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**Facilitating learning success and contributing to social
inclusion through recognition and self- evaluation of
personal competences: lessons from UK**

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Abstract

The proposed paper considers the impact of forms of self-evaluation on so-called 'soft outcomes' such as levels of learners' confidence, increased self-esteem and attitudes to learning. The paper discusses the ways that could encourage adult learners to evaluate their own personal competences and considers the part played by tacit forms of competences in the education, training and work re-entry of adults.

In order to develop methods for self-evaluation we have been collaborating with both students and tutors from selected colleges in London. A qualitative approach was utilised in this study. We have been employing the Dynamic Concept Analysis (DCA) for modelling learning processes of adult learners. The paper discusses the potential of the DCA approach as a method of self-evaluation of personal competences.

Introduction

This paper is based on the project "Transnational Methods and Models for Self-Evaluation of Personal Competences" carried out as a part of the EU funded Research Network. This project is part of an international initiative funded by the European Commission Leonardo Da Vinci Community Vocational Training Action Programme. This programme will contribute to raising the quality, innovation and European dimension of vocational training systems and practices by means of transnational co-operation. The paper summarises the work in progress undertaken to date on the project.

The study investigates the learning processes of adult learners with particular reference to self-awareness and self-evaluation of their personal competences and tacit skills. Tacit skills are generally thought of as the 'hidden' dimensions of the skills and competences that people can learn from a variety of experiences, such as formal education, workplace, family experience, informal learning, etc. Self-evaluation means supporting people in evaluating their own possible competences. The project aims at developing new methods of self-evaluation of personal competences of adult learners on a transnational basis.

Our research underlines self-evaluation as a potentially significant part of the learning process in colleges of further education. The research also identifies a number of relevant issues including the impact of forms of self-evaluation on so-called 'soft outcomes' such as levels of learners' confidence, increased self-esteem and attitudes to learning (Evans et al, 2004).

Within this paper our objectives include the following: (a) to uncover potential effects of experiences with self-evaluation methods; (b) to analyse the transferability of self-evaluated competences in the views of individuals, tutors and employers; (c) to identify dimensions of key competences in college and workplace contexts; and (d) to draw on special effects of self-evaluation with respect to learners soft outcomes including motivation to work and readiness for further learning.

To address these issues we collaborate with selected colleges of further education in London for testing and further development of self-evaluation methods. Interviews with employers and individual employees have also been carried out to draw on the issues of recognition and evaluation of personal/tacit skills and competences in the context of the workplace. Our fieldwork aims to investigate the following relevant issues:

- Tutors'/learners'/employers' reactions and interpretations of the self-evaluation methods and techniques;
- Challenges of the practical application of the self-evaluation methods in colleges of further education;
- Relevance of the self-evaluation methods to specific courses in adult education.

Self-evaluation of personal competences. Target groups

Our target groups include learners with interrupted occupational or learning careers who embark on various courses in colleges of further education with the purpose of returning to work or learning. Our findings from previous research (Evans et al, 2004) support the view that for such target groups self-evaluation and self-recognition of their personal skills and competences could be crucial to their learning success and learning outcomes. Learners who have experienced career breaks sometimes record low levels of confidence and skills recognition. They often do not value their personal or tacit skills and competences that they have acquired from various life experiences because they feel that these skills are not recognised by others, e.g. by their prospective or current employers. Our research indicates that both recognition and self-recognition of learners' tacit skills may facilitate their confidence and involvement, thus contributing to their social inclusion and social interaction within a classroom. As noted by one tutor:

One of the problems that you have with the students in our college is that they are disadvantaged in one way or another [...] some of them are operating in a culture that is not their own [...], they have substantial career interruptions [...] they are also women and women tend to undervalue their personal skill -, they tend to think that they [their personal skills] just come naturally and, therefore, they are not worth anything. And since most of the motivation for coming here is that they looking at improving their personal lot, often through potential job opportunities, then, obviously it would be better if we were more consciously looking at those kinds of soft skills during the courses.

Self-recognition and self-evaluation of the learners' personal skills and competences may also encourage them to deploy and demonstrate their skills in various kinds of situations in order to make them visible to both themselves and to others. The concept of self-evaluation of personal skills and competences is closely related to both skills recognition and self-recognition. Recognition of learners' tacit skills and personal competences by others could support them in moving towards self-recognition and self-evaluation of their own possible skills and competences. Our data show that recognition, acquisition and deployment of tacit skills are all interrelated processes. In the course of our interviews learners supported the view that self-evaluation of their personal (tacit) skills could become an important part of their learning process. They maintain that it would encourage them to use and deploy their skills in their learning environments. It would also facilitate learners' willingness to work together and co-operate with other members of a group, thus contributing to their social inclusion.

