a great part of them is not aware of them.

The conditions mentioned above led to this new project which addresses the problem of long term unemployment in a totally different way. It aims at helping people to change their perspective on being unemployed from being frustrated and feeling devalued to discovering opportunities of how to use these times in a creative way for their own interests and desires and maybe for societal developments and changes.

3 Target group

The target group of the courses briefly described above includes people between 18 and 55 years. The division between male and female participants is 60% to 40%.
A great part of the learners – about 60% of them - has passed an apprenticeship in crafts, in administration or in retail. Some of the young participants entered the course directly after their apprenticeship because they have not been taken on after their exam.[2]
The others have mainly worked in the service sector without any qualifications.
Most of them look back on an occupational career which has been interrupted several times and they have changed their employers several times. Nearly all of them have recently faced longer periods of unemployment and they receive ALG II. They report that it became more and more problematic for them to find employment during the last years and that they feel very insecure with regard to

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[2] There is a special section within the social and labour market reforms which gives young people under 25 the legal right for an "One-Euro-Job".

their future. Their motivation for being at the training center is widely spread. Since it is possible to increase the ALG II through "One Euro-Jobs" about an amount of 120€ a month a lot of the persons affected use this option not only because of the additional money but also because they feel less isolated if they can participate in some kind of work or if they go to one of the former training centers.

Even against the background that there doesn´t seem to be much hope for the clients to re-enter regular employment through their "One-Euro-Job". Nevertheless a great part of the clients expect that their participation will help them to get on and maybe to find a job again.

The expectations to find a job soon have, to a certain extent, to be led back to the unrealistic ideas of the participants on the one hand but also through the demands of the local community which still seems to pretend that everybody who wants to work would find work. In order to assist the client´s expectations some of the institutions which are in charge of looking after the clients still offer assistance in application writing. This leads to the situation that the changes on the micro level are not as big as pretended. The unrealistic expectations of the clients with regard to work options in future and their general perspective on work as paid work appeared to be one of the central problems for the success of the exploration of the Interests and Desires course. This will be argued in chapter 6.

4   Theoretical background of the course design

Regarding the theoretical background of the course design two main ideas need to be mentioned:
Firstly there is John L. Holland ´s theory of types of personality which has been developed since the 1960s in the US and which has become more and more popular in the European context during the last 15 years. Holland ´s central idea is that people have specific personality structures which are related to certain abilities which finally lead them to choose jobs in a specific field. Within his theory he divides between six types of personality: Realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, conventional.

He proved his setting through factor analysis. Today there are over 20000 job profiles in the USA which are described on the basis of Holland ´s theory of types of personality.

Since the 1960ies Holland´s ideas have been developed further in an extensive way. It is used for job finding processes, vocational orientation (e.g. Explorix) as well as for biographical planning of occupational career.

His theory has been developed further e.g. through Linda Gottfredson who focus on vocational choices theory. Very popular in different European countries are interactive based multiple choice tests for vocational choices which can be filled in online and which are – according to our research very popular in Romania, Germany, Austria and Danmark. These tests are maily designed for pupils which are in the process of vocational orientation.

These tests can be found through "google" under the headline *"Explorix"*[3]. Each of them consists of three levels: The **first level** demands the occupation seekers to choose from a variety of tasks which they are able to manage.

The heading of this level is: *What am I able to do?*

On the **second level** they are asked to choose from a variety of tasks those for which they have a specific interest.

The heading of this level is: *What would I like to do?*

The division between these two questions seem important to us with regard to the fact that the task one can manage does not consequently mean that it also suits his interests. On the contrary one might be interested in some kind of task although he/she is not able to manage them. Therefore the two questions will be taken over for the second step of the German model project which is described below.

On the **third level** a choice of occupations is given for each type of personality. The users are asked to choose those occupations which suit them best. In order to get the result of this test the user has to pay a small amount of money and he/she will receive the rest results by post.

While analysing this test we discovered a few <u>critical issues</u>:

   a) All occupation related to the investigative type of personality on level 3 are very close to academic endeavours.

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[3] www.explorix.de

b) The occupations related to the realistic type of personality on level 3 are very close to as well as a great part of the tasks on level 1 and 2 are strongly related to male handicraft.
c) There is a strong focus on salesmanship within the tasks and the occupations related to the enterprising type of personality
d) The social type of personality seems to be mainly related to children´s education, aspects like elderly care or nursing are poorly represented.

Nevertheless HOLLAND´s theory of personality seems applicable to our aim to assisting people in self-evaluating their non-formal and informal competences because his six types of personality are easy to defined in such a broad way that they allow to match a variety of occupations or jobs to them.

We use Holland´s theory as well as its adaption to practice as a starting point for the design of the German module for the creative planning of a meaningful life through the appraisal of Interests and Desires.

