

European Inventory

on validation of informal and
non-formal learning



Education and Culture DG



Case Study: Role of the VAE jury, France

1.1 Introduction

France is one of the EU countries at the forefront of the development of validation of informal and non-formal learning. France was in fact the first Member State to introduce legislation with respect to validation, when in 1934 a law was introduced to enable individuals to obtain an engineering diploma on the basis of professional experience.

During the 1980s, a trend in national policy proposed to increase the number of people entering higher education (HE) and in 1985 a decree was adopted to allow professional experience to be taken into consideration in determining access to HE. The process, termed 'VAP 85' enables any person aged at least 20, who ceased their initial studies a minimum of two years ago, to apply for a place on a HE course. Any form of training, experience acquired through paid or voluntary work and knowledge or skills acquired independently of training can be taken into account in their application.¹ The purpose of 'VAP 85' is to enable an individual to take up studying again through exemption of the qualification normally required. It is based on a portfolio, which is assessed by a Pedagogical Commission. Today, 'VAP 85' is still the most used procedure in Higher Education.

In 1992, further legislation *Validation des Acquis Professionnels* ('VAP 92')² was introduced. 'VAP 92' enabled individuals to apply for the validation of certain parts of a qualification (but not a whole qualification) awarded by the Ministries of Education and Agriculture (secondary and higher education). Candidates must at least pass one unit of the degree. People with five years' work experience can apply for these partial qualifications by submitting a portfolio detailing the activities undertaken and skills (competences) gained through their experience, which is then examined by an assessment panel or *jury*.

The 2002 "Social Modernisation Act", extended the existing model of validation to include all the main types of qualification (*certification*) used in France and allow complete qualifications to be awarded on the basis of knowledge gained through experience. This broadened concept of validation, referred to as *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience* (VAE) or Validation of Prior Experience, made access to validation of knowledge gained through experience a right for everyone with at least three years of paid or voluntary

¹ Refernet (2005-2006) , Accumulating, transferring and validating learning, France, published by Cedefop

² Law no. 92-678 of the 20 July 1992 promoted by the Ministry of Labour, followed by decree no. 93-538 of the 27 March 1993

experience. Thus, informal and non-formal learning can be considered as a basis for the award of all types of nationally-recognised qualification.

Since its creation in 2002, there has been a considerable increase in demand for VAE from individuals with no or few qualifications, seeking to take up the offer of a 'second chance' and to progress towards a higher level of qualifications. A total of over 50,000 qualifications were awarded through VAE between 2002 and 2005. VAE is currently concentrated in certain sectors and for a small number of qualifications – over a quarter of the qualifications delivered in 2004 and 2005 related to professions in health and social care. 5600 university degrees were obtained through VAE during the period 2002 - 2006 (7882 partial degrees were delivered during the same period).¹

The 2002 Social Modernisation Act again stipulates the use of a jury for the assessment stage of a VAE application, as well as how these juries should be composed. The role of the jury is to assess the candidate's application for VAE, based on their dossier of experience, and in some cases on an interview with the candidate and/or a practical assessment (either simulated or real-life). All juries should be balanced in terms of gender and a quarter of the membership should represent the relevant occupational sector.

This case study examines the role of the VAE juries in France and aims to identify good practice and lessons learned from experiences to date. It is based on a document review and two interviews with jury members from French Universities and therefore focuses in particular on the implementation of VAE in French Higher Education.

1.2 Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience, VAE

The decrees following the April 2002 Social Modernisation Act outlined the basic principles of the procedure for VAE, which is made up of five main steps. We will examine each of these in turn.

1.2.1 Step one: Information and Guidance

Individuals can find out about VAE from a number of sources, including the new website www.vae.gouv.fr and regional centres which provide advice and support to potential applicants.

Many universities have set up their own dedicated department or centre to support individuals who are interested in accessing VAE to recognise their professional experience. The staff at these centres provides individual support (mentoring) throughout the preparatory phase, such as helping the individual to compile his/her dossier or portfolio

¹ Information provided by a representative of the Ministry of Education

and to prepare for the interview with the jury. At the two case study universities, this member of (administrative) staff also participates as a member of the VAE jury.

One of our interviewees was able to give details of the profile of the staff at their university validation centre. There are three VAE 'advisers' at the centre, all of whom have achieved a PhD in different subjects (modern literature, oceanography and sociology). However, it was suggested that this was particular to this university and it is not known if all staff at similar centres would have achieved a similar level of qualification. The interviewee told us that none of the 'advisers' were provided with training specific to the role.