Students stress that recognition of their skills by others encourages (or would encourage) them to further develop their skills. The importance of demonstrating and making the skills visible has also been emphasized by tutors:

It's not only about self-evaluating of their skills. It's actually about being able to talk about them [learners' skills and competences] in terms that make it clear to other people that they [learners' skills and competences] are valuable.

Making their tacit skills visible facilitates learners' motivation and readiness for learning. In addition, it may improve their employability as the learners maintain that self-recognition of their own skills makes it easier to demonstrate and present them to their prospective employers.

Interviews with employers have also shown that they are ready to recognise the importance of these transferable skills that could be acquired from a variety of experiences. In the workplace settings employers consider their employees' generic skills to be as significant as their professional competences. An interview with one employer (Mental Health Group) has indicated that she is looking for generic or transferable skills in prospective employees right from the job interview:

They [prospective employees] need to have [...] good communication skills, listening, giving feedback, building good relationships with the client [...] organisational skills, planning. For me it's really important [...] the way they can act, the way they treat people as well as their caring and understanding [...] being tolerant [...] being motivated.

One of the tasks included in the job interview process involves asking an applicant to solve a problem (or deal with a situation) and specify which skills (including personal and tacit skills) would be employed to solve a specific problem. This example shows the employers' willingness to incorporate self-evaluation approaches of personal competences in the recruitment process.

Dimensions of key competences in college and workplace contexts

Our interview data have revealed that personal skills and competences that are significant in both workplace and college settings could be grouped into five groups of personal skill and competences:

(1) methodological competences; (2) social competences, (3) competences related to attitudes and values; (4) learning competences; and (5) content-related (or subject-matter relevant) competences.

The research indicates that learners and employees consider the five dimensions of personal competences (see below) to be of crucial importance to their learning success, although as we noted above, the degree of importance in relation to a particular competence may vary from learner to learner, depending on their current priorities and learning situations.

Methodological competences

College settings

Although learners recognise *methodological competences* as important types of skills, aspects of their personal perception of these competences often depend on their individual dispositions, experiences and situations. For example, our fieldwork data indicated that learners who have multiple responsibilities and commitments (e.g. those who look after children, work and study at the same time) attribute a higher degree of importance to such competences as *time-management* or *decision-making*. Within the dimension of *methodological competences*, tutors have particularly stressed that the competences such as *ability to interpret situations and to respond to them appropriately* and *ability to follow written and verbal instructions* need to be developed by every student. Other methodological competences, such as *decision-making* and *time-management* are also considered to be essential skills within college settings.

Workplace settings

Our interviews with employers have also shown that *methodological competences* are taking an important place in the list of skills and competences that employers are looking for in prospective applicants. Employers generally agree that there are various links and interrelationships among the personal skills and competences (e.g. better decision-making facilitates more efficient time-management), and that the recognition and self-evaluation of the employees' personal competences may encourage them to develop their skills further.

Social competences

College settings

Learners feel that their social skills and competences play an important role in college settings. Skills such as *social interaction*, *ability to work with others* and *involvement* have been identified as 'everyday skills' that are constantly employed in both workplace and college settings. At the same time the learners maintain that their social skills are being developed continuously in all kinds of settings and situations, such as college, workplace or family settings. Our discussions with tutors have shown, for example, that in the settings where tutors encourage and facilitate teamwork, learners are able to recognise and develop to a higher extent such skills as *ability to work with others*, *social interaction* and *involvement*.

Workplace setting

The importance of *social competences* has been emphasised by both learners and employers, although it has been stressed that the degree of importance is situation-specific. For example, in workplace environments that encourage active collaboration among employees and employers or that involve frequent contacts with customers or clients, skills such as communication, ability to work with others or negotiation skills are valued and recognised by both employees and employers. Different kinds of workplace environments may highlight the importance of other types of personal skills and competences (e.g. methodological or attitudes and values). For example, as stressed by employers and employees, some workplace situations may require workers to work independently and autonomously, rather than as a part of a team. In such contexts other types of skills such as self-organisation, independence, time management and decision-making would be of crucial importance.

Attitudes and values

College settings

Our interview data indicate that skills such as confidence, self-responsibility or motivation are being recognised as important in college settings. However, as stressed by both tutors and learners, evaluation and self-evaluation of these skills should be treated carefully, taking into account the specific experience, attitudes and disposition of individual learners. For example, it should not be assumed that a high level of confidence would necessarily facilitate a learner's achievements. In some cases, over-confidence may actually affect negatively the learning processes of learners as they may wrongly assume that they 'know enough and do not need to develop their skills further'. Conversely, as suggested by our data, lower levels of confidence may actually motivate learners to develop and acquire both personal and professional skills and facilitate their positive learning outcomes.

