

# VOCATIONAL TRAINING

## in PRACTICE



The EPALE collaborative platform is a tool of the Erasmus+ programme that fosters exchange between professionals involved in adult education and training in France and Europe.

These professionals publish a wide range of content: not only news, reports and studies, but also articles describing their practices and thinking about the sector. They are regularly invited to discuss current national and European issues, through online discussion forums or events such as thematic meetings.

This handbook provides examples illustrating how continuing vocational training in France works, and supplements the description provided in the brochure "Continuing Vocational Training in France".

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The articles can be accessed and consulted on the dedicated web platform EPALÉ  
<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/fr>

# Professional pathways and validation of professional experience: **a new path?**

By Isabelle HOUOT, *Thematic Expert for EPALE France and Lecturer at the University of Lorraine*



"Your experience is certainly worth a degree", says the AFPA (National Agency for Adult Training) promotion brochure. To what extent is this statement credible in the eyes of society?

*Validation of past experience is a means of facilitating access to continuing training and is available to all persons with professional experience.*

SEE P. 10 OF THE BROCHURE

How should we approach and understand the changes in the current VAE provisions in France?: Experience requirement reduced to one year, optional training parallel to VAE prior to interview with examination panel, etc.

These recent provisions support the idea of a shift in thinking, found in France as well as across Europe. It would thus appear that we are moving from a training provision rationale to one in which pathways are offered offering, wherein certification is more of a waypoint than an end.

With this in mind, the VAE system appears to be a major means: for enabling smoother pathways, and bringing diversity into systems. Yet how should we analyse and think about this move from a logic of training provision to a logic of supporting professional and personal career paths? What procedures should we envision for VAE in this process?

In this regard, three issues appear to be fundamental, relating both to the expectations from which the mechanisms were developed and the reconfiguration of professional profiles in training actors.

## 1. Gaining a better understanding in order to better take into account learning "in the workplace" in the development and implementation of training systems appears an imperative here.

Because if it is in the very exercise of work that competencies develop, the aim is then to focus the system on the actual activities of active workers (rather than on required tasks) with a view to developing a support

offer suited to both career pathways and organisational changes. The renewed interest we are currently seeing in FEST (workplace situation training) appears to be a step in this direction. From the experience with VAE and the experience gained by VAE support workers, a large number of lessons can be gained and used to form the foundation for engineering components to support career paths.

## 2. Creating the conditions for development at work through and all along the professional pathway.

The experiments, carried out here and there, engaging a reflexive activity in a work and/or training situation, the new forms of management (today's discourse makes reference to the liberated company) have clearly shown how "acting with competencies" and "acting autonomously" are behaviours that are largely dependent on the environments in which they are deployed.

At the training and/or support venues themselves, professionals must take on a real challenge, reconciling two objectives that are not necessarily mutually exclusive, yet go hand in hand:

- An adaptation objective: ensuring that participants develop gain the skills required to exercise the competencies expected of them in the professional world.
- And, at the same time, a development objective: equipping participants (whether interns, trainees, or VAE candidates) with the tools they will need to chart out their own career pathways and, more broadly, determine their direction in their lives and careers. And this ability to shape one's learning requires a number of conditions to be satisfied: access to knowledge, access to resources, and the ability to take ownership of and share them. These are keys to the concurrent development of the individual and work. It is certainly no coincidence that the VAE-certified, who have gone through a process of analysing their own activity, outperform by 10% those certified by training, when it comes to securing lasting employment. <sup>[1]</sup>

**3. The ability to display recognisable social signals of qualification on the labour market (national and/or international) is an imperative toward being able to competently navigate an environment of multiple mobilities, whether professional, sectoral, geographical, etc.**

At stake here is the ability to standardise of competencies within common national and/or European frameworks so that as many people as possible have access to “credible” and truly “bankable” certification. In this respect, the provisions regarding validation of previous professional experience (France, Luxembourg) have shown the way: allowing the recognition of knowledge gained through certification and degrees, thereby guaranteeing equal “dignity” in achieving the same certifications, all along the pathway.

As to the opportunity for learners to shift to more hybrid, flexible provisions closer to the needs of people and companies, it should definitely be enabled - but how? Herein lies the key question, for it entails coming up with and developing pathway engineering mechanisms that take into account all 3 of the aforementioned challenges.

