

Good practice in validation of learning outcomes

Germany

Qualification "Carpenter"



Good practise in validation of learning outcomes. Germany. Qualification "Carpenter"

Based on the expertise by Franziska Laudenbach

Editors:

Barbara Fijałkowska, Roksana Pierwieniecka, dr Marcin Trepczyński, Barbara Przybylska

Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych

ul. Górczewska 8

01-180 Warszawa

tel. (22) 241 71 00; www.ibe.edu.pl

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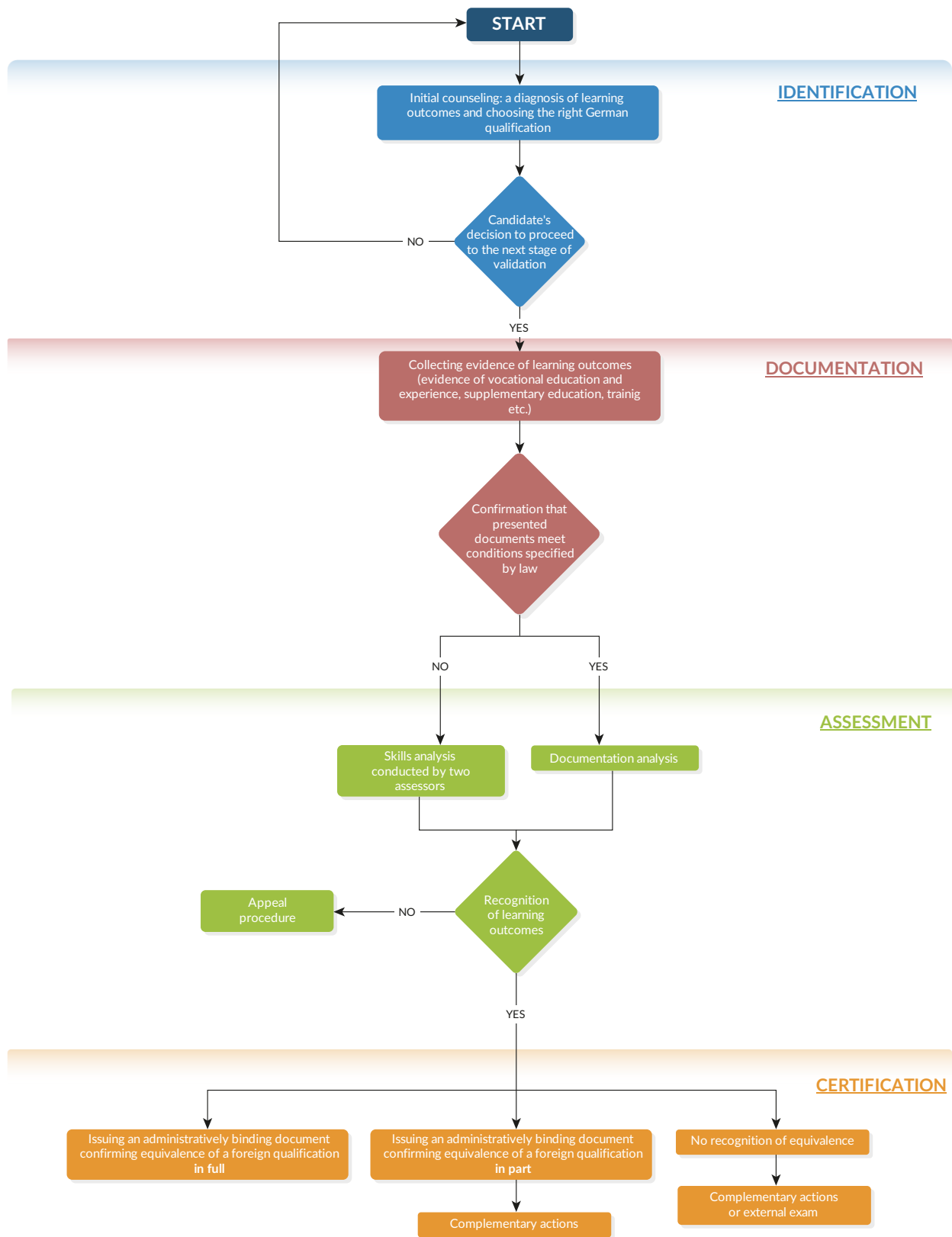
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1. Country, institution name