Workplace settings

Both employees and employers stressed the importance of attitudes and values within the workplaces. However, our data indicated that the importance of such skills is situation-specific. For example, some workplaces involve working with vulnerable people (e.g. disabled people or mental health patients). In such a workplace employers would expect their employees to demonstrate such personal or tacit skills as patience, caring and compassion as well as ability to foster confidence and trust.

Learning competences

College settings

Both *self-learning abilities* and *critical thinking abilities* have been recognised as important competences in the educational setting. Both tutors and learners argue that *self-learning* and *critical thinking* abilities could be – and in most cases are – developed in college environments. There are many activities that may stimulate learners' self-learning abilities, such as feedback, teamwork, individual and group tutorials. Our interview data indicate that developing self-learning and critical thinking skills enhances learners' confidence and motivation to further learning.

Workplace settings

Our fieldwork has indicated that whether learners/employees recognise the importance of these competences in workplace settings, largely depends on the type of workplace environment. Expansive and stimulating workplace environments that provide the learners with opportunities for workplace training may facilitate the development of self-learning and critical thinking abilities. On the contrary, restrictive and non-stimulating types of environments do not encourage the acquisition of these types of skills. However, our research has shown that the learner's own initiative may actually change the type of learning environment from restrictive to expansive and therefore, may result in the development and growth of skills.

Content-related

College settings and workplace settings

Subject matter skills and competences that are relevant to work tasks have been recognised by learners as skills that are important in both workplace and educational settings and environments. The success in the development of this type of skill could be facilitated and enhanced by other skills and competences such as motivation, self-learning and critical abilities and confidence. Our research indicates that *subject matter* skills and competence have often been associated with the learners'/employees' learning outcomes in various kinds of settings.

Although learners consider self-evaluation to be their own responsibility and maintain that much depends on their own initiative, they also support the view that a number of external

factors could facilitate this process. *Recognition* of their personal skills and competences by others (e.g. by their tutors, fellow-students, families, etc.) is regarded as an important factor in this context. If learners' skills are recognised and valued by *others*, this could stimulate learner's self-recognition and self-evaluation of their own skills. In a college environment, recognition of learner's personal skills by tutors is especially valuable. *Stimulating learning environment* was named as another important factor that could contribute to both making students' tacit skills visible and facilitating the self-evaluation process. Our interview data indicate that a stimulating learning environment is associated with the following features/activities:

- Regular feedback from tutors;
- Teamwork and co-operation among students on the course;
- Opportunities for individual tutorials;
- Opportunities to make suggestions to tutors regarding course programme and curriculum;
- Informal way of teaching;
- Opportunities to use existing skills;
- Frequent discussions; and
- Opportunities to acquire new skills.

Self-evaluation methods, techniques and approaches

In the course of our pilot fieldwork we attempted to develop and test two methods: the questionnaire method and the DCA modelling method (Konttinen, 2002). Both *the Self-Evaluation Questionnaire* (see Appendix 1) and the *Self-Evaluation Form1 for DCA Analysis* (see Appendix 2) have been developed as a result of discussions and interviews with learners and tutors. The Dynamic Concept Analysis (DCA) is a computer program that allows the analysis of data using conceptual models based on information about concept relations in adult learning (Konttinen, 2002). In this study we use the DCA method as a tool to help us as researchers to describe and explain a single case. It seems feasible that this approach has potential as a method of self-evaluation of personal competences that could support learners into evaluating their own personal skills and competences. As well as providing a research tool, a simplified version of conceptual model building can be used with practitioners (programme designers, tutors, trainers, mentors, human resource developers and learners

themselves) in ways that enable them to reflect upon and change their own concepts and approaches, including the creation of learning environments. One advantage of this approach is in its flexibility. The DCA is flexible enough to accept new concepts (or variables) and new definitions of concept relations depending on new research findings and aims. We are currently collaborating with a college of further education to develop an approach towards evaluation/self-evaluation through modelling learning processes of adult learners that could contribute to the development of a tool for learners' self-assessment.

The DCA method presents a very flexible approach to the self-evaluation of personal competences. Concepts (competences) can be selected depending on learners' individual needs and requirements, their occupational or learning backgrounds, college or workplace settings or their self-evaluation objectives (or those of their college or workplace).