Realistic

Investigative

Conventional

Artistic

Enterprising

Social
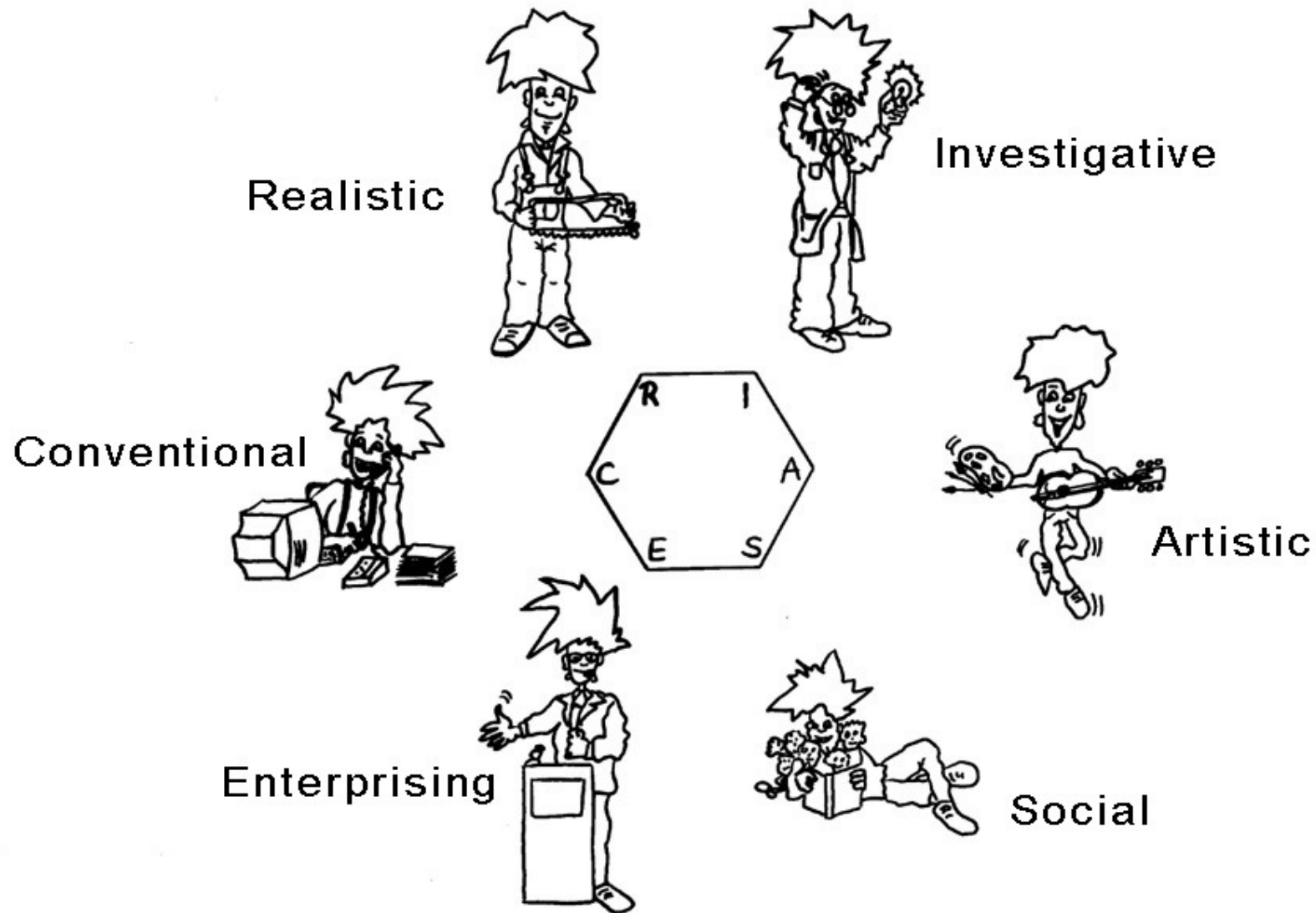
Secondly there is the **idea of action orientation** which has been a central focus in education and curriculum development in Germany during the last two decades. The idea of action orientation is based on the work of PIAGET, AEBLI, VYGOTSIKI and VOLPERT and has a central focus on the existence of complete actions.

Central characteristics of an action oriented learning context are given and explained below:

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Activation of   │
                    │ former          │
                    │ experiences and │
                    │ skills of the   │
                    │ individual      │
                    └─────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐    ┌─────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
│ product          │    │ the idea of │    │ process          │
│ orientation      │    │ action      │    │ orientation      │
└──────────────────┘    │ orientation │    └──────────────────┘
                        └─────────────┘
┌──────────────────┐                       ┌──────────────────┐
│ complete action  │                       │ team work        │
└──────────────────┘                       └──────────────────┘
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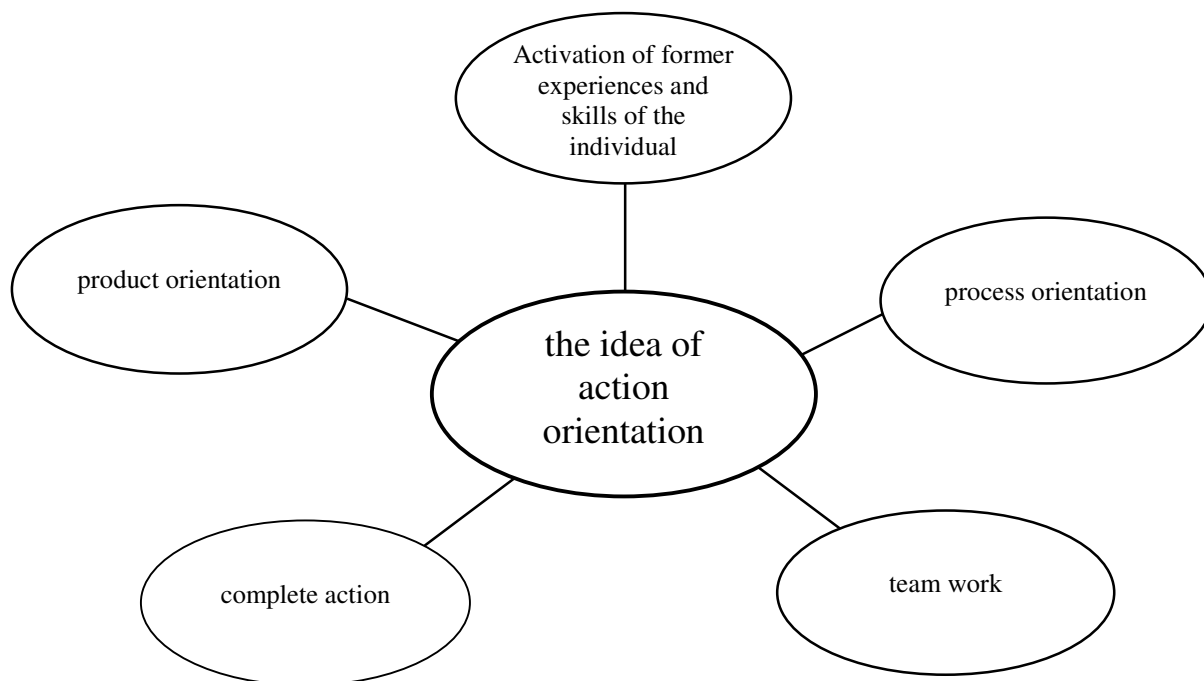
Process orientation: This means that the learners are allowed/are asked to construct their own approach and their own way of solving the task or the problem.

Product orientation: This means that firstly there is a final visible and presentable product at the end of the learning process. Secondly it contains the demand that this final product of the work process has a meaning to the learners and that it is useful.

Complete action: This means that the following steps are realised and carried through in the following order within the learning process: Collecting information, planning, decision making, carrying through, controlling, evaluating

Team work: This means that learning processes should not be carried out alone but in teams because within the group information processes could be carried

through, different ideas can be discussed and combined, products, solutions and the evaluation of both can be discussed and a multi-perspective reflection process is supported. Additionally the realisation of team work makes the learning process more realistic with regard to work processes.

Activation of former experiences and skills of the individual: This means that the task should be designed in such a way that it recalls the skills of the individuals and motivates them to make use of them. This is the characteristic which is most important with regard to the *Creative Planning of a meaningful life through the appraisal of interests and desires.*

5 Curriculum design

Participating in the courses and talking to the participants on an informal basis we learned that most of them are not aware of their own skills and competences. They feel insecure when they are interviewed about their former experiences in the job and in their leisure time. This leads them to say less or in some cases nothing about their additional interests and skills because they do not regard them as important or they do not see their relevance with regard to new job opportunities. Against this background which has additionally been investigated through interviews with trainers in the respective courses the filling in of the *profiling sheets*[4] for each learner which is an obligatory within the course is a very difficult and demanding task for the trainers which can not in all cases be completed in a way that supports the participant.

To meet and overcome these difficulties and restrictions we developed a method that starts with an action oriented incentive and impulse for the reflection of one´s own skills and competences and then leads the participants through reflection processes to develop own ideas regarding possible future job options.

We call this module *"The Flensburg Method for the creative planning of a meaningful life through the appraisal of Interests and Desires".* The whole module can be divided into four main stages:

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[4] Profiling sheets are questionnaire which have to be completed with information about each participant. These information are send to the labour office where they are the basis for the support the individual gets for job seeking. Main features of this questionnaire are formal qualifications of the individual, attitude to work, attendance during the course, manner etc.

The **first step** of the module focuses on experiencing situations and activities with different characteristics and demands which are based on HOLLAND´s theory of types of personality: Realistic (R), Investigative (I), artistic(A), social (S), enterprising (E), conventional (C). These situations and activities should be carried through in groups of two or three participants. The actual set of situations is the following:

R) realistic: model railway
sewing
model ships or steam engines building
repairing a bike
 building a high tower with paper

I) investigative: comparing and choosing an office chair

for people with a bad back

investigating a fault in a car
rearching into the cheapest ingredients for a meal

A) artistic: building an object for a model railway landscape

preparing and decorating a plate with bread roles
(Canapés)

designing a CD-cover for a specific song

S) social: role playing – intervention in a conflict

 e.g. house mates fight about,
washing up, friends argue about money

organising a party for people with different interests

organising a soccers training (related to enterprising)
            ???

E) enterprising: organising a political manifestation

organising the preparation of a large meal in a team with a limited budget

organising a party, planning the different tasks and choosing the right persons for each task

C) conventional: Book keeping about expenditures for a household

filling in transfers for one´s own bank account
find a sensible order for a variety of recepies

It has to be mentioned at this point that supplementary situations and activities could and should be developed either by the trainers if they do not feel that our setting is suitable for their specific target group or even by the participants themselves.