- Germany
- Integration durch Qualifizierung (IQ), the “Integration through Qualification” Network

2. Institution website

<http://www.netzwerk-iq.de>

3. Qualifications

Comment

Carpenter [Der Tischler]

Level 4 of the German Qualifications Framework [*Deutschen Qualifikationsrahmen*] (GQF)
Level 4 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

4. Short description of the validation process

Comment

This good practice relates to the procedure of **recognising vocational qualifications attained outside Germany**, made possible by the introduction of the federal *Act concerning the Assessment of Equivalence of Professional Qualifications* of 2012 (hereinafter referred to as the Federal Recognition Act).

The procedure consists of four stages, which correspond to the validation of learning outcomes:

- **Identification of learning outcomes** – an initial stage where a person’s learning outcomes are determined, the German qualification to which they correspond is specified and the successive stages of the procedure are explained to the candidate.
- **Documentation of learning outcomes** – the candidate collects evidence of having the vocational qualifications attained abroad.
- **Assessment of learning outcomes** – may consist of two parts:
 - analysis of evidence collected at the documentation stage to specify the equivalence of the candidate’s qualifications to their German equivalents,
 - additionally, if the evidence is doubtful or is insufficient to make a decision – the learning outcomes of the candidate are examined in practice, which is called a **skills analysis**.
- **Certification** – issuance of an administratively binding document confirming:
 - complete or partial equivalence of the qualification attained abroad to its German equivalent (in accordance with German standards),
 - lack of equivalence, i.e. no recognition of qualifications.

The purpose of validation is to specify whether the candidate’s competences or qualifications are equivalent to those that he/she would attain at level 4 as the result of learning within the dual vocational education system in Germany.

5. Detailed description of the validation process

Comment

5.1. Identification of Learning Outcomes

Identification of learning outcomes takes place in a meeting with a counsellor, usually held in a local consulting point belonging to the “Integration through Qualification” Network. The counsellors also work at chambers of crafts.

The identification stage is usually limited to a single meeting. During this meeting, the counsellor tries to determine whether the recognition process is justifiable in a given case on the basis of the candidate’s

professional experience. This process is called **initial counselling**.

If the initial analysis of professional experience and the documents justify proceeding further, the counsellor and the candidate jointly specify which German qualification will be the basis for the recognition process. The counsellor should also indicate which assessment procedure the candidate should undergo (analysis of documentation or skills analysis).

The duration of the counsellors' meeting depends on the candidate's preparation, the scope or length of his/her professional experience and the level of difficulty in comparing his/her qualification to its German equivalent. The time needed for one meeting is 20–60 minutes.

Further counselling may prove necessary if the candidate needs more time to make a decision on whether he/she should continue the validation process or when he/she must complete the documentation.

The methods used for the identification of learning outcomes are an interview (unstructured interview) and analysis of documents (analysis of evidence and statements) delivered by the candidate.

5.2. Documentation of Learning Outcomes

Documentation of learning outcomes consists of collecting evidence that confirms, among others:

- vocational education,
- professional experience,
- supplementary education,
- content of the training.

The documentation may also include CVs, any certificates, diploma supplements, course completion certificates and other related documents.

These documents must be officially certified copies – or otherwise they will not be accepted. They may be submitted in paper form or via electronic mail.

The evidence collected at this stage is assessed through the analysis of documentation method.