The DCA concepts (or competences to be self-evaluated and modelled) have been selected on the basis of learners' viewpoints, attitudes and approaches to the personal competences. Initial testing of the DCA self-evaluation method indicated that the major limitation of our pilot fieldwork had to do with the fact that the same ten concepts were offered to a number of learners from different colleges for self-evaluation of their personal skills and competences and for further modelling. Although the learners have described the ten concepts that we selected for the DCA Self-Evaluation Form as 'significant', our further fieldwork data have indicated that the degree of significance may vary from case to case depending on learners' attitudes, dispositions, experiences or their current situations. Further analysis, as well as feedback from learners, indicated that the self-evaluation methods and techniques could also be developed as more individualised and contextually specific approaches aiming to respond to individual needs, requirements and goals of learners. As noted by Bjornavold (2001, p.30),

The highly contextual and (partly) tacit character of non-formal learning complicates the quest for validity. There is an acute danger of measuring something other than what is intended. The main thing is to avoid a distorted picture of the candidate and the domain and to strive for authenticity. Methodologies have to reflect the complexity of the task at hand; methodologies must be able to capture what is individually and contextually specific.

In addition, it is also important to take into account specific needs and objectives of the courses or training undertaken in a variety of educational or workplace settings.

Further practical tests of self-evaluation methods: analysing data from interviews and self-evaluation questionnaires

An important objective of our approaches to the development of self-evaluation methods within further stages of our fieldwork has been to ensure that the process of self-evaluation fits well around learners' individual requirements, personal experiences as well as their objectives and goals. The flexibility of the DCA method allows us to easily change or replace the concepts (or competences), taking into account individual priorities and goals of the learners. While introducing our method to the learners we have aimed to encourage the learners to reflect upon their own skills and competences acquired from different life experiences and to help them to uncover their tacit skills. To facilitate this process we used the following techniques:

- Conducting semi-structured interviews/focus groups with learners aiming to help them to elicit their tacit skills and competences;
- Offering the learners the chance to complete the *Self-Evaluation Questionnaire* (see Appendix 1) with the purpose of helping them to reflect further upon their personal skills and competences.

Both the questionnaire and the interview data provided us with very useful information on the learners' attitudes towards the importance, recognition as well as self-recognition of their tacit skills and competences. Within the course of interviews we attempted to investigate the issues of (1) how the learners perceive the personal skills, which fall into five groups of personal competences (2) whether they think that these competences are important in their current college or workplace settings; and (3) how (or under what conditions) such skills could be acquired, deployed and further developed. The questionnaire and interview responses summarised the attitudes of learners, tutors and employers and provided us with additional data on their views, approaches and goals. Both questionnaires and interviews aimed to draw learners' attention to the issues of importance, acquisition and deployment of their skills by asking them to reflect upon and to indicate (1) relative importance of personal skills and competences; (2) skills they gained in the college course; and (3) importance of the skills for their success in the college course. The idea behind introducing this method is to support learners in moving towards evaluating and recognising their personal skills. The following section will give a brief account of our primary findings that have arisen from analysing the interviews' and questionnaires' data.

Further practical tests of self-evaluation methods: development of more individualised self-evaluation methods

At this stage of our research we are aiming to develop this method further by taking into account lessons learned from our pilot fieldwork. As discussed above, one finding that has arisen from our pilot fieldwork is related to the issue of developing more individualised and contextually-specific self-evaluation approaches for individual learners or a selected group of learners depending on their experiences, current situations, or objectives. The starting point or basis for developing a more individualised self-evaluation method could arise from the following:

- Data from the interviews/focus groups with a learner/learners;
- Data from the questionnaires;
- Discussions with tutors/employers regarding the learner's (or learners') goals and objectives.

As our next step, we will select and define a number of competences (concepts), taking into account learners'/tutors'/employers' views on what personal or tacit skills they considered to be the most important within the workplace or learning environment. Within our pilot fieldwork we aimed to select a certain number of competences from each of our Starfish categories (see Appendix 2). As we are now moving towards developing a more individualised self-evaluation approach, we are attempting to select those concepts (competences) that fit better around learners' individual experiences, goals and objectives. Our interview and questionnaire data help us to highlight the importance of certain competences in individual case(s). Interviews with tutors and employers may also assist in identifying relevant competences that would correspond to course or workplace objectives and requirements. For example, within some cases where the development and acquisition of social competences was considered to be of utmost importance in the context of the course settings, only the concepts from the category of social competences were chosen for the self-evaluation. Other courses or workplace settings, or learners' personal experiences or priorities may suggest different categories or combinations of categories for self-evaluation, for example methodological or attitudes and values, etc.

Modelling of self-evaluation of personal competences

In the course of our fieldwork we asked a number of learners to evaluate their own skills and abilities within their learning environment. The examples below will demonstrate the experiences with our self-evaluation methods within a group of students in one college. We interviewed a group of learners undertaking a short-term (two-weeks) course 'Ready for Job' in a college of further education. The course involves intensive training in CV, application form and interview techniques. The purpose of this course is to prepare adult learners for the challenges of 'job hunting'. Most of the learners undertaking this course are unemployed and have had some kind of break in their occupational and learning careers.

