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DIVERSE

Diversity Improvement as a Viable Enrichment Resource for Society and Economy



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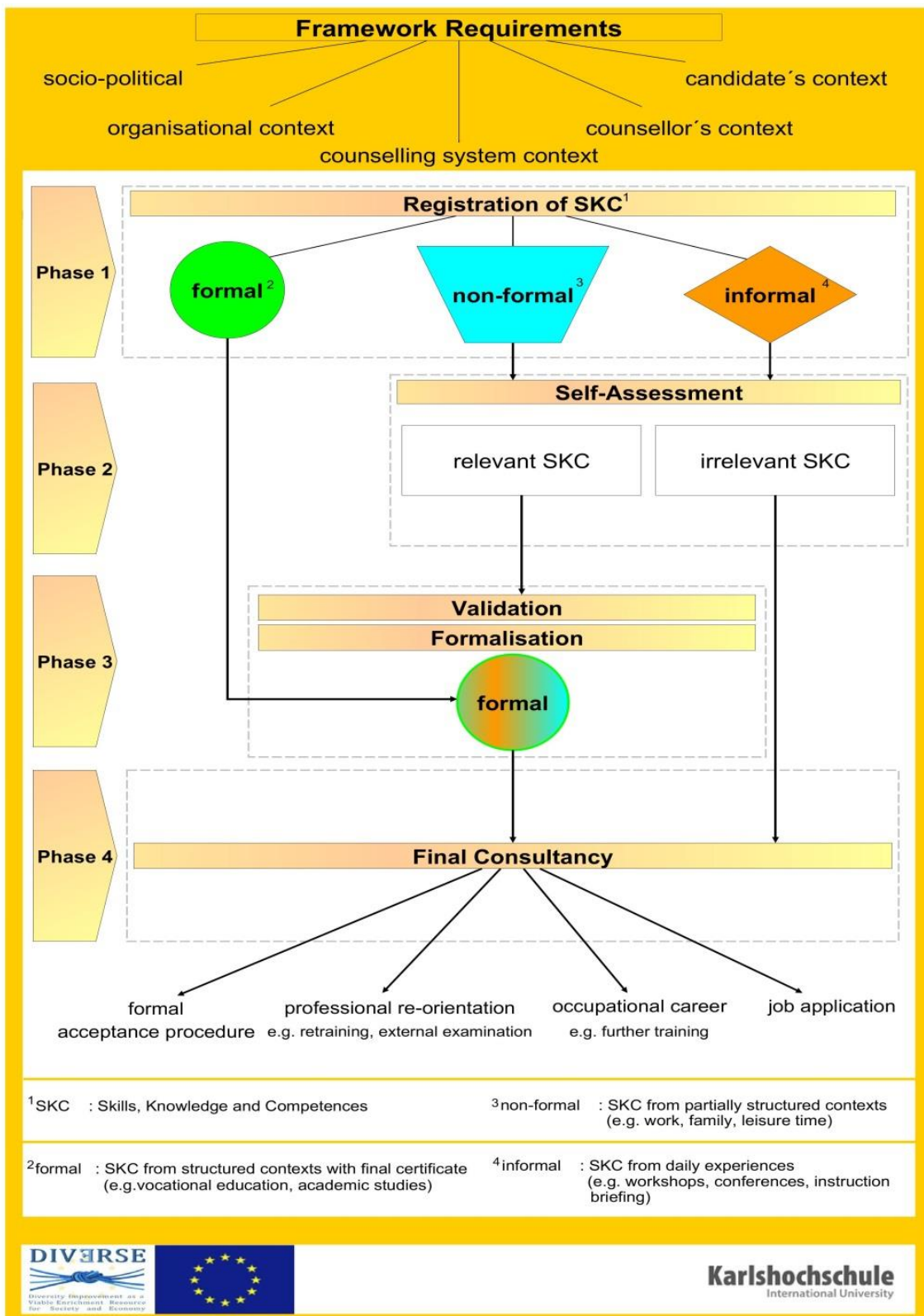
A Validation Process for Formal, Non-formal and Informal Skills, Knowledge and Competences

Preliminary remarks

The design of an adequate, effective and efficient scheme for the recognition, acknowledgment and validation of SKC (Skills, Knowledge and Competences) is a contemporary task which is more and more faced from a strategic perspective (cf. CEDEFOP 2009:12, 18; Netzwerk IQ 2010). Different approaches and concepts for a validation scheme have been developed so far; they represent an inspiring background for the scheme that is presented in this document. The scheme is the proposal of the German research team in the range of the project DIVERSE (“Diversity Improvement as a viable Enrichment Resource for Society and Economy”). It was designed from March till June 2015 at Karlshochschule International University (Karlsruhe, Germany). It takes into account a bundle of experts’ perspectives from local stakeholder institutions.