However, if the evidence is **incomplete or insufficient** to make a decision, the candidate's learning outcomes should be assessed in practice, through the skills analysis. According to the Federal Recognition Act, this is the case when:

- no evidence of vocational education and training has been submitted;
- only partial proof of vocational education and training has been submitted;
- the presented evidence is not significant;
- the authenticity of the evidence presented is doubtful;
- there is some doubt about the formal propriety of the evidence presented;
- the identity of the candidate is doubtful.

5.3. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

In the case of the "Carpenter" qualification, a chamber of crafts performs the assessment. Individual stages of validation are conducted by various entities and may take place in different places and at different times.

Analysis of Documentation

Analysis of documentation takes place when the evidence collected at the documentation stage is significant, complete (confirms the entire vocational education of the candidate) and raises no doubts.

This is the stage where it is determined whether the qualification attained abroad corresponds to the German qualification.

Skills Analysis

The skills analysis is defined in Article 14 of the Federal Recognition Act as “other procedures for the establishment of equivalence [of qualifications] without relevant documents”. This article stipulates that the relevant entity applies the proper procedures to determine whether the candidate has achieved the learning outcomes that correspond to the requirements of German vocational education in the field of the analysed qualification. The Act also lists the methods used in the skills analysis.

Unlike a traditional vocational exam in Germany, the skills analysis is random. Its purpose is to examine whether the candidate has sufficient knowledge, skills and competences required in the specific areas of professional activity.

The skills analysis is conducted by two experts (assessors) appointed by a competent entity. In the case of the “Carpenter” qualification, this entity is the relevant chamber of crafts; in the case of other qualifications, these may also be chambers of industry and commerce.

Assessors who perform a given procedure of skills analysis specify the assessment criteria, which are recorded in a special form. They must be transparent and understandable to each of the parties. They depend on the job, tasks to be performed by the candidate and the assessment tools applied. The criteria usually correspond to the knowledge, skills and competences verified during a German vocational exam that confirms a given qualification.

The procedure includes various possibilities of demonstrating learning outcomes. Cognitive and communication skills as well as knowledge and certain social competences of the candidate may be examined, for example, through an interview with an expert (unstructured interview), an interview in simulated conditions or role playing (observation in simulated conditions), presentation of the results of work and case study, whereas motor skills may be examined by having the candidate do a practical task (observation in simulated conditions) or a “work test” in a workshop (observation in real-life conditions).

An example of a task confirming that the candidate has the learning outcomes required for the “Carpenter” qualification may be the construction of a wooden chest within not more than 7 hours.

The candidate prepares the proper equipment and uses it while performing the task. In addition, he/she should be able to install metal hinges, make a veneer pattern, process plastic and attach ready-made elements to the chest.

During the performance of the task the assessors may talk to the candidate, for example, about the technical issues connected with the process of building the chest, the problems emerging and their solutions. Such a discussion not only examines the professional knowledge of the candidate, but it also lets him/her demonstrate his/her cognitive and communication skills. It may be continued after completion of the work by the candidate.

Examples of questions are: “How did you organise your work?”, “What did you start from?”, “Please explain the individual stages of the work”, etc. This is how the assessors analyse the candidate’s understanding of the broader context of the work performed and his/her knowledge of its methods and technology.

Assessment of the tasks performed is documented in a protocol that the candidate obtains directly after the skills analysis. No scale is used for the assessment; it consists only of the determination of whether the required learning outcomes have been confirmed.

5.4. Certification

Certification of learning outcomes is the written notification of the result of the analysis of documentation or the skills analysis. The result can denote:

- full equivalence – full recognition of the qualification attained abroad as equivalent to the corresponding German qualification;
- partial equivalence – partial recognition of the qualification;
- lack of equivalence – lack of recognition of the qualification.

6. Validation methods

Comment

Various methods may be used at each stage of the recognition process.

6.1. Identification of Learning Outcomes

Counsellors in centres for the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications and chambers of crafts use the interview method (**unstructured interview**) to obtain information about the professional experience of the candidate.

