



A Portfolio for Self-Evaluation

The Romanian Module

General context

In Romania, the conditions for new developments based on the Self-Evaluation approach were and continue to be particularly difficult. The tremendous changes, which have occurred since 1990, and especially the accelerated reform in the last years, resulted in major changes in the structure of the economy and employment system. In such an unstable context, people may experience difficulties in finding reference points for defining themselves and designing a valid life strategy. To introduce measures for individual, for raising self-esteem by means of positive self-evaluation of one's own capacities and for valuing non-formal competencies is a major challenge.

Overview

The Romanian model of Self-Evaluation consists of a portfolio of self-evaluation exercises. This comprises six different activities from which a counsellor, together with the participants, can choose. They are designed to be inserted mainly into existing Continuing Vocational Training (CVT) provision, and also into conventional job seeking courses following the more traditional career guidance approach.

The **target group** was originally adults with a low level of competencies. But, in contrast to Western Europe, this target group has relatively low rates of unemployment in the Romanian labour market, whilst more qualified people often cannot find a job matched to their relatively high competences. Therefore, the Romanian self-evaluation portfolio is very flexible and targets both groups.

It is advisable to start with only two exercises in order to reduce the time needed for the module to what is available. Nevertheless, the six activities build on each other in a (psycho-) logical order. Therefore it is also possible to employ all of them in a specially designed job seeking course. Most of them are constructed in a way which combines individually performed exercises, possibly with the help of the counsellor, with group work or work in pairs.

The six exercises are:

- 1) Evolution of competences
- 2) Lacunar starfish
- 3) Job interview
- 4) Influences between competencies
- 5) My Unique Wheel
- 6) Dynamic Concept Analysis (DCA)

The presentation of these exercises in a portfolio, with increasing complexity, follows a unified structure: purpose of utilisation, source (in literature), description, utilisation procedures, results.





Description of the exercises

1) Evolution of competences

This exercise is aimed at people undertaking their first attempts at gaining self-awareness and/or people with limited verbal capacity.

The objectives are: developing an image of formal, non-formal and informal competencies; identification of an environment favourable for gaining and practicing these competencies, pointing out essential moments in personal development that have helped preparing one's own professional evolution; understanding the role of formal, non-formal and informal competencies in assuring success.

This tool is inspired by and developed in analogy to the biographical method in career counselling.

2) "Lacunar starfish"

This activity is based on the "starfish model" of competencies which formed the conceptual framework of the whole project. It aims at participants becoming more aware of the aspects of the five competence dimensions where they detect the need for personal improvement, that is "lacunae".

First step:

Presentation of the five dimensions:

Practical ("What am I able to do?"); "Personal" (What are my important attitudes and values?); "learning" ("How can I improve my learning?"); "Methodological" ("What do I undertake when I have to fulfill a task?"); "Social" (How do I behave in different relationships?)

Second step:

Discussion in the group, using examples of strengths and weaknesses brought forward by individual participants.

Third step: Participants fill in a sheet depicting the starfish model and try to describe their strengths and weaknesses, supported by the counsellor.

Fourth step: Again a discussion in the group, using the completed sheets. The counsellor usually has to point out the importance of competences gained in non-formal and informal circumstances.

3) "Job interview"

The job interview is carried out in pairs who in turn play the role of the interviewer and interviewee. It tries to create a typical interview situation, involving real or hypothetical accounts of the competences of the participants.

The jobs participants are looking for in the role playing are freely chosen according to their interests and expectations regarding realistic employment opportunities in the labour market. Similarly, the questions asked by the interviewer can be devised by himself/herself, in this way giving rise to question about what may be important for this particular job. This in turn stimulates consideration of the more general competences represented in the starfish model.





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Short notes should be taken by each participant, both as interviewer and interviewee, depicting the main points of the questions and the answers. Examples of these interactions can then be discussed in the group. It should be noted, however, that affective aspects and body language which are not represented in the notes of the questions and answers should be given equal weight.

4) “Influences between competences”

If the participants have already some insight into their competence profile, this exercise can support them in exploring the relations between the different dimensions. In this way, they can expand their field of competences by strengthening those relations, thus constructing an “amplifying” functional circuit between them, furthering positive transfer. This relates particularly to the interaction between formal, non-formal and informal competences acquired competences.

The activity starts with an open discussion about the formal, non-formal and informally acquired competences of the individuals taking part. The group is asked to point out relations between competences which have often not been given previous attention. It is not necessary that all participants take the role of the narrator, especially if some are too shy.

In a second phase, the counsellor can propose a specific job profile. This is used as a starting point for a group discussion about the relation between competences useful for this job, no matter if they are gained in formal, non-formal or informal settings including in their spare time, through citizenship activities or in the home.

5) My unique wheel

This tool was adopted from the training curriculum of the World Bank “Information and Career Counselling” project, undertaken in Romania in 1999 and 2000. It stresses the relationship between the internal and external factors responsible for shaping vocational identity and takes into account the huge changes which have occurred in societal conditions and individual values during the last 15 years.

<p>Internal factors are those perceived by the individual as personal resources in defining his/her own vocational personality including:</p>	<p>External factors belong to the space influencing the individual ‘from outside’:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - competencies - personal style - values - interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - labour market and Continuing Vocational Training - Work experience - Educational background (formal learning) - Significant others





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The aim is to create comparability, as far as possible, between the internal resources and the objective conditions. In individual guidance sessions, the counsellor supports the participant in filling in the form “My unique wheel” and discusses the results, stressing the uniqueness of each individual.

6) Dynamic Concept Analysis (DCA)

This tool was taken over from the British partners – see the UK module in this handbook. The flexibility of the DCA allows it be adapted for to the various target groups for the Self-Evaluation exercises in Romania.

SWOT

Strengths:

- The Self-Evaluation philosophy corresponds to newly identified needs which are not covered by other existing initiatives.
- The whole model encourages participants to reflect upon themselves – so far not common in the usual training approaches.
- The dissemination of this approach should contribute to promoting a person centred culture in work environments
- The modular structure of the training portfolio presents a high degree of flexibility with respect to the target group and to the context of application.

Weaknesses:

- Time constrains hamper in depth application in existing courses.
- Successful application of the training portfolio needs a minimum of verbal skills.
- So far, no training of counsellors/trainers for this new task is available.

Opportunities:

- To a certain degree, connections to approaches in existing courses can be identified and could be strengthened.
- Recent developments of the Romanian system promote validation/accreditation of prior learning which could be improved through the self-evaluation approach.

Threats:

- The self-evaluation process could be perceived as a new attempt to standardise competencies acquired in a deeply personal, non-formal way.
- Insertion of the module in existing courses may not be accepted by the beneficiaries, as it reduces the time allocated to the main objectives of the courses.
- The experience may be considered unrealistic and unproductive, the general attitude being superficial and ‘polite’ towards the trainer/counsellor.

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