VAE support can be defined as a process aimed at collaborative self-training, in which mediation with others nonetheless plays a crucial part. This mediation comes in multiple forms: mediation of the words used to describe one’s activities, mediation of one’s writings, to the support provider, to peers, to the judging panel, even with loved ones, etc.



Because the time during which one receives support is a formative time: it is the time when candidates recollect, elaborate upon, and give meaning to their experience and, from this foundation, formally sum up what they have gained. These two distinctive times - when they tell of their experience for others to hear, and when they recount what they have gained in an application or in front of a jury - have one trait in common: they put words on what has taken place. Putting an individual's experience into words is the very essence of this support time: it is the action asked of the candidate. It is this action that will enable the individual to formulate the substance for their application and present it, and substantiate their action, in a simulation environment or at an interview.

To be both productive (bring about a product, i.e., the application, or the explanations provided during a simulation) and constructive (in that it paves the way for the development of the person's knowledge), this action of putting into words assumes two things:

- First of all, there is an addressing, i.e. a destination third party, which may be one person or more.
  - Secondly, it must be able to draw upon a memory of successive formulations,
- Lastly, it is based on interactions with others capable of supporting the individual's engagement in the same activity.

From the above, it becomes clear that, over the course of a professional pathway, these formative times are of particular importance: they make it possible both to elaborate upon and formalise set out knowledge gained as a series of actual traces and evidence of a path travelled, and from which it is then possible to found new professional prospects with the person, in other words to imagine where the pathway might lead in the future...

Through this transactive process, the person's professional identity is forged out, illustrating the need to establish the “training” pathway as a form of gradual support for an identity in transformation.

The shifting characteristics of the market and labour organisation today can lead to rockier pathways, more likely to be fundamentally questioned over the course of a career, hence the importance - all European countries agree in essence on these two points - of “smoothing” and “securing” them. And it can be clearly seen that a VAE scheme, as exists in France, can enable a move in this direction.

That being said, VAE is first and foremost a form of access to an individual right (previously unrecognised in Europe): the right to choose to have the knowledge gained from one's personal, professional and social experience recognised.

It will also be important to ensure that, absorbed into a series of broader provisions, VAE continues to fall within the scope of this guaranteed right, rather than proceeding solely from a logic of external prescription on the part of employment and training operators. This will be the decisive factor in the actual development of the individual's experience, their activities, and, more generally, of work organisations. It will be decisive for the future social credibility of support mechanisms for career pathways.

[1] Review of vocational qualifications in 2016 Document produced with the support of the French National Agency for the Vocational Training for Adults (AFPA) as part of its public service missions.

## Training operation in a work situation, based on analysis of work characteristics in a VSE in the hotel and restaurant sector.

By Patrick Mayen, E, Thematic Expert for EPALE France and Professor of Education Sciences at the University of Bourgogne Franche Comté/Agrosup Dijon

The question of how to best go about identifying training needs is a long-standing one, the answer to which is in no way clear or immediate. It is in no way immediate for employers or supervisors. Nor is it immediate for those being asked to take part in training, or who asking to receive training.

*The company is a major point of entry to continuing vocational training.*

SEE P. 8 TO 14 OF THE BROCHURE

The purpose here is to report on an intervention carried out in a very small business in the hotel and catering sector, which used a vocational teaching approach to analyse work, then come up with a form of intervention which, as we will see, is very original and productive.

The company is a hotel-restaurant located in a small thermal resort in a rural setting. It is managed by a couple and employs a chef, a maid and a waitress. The request for intervention came in response to an observed reality: the hotel owners noticed that some of their customers were coming back to the spa station but not to their hotel. They wanted to improve the quality of the service. The hotel-owner felt that the work practices of both the waitress and maid could stand to be improved and that training, within the company itself, was the best response. Though not schooled in the profession, she pointed out gaps between what she had asked to have done, or what she would have done herself and believes is good for customer satisfaction and loyalty, and the methods chosen by her two workers.

The training provider assigned to the task first took the time to conduct a work analysis, which the wife found interesting.

She also took the time to define what ergonomics specialists call the prescribed work, in other words, what the hotel-owner expected, what the chambermaid must do, how and why.