The task of the counsellor is to learn about the candidate's situation in life and the scope of his/her professional experience. To do this, the counsellor may use guidelines for initial counselling, which have been prepared as part of the **"Prototyping Transfer"** project.

These guidelines describe recommendations, work methods and quality standards, but they do not contain obligatory questions.

The analysis of documentation (**analysis of evidence and statements method**) is also used at this stage to determine whether the evidence initially collected by the candidate is sufficient to confirm the learning outcomes required for the qualification.

6.2. Documentation of Learning Outcomes

At this stage, the required documents delivered by the candidate are collected and then the possibility of assessing the required learning outcomes on their basis is determined.

6.3. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

At the assessment stage, the method of analysis of evidence and statements is used first. In the case of the skills analysis – other methods are also used. They include:

- **practical task** (observation in simulated conditions) – the candidate performs a typical professional activity; this can be a service, maintenance or repair;
- **interview** (unstructured interview) – supports the performance of the practical task; this makes it possible to discuss technical issues, procedures, conditions and possible problems along with their solutions;
- **work test** (observation in real-life conditions) – the candidate works one or several days at a company to confirm his/her skills, knowledge and social competences at work;
- **role playing or simulated interview** (observation in simulated conditions) – enables the candidate to act as if he/she was at work; the assessor (or a third party) plays the role of the interviewer;
- **presentation** – the candidate presents a task, a typical professional situation and the broader context; then questions asked by the assessors are answered; this is usually an oral presentation based on a piece of work, for example, the results of the practical task;
- **case study** – relates to complex professional situations; the candidate must find potential solutions to an actual problem and discuss them. a case study makes it possible to demonstrate learning outcomes at work since it relates to real problems, situations and practical solutions. The focus is mainly on cognitive skills connected with the identification of the problem, its analysis and justification of selected strategies. The results of the case study may be presented in written or oral form.

7. Validation results

The validation process ends with the candidate obtaining one of three results:

1. **Full equivalence** – the qualification attained abroad is fully recognised.

The qualification is awarded when there are no significant differences between the qualification held by the candidate and its German equivalent.

2. **Partial equivalence** – partial recognition of the qualification.

Partial equivalence is granted when there are significant differences between the qualification held by the candidate and its German equivalent. The differences are described in the notification and it is possible for the candidate to undertake supplementary activities to gain full equivalence (for example additional education, additional on-the-job training).

For example, it may turn out that due to differences in vocational education, the candidate lacks some of the required skills, such as in operating a machine. If this is the case, the candidate should complete a machine operation course required of all carpenters in Germany. He/she can obtain co-financing from the employment office for such supplementary activities.

Only after completing the required supplementary activities will the candidate obtain a document confirming full equivalence of his/her vocational education to the German qualification from the relevant chamber of crafts. This confirms that he/she has the same skills, knowledge and social competences as a person who completed German dual vocational education.

3. **Lack of equivalence** – no recognition of the qualification.

This occurs when the candidate's qualification significantly differs from the requirements of the German qualification.

The candidate is informed about this in writing. The candidate can consult with the local vocational counselling office about further steps. The candidate can take an external exam or conduct supplementary activities, such as an adaptation period or passing a test at a later date.

The candidate has the right to appeal the decision made by taking certain legal steps. Consequently, another institution (a chamber of crafts or a chamber of industry and commerce) may review the decision issued.

8. Human resources

Comment

8.1. Counsellors

The counsellors must first and foremost have:

- a higher education degree,
- experience in counselling,
- extensive knowledge about educational and institutional structures and the Federal Recognition Act,
- well-developed communication and intercultural competences.

The communication and intercultural competences are of great importance since the counsellor should be free of prejudices. He/she is expected to be open and treat the candidate and his/her situation in life with respect.

The task of the counsellor is to work to solve problems and fully understand the candidate's situation.