An important objective of this course is to help the learners to recognise and evaluate their own skills and abilities in order to 'sell' these skills on the job market. Although the course does not lead to a nationally recognised qualification, the learners maintain that they acquire and develop a number of valuable skills and competences, e.g. working as part of a team, communication skills, time-management skills and others. Another important ability that they hope to develop within this training is related to being able to present, demonstrate and make visible their skills to prospective employers. The issue of initial self-recognition and self-evaluation of their personal skills and competences takes an important place in the context of improving the learners' employability as well as their motivation towards further learning and skills acquisition.

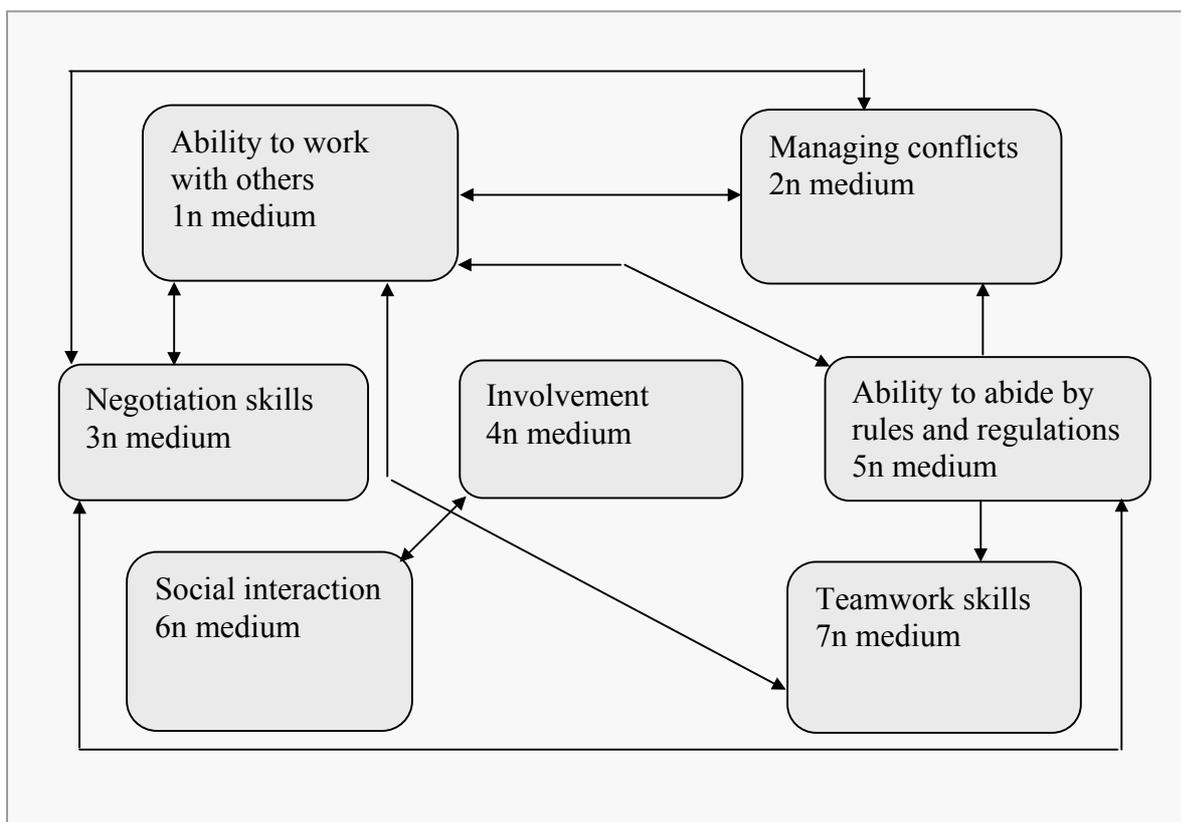
Ann's case: self-evaluation of social competences

In the case of Ann, interview and questionnaire data highlighted the importance of the development and self-evaluation of skills that are grouped under the category of social competences. In order to facilitate the learner in evaluating and recognising the importance of social skills we chose competences from the social competences category and asked the learner to evaluate her own skills and abilities within her learning environment. Her responses were analysed using the DCA computer program and the model below reflects her personal skills and defines interrelationships among the concepts (please see Appendix 3).

Modelling of Ann's case (see Model 1)

Ann's ability to work with others is medium (1n). She maintains that sometimes it is difficult for her to understand how tasks and responsibilities are divided between herself and her

classmates if they are involved in a groupwork assignment or if they work in pairs. Her medium ability to abide by rules and regulations also contributes to her reduced ability to work with others (5n). She admits that she is not happy when her tutors ask her to work in the class as a member of a team. Her medium ability to work with others contributes to her reduced teamwork skills (7n) and skills in managing conflicts (2n). Ann does not involve herself very strongly in classroom activities (4n). Her medium involvement (4n) is also facilitated by her medium social interaction (6n) with other members of the class. Her medium ability to abide by rules and regulations also contributes to her medium level of involvement and interaction. The model suggests that developing her teamwork skills may ultimately lead to higher involvement and more active social interaction within the college.



