

Quality Assurance and Practice-Oriented Assessment in European Vocational Education (QUAL-PRAXIS Project)

Mobility Beyond Borders
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Background of the QUAL-PRAXIS Project

- Making learning and competencies visible and guaranteeing the value of education has become one of the prime European objectives in vocational education.
- Assessment, qualifications and certificates are important determinants of students' future opportunities.
- Furthermore, there is a demand for more transparent qualifications and certificates which would promote workforce mobility across national boundaries, between different levels of occupational hierarchies and from one geographical region to another.
- The most essential reason making the assessment in education more important is the growing emphasis placed on lifelong learning.



The Aims of the QUAL-PRAXIS Project



- To discuss and examine innovative practice-oriented assessment (authentic, competence-based) models from the perspective of different national VET traditions (Austrian, German, Estonian, Finnish and Irish)
- To introduce good practices for assessing practice-oriented assessment in vocational education
- To find new approaches in assessment of work-related learning as ways to improve the quality of vocational education
- To compare different practice-oriented assessment models in Europe



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Partners of the QUAL-PRAXIS Project



Coordinator



Finland: Institute for Educational Research,
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Partners



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Germany: ITB, University of Bremen,
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Finland: National Board of Education,
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Fields and Levels of the Case Studies in the Partner Countries

Country	Study programme	Level of education	Source/ Focus of examples
Austria	Social work	Applied higher education	Social work study programmes at an Austrian university of applied sciences (Fachhochschule).
Estonia	Health care and IT –sector	Applied higher education	Applied higher education programmes in nursing at Tallinn and Tartu Medical Schools
Finland	Social welfare and health care, Building Maintenance Technology, Construction	Initial VET	Vocational skills demonstrations and on-the-job learning in initial VET
Germany	Geriatric care	Initial VET	Practical (apprenticeship) training as part of geriatric care education
Ireland	Vocational teacher education	Higher education	Undergraduate-level vocational degree programmes offered by Dublin City University



Elements of Good Practices for Practice-Oriented Assessment within the QUAL-PRAXIS Project (Stenström & Laine 2006)



Elements of Quality Assurance in Practice-Oriented (Authentic) Assessment



- **Authentic context**
 - Cooperation with world of work
 - Feedback from the world of work
 - Real working situation brings best out students' vocational skills.
- **Development (and multiplicity) of methods**
 - Development of valid instruments and tools
 - Range of assessment methods
- **Transparency**
 - Predefined assessment targets and criteria
 - Assessment documentation
- **Joint assessment**
 - Assessment discussion (including self-assessment)
 - Tripartite principle (teachers, workplace instructor, students) refers to objectivity of assessment
- **Assessor training**
 - Professionalism of assessors
 - Vocational skills requirements for assessors



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Common Quality Criteria for Assessment



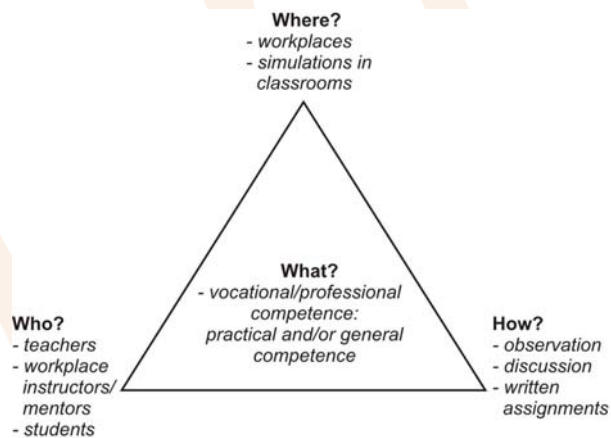
- **Validity**
 - Appropriateness, meaningfulness, usefulness
 - Reality of the workplace
- **Reliability**
 - Assessment method can resist variation (e.g. variation in tasks and time)
- **Objectivity**
 - Several assessors with differing backgrounds
- **Transparency**
 - Requirements for assessment criteria
- **Equity**
 - Assessing students as objectively as possible and taking account of their personal characteristics
- **Fairness**
 - No person be disadvantaged through the assessment process
- **Comparability**
 - Standard of student performance is consistent from placement to placement and from one year to another.



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Assessment Triangle of the QUAL-PRAXIS Project



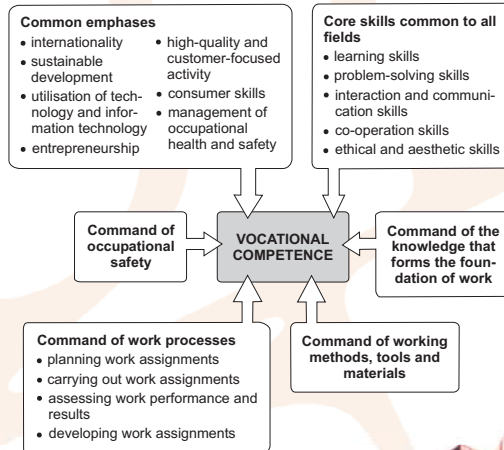
Example of Assessment Methods of the QUAL-PRAXIS Project



<i>Assessment methods</i>	<i>Initial VET</i>	<i>Applied higher education</i>	<i>Higher education</i>
Reflective / Joint discussion	Germany Finland	Austria	Ireland
Written assignment	Finland Germany	Austria Estonia	Ireland
Observation	Germany Finland	Austria	Ireland
Self-assessment	Finland	Estonia	
Portfolio		Estonia	



Example of Assessment Targets (Focus of Assessment) of Vocational Competence in Finnish VET



Degree of Context Specificity within the QUAL-PRAXIS Project



- Because of the specific nature of each individual context, seemingly similar approaches to assessment across the QUAL-PRAXIS partner countries are tailored to the demands of each context (e.g. sanctity of the client/practitioner relationship, the standards required at different education levels impact on the implementation of the assessment methods).

Concluding Remarks on Practice-Oriented Assessment



- The reason for focusing the QUAL-PRAXIS project on practice-oriented assessment was that modes of assessment have proved to be resistant to change, although new concepts of teaching and learning have been adopted to meet the demands facing teaching and learning in the labour market.
- The project launched the term practice-oriented assessment, with reference to performance- and competence-based assessment and to authentic assessment in work-related learning.
- The focus of practice-oriented assessment is vocational competence and the viewpoint of working life is taken into account. Assessment is performed by various assessors (e.g. teachers, workplace instructors, students) in as authentic an assessment context as possible. The most common methods used are observation, discussion and written assignments.



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Concluding Remarks on Practice-Oriented Assessment (Contd.)



- Among measurement experts there is a general consensus that performance assessment, whether authentic or practice-oriented, is a better way to evaluate students and a stronger predictor of vocational skills than paper-and-pencil tests.
- The reality of the workplace interacts well with practice-oriented assessment.
- The QUAL-PRAXIS project indicates that practice-oriented assessment is a method of assessing work-related learning that suits a wide range of educational domains.
- The assessors and methods are highly diversified, therefore the importance of quality assurance in relation to work-related learning and practice-oriented assessment needs especially to be stressed.



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Practice-Oriented Assessment and Mobility



- Mobility is increasing locally, nationally and internationally.
- It is needed assessing qualifications, knowledge, skills and competence in different context (formal and informal learning) for transfer, validation and recognition of learning outcomes.
- For assessing one's vocational competence it is needed valid and reliable assessment (what? how? who? where?) in different context.
- Quality assurance of (practice-oriented) assessment is an important tool towards a comparable system of skills, competence and qualifications (e.g. ECVET and EQF) for improving mobility.