1.2.2 Step two: Decision on the validity of the application

Individuals must complete an initial dossier which outlines their experience in relation to the qualification they wish to apply for. They must be able to give evidence of a minimum of three years' experience in relation to the qualification. The three years can be continuous or include gaps and the experience can be full-time or part-time, in France or abroad.¹

Applicants can access online *référentiels de certification / d'activités* for use during the preparation of this dossier. These are reference frameworks which outline the knowledge, skills and competences the individual should possess in order to be awarded the relevant qualification.² For vocational education, there are *référentiels métiers* as well as *référentiels de certification (ou de compétences)* (which are used in this sector to construct qualifications and define the content of the training).

The individual should then submit the initial dossier to the certification body for the relevant qualification, which decides within two months on the *recevabilité* or validity of the application, i.e. whether the individual can proceed further with the VAE process. For universities, this step would normally be completed by the administrative department or centre with responsibility for VAE.

In Higher Education, as regards to the complexity and commitment involved in producing the VAE portfolio, the validity decision cannot be only based on the three years formal requirement. That is why most universities also inform the candidate if their chance of achieving the qualification is high or not.

¹ Certain Ministries apply more precise frameworks to the relationship between the certificate and the individual's experience.

² Information taken from www.vae.gouv.fr

1.2.3 Step three: Preparation of the candidate portfolio

If the candidate's initial application is approved, they then proceed to prepare their *dossier* or portfolio of experience. Again, portfolios must give evidence of at least three years of relevant experience (professional, unpaid or voluntary). Our interviewees told us that the portfolios submitted at their institutions are generally composed of a document detailing the candidate's background, the reason for their application etc., together with evidence of their experience, e.g. job descriptions, training certificates, minutes from meetings, signed references from voluntary associations. However, it is not compulsory to provide formal documentation. The portfolios vary in size – 20-30 pages was suggested to be the average, although our interviewees mentioned that some can reach at least 200 pages.

At this stage, candidates may choose to receive support or 'mentoring' – this is strongly recommended on the government website for VAE¹ and most universities do ensure that candidates receive support from their counsellor (*accompagnateur*).² The support is provided to help the candidate to assemble their portfolio and to prepare for the interview with the jury and/or practical assessment. At the case study universities, the administrative department with responsibility for VAE provides this support/'mentoring'. In other cases, candidates must enquire with the relevant (regional) organisation responsible for validation or certification – some provide the support themselves, others designate official (public or private) providers to carry out this task.

¹ The website www.vae.gouv.fr outlines the individual stages of a VAE procedure and strongly recommends that individuals seek support / mentoring (*accompagnement*).

² Information provided by a representative of the Ministry of Education

1.2.4 Step four: Interview

An interview or 'dialogue' with the jury takes place, either at the request of the jury or the candidate (except in Higher Education, where interviews are compulsory).

Assessment takes place at accredited centres, where the jury evaluates the individual's skills in relation to those required to obtain the qualification (as outlined in the *référentiel de certification / d'activités*). The individual's portfolio gives evidence of their experience and the interview serves to supplement the portfolio, thus enabling the candidate to give further details and the jury members to clarify any questions they might have. This may include observation of the candidate in his/her work situation or in a practical test. These practical observations are organised by the relevant organisation responsible for validation or certification. Where an interview takes place, this can serve as a verification of the individual's professional competences, in place of the practical observation. In higher education, the institution determines whether such a practical observation is a necessary element of the VAE procedure.

We provide further details on this stage in more detail below.

1.2.5 Step five: Deliberation and final decision

The jury then proceeds to deliberate and decides on the outcome of the validation request, based on the documents supplied and their own observations. The jury's final decision can result in:

- Full validation of the qualification
- Partial validation of the qualification¹
- A refusal to award the qualification.

Our interviews also revealed that candidates may be awarded a 'conditional' validation, meaning that they are to be awarded the qualification, on condition that they complete, for example, a certain education or training course. At one university, it was noted that the jury would prefer to pursue this 'conditional' validation approach rather than a partial validation, in order to support the candidate to obtain a full qualification.

VAE would thus be classed as a 'portfolio method' according to the typology of validation methodologies given in the European Inventory of 2005.