Model 1. Ann’s case of self-evaluation of her social skills and competences.

This example shows the potential of the DCA computer program as a method for self-evaluation of students’ personal competences – in this case – social competences. Apart from encouraging the learner to reflect upon and evaluate their own competences, this method also

provides a learner with ideas about how they could acquire, develop further or maintain their personal skills and abilities that are often tacit in nature. For example, the model shows that the learner's not very active social interaction, medium level of involvement as well as not very strong teamwork skills and ability to work with others largely result from her medium ability to abide by rules and regulations in the class. Therefore, a user may make an argument that paying more attention to her tutor's advice may result in more active involvement and interaction.

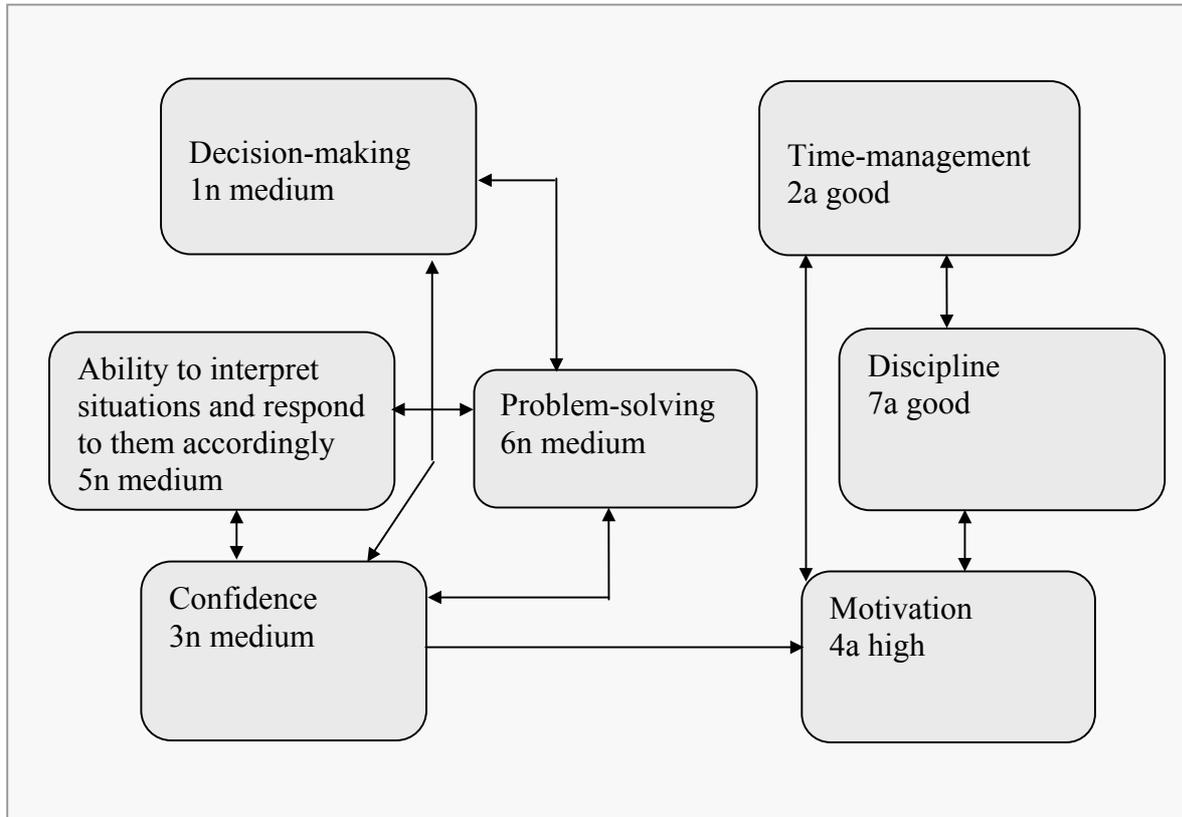
Helen's case: self-evaluation of social and methodological competences (see Model 2)

Helen is another learner attending the course '*Ready for Job*' in the same college. Interview and questionnaire data, as well as discussion with tutors emphasised the importance of self-evaluation and further development of both methodological competences and the competences related to attitudes and values. As in Ann's case, we asked the learner to evaluate her own skills and abilities within her learning environment (see Appendix 4) and analysed her responses with the assistance of the DCA software.