She then carried out a co-analysis of the work with the chambermaid, an experienced person, whom she found out was very attached to the company, to her work and caring about her guests, even when she did not see them; which is a characteristic of this type of work, in which one is expected to look after guests whom one does not meet. The trainer therefore stayed alongside chambermaid for two working days. The latter showed her what she does, how she does it and why. There too, the chambermaid acted in a systematic, rational manner. For instance, she explained that she dedicates a great deal of care and time, too much according to her hotel-owner, to hoovering the carpet. In her opinion, as someone accustomed to going



on holiday and staying at hotels with her sister, holidays mean a lot of walking and touring during the day, such that, upon returning to one's hotel room, the first thing one wants to do is take off one's shoes, go barefoot or wear only socks or stockings. If the floor is not impeccably clean, however, this quickly becomes clear, as the guest's feet or socks become dirty. The cleanliness guaranteed by the time and care taken when hoovering therefore translates into a key criterion of quality and customer satisfaction. It is clear in this case that non-professional experience, gained as a client and user of the services provided by a chambermaid, is mobilised here, redefining work and the way an on-the-job action is structured.

The training phase itself was conducted as follows: the hotel-owner and trainer took part in the chambermaid's work. The relationship between the employer and her employee was good enough for the latter to accept and even see it as interesting a priori.

In reality, it is a double co-analysis of the work and co-training that would take place.

One of the key success factors proved to be an unexpected event that came up very quickly. As the chambermaid was just finishing cleaning the toilet, her hotel-owner informed her that she should not forget the anti-tartar product. The chambermaid turned to her and, astonished, told her that, here, the water was not hard at all, and that there was thus no point in using an anti-tartar product. She added that it would be a waste of money to do so, and concluded by mentioning the chemical smell it might add, to the customers' dissatisfaction. This unexpected situation caught the hotel-owner by surprise, and became a factor in her commitment to engage in a learning arrangement for herself. She acknowledged that, not being from the region, she had been unaware of this and thanked the chambermaid. This very brave and modest reaction instantly transformed the relationship with her employee. For the chambermaid, it meant that she was recognised the chance to bring her practices and its competencies to bear. For the hotel owner, the training sought for her employee also availed her with training, and even extended beyond the training and into company practices. The rest of the process therefore unfolded as follows:

- In some cases, and for certain tasks, the hotel-owner would what she expected, how she would go about it, or what she thought was not being done well enough (i.e. her way), after which discussion was engaged with the chambermaid;
- In most cases, the chambermaid did, commented on and explained why she acted in specific ways. The hotel-owner would approve, suggest other options where necessary, then they would discuss together to come up with new ways of doing things, and adjustments resulting in arrangements new to both.

#### What outcomes?

This type of intervention, which can only fully play out when relations between the players involved are free of tension, offers workplace training involving not only a category of players, but players engaged in necessarily collective work. Here, both of the parties involved learned from the experience and from each other; their feedback some time after the intervention furthermore showed

that their professional relationship had changed and, according to both, had become more trusting.

Most of the time, training is defined and targeted at one population, as if others, and management were not involved.

Here, it can be noted that the working practices and conditions were the primary cause and the focus of rediscovery and shared reflexive analysis. Through this co-analysis and discussion on the work quality criteria, both players received workplace training.

This intervention was carried out by Beyan Sokhurt, for his Master's thesis in Learning Engineering in Vocational Training, in Dijon.

<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/fr/blog/une-intervention-de-formation-en-situation-de-travail-partir-dune-demarche-danalyse-du-travail>

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## How should we train and provide support to people released from prison to find a job?

By Association ÎLOT



### UN ACCUEIL, UN TOIT, UN NOUVEAU DÉPART

*ÎLOT is an association the purpose of which is to provide walk-in and reintegration services to people rejected from society and in great distress. The audiences its supports include people who are subject to a court sentence (released from prison or with a modified sentence).*

*EPALE France met with ÎLOT to find out about the reintegration actions implemented and more particularly the qualification-integration workshops.*

#### What kind of support is needed for those under correctional control?

Those under correctional control need a space where they can regain the necessary foundations that will enable them to resume life in society and employment.

*Lifelong vocational training is provided in multiple environments, regardless of the person's status*

SEE REGIONAL INTERVENTION, P. 11 OF THE BROCHURE

At L'Îlot, we identified three essential forms of support for persons under correctional control:

- social support
- educational support
- vocational support

To provide this support, we provide our beneficiaries with three types of human skills:

- employees of the association (social workers, specialist educators, professional integration advisers, professionals from the Food Services Division at the Amiens site, institution heads and other permanent staff: reception professions in particular),
- specialised volunteers (teachers, recruitment professionals: HR function and/or CIP, etc.),
- providers such as specialised trainers.