The counsellor is expected to guide the candidate through the recognition process, basing this on his/her previous professional experience and to prepare him/her for a possible skills analysis. The counsellor is

responsible for providing reliable and clear information to the candidate about the procedures.

8.2. Assessors

The assessors must:

- be specialists in the relevant job with at least three years' experience corresponding to the requirements of the German qualification on which the recognition process is based,
- represent the entity competent for the given occupation (for example a chamber of crafts) with at least three years' work experience in the field of economics, administration or education,
- have communication and intercultural competences,
- know how to identify the competences of candidates,
- be able to assess learning outcomes,
- know the organisational requirements for performing an assessment,
- know any regulations concerning education and training in the field of the German qualification on which the recognition process is based.

9. Organizational and material conditions

Comment

9.1. Timeframe

Formally, the recognition process should end within three months. In practice, the time-frame depends on whether the documentation is complete, whether information about the previous education of the candidate is sufficient and whether a skills analysis needs to be conducted.

As individual stages may take place in other places and can be conducted by different entities, the time allowed for the processing of documents by other institutions should also be taken into account.

9.2. Organisational and Material Resources

The organisational and material resources needed to conduct a skills analysis depend on the qualification. In the case of the "carpenter" qualification, they include, for example:

- materials needed to build a wooden chest (wood, metal joints, etc.),
- machines needed to process materials and construct individual parts of the chest,
- a workshop in which the skills analysis will be performed.

In addition, the candidate must wear specific protective clothing depending on the type of task to be performed.

10. Quality assurance

Comment

10.1. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Act

The *Act concerning the Assessment of Equivalence of Professional Qualifications* of 2012 is periodically evaluated.

As a result, four reports were prepared by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2012–2017. They include official statistics concerning application procedures, amendments to legal regulations and amendments to recognition procedures. They are used to constantly monitor the Act.

Moreover, two external institutions have recently published an evaluation report that includes an analysis of amendments after the implementation of the Act in 2012.

This report demonstrates the impact of the Act on other legal regulations and on the general principles of the recognition of foreign qualifications. It also concentrates on how the Act influences the candidate and his/her

integration potential in the labour market after the recognition process.

10.2. Quality Assurance of the Skills Analysis

To unify recognition procedures, several quality standards for the skills analysis have been established nationwide:

Transparency of the procedure

As early as at the initial counselling stage, both the advantages and limitations of the recognition procedure are stressed. If a skills analysis is needed, the candidate is informed about the stages of the process, its duration, costs and the consequences of not doing it. He/she may also contact the expert in advance to discuss the requirements for the skills analysis and only then decide to do it.

Dual control principle

This principle means that the assessor assesses the work of the candidate during the skills analysis together with another observer. This is intended to ensure the objectivity of the procedure.

Requirements of the assessors

Experts involved in the skills analysis must meet clear conditions concerning their education, professional experience and competences.

Training for the assessors

Before conducting the skills analysis, the assessors must take part in training, which includes issues relating to the preparation (for example, of the practical tasks and assessment criteria) and performance of the skills analysis as well as the assessment of its results.

Methods

The methods used during the skills analysis should be adapted to the needs of the candidates and specified in the law.

Documentation of the course of the skills analysis

To ensure an objective assessment, the competences to be examined during the skills analysis must be previously operationalized by the assessors.

To this end, assessment criteria, adapted to the assessment methods used and the tasks to be performed by the candidate, are formulated. The observations are then noted in a special form. This enables the assessors to concentrate on specific activities of the candidate and then on the achieved work result. It also makes it possible to document the course of the skills analysis. The assessors have access to standardized forms and protocols of the results.

Openness

Assessors must be open to different approaches in performing tasks and solving problems and take the background of the candidate and his/her experience into account.

Language

As German is a foreign language for most candidates, the tasks must be formulated clearly and simply. The candidate may use dictionaries or ask for an explanation of individual terms.

