



Picturing yourself and reflecting together with others

The UK module

Introduction

The UK team's self-evaluation module and tools are aimed at practitioners who teach, supervise or design courses or programmes in adult education and lifelong learning, including workplace learning.

The target groups include learners with interrupted occupational or learning careers who embark on various courses in colleges of adult education with the purpose of returning to work or learning.

The aim is to incorporate self-evaluation methods and approaches across all course modules to enable the learners to reflect upon their own competences in the context of tasks and assignments they are doing as a part of their main training. As a result of participation in various classroom activities the learners acquire, deploy and develop a number of personal competences and skills but learners often do not recognise and build on those tacit skills that they may have acquired from their previous experiences, either formal or informal. Purposeful self-evaluation of their skills in the context of classroom activities will make this process more visible and will help the learners and their tutors to establish links between skills development and certain classroom tasks and assignments.

The UK module is based on two methods: a questionnaire method and Dynamic Concept Analysis (DCA) modelling. Both methods have been developed as a result of discussions and interviews with learners, tutors and employers.

The first tool: the questionnaire method

The questionnaire method aims to encourage learners to self-evaluate their skills by drawing their attention to how they acquire and deploy their competences within their learning environment and to help the learners to explore to what extent they use, deploy and develop their personal skills through participation in a particular classroom activity. These questionnaires assist learners in evaluating and recognising their skills in the context of the general learning environment and in the context of a particular classroom activity or task.

The questionnaires include the following groups of competences:

- Methodological competences
- Social competences
- Attitudes and values
- Content related competences
- Learning competences

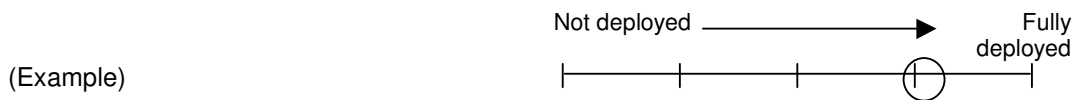


The following example shows a questionnaire evaluating methodological competences for a single classroom activity.

Please indicate the relative extent of deployment of the following skills for the following classroom activity _____ (e.g. Brainstorming) _____

(please indicate the activity)

Please circle.



Methodological:

Decision-making				
Problem-solving				
Self-organisation				
Time-management				
Ability to interpret situations and respond to them appropriately				

The second tool: Dynamic Concept Analysis modelling

Dynamic Concept Analysis (DCA) helps learners self-assessment through graphical modelling of the learning process. The DCA models can be employed to evaluate learners’ skills and competences and identify links and interrelationships between a number of chosen concepts (e.g. competences or classroom activities). The DCA tool is software based and can be downloaded free from <http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/dca/> together with an explanatory handbook.

The starting point in the DCA process is to identify a number of concepts (no more than ten are recommended) to be evaluated or self-evaluated. Which concepts are to be chosen is entirely up to the users dependent on course requirements or responses to the learners’ questionnaires. Once the concepts are chosen, the following steps are undertaken:

- (1) The concepts need to be entered into the software based *DCA information matrix*;
- (2) The concepts’ attributes need to be identified and entered into the matrix. Each of the concepts would have three attributes e.g. *a* (e.g. positive, high or strong), *n* (e.g. medium or neutral) and *b* (e.g. negative or low);
- (3) Relationships (if any) between the concepts need to be indicated in the matrix.

Learners are then asked to choose an attribute that best describes to what extent they possess a skill or a competence in their learning environment. On the basis of their responses the DCA software builds models that graphically represent the extent to which learners possess certain skills or abilities and the ways the skills are related (or not) to other skills or variables. For



Leonardo da Vinci

learners the process contributes to making their skills more explicit or visible. For practitioners, the DCA conceptual model-building enables them to reflect on and develop their own concepts and approaches, including the creation of learning environments.

An example on one DCA analysis for one learner is given below.

Emma's case: Self-evaluation of personal skills in the context of brainstorming.

We asked the learner to evaluate her own skills and abilities in the context of brainstorming activities undertaken in the class (see the table below). Her responses were analyzed using the DCA computer program and the model below reflects her personal skills and defines interrelationships among the concepts.

DCA analysis

Emma generally perceives brainstorming as a useful classroom activity. She argues that participation in the brainstorming enabled her to develop the communication skills (2a), as she was encouraged to 'voice her ideas', even if she was not sure herself whether her 'ideas fit into the general topic' of the brainstorming. She feels that this contributes to the development of her confidence and self-assurance (1a). She argues, however, that the pace of the brainstorming activities is too intensive, and this does not fully facilitate the development of her decision-making skills (3n). Emma maintains that the intensive pace of the brainstorming 'does not give her much time to make informed decisions'. She feels that teamwork skills (5b) are not facilitated through this specific activity, as the learners are expected to make their own assumptions and to voice their own ideas. However, as the model shows, low deployment and use of teamwork skills (5b) encourages her to 'speak for herself and to give her own ideas', thus contributing to the higher levels of her communication skills (2a) and confidence (1a). Emma feels that the self-learning skills are not facilitated through this activity (4b), and this made her realize that she has to develop her self-learning skills through other classroom activities, for example researching or reading.

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Self-evaluation Form for DCA Analysis (Emma’s case)

Competence	Level of competence	Evaluation of learners’ competences in the context of Brainstorming
1. Confidence	High (a)	X
	Medium (n)	
	Low (b)	
2. Communication skills	High (a)	X
	Medium (n)	
	Low (b)	
3. Decision-making skills	High (a)	
	Medium (n)	X
	Low (b)	
4. Self-learning skills	High (a)	
	Medium (n)	
	Low (b)	X
5. Teamwork/ Working with others	High (a)	
	Medium (n)	
	Low (b)	X

Strengths

As very flexible approach, the DCA method has much potential as a method for self-evaluation of personal competences and exploring links and relations among the competences. The strengths of the method as a tool for practitioners include those of availability, flexibility, adaptability and clear graphical representation:

- The computer program can be downloaded free of charge.
- The method is flexible enough to accept those concepts for analysis/evaluation that are considered to be relevant in the context of the demands of a course or training programme or the requirements of an individual learner. The computer program also allows for replacing or changing concepts at a later stage, depending on changes in course priorities.
- The DCA analysis can be adapted easily to the aims, goals and requirements of the course. The examples we considered have demonstrated how these methods could be employed for different self-evaluation goals.
- Graphical representation of the self-evaluation of personal skills provides a clear illustration of learners’ levels of skills’ deployment, recognition and development, indicating links between various skills and thus suggesting how (through what activities) learners may potentially develop their skills.