#### Through what actions is the association L'ÎLOT working to reintegrate people under correctional control?

With 5 safe houses in France, 3 integration construction sites and 3 integration qualification workshops, each year, L'Îlot welcomes nearly 1,200 people to whom it provides,

whether they are residents of an accommodation and social rehabilitation centre or employed at a workshop on a social reintegration plan, **social and educational support** in order to **give them the means to stabilise after a period of incarceration or precariousness**. The association's main activities are thus in enabling **accommodation and access to employment and/or training**. Created in 1969, the association has been recognised as being of public interest since 1998 and is a member of the Charter Committee for Trust Donations.

**When it comes to qualification/integration workshops, how does the association design and run these workshops? What kinds of challenges can it face?**

The Qualification-Integration Workshop (AQI) was born of the association's desire to give the public it supports the foundations needed to return to life in society and employment. The AQIs embody L'îlot's belief that by concurrently providing general support through workshops covering all areas, intensive immersion experiences in the business world and the opportunity to earn a degree (usually the first) to people who are marginalised and/or remote from employment and giving them adapted resources and tools to prepare well, it can enable sustainable social reintegration for those persons and curb repeat offences in people released from prison.

This mechanism is formally known as an Integration Site Workshop (ACI) and stands out for its innovative character which has the particularity of fostering social and professional reintegration for young people leaving prison by enabling them to take part in a diploma training course in food services. Upon completing this course, they may earn a vocational certificate in food services (RNCP code: 280). This project meets both the training and degree needs of people under justice surveillance and foster professional integration for this audience by positioning them in an area of activity where demand is high, i.e., collective food services.



The Workshop has been in existence since 2009 in Paris, 2012 in Aubervilliers (93) and 2015 in Amiens (80). The participants (3 groups of 15 people/year) are recruited on part-time permanent contracts (26 hours/week) which last from 9 to 11 months. During this period, employees on integration programmes alternate between training periods in a partner training centre, business immersion periods and socio-educational support sessions at L'îlot.

The first weeks after leaving are crucial, hence the association's decision to organise, at the very start of the internship, a session to help participants break with the prison environment, develop mutually supportive relationships with other participants, change image and regain self-confidence. In particular, a retreat can be offered at sea with the Association Les Amis de Jeudi Dimanche (link is external), during which future interns can find their place in a group, far from the world to which they have been limited during their prison time.

The Workshop is offered as an "airlock" or a bridge between life in incarceration and life in an open environment. It allows

people recruited at the end of their sentence to consolidate their reintegration plans while benefiting from sufficient and regular income, essential to seriously planning a new start.

The aim is for them to gain, by the time they complete the programme:

- **greater personal and social stability.**
  - By resolving personal difficulties or gaining greater autonomy and confidence in their ability to resolve such difficulties, in connection with identified resource persons,
  - By gaining access to social benefits,
  - Through familiarity and compliance with the rules of life in society and in the workplace...
- **professionalisation:** developing know-how and soft skills, gaining significant experience;
- **a recognised vocational qualification as a food services worker, fostering access to a lasting job:** a degree as collective food services worker, Level V, issued by the Ministry of Labour.

With regard to the difficulties participants can face, our **action is sometimes impacted** by the slow progress of pleas for sentence adjustment, despite the very good ties we maintain with the prison administration, a partner to our work. Other issues lie in the **pace of the project, which is based on alternating periods of work-study** and which require compliance with a heavy schedule, something not always easy for people who have been deprived of freedom for a long period of time. This requires our teams to be **very watchful** so as to keep the group motivated over the entire duration of the project. Lastly, **learning is not always easy for an audience, the majority of which has experienced academic failure**, even when most of them express a desire to receive training so as to become self-sufficient.

**What feedback can the association give today on the AQI project?**

We initiated a **social impact assessment process** on this project in 2016, thanks to support from the Bettencourt Schueller Foundation to measure the impact of the AQI project, as well as to conceptualise.

During the preparatory phase of this study, we defined the following 11 themes in line with the realities of the support provided by the teams at L'îlot and on which people were interviewed during the study: rights & administrative procedures, employment, behaviour & social codes, budget management, relations with the justice system, basic knowledge & French as a foreign language, health and addictions, housing, self-esteem, family relations and activities & social ties.