The **second step** of the German module is the common reflection of the experiences within small groups. Assistance and support of a trainer during this reflection might be offered if necessary and/or demanded by the participants. This reflection should focus on the questions *"What did I like?"* and *"What have I been able to do?"*. It is important that the impressions of the individual himself and the other members of the group are compared and discussed. Through this reflection process differences between own perceptions of ability and the perception others have from one´s ability should be completed to a realistic image as a starting point for further plans.

It depends on the setting of participants within the group if it is crucial that a trainer is involved in this reflection process.[5] On the one hand we regard it as important that there is the offer of assistance if the learners demand it and on the other hand it is crucial that the trainer observes and decides if a group needs assistance in reflecting their experiences during the situations and activities. This is a very high demand regarding the professional skills of the trainer who carries through the module because he has to balance his role between that of a counsellor and that of a leader/teacher. If he involves himself too strongly into the reflection process he might hamper it but on the other hand - he does not assist the reflection enough - the process might not start or it might not be as successful as it could be. In order to overcome this problem and in order to give the trainers a different perspective of the module we strongly suggest that they themselves go through the whole module process.

A good way to practice this might be to write down about oneself what types of personality according to HOLLAND´s theory someone expects to be. Then the situations and activities should be experienced and reflected in small groups and the members of one group might act as interviewers for members of another group in the interview of step 3. This own way through the module will support different aspects.

Firstly the trainers might develop additional ideas for different an further situations according to the six types of personality. Secondly the existing situations and activities might be improved.

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[5] As it will be shown in chapter 6 and 7 it seems favourable to involve a trainer in these group discussions in order to ensure that they take place.

Thirdly the trainers will experience themselves that there are differences between their self-image and the perspective other have on their abilities. This is important because trainers have sometimes difficulties to understand that there is such a big difference between how they regard a trainee and how the trainee regards himself. Fourthly going through the interview process as an interviewer and as the person to be interviewed might help them to develop their questions more precise and more careful.

All three levels and to a certain extent also the six dimensions are interrelated. On each level questions are asked which stimulate the self-reflection of the user and which have to be answered in relation to the personal situation and life circumstances. It is important to mention that the questions of the tool are formulated in a way that there is no option for short answers with "Yes" or "No". This is from our perspective the central difference and the main obvious advantage compared to the profiling sheets of the labour office (Bundesagentur für Arbeit). The reflection processes initiated through step two is much more going into depth.

As a **third step** possible future fields of activity for the participant should be developed. Therefore he can receive assistance through a third person which has not been involved in the first two steps. This should be a trainer within the course or it might also be a person from the careers office. Before starting the interview the participant should inform the interviewer which of the situations and activities were most suitable for him according to step one and two. Then it is the task of the trainer to build a connection between the results of the participant´s experiences in step one and two on the one hand and central features of influence in the life of the individual on the other hand. The aimed result of the interview is that the participant and the trainer come to a conclusion which contains possible fields of activity for the participant which are matching well with his personal life circumstances.

This interview is a very demanding task for the person who carries it through. It is very important that the trainer has broad experiences in guidance and counselling of the target group. In this context I would like to refer to the occupational standards for APEL professionals in France identified and described in the context

of the Leonardo Thematic Action EuroguideVAL (2005-2007).[6] A lot of aspects included in these occupational standards give good hints about what demands a trainer has to fulfil. They are very detailed and should therefore partly be used in the further process of this project as well.

From a pragmatic point of view it is at least crucial that the trainer is supported by a structure which helps him to take different aspects into account and to address the participant and his situation as a whole.

Holland´s dimensions of interests, wishes and abilities	R	I	A	S	E	C
Former learning contexts: ➢ formal: e.g. school ➢ non-formal: e.g. apprenticeship, work placement ➢ informal: e.g. family, sports club						
Competences: ➢ Occupational abilities interests wishes ➢ Social abilities interests wishes ➢ Personal abilities interests wishes						
Present experience and life circumstances ➢ Unemployed ➢ Woman returner ➢ Employed, seeking for new field of activity						
Potential future activities Individual activities ➢ Networking activities ➢ Activities related to citizenship						

Therefore we propose the structure above which points out four central fields of content for the interview:

The **historical field** refers to former learning contexts of the participants.

The **actual field** refers to the competences of the individual as well as to his interests and wishes. This information should be combined with the actual individual life circumstances on the third field.

The **field of present experiences and life circumstanc**es refers to the actual living situation and combines these with the experiences which the participant has gained during the situation and activities in the first step.

Finally future options for activities outside gainful employment are discussed in the fourth field **"possible future activities"** of the interview.

Below the fields are explained further more detailed:

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[6] Cf. www.euroguideval.org

The **historical field** refers to former learning contexts. The term learning contexts has to be understood in a very wide sense because it takes into account formal learning contexts like school and workplace but it focusses more on other more informal learning contexts like one´s family or one´s sports club. Additionally it refers to non-formal learning contexts which might be the social context within one´s apprenticeship or one´s field of work.

The **actual field** refers to the individual competences of the participants. The division in this field is based on Heinrich ROTH´s distinction between subject related competence, social competence and self-competence. In this context questions about the occupational, the social and the personal competences should be asked.