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Figure of the process



Description of the process

First, there are **framework requirements** that have to be considered and incorporated in order to guarantee the feasibility and the appropriateness of the whole process. Some of the main characteristics of these framework requirements are:

- The accessibility to the process without any barriers
- The importance of guidance of a counselor throughout the whole process
- The verifiable intercultural competence of the counselors and examiners who are involved in the process
- The validity, objectivity and reliability of the measurements within the procedure
- The integration of the validation process into existing procedures; it is especially important to have the personnel of the competent authorities for validation (e.g. chambers) involved
- Cost awareness

The validation process that is presented here consists of four phases: Registration of SKC, Assessment, Validation, (Final) Consultancy.

In the first step (**phase 1**), the candidate's SKC are **registered** by the candidate himself/herself in cooperation with a counselor. It is important that not only the working experiences but also experiences gathered in other life worlds (e.g. family, leisure time and important life events) are considered. The candidate describes rather openly all the tasks she/he has carried out so far in her/his life (register of experiences) (cf. BRETSCHEIDER/PREISSER 2003:6-7). With the help of the counselor this unstructured list of experiences is transformed into a register of SKC.

Afterwards the SKC are **assessed** by the candidate together with the counsellor (**phase 2**). The assessment is based on the DQR (German Qualifications Framework) deriving from the EQF (European Qualifications Framework). In order to reduce complexity it is recommended to translate the levels of the DQR to the three levels that are known from the assessment of candidates in the Federal Employment Office in Germany: "Basic SKC" ('Grundkenntnisse'), "Advanced SKC" ('erweiterte Kenntnisse') and "Experienced SKC" ('Expertenkenntnisse'). Thus, the SKC of the candidate are identified in a reasonable way and can be validated subsequently.

In **phase 3** the candidate's register and assessment are handed over to an expert in the **validation** of such SKC for the aspired profession. His/her task is to validate the candidates' SKC in regarding the specific professional needs and requirements. The expert should preferably come from the particular institution which is likewise responsible for the formal acceptance procedure for foreign qualifications (cf. NETZWERK IQ 2010:24). Thereby it is possible to prevent friction loss and time waste due to ambiguous responsibilities.

In order to grant transparency, objectivity, reliability and especially European validity, a "clearly defined and agreed reference point" is indispensable (CEDEFOP 2009:31). The pre-

sented audit-scheme strongly recommends to make a difference between the professional requirements and the “Learning Outcomes” (cf. *ibid.*:31-32). The Learning Outcomes do clearly specify what a candidate has to prove in order to be able to exercise his/her tasks in a certain profession, no matter whether the acquisition of the SKC took place formally, non-formally or informally. The Learning Outcomes form part of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, ECVET (cf. <http://www.ecvet-info.de/de/237.php>). Several ECVET-Partners have designed a differentiated set of Learning Outcomes for various professions (cf. <http://www.ecvet-info.de/de/325.php>). This modularized way of specifying vocational requirements can be applied in the same manner for the validation of non- and informal learning outcomes.

Based on the Learning Unit Outcomes it is the expert’s task to validate the candidate’s performance. Several methods of validation can be considered (cf. WESTDEUTSCHER HANDWERKSKAMMERTAG 2013:13; CEDEFOP 2009:59-65; NETZWERK IQ 2008:10):

- Skills-Demonstration / Test Piece
- Written Tests, Multiple-Choice or Free-Text
- Oral Exam
- Project-Work
- Assessment-Center
- Presentation
- Simulation
- Role-Play
- Monitored Internship
- Combination of Several Methods

The expert has the responsibility to decide on the proper examination method. At this moment, he is asked to consider the counselor’s advice (especially as regards costs, language needs and the cultural appropriateness of the examination method). Practical exams should usually be preferred instead of theoretical exams (*ibid.*:14).

Finally, in **phase 4**, the candidate will be given a certificate showing the result of the validation. The next steps in the candidate’s occupational history are discussed in a **final consultancy**. The candidate may use his/her certificate of non- and informal SKC to complete his/her documents and continue pursuing his/her individual occupational history. This can lead to a formal acceptance procedure, a professional re-orientation, an occupational career or directly to a job application.

Although the described process allows the registration, assessment and validation of both, on the one hand *formal* and on the other hand *non-* and *informal* SKC, its main asset consists in registering *non-* and *informal* SKC. Whereas the recognition of *formal* SKC has already been implemented to some extent successfully in Germany, the *non-* and *informal* SKC still offer great potential. Hence, the result of the process (certification/formalization of SKC) is meant

to be a complementary document to the candidate's so far existing *formal* documents, or, in case there isn't any *formal* certificate, the exclusive proof of SKC.

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