During the study, we found that **the motivations of people to join our integration project through training vary from person to person** : interest in food services, earning a degree, being granted a sentence adjustment, etc. Despite these differences, it would appear that the AQI experience allows everyone to trigger a change in their life path, in that it enables them to "gain a new awareness" for their professional or personal lives.

<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/fr/blog/comment-former-et-accompagner-les-personnes-sorties-de-prison-pour-retrouver-un-emploi>

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# Best practices for training quality: the EDUFORM National Education label

By Joël PAVAGEAU, Continuing training advisor at the Academic Delegation for Continuing Education - DAFCO Lille for the Greta du Nord Pas de Calais network (Lille Academy)



On 20 September 2018, at the 5th EPAL France themed meeting "Best practices for Quality of Training", training professionals spoke to share their practices. Joël PAVAGEAU, Continuing Education Advisor at the Academic Delegation for Continuing Education, went over the topics discussed during this one-day exchange session.

*National education is largely involved in continuing vocational training, particularly through the Greta network, training over 500,000 adults each year. A quality label for continuing education has been created encouraging organisations to meet the requirements of the National Education system.*

SEE P. 15 OF THE BROCHURE

Within the academic delegation, I am responsible in particular for deploying our EDUFORM quality approach for the continuing vocational training network (DAFCO/GIP/GRETA) in Nord Pas de Calais; I am also a member of the national expert group that developed the reference framework and the complete process for earning the EDUFORM label, which is included on the CNEFOP national list.

The DAFCO's mission has been to develop, coordinate, monitor and assess the academic development strategy for the 4 Greta networks governed by the Lille School Board.

The Continuing Vocational Education network is the leading network in France in continuing education; it is made up of groups of public institutions that pool their skills and teaching resources to offer a global chain of tailor-made services ranging from skills review assessments and guidance to professional integration, including training and Validation of Prior Experience.

The Continuing Vocational Education network is committed to the quality approach that culminates in the EDUFORM label; this is an ambitious approach in multiple respects:

- it covers all the services offered by a Greta or GIP (skills review, guidance, training, VAE, support into employment),
- it covers the three dimensions that structure a training organisation: teaching, organisation and steering,
- it is an approach open to all training organisations preparing individuals for vocational degrees offered by the National Education system,
- the Ministry of National Education is now the head of a labelling process and certification authority,
- the National Certification Commission, which is empowered to award or deny the EDUFORM label based on a rigorous audit process, is made up of

personalities from COPANEF, OPCA, other ministries and professionals from the E.U. continuing education network who do not have the majority of votes.

## Best practices between service providers and trainers

It is important that the criteria of the quality decree be incorporated from as early as the worker hiring stage; in particular, skills and qualifications related to the areas of intervention are verified within our network, before each recruitment. This also applies to all individuals hired, particularly administrative and management staff.

Competencies are referenced in order to monitor and support the development of the skills of our permanent staff in line with market developments. A regional professionalisation plan is thus drawn up and offered to all our staff.

As far as occasional workers are concerned, the requirements of the decree are adapted into the short-term contracts; such workers are also eligible for the professionalisation plan in place for permanent staff.

## Certifications, referencing and business practices

Our commitment to the DataDock listing procedure is perfectly in line with the service commitments of the "Eduform" repository, which already took up all the criteria of the quality decree.

The common and shared description of our operating procedures with regard to the 21 indicators from the national OPCA group has proven an outstanding opportunity to harmonise professional practices, enhance them and thereby strengthen our network's professional identity.

This approach was intended to be collaborative and participatory, a mark of success on the way to ensuring



that all our staff properly took ownership of our commitments further to the quality decree.

**Research and innovation in training, to serve best practices**

The Nord Pas de Calais Continuing Vocational Training network chose to become actively involved in the overhaul of vocational practices, in order to propose new training methods (digitalisation, training on work situations, etc.) adapted to the needs of companies, local authorities and individuals.

As such, new learning methods are emerging (multimodality, e-learning, etc.), and an increased variety of learning situations were offered in order to "take down" the walls of the traditional training room.

This work is being carried out done with the support of the teaching teams and an adapted professionalisation plan.

<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/fr/blog/bonnes-pratiques-pour-la-qualite-de-la-formation-le-label-eduform-de-leducation-nationale>

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