The **field of present experiences and life circumstances** pays attention to the fact that specific life circumstances might hinder the trainees from working in the fields of their interests and wishes. This should be avoided by all means because any kind of disappointment should be ruled out in order not to destabilise the participant. This part of the interview is a preliminary stage of the following field in which future job opportunities should be developed. Central questions which should be discussed with the trainee in this third field are questions like

"Do the identified abilities, interests and wishes fit well with former jobs or are they contradictory?", "Has the participant known about these abilities, interests and wishes before?", "Is it possible to combine the own interests with family responsibilities like child care?, "Is it at all possible to realise the abilities, interests and wishes identified through the situations and activities in the world of work?", "Might it be easier to realise the own abilities, interests and wishes in other contexts?" or "What context might be suitable for the realisation of the discovered abilities, interests and wishes?".

The fourth field **"possible future fields of activity"** is the most difficult part of the interview because, as found out in interviews with the target group, the trainee expects the trainer to make proposals for possible future fields of activity. It is demanded that the trainer is not only an expert regarding the wide range of fields in which somebody could engage but that he is also capable to point out ways of

finding a contact address where the person affected and his/her engagement is welcomed.

Beside all these demands it has to be pointed out clearly that the trainer can only be an assistant in finding suitable fields of activity. The decision process which leads to a specific activity and personal engagement is within the responsibility of the participant. It might be useful that trainer and trainee use material like lists with examples for voluntary work, examples for networking activities or even leisure activities.

6 Implementation and Evaluation

Within the first exploration phase of the Interests and Desires project the basic module of the project was implemented at an institution which deals with clients who are receiving ALG II and who want to improve their income through a "One-Euro-Job". In the past this training center - before the coming into force of the HARTZ-laws - developed a lot of expertise in working with long term unemployed people and especially with young people who have never had a job.

6.1 Characteristics of Exercises

The whole seminar was centred on self-evaluation. Every participant made an assessment of his or her own performance. Hence a good working atmosphere could be created, a fact that was perceived as very pleasant by all individuals. All persons taking part in the seminar pointed out that they did not feel like in an exam situation. They did not feel to be set under pressure as well. Ute had been scared in the beginning, that data collected during the seminar could not be handled confidentially. The fact, that she needed to be repeatedly reinsured, underscores the importance of a basis of mutual trust for the project as a whole. The fact, that all participants joined the project voluntarily, proved helpful in this connection. The same is true for the fact, that the elaboration of exercises and group reflections were conducted self-reliantly. Thus part of the seminar´s success was delegated to the participants. Particularly Martin´s statement proved the motivating effect. He felt himself committed to cooperate, at least to some degree. Not all exercises were considered as interesting by the participants. Still they normally were carried out without complaints. No cases of work refusal could be noticed.

Generally the exercises were considered to be varied. Working was perceived as fun under these conditions. Yet the different tasks have not been considered to be demanding enough. This is the perception of all individuals with the exception of Ute and Maike. The exercises were prearranged in detail, offering only little room to make own decisions and work self-reliantly. At least the volume of the specific work exercises should be enlarged to enable the individuals to assess their own interests. Marc added, that more demanding exercises would potentially improve the ability to evaluate own competences. Frank mentioned that he had difficulties to assess his own capabilities. To him a standard of comparison was missing. The space of time, being half an hour to complete an exercise, was generally regarded to be sufficient. The time needed varied though very much depending on the task that had to be fulfilled. Insufficient spaces rendered the ability to come to conclusions concerning self-evaluation. The participants stated that demand of work exercises as well as space of time would have to be increased. Adequate spaces ranged from ¾ of an hour to a complete working day.

6.2 Relationship of Course Members

All members without any exception emphasized the good relations among the participants. Even though the subdivision into groups was conducted randomly, all individuals felt being treated equally and accepted. Every one of them got the opportunity to bring him or her in. The result was an effective cooperation. Due to differences in performance level of the different members, partly work shares were unequally distributed. Yet this was not perceived as a disadvantage. The arrangement of groups was considered as sensible under given conditions. Teamwork was fun, as most of the participants stated. The opportunity to help others was seen as a positive effect, as the leader of the seminar assessed. The result was that even those exercises, which were not considered interesting at all, were completed. Martin for instance, was convinced by his group members to complete the exercise with crafts-technical orientation, even though he disliked it.

Teamwork and a good relation to the team members were seen as the decisive condition leading to a positive perception of the seminar. Two individuals remarked that they would like the teamwork phases being completed with phases, were the participants could work on their own. A better self-evaluation could be the result,

especially if competences already exist within the specific work field. In the second case a female participant mentioned that she considered it as helpful, if she could do certain exercises on her own. Particularly if she encountered difficulties regarding a certain exercise.

Due to the basis of trust that could successfully be created, all participants, with only one exception, remarked that it has been able to frankly lay open their assessment in group reflections. Only one participant considered the situation as unpleasant, perhaps because of a lack of self-confidence. It has though to be considered that all individuals were acquainted to one another for several months. They knew one another since they started working at "Zeitraum". Thus they already had a good relationship before the seminar started. Also has to be taken into account that the group constellation was arranged randomly. Other constellations could potentially ended up in a breakdown of the group or work refusal. This is particularly true in Martin´s case.