¹ We were informed that according to the legislation, candidates should apply for a full qualification and it is the decision for the jury to award a partial certificate. However, we were also told that in practice, some candidates clarify to the jury that their application is for a partial validation only and the jury thus makes a judgement according to the candidate request.

It is important to note that while there are general procedures for VAE, which apply to all educational sectors, Higher Education institutions are able to determine their own VAE procedures, in line with the national guidelines. The interviews we conducted with representatives from two universities show that this has led to a degree of variation in practice.

1.3 VAE – The Role of the Jury

Our research has enabled us to carry out a detailed examination of the five steps outlined above, in particular in relation to VAE in practice at two French universities.

1.3.1 Composition

A jury must be constituted and chaired in accordance with the general regulations and those for each type of qualification. In general, one quarter of the membership must be qualified representatives of the relevant occupational sector. Half of these must be employer representatives, half employee representatives and there must be an equal balance between men and women. No further regulations are given regarding the remaining members of the jury, aside from the fact that staff from the company where the candidate is employed may not be part of the jury, nor may advisors who have helped the candidate put together his/her portfolio (except in Higher Education).

Within Higher Education, the general conditions for validation are identical to those applied for other types of educational qualification, but the composition and role of the jury is different. The president or director of the higher education institution nominates the president and members of the jury. The jury must be made up of a majority of teachers/academics and must include at least one member from a company or external organisation (excluding the candidate's employer organisation).

1.3.2 Roles and responsibilities

Juries are required to attribute "value" to an individual's experience, which may vary considerably in nature, depending on the context in which it was gained. Further, the 2002 Social Modernisation Act extended this initial remit, by giving the jury what Michel Feutrie (2006) terms "*le rôle de prescripteur*"¹ (a 'prescriptive' role). He refers to the additional responsibility of the jury to 'prescribe' the necessary steps a candidate who has received only 'partial validation' should take in order to obtain a full qualification, which might be a training course, an individual project or further experience. Thus, he says that the role of the jury goes beyond the award of a qualification, to supporting the individual to achieve their personal and professional aspirations.

1.3.3 The VAE jury in practice

Although the 2002 Social Modernisation Act and subsequent decrees provide a legal framework for regulating procedures, each jury determines its own proceedings and the manner of validation, as the jury's sovereignty is recognised in this domain.²

To find out how the guidelines are implemented in practice, we interviewed two academic members of staff from two different French universities for this case study. They explained how VAE was applied in their institutions. Stéphane Bellini, one of the interviewees, also supplied a research paper he had written based on his observations of the jury procedure.³

The composition of the juries varied a little between the two universities. In line with the regulations relating to Higher Education, the president or director of each institution nominates the president and members of the jury. At one institution, the jury is made up of four individuals: the jury president (Dean of the Faculty), two or three academics involved in the delivery of the qualification in question, a member of administrative staff from the university VAE department and a 'professional' representative. The 'professional' in this case can also be lecturer at the university, with external professional experience.

At the second university, there is a different jury for each subject. A jury is made up of two permanent members (president and vice-president of the jury), two academic members and two professionals. Here, the professionals chosen are individuals with an understanding of the qualification in question, such as former students. The professional members are required to have a qualification higher or equal to the qualification which the candidate has applied for. All six members give their time on a voluntary basis.

¹ Feutrie, M., 2006, La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience à l'Université. Available at: <http://www.eucen.org/documentation/InterestingDocs/TextMFtoCYD2006FR.pdf>

² Bellini, S., The Experience of Validation, 2006 (English version not published). A similar report was presented at a congress in Reims, France in November 2006, entitled « Valider l'expérience du travail. Exercice d'anthropologie appliqué à un jury de VAE », Actes du XVIIe congrès de l'AGRHI, Reims, novembre 2006.

³ Ibid

In contrast to higher education, for school-level qualifications, existing juries (for the award of qualifications through 'normal' procedures) have been used for VAE.¹

At the second university, the interviewee noted that it was very rare for all six of the jury members to be present at a candidate interview (there is no minimum number of members which must be present). He explained that this is due to reasons such as: for some jury members it is seen as an additional burden on top of their normal workload, the interviews are not always held at a convenient date/time (applications for VAE can be made at any point in the academic year); and there is no payment for jury members at this particular university. He noted that in particular the professional members (who receive no payment for their time, nor any expenses) often do not attend the interview. However, even if members do not participate on the day, he confirmed that they contribute in some way to the assessment – e.g. through sending comments by e-mail. The first interviewee reported that for the juries he had taken part in, all members had been present but that within the university, this was not always the case.