Modelling of Helen's case (see Model 2)

Helen's ability to interpret situations and respond to them accordingly is not strong (5n). It has been noted that this sometimes leads to cases of misunderstanding with both her tutors and her classmates. While self-evaluating her personal competences she admitted that her medium level of confidence (3n) reduces her ability to interpret situations and respond to them accordingly. Her medium level of confidence (3n) contributes to her reduced ability to make decisions (1n) and to solve problems in good time (6n). However, her time-management skills are good (2a), and this is being influenced by the fact that her motivation is high (4a). She also explains that because she is not confident enough about her abilities, she tries to plan her time well in advance and discipline herself (7a).

Helen's DCA case analysis suggests that by developing her confidence she is likely to develop a number of personal skills such as decision-making or problem-solving. The model also indicates the importance of motivation and time-management skills for her learning success. The user may also make an assumption that developing her confidence and problem-solving skills may help her to develop her abilities in interpreting situations and responding to them accordingly.



Model 2. Helen’s case of self-evaluation of her skills and competences.

Concluding remarks

In this report we have summarised our work undertaken to date within the Self-Evaluation project. The methods we have considered aim to support learners in moving towards intentional evaluation of their personal competences and in reflecting upon links and interrelationships between the competences. Our findings indicate that low skills self-recognition leads to low levels of personal confidence and self-esteem. Prior learning experience acquired from various activities is not considered to be of any importance in such cases. This also leads to isolation and loneliness and may result in social exclusion. Recognition or non-recognition of skills by others seems to be one of the central concepts in this context. Our research supports the views that the process of self-evaluation may lead to self-recognition of adults’ skills and competences which is associated with a number of positive outcomes such as increased confidence, self-assurance, motivation to develop new skills as well as higher involvement and active social interaction in a learning or workplace environment. Taking on these opportunities also helps them to realise themselves as members

of a community, especially through social interaction. Thus, it could contribute to the elements of social inclusion. By focussing on competence building in interrupted occupational biographies and the implications of accrediting non-formal learning, this paper has aimed to show how adults' occupational and learning biographies can be understood in ways which more systematically address the importance of tacit skills recognition, self-evaluation and deployment, and the potential of dynamic concept analysis for modelling these processes as a basis for future interventions at the level of practice.

As a very flexible approach, the DCA method has potential as a method for self-evaluation of personal competences and for exploring links and relationships among the competences. As we commented above, the advantage of this method is in its flexibility and potential adaptability to various situations and settings. The concepts (or competences) could be chosen and later substituted with other concepts depending on the self-evaluation's objectives and individual learner's requirements. Models of personal competences produced within this method provide learners with a clear picture that explores the interrelationships among their skills and competences. Practitioners we are collaborating with have suggested that it may be very useful for the learners if the DCA modelling could help them not only to indicate links between the personal competences, but also to explore what classroom or college activities/events/tasks, etc., contribute to the acquisition and development of personal skills and competences. In other words, in addition to self-evaluation of the learners' personal competences, it may be useful to assist the learners in evaluating the issue of how (e.g. through what activities) they can acquire or develop certain skills or *what skills are related to what activities*. This aspect is related to the potential practical benefits of self-evaluation that would enable both learners and tutors to facilitate learners' success in the college as well as their skills development and acquisition.

The other issue raised by the practitioners is related to the question of potential *verifying* or *validating* of the self-evaluation process. One concern put forward by practitioners has to do with the problem of *how to ensure that learners are able to evaluate adequately the level of their skills and competences*. Our fieldwork and further discussions with practitioners and learners supported the view that establishing links and interrelationships between acquired or potential competences and certain classroom activities may assist in validating the process of self-evaluation. Both tutors and learners argue that this would enable the learners to reflect upon their skills in the context of real classroom situations and challenges and therefore,

would facilitate them in moving towards a more substantiated self-evaluation of their personal competences within their learning environment. The potential effect and realisation of such self-evaluation approaches will be considered within our next workpackage.

We are aiming to develop this method further by taking into account lessons learned from our early fieldwork. Within the current stage of our fieldwork we are moving towards developing approaches that would correspond to learners' individual needs, priorities and goals as well as to their courses' requirements. The DCA approach could help not only to evaluate learners' personal competences, but also to explore what classroom or college activities/events/tasks, etc., contribute to the acquisition and development of personal skills and competences. In other words, in addition to self-evaluation of the learners' personal competences, it may be useful to assist the learners/tutors in evaluating the issue of how (e.g. through what activities) learners can acquire or develop certain skills or *what skills are related to what activities*. This aspect is related to the potential practical benefits of self-evaluation that would enable both learners and tutors to facilitate learners' success in the college as well as their skills development and acquisition. Our pilot interviews and discussions supported the view that establishing links and interrelationships between acquired or potential competences and certain classroom activities may assist in the process of self-evaluation. Our interviews indicate that this would enable the learners to reflect upon their skills in the context of real classroom situations and challenges. In addition, this may assist practitioners/tutors in ways that would enable them to reflect upon their teaching approaches. Therefore, the use of the DCA method has the potential to be developed as a practical tool for practitioners planning changes in learners' programmes

Appendix 1. Self-evaluation Questionnaire

Self-evaluation of personal skills and competences

1. Importance of personal skills and competences

Please indicate the relative importance of the following skills? Please circle.