6.3 Relationship toLeaders / Trainers of the Seminar

Some of the participants described their relationship to the trainers of the workshop as open, honest, frank, sympathetic as well as pleasant and free from stress. Others stated that due to the short period of time, they did not have problems. They also had the feeling, that the trainers could be addressed any time to get support. Concerning the interview it has to be remarked that the participants reacted rather reserved. They were obviously irritated by the sometimes very personal questions.

Due to the open atmosphere it was possible to win all participants to talk about themselves, with the exception of Frank. In the final interview, no comments were made about the previous interview that could have suggested that the situation was considered as unpleasant. Sometimes it seemed that some participants welcomed the fact of others showing interest for their specific situation. They seemed to be open for recommendations.

6.4 Reasons for the lack of Effectiveness of the Initiative

Unfortunately the initiative proved only little effectiveness regarding the participants. The proceeding in action-oriented self-evaluations was new to them. But in the end, no changes in assessments of interests and competences could be realized during the course of the seminar. No new aspects of their personality could be discovered. Various factors are responsible that should be discussed in more detail.

6.4.1 Orientation towards Themes of Exercises

To make an accurate self-evaluation, it is import to assess interests and competences related to the activities that have to be conducted. The interest in the specific theme (content) or example is of minor importance. One example is the Tiffany-exercise. Not the Tiffany-exercise itself was of interest, but the assessment of activities that lead to its completion. However this was not realized by the participants. Often it seemed as if the completion of a specific interest or task had priority above the reflection related to it. This was stressed by the fact that half of the participants pointed out that the exercises were not new to them. No activities were included, which they had not done before on their own accord. Most of the participants considered the exercises as not demanding enough. Consequently the activities were completed very quickly, like day-to-day tasks and routines. It also showed that specific parts of the exercises had a deep impact on the participants´ assessment of a specific task. This was especially true in the cases of Andreas, Ute and Martin. Their issues were regularly related to the specific content or theme of an exercise, not to the activities that had to be conducted. Although the cognitive test identified Martin as a type of personality with an orientation towards activities in the field of handicrafts, he judged the corresponding exercise with a low mark. The wrong material had to be treated. The same is true for Andreas. He also criticized the material used to fulfil the crafts-technical exercise. The deviation was yet not as significant. He rather corresponds to the salesman/leader type if we refer to the model of type of personality by Holland. He generally did not show an orientation towards handicrafts-technical activities.

6.4.2 Influence on Perception by Level of Standards (Demand)

It showed that self reliant assessments of interests and competences were influenced by the level of standards for a specific exercise. This was particularly true if an exercise proved to be too demanding. The effect was a negative assessment of the exercise as a whole. This effect could be noticed regarding Maike and Ute. While Maike initially showed strong interest in the crafts-technicl orientated exercise, she finally made a low assessment of the task due to the degree of difficulty, which she considered too high. The same is true for Ute completing the leadership-salesman exercise. It has to be stated that a clear issue could not be made about the relation between self-evaluation and real type of personality. The relation may be influenced by other factors as well. Degree of difficulty of a specific exercise, respectively the interest in a specific activity may also have had an effect.

6.4.3 Lack of Comparison between Self-perception and Perception by others

Despite of the basis of trust that could be created within the group, and despite of the written instruction, no comparison of self-evaluation with evaluation by others happened. The individuals did not realize the importance of the reflection phases. Especially the utterances by Andreas and Reza show that a detailed discussion of own competences did not take place. They merely made an assessment of the motivation they felt while fulfilling certain tasks. These assessments did though not include an evaluation of their own competences. Individual assessments were largely influenced by group assessments. This may have lead to a falsification of results. The reflection in groups bears the risk that especially shy members join the group's opinion instead of making deviating judgements. If a deeper insight into own competences could not be achieved, a lack of self-realization is consequently the result. On the other hand self-realization was supposed to be the basis for a later training interview. None of the participants was able to discover new sides of their own personality. Hence the exercises during the seminar were not regarded as helpful to assess own competences and interests. Thus the assessment given before the seminar did not deviate from the one made afterwards. The most significant changes could be realized in Maike´s case.

Although she herself was not able to identify any changes, the trainers definitely did. Her self-realization respectively perception of her own personality seemed to be by far more detailed following the seminar. Andreas perceived the seminar as a kind of refreshment of interests. Almost forgotten interests came into focus. An inquiry according to the multiple-choice systematic would not have been able to reveal these findings. The objective of the seminar was to show the participants new perspectives for an employment. This aim could not be accomplished. It has to be considered that all participants practice certain hobbies. Thus they are embedded into a social environment.

The following participants regularly practice activities:

- Bernd is a musician. He plays music in a band. He also helps his parents, who work on a farm. Besides this he has various interests.
- Reza joins courses at the adult college. He repairs electric devices in his leisure time.
- Günter plays Skat and Dart in a Club.
- Andreas is active in an allotment Garden Club. He cares for a playground for dogs on a voluntary basis. He also cares for his co-inhabitants, who are mentally ill.
- Ute has only little time for hobbies due to her job on the adventure playground. She wanted to dedicate herself to textile works. She already bought a sewing machine, a fact, which underlines her intentions. During the interview, she pointed out that she already planned activities together with her parents as well as with her brothers and sisters.

