

Vocational and Professional Assessments are an International Phenomenon

EU countries recognise the value of vocational education and training. At a recent educational trade fair speakers acknowledged in the final remarks that:

“Vocational education and training is international: *Berufsbildung* (vocational training) in Germany is not conceivable without international cooperation. This is the conclusion of the final day of the Vocational Education and Training Forum at the *Didacta* Education Fair in Cologne.”

If vocational education is ‘not conceivable without international cooperation’, what does this mean for providers in the UK and elsewhere? Improving the capability of personnel means enabling learners to gain both international experience and internationally recognised competence. This makes vocational education and training a good choice for learners alongside other university studies. Opportunities therefore exist for training providers to create ‘permeable career paths’:

- working with suitably qualified specialists;
- cooperating and collaborating with exemplary vocational education and training in universities and vocational centres abroad; and
- ensuring recognition of qualifications acquired abroad for the migration of credits (recognition of prior learning) through training and employment.

Training providers need to facilitate learners’ curiosity about the world, of opportunities supporting openness to the knowledge and ideas of international partners acting together across borders . This will make education and training providers fit for the future as attractive providers for education, business, and innovation in a European and global networks.

Assessors must keep up with the opportunities and challenges provided by international and global cooperation in vocational education and training. Establishing professional capabilities and capacity to evaluate learners’ competence where they have gained experience outside their own jurisdiction extends the value an assessor can offer to the organisations that they work for. For Lead Assessors it is vital to have a grasp on the full implications of the international dynamics if they are to meet the challenge of strategic developments for education and training providers.

For example, the growth in sustainability business training is at the cutting edge of new programmes from universities and other providers. This will have impacts on national, regional and international legislation and training. Regulatory compliance and risk professionals, corporate governance and legal teams, as well as exporting manufacturers, will need to deal with the complexities of cross-border legal and regulatory alignment. This will require agile learners gaining experience in local, national and international contexts. Assessment will, therefore, need to capture a broader and more diverse picture of competence to keep up with and meet the needs of industry and business sectors.

At the core of this new engagement with competence and capability is a richer understanding of learners’ experiences gained through a permeable vocational education and training environment: learning interventions operating at a micro-learning level through to extended programmes of study within work, training and educational contexts nourished by international experiences. This will impact learners’ engagement with technical knowledge, their deployment of the skills they develop, and the behaviours that they exhibit. Assessors will need to capture the breadth and depth of learners’ aptitude, attitude and abilities evidenced through testing and examination. Potentially, this could mean rethinking pedagogy, shifting the focus to assessment for learning, and ensuring that the assessment tools for summative assessments are relatable as an authentic representation of praxis for individual practitioners: from apprentices to individuals with much greater career experience.

by David Jenkins-Handy