During the assessment, the candidate should primarily be demonstrating the essential activities of the given qualification; language competences should be assessed only when they are required for the implementation of the task.

10.3. Quality Assurance in Institutions Conducting the Recognition Process

The process of recognising foreign qualifications may be affected by the internal quality assurance systems of the entities conducting counselling and assessment. For example, the local career counselling office in Bremen has developed internal guidelines for counsellors. Weekly meetings are held there to discuss individual cases. Additionally, completed proceedings are analysed systematically.

Moreover, to improve the process on a regular basis, the office has implemented its own quality management system, which includes: drawing up a schedule of meetings with candidates, a presence in the Internet or regular meetings of the counsellors' team.

11. Financing

Fees are charged for the process of recognising qualifications attained abroad. The amount of the fee depends on the expenses incurred in conducting the process, and is usually in the range of 100–3000 euro.

The fees cover the entire recognition process, including a possible skills analysis (cost of materials, work of experts and workshop rental), the final report and document processing (shipment, costs of telephone calls, translations, etc.). If the full equivalence of the candidate's qualification to its German equivalent was not determined and a foundation course or a language course must be completed or supplementary activities undertaken, the costs of the validation process increase.

Candidates can apply to various institutions for financial support to cover these costs. In particular situations (for example, if the candidate is an unemployed person), the employment office can provide financial support. Moreover, the federated states of Hamburg, Berlin and Baden-Württemberg have special funds for candidates in a difficult life situations. As part of the "Prototyping Transfer" project, candidates can apply for the costs of the skills analysis to be covered. It is also possible to obtain financing from an employer who is supporting the recognition process.

12. Context of good practice

The process of recognising vocational qualifications attained outside Germany under the *Act concerning the Assessment of Equivalence of Professional Qualifications* of 2012 is performed mainly at the local level. In the case of the "Carpenter" qualification, identification of learning outcomes (i.e. initial counselling) may take place in special counselling points. The skills analysis is performed in chambers of crafts. The scope of responsibility of individual institutions in Bremen for specific stages is presented below.

Initial counselling is provided by the Recognition Centre of Qualifications – the local career counselling office, which is a unit of the Chamber of Labour in Bremen. It is officially subordinate to the Senator for Economic Affairs and Ports of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, therefore, it is a public authority.

The process of the recognition of qualifications and the skills analysis are conducted by the Chamber of Crafts in Bremen. It is a listed company employing 35 persons. It represents the interests of all people working in craft trades in the federated state of Bremen, about 31 000 employees from approximately 5 000 crafts workshops.

It is responsible for representing the interests of the persons working in craft trades before politicians and public administration. On behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Chamber of Crafts maintains a register of persons working in the craft trades and a register of persons learning in the craft system. It also is obliged to regulate and supervise vocational education and, among others, it appoints examiners in the

field of vocational education in Bremen. Moreover, the Chamber offers individual consultancy for all employees of craft workshops (and persons starting work) in the areas of management, establishing start-ups, training and education.

The Chamber of Crafts in Bremen belongs to the German Chamber of Crafts, which supervises all 54 chambers of crafts in Germany and represents their joint interests. The Chamber of Crafts in Bremen belongs to the German Confederation of Crafts, along with 54 chambers of crafts and 38 central professional associations and significant economic and research organisations of the craft sector in Germany. The Confederation represents the joint interests of its members in all fundamental issues relating to craft policies in the German parliament, the federal government and other central bodies, as well as in the European Union.

The Federal Recognition Act, which regulates the process of the recognition of foreign qualifications in Germany, is a national level legal act. It lies within the scope of responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. From a legal perspective, it is subsidiary to sectoral law: it is valid only if there are no regulations from the sectoral law. Both the citizens of Germany and foreigners have the right to initiate the process of recognition on the basis of this Act.