All these individuals are long-term unemployed. Yet they do not seem to be in danger of isolating themselves or to glide into passivity. Hence they do not really belong to the target group, which the project originally wanted to examine. The fact that all individuals examined already spent their time actively could also have had an effect on the project's results. New fields of activity could not be discovered, because they already had leisure-time occupations, which satisfy them. From that perspective it can be questioned, whether the whole research had a representative outcome.

6.5 Acceptance of the Seminar

Even though the participants did not consider the seminar as helpful to find new fields of interest, still they made a positive final judgement. They regarded it as a variety to their day-to-day life. They generally considered the approach as sensible, even though it was not in their specific case. They marked the seminar with a 1-3 according to the German measure of school marks. The fact that the course members kept cooperating up to the very end as well as the fact that they remained open and positive within the interviews, indicate that the seminar was accepted. Thus the question, whether the seminar found acceptance among the course members, can clearly be answered with "Yes"!

6.6 Acceptance of the Project's Objectives

While the acceptance of proceeding in form of self-evaluation could clearly be proved, there is no unique picture concerning the project's objectives.

6.6.1 Acceptance of the Projects Objectives in general

Most of the participants remain deeply influenced by the working life experiences. Hence they stick to income-related occupations. This is true even for those, who already tried for years to find an employment. The opinion was dominant among all participants that they would once be successful in finding a job. An income-related occupation clearly had priority above those activities without payment. Activities in honorary post, just to spend time, were generally not accepted, at least not on the long run. This was considered a less-than-ideal solution. Most of the participants still prefer an income-oriented approach. They would not change this approach on a volunteer basis. This was extremely significant with Frank, Günter and Maike. They seemed to be deeply influenced by their original vocation. Perceiving competences and interests outside the field of their original vocation proved to be almost impossible. Günter for instance was influenced by his vocation as a joiner. Although he completed the artificial exercise extraordinarily successful, he did not recognize a specific gift for such tasks in himself. Yet he made a good self-assessment for this exercise. He did not want to change his view as it showed in the final interview. "I have learned a vocation and I do not

want to change it at my age - perhaps a little bit into a different direction, but not too much – a job as a janitor would be ok." Frank also made clear that he did not want to change his attitude. He told in the interview that the seminar did not help him at all. He also remarked that he would apply on the working market again, after the engagement at "Zeitraum" had come to an end. He did not show himself open for alternative concepts. The questions, how he wanted to spend the time till he would re-enter the working market remained unexplained.

The influence of a certain vocation was not dominant in Maike´s case. However she tended to favour occupations related to existing vocations. She mentioned activities normally practiced by retailers, charwomen and waitresses as possible leisure time activities. She also named occupations, like to care for old people or to help old people doing their shopping or homework. But she only wanted to fulfil these tasks against payment. Ute also favoured activities for the benefit of other people. In the end she came to the same conclusion as Maike did. She only wanted to do it against payment. Only two participants had a deviating view. Bernd and Andreas seemed to assess their chances more realistically. They considered their chances to find a job as little and therefore they seemed to be open to rethink their attitudes.

In both cases the biographical background has to be taken into account. Bernd looks back on an almost excessive life. With his 54 years, he is the oldest course member. He is able to look back on his past experiences and use it for his self-realization. Therefore he is able to take a more relaxed point of view looking into the future. Overcoming drug and social problems might possibly lead to a change of attitude in Andreas´ case. He uttered that he is satisfied with life as it is and that he would like to enjoy it.

6.6.2 Specific Acceptance of various Forms of Activities

It turned out during the seminar that specific leisure time activities find different degrees of acceptance. Generally they can be subdivided in 3 levels. The lowest level consists of activities that one person is able to do on his or her own, often at home. The time and the space of time to practice an activity are assigned individually by the person him or herself. The aim of activities of this category is mainly to satisfy the person's own needs. Textile works, as mentioned by Ute, fall

into this category. Activities of this kind receive highest recognition. The target group comprising individuals, who could not name possible activities, was the least open to start a regular occupation of this category.

The second level is represented by activities, which are conducted within a social context. An example for such an occupation could be for instance an engagement in a club. Thus the participants are integrated into a specific institutional framework as well as they are pinned down to a specific time to practice their activity. The activities require a regular participation.

The activities of this level are clearly recognized as leisure time activities. The acceptance is though significantly lower. The reasons for this categorization could however not be discovered. It can be assumed that a lack of self confidence hinders the participants to enter a new social environment. Long term lack of activity could as well have resulted in an inability to organize life according to new activities.

On the third level, activities can be found that are practiced within a social context for the benefit of others. These are voluntarily done activities on an honourable post. These activities are the least recognized. Two reasons can be made responsible. On one hand these activities are as demanding as those of the second level concerning socialization and restructuring of daily tasks. On the other hand these activities are no longer regarded as leisure time activities. They are considered services. Thus a payment seems to be appropriate. The fact that they are asked to fulfil these tasks without payment, is probably perceived as an abuse of their precarious situation. Thus they react sensitive concerning such recommendations. They are definitely not willing to work for nothing.