At the first university, all jury members do now receive an incentive payment. Payments or *primes* were initially only given to the professional representative, until a change in policy two years ago. The payment is currently around 40 euros per candidate interviewed (this is only for the academic and professional jury members – the administrator from the validation centre does not receive a payment for taking part) and is conditional on participation in the candidate interview. Academics who take on the support/mentoring role for candidates also receive around 40 euros for this work and can also receive an additional payment for participation in the jury. It is paid by the university department for continuing training.

Under the national HE 'VAE implementation plan', which was supported by ESF funding, training was provided for stakeholders involved in the VAE procedures in French HE.² However, our interviewees stated that neither university provided any training for jury members. At the first university, jury members would participate in a discussion with the VAE administrator but no formal training was provided at either institution. It has also been noted in another report that in many cases jury members, who are generally more used to formal examination procedures, have not received detailed training on how to implement validation assessment methodologies.³

¹ Benhamou, Prof. A-C., 2005, 'La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience en Actes', Rapport de Mission sur l'application de La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (Loi 2002-73 du 17 janvier 2002)

² Feutrie, M., 2006, La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience à l'Université. Available at: <http://www.eucen.org/documentation/InterestingDocs/TextMFtoCYD2006FR.pdf>

³ Charraud, A-M., The French approach of VPL, An historical approach and the state of art in 2007

The jury's role can be divided into three key steps:

1. Examination of dossier, prior to the candidate interview;
2. Candidate interview;
3. Discussion after the interview, leading to a decision.

We will now consider these steps in turn.

Examination of the dossier, prior to the candidate interview: As explained above, candidates prepare *dossiers* or portfolios to give evidence of their experience in relation to the qualification in question. Interviewees noted that these portfolios can reach up to hundreds of pages, since there is no limit imposed on their length. At both universities, the jury members received the candidates' dossiers in advance of the interview. They were thus able to carry out their own, private assessment of the content and to formulate initial judgements, as well as questions they might want to ask at the interview.

Candidate interview: The candidate interviews at both universities were short – between 15 and 30 minutes at the first and around 30 minutes at the second (although at many other universities, interviews last longer than one hour¹). One interviewee suggested that some candidate interviews allowed a process of 'sampling' to take place – questioning to test certain areas of knowledge/competences.

Discussion after the interview, leading to a decision: At the two universities, this discussion takes place immediately after the interview. At both, it was confirmed that, as Bellini found in his research, decision-making is always consensual and no 'vote' is required.² The decision results from an exchange of impressions and arguments based on the examination of the individual dossier and the interview. Bellini also notes that all juries are able to make quick decisions - in some 30 minutes, the decision is made. These 30 minutes can include previous discussion on the dossier, questioning the candidate and decision-making itself.

According to the legislation, the decision of the jury is absolute. Our interviewees however revealed a difference in procedures relating to the right to appeal the final decision of the jury. At the first university, the jury decision is considered absolute and there is no possibility for appeal – either by the candidate or a jury member. At the second however, the candidate may make an appeal, although no formal procedure has been established for this. The interviewee noted that several candidates had made an appeal (either to the Head of the Faculty or the University) and in each case their dossier had been re-

¹ Information provided by a representative of the Ministry of Education

² Bellini, S., The Experience of Validation

examined, with varying consequences (e.g. confirmation of the decision, request for additional documentation in order to justify an amendment of the decision).

1.3.4 Quality and Consistency

The literature notes that a significant amount of work has been carried out to develop *référentiels* or reference frameworks in order to provide VAE juries with a reliable tool to carry out an evaluation of an individual's competences in relation to the qualification in question.¹ The use of standard reference frameworks should enable an element of consistency to be maintained across the individual VAE assessments. Furthermore, in most universities, an assessment grid is established and given to the jury members.²

Our first interviewee confirmed that quality assurance of the VAE assessments at the university was based on the use of the *référentiel* for the qualification in question. He noted that the introduction of a more competence-based approach enabled consistency to be maintained in the assessment of the candidates but also mentioned that his own appraisal of candidates was based on a 'global' understanding of their experiences and competences.

The second interviewee explained that the role of the permanent jury members (the President and Vice-President) was to ensure equality of treatment for all candidates and consistency in the assessments. He mentioned that national *référentiels* are not available for all higher education qualifications (mainly for general qualifications, less so for more specific subjects) and added that not all university *référentiels* are yet structured according to competences (some are structured according to subjects). Both interviewees agreed that a VAE assessment was much easier to carry out on the basis of a competence-based *referential*.