	Low Importance → High Importance
(Example)	
<i>Methodological:</i>	
Decision-making	----- ----- ----- -----
Problem-solving	----- ----- ----- -----
Self-organisation	----- ----- ----- -----
Dealing with irregular demands	----- ----- ----- -----
Time-management	----- ----- ----- -----
Ability to interpret situations and respond to them appropriately	----- ----- ----- -----
<i>Social competences:</i>	
Ability to work with others	----- ----- ----- -----
Managing conflicts	----- ----- ----- -----
Ability to co-operate	----- ----- ----- -----
Negotiation skills	----- ----- ----- -----
Teamwork skills	----- ----- ----- -----
Ability to abide by rules and regulations	----- ----- ----- -----
Involvement	----- ----- ----- -----
<i>Attitudes and values:</i>	
Confidence	----- ----- ----- -----
Conformity	----- ----- ----- -----
Self-responsibility	----- ----- ----- -----
Taking own initiatives (e.g. self-starter)	----- ----- ----- -----
Discipline	----- ----- ----- -----
Sincerity/honesty	----- ----- ----- -----
Caring, nurturing and empathy	----- ----- ----- -----
Emotional control (e.g. patience, tolerance)	----- ----- ----- -----
<i>Content-related:</i>	
Subject-matter relevant to work tasks	----- ----- ----- -----
Information Technology (IT)	----- ----- ----- -----
<i>Learning competences:</i>	
Self-learning ability	----- ----- ----- -----
Critical thinking	----- ----- ----- -----

2. Skills gained in the college course

Please indicate skills, knowledge or capabilities, which you gained in the college course.

Please tick the appropriate boxes.

Competences	Gained a lot	Some	Little/ none	Don't know
Methodological				
Social				
Attitudes and values				
Content-related				
Learning				

3. Importance of skills for your success in the college course

How important were the following skills for your learning and achievement in the college course? Please tick the appropriate boxes.

1. Methodological:

Skills	Very important	Important	Not so much	Don't know
Time management				
Juggling different tasks or activities				
Handling routine work				
Prioritising				
Planning/organising				

2. Social:

Skills	Very important	Important	Not so much	Don't know
Ability to work with others				
Learning from other people				
Managing conflicts				

3. Attitudes and values:

Skills	Very important	Important	Not so much	Don't know
Self-confidence/belief				
Autonomy/independence				
Persistence				
Caring, nurturing and empathy				

Taking initiative (e.g. self-starter)				
Discipline				
Emotional control (e.g. patience, tolerance)				

4. Learning

Skills	Very important	Important	Not so much	Don't know
Problem-solving				
Dealing with irregular demands				
Critical thinking				
Doing research				
Creativity				
Self-learning				

5. Content-related:

Skills	Very important	Important	Not so much	Don't know
Subject matter relevant to work tasks				
Information Technology				

Appendix 2. Self-evaluation Form 1 for DCA

Analysis

Please tick

Competence	Level of competence	Evaluation of learners' competences within their learning environment (<i>please tick</i>)
Decision-making skills	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Time-management skills	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Interaction	Active	
	Medium	
	Passive	
Negotiation skills	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Involvement	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Confidence	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Motivation	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Self-learning	Active	
	Medium	
	Passive	
Critical and reflective abilities	Active	
	Medium	
	Passive	
Subject matter-related competences	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	

Appendix 3. Self-evaluation Form 2 for DCA

Analysis: Evaluation of Social Competences

Please tick

Competence	Level of competence	Evaluation of learners' competences within their learning environment (<i>please tick</i>)
Ability to work with others	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Managing conflict skills	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Involvement	High	
	Medium	
	Passive	
Negotiation skills	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Social Interaction	Active	
	Medium	
	Passive	
Teamwork skills	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Abilities to abide by rules and regulations	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	

Appendix 4. Self-evaluation Form 3 for DCA Analysis: Methodological Competences and Attitudes and Values

Please tick

Competence	Level of competence	Evaluation of learners' competences within their learning environment <i>(please tick)</i>
Decision-making skills	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Time-management skills	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Confidence	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Motivation	High	
	Medium	
	Low	
Ability to interpret situations and respond to them accordingly	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Problem solving abilities	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	
Discipline	Good	
	Medium	
	Poor	

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