More information about the activities of the institutions responsible for the recognition of qualifications in Germany is available from:

1. "Integration through Qualification" Network:

- <http://www.netzwerk-iq.de>
- <http://www.netzwerk-iq.de/network-iq-start-page.html> (English language version)

2. Government's information portal on the recognition of foreign vocational qualifications in Germany:

- <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/de/> (German language version)
- <https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/html/pl/> (Polish language version)

3. Central institution performing the validation of vocational qualifications in trade and industry:

- <http://www.ihk-fosa.de/die-ihk-fosa/> (German language version)
- <http://www.ihk-fosa.de/pl/ihk-fosa/> (Polish language version)

13. Comments

The complex structure of the entire recognition process and in particular, the fact that different institutions are responsible for successive stages of the process, may seem quite complicated to foreigners. The scope of responsibility of these institutions is also not always clear. For persons who do not know the German vocational education system, obtaining additional information about possible support and financing is an additional difficulty.

An insufficient command of the language may also be a problem, particularly when the candidate must tell the story of his/her life several times to various counsellors. There may also be a large content-related and linguistic imbalance between the expert and the candidate, since counsellors usually know the system and legal procedures better and German is their native language.

It should also be stressed that the German dual vocational education system, focused on extensive practical training in relevant craft workshops, is a unique system. This may complicate the recognition of qualifications attained in countries where vocational education is mainly based on theoretical learning, with a smaller share of practical training.

Moreover, high safety standards and the preference for formal education may significantly hinder the recognition of foreign qualifications in Germany.

Comments

Name of the Qualification

Carpenter

In Germany, a person attains the qualification of “carpenter” after three years of dual vocational education. However, the good practice described herein is referring to the recognition of the qualification of “carpenter” or the confirmation of its learning outcomes attained in a foreign country.

Short Description of the Validation Process

skills analysis

The concept of skills analysis and the instruments for performing it were developed and tested in cooperation with selected sectors under the auspices of the “Prototyping Transfer” project in 2012–2014. The elaborated solutions are presently used and disseminated by chambers of crafts and chambers of industry and commerce.

Detailed Description of the Course of Individual Stages

“Integration through Qualification”

The “Integration through Qualification” Network is a network of local counselling points in all 16 federated states of Germany working in the field of the recognition of vocational qualifications attained abroad. It operates on the basis of the Act concerning the Assessment of Equivalence of Professional Qualifications of 2012 (Das Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Feststellung und Anerkennung im Ausland erworbener Berufsqualifikationen, BGBl. 2011, T. I, Nr. 63, S. 2515; cf the English-language version of the act: https://www.anerkennung-in-deutschland.de/media/bqfg_englisch.pdf).

Validation Methods

“Prototyping Transfer”

The “Prototyping Transfer” project conducted in years 2015–2017 was the continuation of the “Prototyping” project. It was implemented to improve the process of recognising foreign vocational education and to disseminate good practices concerning validation in Germany. The project was financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

Competences of Validation Practitioners

experience in counselling,

In Germany, providing career counselling may refer to the sixth or seventh level of the German Qualifications Framework (GQF). Thus far, however, the GQF only includes formal qualifications awarded in vocational education, general education and higher education. Qualifications attained as part of supplementary education, including in the field of counselling, are to be included in GQF at a later date.

Organisational and Material Resources

protective clothing

Germany has strict standards and regulations specifying the protective clothing to be worn in successive stages of work: helmets, hearing protectors, working shoes, protective gloves or even masks. These standards were developed by the Association for Employers’ Liability Insurance. Material resources are provided by the institution performing the skills analysis (for example the Chamber of Crafts).

Quality Assurance of Validation

They are used to constantly monitor the Act.

Cf. the report of 2017: https://www.bmbf.de/pub/Bericht_zum_Anerkennungsgesetz_2017.pdf

Quality Assurance of Validation

evaluation report

Cf. https://www.anererkennung-in-deutschland.de/media/Evaluationsbericht_2017_InterVal_IWAK.pdf