A number of reports have shown that the high demand for VAE in France has not always been met by appropriate allocation of resources (both human and financial). Indeed, Benhamou, in 2005, warned that VAE should not become a '*victim of its own success*'.³ Resource constraints do appear to have had an impact on the VAE procedures in place at each of our case study universities. Both interviewees indicated that although the length of the candidate interviews was sufficient to make a judgement on the candidate, longer interviews might be beneficial. However, it was noted that due to resource constraints, it

¹ Benhamou, Prof. A-C., 2005, 'La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience en Actes', Rapport de Mission sur l'application de La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (Loi 2002-73 du 17 janvier 2002)

² Information provided by a representative of the Ministry of Education

³ Benhamou, Prof. A-C., 2005, 'La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience en Actes', Rapport de Mission sur l'application de La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (Loi 2002-73 du 17 janvier 2002)

would be difficult to make the interviews any longer. One suggested that the option to call a second interview might be useful in some cases, in order to clarify points where jury members would have preferred more detail. The interviewee however gave a number of reasons why second interviews were not held such as time/resources constraints and other practical factors (e.g. the candidate may have travelled a long way to get to the interview).

When asked if they felt the jury assessment process in VAE was valid and reliable, the interviewees gave mixed responses. The first noted that, after jury members had become accustomed to the procedure, it was a reliable and valid method of assessment. The second suggested that, as a measure of 'technical' competences, the jury procedure works well, since these are easy to identify. But in order to assess 'social and cognitive skills', the interviewee felt that the jury procedure is more subjective. He explained that judgements of the candidate's 'social and cognitive skills' may be based on the jury members' perceptions, rather than a definitive framework of reference. He added that jury members tend to perceive the ability to apply oneself to some form of formal learning as a demonstration of these social and cognitive skills and noted that in his experience, very few VAE candidates with no formal qualifications are successful in their VAE application, (whereas those with some previous education are more likely to succeed).

Nevertheless, Bellini reports that one characteristic common to all the juries he studied is that the decision-making process was always consensual. No votes were required and decisions were prompt – suggesting that the procedure itself allows all members of the jury to conduct an assessment and reach the same conclusion regarding an individual's competences in relation to the desired qualification. Bellini considers that a validation 'standard' is developed during the jury procedure, without ever being explicitly defined.¹ Moreover, as mentioned above, many universities allow interviews to take over an hour. Many also establish an assessment grid which is given to the jury members, therefore helping to promote consistency in judgements and assessments.

This overview however raises some concerns regarding the quality and reliability of the existing jury procedure in French VAE. At the two Universities considered for this case study, it appears that quality assurance procedures could be improved in order to ensure the consistency of decisions – for example currently some jury members are not provided with training and *referentiels* based on competences are not yet available for all qualifications. A greater standardisation of the procedures for VAE, together with the allocation of adequate resources to meet the level of demand could ensure greater reliability of these assessments. The work of the French National VAE group, where

¹ Bellini, S., The Experience of Validation

persons in charge of VAE meet, should help to overcome these problems, as the group enables comparisons to be made, best practices to be exchanged and procedures to be harmonised.

1.4 **Outputs and Impact – Good practice and lessons learned**

For individual VAE candidates, both interviewees agreed on the benefits of undergoing VAE. They talked about the positive impact of gaining recognition for the individual's knowledge, skills and competences which have been gained through informal or non-formal learning. Following successful VAE, an individual can benefit from career progression or a career change. The second interviewee gave examples of individuals who had achieved a promotion, or found new employment following redundancy, thanks to VAE. It was also noted that for many candidates, there are psychological benefits – they have more confidence at the end of the process.

As noted in the introduction, between 2002 and 2005, over 50,000 qualifications were awarded through VAE. By 2004, 16,860 individuals had taken part in a VAE procedure at a French university, 59% at Bachelor level and 41% at Masters level. 43% of the jury decisions resulted in the award of a qualification in full. Feutrie suggests these figures demonstrate that the anticipated reticence on the part of academics is not as significant as originally feared.¹

He also considers that VAE has helped to change attitudes and ways of working within Higher Education. He notes that the examination of candidate's portfolios and the interviews with the candidates can often be a surprising learning experience for the academics who take part in them.² Our interviewees too noted the impact VAE had had on the attitudes and beliefs of the jury members. The first noted that before VAE, people did not believe that a *diplôme* could be acquired without studying at university. Now they can see that the same knowledge and skills can be developed through experience. VAE has thus helped to break down barriers formed by attitudes and misconceptions. The second interviewee also mentioned that jury members gain indirect advantages – the chance to reflect on the education provided at the university and to reflect on whether the training provided really helps students to develop the competences required for the qualification awarded.

