

Identifying transferable competences in the field of performing arts - CAPE-SV project

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Unlike most of the other ECVET pilot projects, the project CAPE-SV¹ operates in an economic sector that is highly fragmented, where qualifications differ enormously in their focus and where the volume of learners enrolled in formal pathways is relatively low – the sector of performing arts. But it is also a sector where people are very mobile both geographically (the international dimension is a “must” in this sector) and professionally (moving across professions or having multiple occupations is not rare).

In this sector, the CAPE-SV project only works with professions and related qualifications concerning technicians and administrative staff. But even within this type of occupations the variety is great, ranging from costume designers to producers, including light or sound engineers. Many of these professionals have rather broad profiles in terms of knowledge, skills and competence, combining specific technical and vocational aspects with more artistic ones. Furthermore, on the job, these people are expected to be very versatile given the limited size of the teams in which they operate. They often carry out a combination of tasks that covers elementary activities (such as building the scaffolding for the scene) with highly creative and innovative productions.

Another difficulty the project has to deal with are the differences according to which this sector, and more specifically the technical and administrative occupations, are professionalised across the partner countries. For example, in some countries the people operating in this area are qualified in vocationally oriented schools and colleges (often post-secondary education and training) while elsewhere the only qualifications in this area are delivered by universities. It is also not unlikely that in some countries there are simply no formal qualifications corresponding to these professions. For example in the Czech Republic there is no qualification for sound or light engineers in performance arts. Many people first enter these occupations through leisure activities, learn and acquire knowledge and skills on the job and one day decide to make a living out of this activity. Where qualifications exist, they differ in scope: some are more technical and others more artistic. For example, the sound engineer qualification in the Spanish partner organisation is rather technical and requires a good level of technical knowledge and skills (electronics, physics, etc.). A similar qualification of the UK partner institution, on the other hand, is much more focused on the creative aspect of this profession.

These characteristics mean that credit transfer and accumulation will be operationalised differently, compared to qualifications preparing, for example, for car mechanics where the product and processes are highly standardised across Europe.

The assumption of the CAPE-SV project is, that despite all these differences, the people working in these professions share some common competences that can be transferred if they need to re-qualify or if they seek recognition of their qualifications abroad. That is the reason why the partner institutions embarked on the adventure of testing ECVET in their area.

1.1 Testing the ECVET specifications

The starting point of the CAPE SV project in testing ECVET is to explore how a unit-based structure of qualifications will enhance the transparency of what people have achieved in order to support decisions on validation and recognition by the partner institutions.

The CAPE-SV project is not concerned with preparing the conditions for organised geographical mobility of students (though such exchanges

¹ Capitalisation des acquis professionnels dans le spectacle vivant – Capitalisation of learning outcomes in Europe's life performing arts
<http://www.cfpts.fr/capesv>

take place among some of the partners). Its main emphasis is on enhancing transparency of learning outcomes so that learners have the possibility to pursue their learning pathways abroad while making it easier to recognise what they have already achieved.

The core of the project work is to identify an approach to describing qualifications through units of learning outcomes which will be shared among the partners. Most of the partner institutions involved are also the competent institutions for the following ECVET functions (sometimes in cooperation with other partners such as regions or social partners in the sector):

- Design of qualifications;
- Design and delivery of learning programmes;
- Assessment and validation; and
- Recognition and award of qualification.

However they also operate within national qualifications system that have certain requirements regarding qualifications design. For example the Spanish partners are currently preparing their qualifications to be registered in the national register of qualifications which imposes a certain way of structuring and describing the qualification. Therefore the objective is not to adopt a common approach to structuring qualifications but only for their description.



The starting point for the project work is the identification of five common phases of work processes that are shared by all the professions in the area discussed. These are:

- Conception
- Planning
- Production
- Marketing
- Evaluation (feedback)

On the basis of these phases used as the main structure, the project partners are able to describe their qualifications in units of learning outcomes. The feasibility of this approach has now been tested in three transnational juries, where education and training professionals from the sectors concerned were asked to use the grid

developed by CAPE-SV to describe their qualifications. These are professionals who have not been involved in the development of the grid and the project work more generally. For each phase it is possible to identify several activities which can be described by a rather general statement of learning outcomes (see example below). These activities constitute the units of learning outcomes. The choice of maintaining rather general and holistic (i.e. combining knowledge, skills and competence) formulations of learning outcomes has been made in order not to overburden the partner institutions with paper work. This level of detail is considered sufficient for making the content of the qualification transparent and understandable to the partners.

CAPE-SV example of units of learning outcomes for sound technicians as defined by the French partner institution (STAFF)

Phase	Unit of learning outcomes	Learning outcomes description
Conceive	Analysis of the demand for sound design, choice of installation and adaptation	Synthesise the technical demand by understanding and analysing the technical data and artistic choices and taking into account the setting in order to finalise the necessary technical documentation.
Planning	Preparation and organisation of sound equipment	Prepare the cabling equipment according to the implantation plan and the technical fiche for repartition on the given exploitation space

Although these generic statements are considered sufficient, the partners agreed on the necessity to specify the level of autonomy and responsibility of learners. Therefore each learning outcome has an associated "level indicator". EQF levels are used as a proxy for these indicators, mainly looking at the column of competence.

Assessment and validation

Assessment and validation for purposes of credit transfer and accumulation is one area where the CAPE-SV project has an easier task than the other pilot projects. As already mentioned, the partner institutions in this sector are very often competent for all or most of the ECVET functions, including planning and carrying out of assessment and decisions on validation and recognition.

These institutions also prepare relatively small numbers of learners who in any case follow highly individual-

ised pathways. Project work in teams as well as individually constitutes a major part of their training pathway though obviously some courses are still delivered through traditional classroom lectures.

Therefore, given this very flexible organisation of learning pathways, the validation and recognition of assessment that has been carried out abroad is not a major obstacle provided that partners trust this assessment. One condition for trust is the transparency at the level of the qualification description presented above. Another condition is the transparency of assessment evidence (for example portfolio). With regard to this point the project partners are currently working on developing a sort of taxonomy which can be used to describe the assessment and the evidence learners had to produce. Nevertheless, there is a third point that is a crucial condition for any recognition in this sector and that is the direct experience of the partner institutions systems (having seen how they work),

quality of learning activities offered and of graduates (what are their career options once they have achieved the qualification). As highlighted by one of the partners "the paper can carry a lot of things including those that are not exactly true" and therefore while some documentation is needed its importance in developing trust should not be overestimated.

1.2 More information

You can read more information about the CAPE-SV approach on their web-site which among other things described the evolution of the methodological approach, the different possibilities envisaged and the reasons why these have not been maintained (see the part on Methodology): <http://www.cfpts.fr/capesv>.

Like many of the ongoing ECVET pilot projects, CPAE-SV still has over one year to finalise and fine-tune their work. The final methodology will be published on the project web-site.