7 Summary / Conclusions

The results of the research suggest that the method self-evaluation generally is accepted by the participants. Still it proved a difficult task to show unemployed people sensible activities apart from the working life. This is true not only for the framework, but also for the seminar itself. It has to be taken into account that the participants are only partially open to the objectives of the project. It seems

Godfredsson is right in her assumption that the prestige level of activities plays a dominant role for the recognition by the participants.

This can be a crucial issue for the project as a whole. It has to be picked out as a control theme for the future development of the project. Only if acceptance can be achieved for this objective, the project gets a realistic chance for implementation.
A solution to the problem can only be found within the context of society as a whole. Striving for a rethinking must be the aim. Participants must be enabled to draw self-affirmation from unpaid activities. That is the only way to make acceptance of the objective finally prevail.

The project addresses primarily those unemployed individuals, who are in danger of getting isolated or tend to glide into a passive state or are already passive. On the other hand the seminar builds up on voluntary participation. Hence a certain degree of motivation is indispensable for the initiative. This however seems to be a difficult demand, bearing in mind the target group comprising people, who are already in a destructive state.

Therefore it is important to animate them to join such programs before they face severe problems. The one-Euro-forces of the institution "Zeitraum" should therefore be given a chance for a self-evaluation before they leave. At least if a further employment is not at hand. This might help them to overcome the situation of losing an at least "similar-to-work" activity. Recruiters from the peer group could be employed to persuade individuals to join seminars like self-evaluation if the addressees already glided into passivity.

During the seminar it proved a difficult task to support the participants in making a realistic self-assessment. For most of the course members the seminar turned out to be only little effective in showing new fields of interest and competence. Hence no new perspectives could be acquired. But this is something the measure action oriented self-evaluation can not be blamed for. It originates from difficulties that occurred during the course of the investigation. In this connection it has to be taken into account that this was the first attempt to conduct such an initiative. The findings gained during this research can therefore be regarded a helpful source of information for those, who intend to conduct further seminars of that kind.

It may have influenced the results that more than half of the participants did not originate from the original target group. Furthermore it has to be stated that the capacity of the different participants vary widely. An investigation of individual performance levels should therefore generally be done prior to a seminar self-evaluation. It should be confirmed whether individuals really belong to the target group or not. More homogenous groups could be the result. The participants´ judgement largely depends on the content or theme of an exercise. This can lead to false perceptions and has to be considered for the conception of exercises. It must be ensured that exercises are just seen as examples and that the participants draw their attention to the activity.

This could be improved by offering them a larger amount of exercises, out of which they can choose those they find the most attractive. Corresponding to the theory by Godfredson, exercises should be arranged considering the specific sex of an individual. This is especially true for exercises from the crafts-technical and social-helping field of tasks. An evaluation of competences did not have priority for the project. Still it makes sense to make such an assessment. The successful completion of work tasks help building up self-confidence and develop a positive attitude towards the exercises. An assessment of competences would be easier for the participants, if exercises are created, which consist of various modules with increasing degree of difficulty. The competences could be checked on various levels of difficulty. A successful completion of the first level would enable the participants to make an assessment of chances to complete the next level. This would generally improve their ability to make a self-evaluation.

On the other hand such a proceeding would offer the opportunity to abandon specific tasks at an early point. Exercises, which are regarded a not interesting would not have to be completed. A longer occupation with tasks that are not favoured could be avoided. A shifting towards other fields of activity is opened. A great deal of flexibility could potentially be gained in working on the different tasks. The participants get a lot more responsibility in their hands.

A further aspect that has to be changed concerns the reflection phases. In the future these phases should be guided to ensure a deeper discussion of interest and competences of every participant and feedback by the other course members. Group reflections play a key role within the concept self-evaluation. They are

essential for a successful proceeding of a seminar. During the observed project, such reflections did not take place. Consequently the participants lacked sensible findings for the final interview. It may be helpful for cognitive less gifted participants, to give them a list with a catalogue of possible prearranged answers, to offer an orientation.

Furthermore it seems to be helpful, if the trainer would visit the institution, where the project takes place. He should also be acquainted to the participants. An emphatic atmosphere would be the result that could potentially make talking easier for the individuals. The trainer's ability to judge the participants´ statements could be improved. False perceptions of oneself could easier be detected. The result would be a more realistic self-evaluation. I consider it sensible to let the individuals make a self-assessment with cognitive orientation at the beginning of the seminar. This bears the already discussed difficulties in comparison to an action oriented proceeding. However it can offer hints, whether the participants made unjustified compromises in the past and did not fully use their potential of development. It can be checked, whether they have a false perception due to that. If the person's grades on a cognitive level are low, while they are high on an action oriented level, this could be seen as a hint. The interest contents of Explorix should be reworked concerning sex-related interests. Otherwise this could result in false judgements. The trainers should have an insight into local fields of activity. This would enable him or her to arrange first contacts. This ensures that results of the seminar find direct implementation.

This report is supposed to make clear that the concept of the seminar "Projects and Desires" still bears a lot of potential for a further development in the future. A further development seems to be promising. The approach offers appropriate means to encounter the problem of long-term unemployment. This elaboration is a first step into this direction. Finally it has to be stated that all issues hints and recommendations reveal the author's judgement and attitude. From this perspective it seems desirable that further research will build up on these experiences.

8 Literature

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