However, it was clear that both interviewees were aware of the disadvantages to being a jury member. Taking part in a jury requires a time commitment, involves a lot of

¹ Feutrie, M., 2006, La Validation des Acquis de l'Experience à l'Université. Available at: <http://www.eucen.org/documentation/InterestingDocs/TextMFtoCYD2006FR.pdf>

² Ibid

preparation (reading, often lengthy, dossiers) and at one university there is no payment. Lessons which have been learned to date thus relate mainly to improvements in the procedure for the jury members and these are detailed in the next paragraphs.

Several reports have noted the difficulties experienced to date in recruiting jury members.¹ Our interviewees indicated that their universities had so far not had any problems with recruitment (although as we have seen, at the second university, the problem was more with regard to attendance to interviews) but did suggest that this might change in the future, after initial 'curiosity' and goodwill (it was suggested that participation is seen as a 'public service') run out. Therefore the introduction of a payment for expenses and a payment or recognition of the time and effort made by jury members might help to avoid recruitment/attendance problems in the future.

In line with our interviewees, Feutrie (2006) notes that the introduction of VAE requires a change in the understanding of the evaluation process. He sees it as a 'redistribution of power', where the candidate, rather than the jury, is able to determine what will serve as the basis of the evaluation. Yet as we have seen, jury members are generally more used to formal examination procedures, and in many cases have not received detailed training on how to implement such assessment methodologies.² It is to be recommended, therefore, that more detailed guidance and / or where possible (short) training sessions might be made mandatory for jury members, before they may take part in any assessments.

Other possible amendments to improve the existing procedure were suggested during the interviews, although on the whole, it was felt that the existing format was satisfactory. The suggestions included:

- To recommend a minimum length of one hour for the candidate interview
- To provide support support / 'mentoring' to the candidate when putting together their dossier from an academic, as well as an administrative member of staff
- To introduce a more defined framework / *référential* for the assessment of social and cognitive skills

¹ For example, the pressure on the juries of the high demand for VAE is noted in Benhamou, Prof. A-C., 2005, 'La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience en Actes', Rapport de Mission sur l'application de La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (Loi 2002-73 du 17 janvier 2002)

² Feutrie, M., 2006, La Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience à l'Université. Available at: <http://www.eucen.org/documentation/InterestingDocs/TextMFtoCYD2006FR.pdf>

- For candidate interviews to be carried out by jury 'representatives' rather than the full jury (to allow longer interviews to take place and relieve the burden on individual members)
- For the jury to take on more responsibilities in supporting candidates who achieve 'partial' validation to go work towards a full qualification.

1.5 Sustainability and mainstreaming

VAE, as a legal right in France (applicable to foreign citizens as well as French nationals) is clearly a sustainable validation initiative. However, as identified above, the procedures in place for VAE jury assessments could be refined in line with good practice and lessons learned through experience to date. Some steps are now being taken to do so at both institutional and national level.

For example, on an institutional level, we learned of plans at one university to introduce a guidance note on the role of the jury member, based on experience to date. On a national level, the *Plan VAE*, introduced in September 2006, identified the difficulties in bringing together jury members (due to lack of expenses for transport or accommodation) as an obstacle to effective implementation of VAE and recommended the payment of expenses for jury members. A decree was signed, after consultation with the social partners, to state that the expenses would be paid out of the funds which are available for professional training.¹

1.6 Conclusions

In France, VAE has become part of the process of lifelong learning and is an example of a successful validation initiative which has benefited large numbers of individuals and changed attitudes and practices in education, training and employment. Many lessons can be learned from the VAE experience to date, both internal lessons which should continue to be monitored and be acted on, and external lessons which should be shared with the wider community.

¹ Taken from http://www.travail-solidarite.gouv.fr/actualite-presse/dossiers-presse/validation-acquis-experience-cinq-mesures-pragmatiques-pour-simplifier-procedure-3407.html?var_recherche=vae