

EAF Accreditation Framework for the European Career Guidance Practitioners at a Glance

Leonardo Evangelista

Consultant, Empoli, Italy, contatto@orientamento.it

1 ABSTRACT

This contribution presents EAF Accreditation Framework for the European Career Guidance Practitioners, a framework developed to accredit at European level people delivering career guidance. EAF accredits main tasks, i.e. the 4 main identifiable and self standing activities a person delivering career guidance can accomplish: 1. Deliver information related to career guidance as a separate activity 2. Perform career guidance interviews 3. Carry out career guidance activities in small groups 4. Support clients on 1:1 base during a time span, including by networking and advocating on their behalf. EAF assessment is based on main tasks performance, i.e. during the assessment, the candidate must demonstrate to be capable to carry out the main task(s) for which he/she seeks accreditation. The framework solves most of the challenges incurred when accrediting career guidance practitioners in Europe. EAF focuses on what the person does in practice, notwithstanding the many diverse occupational roles in career guidance in Europe. EAF values directly how the practitioner carries out the main task(s) for which he/she seeks accreditation, while other current systems, based for example on educational qualifications, experience, competencies are all indirect, that is to say speculative.

2 INTRODUCTION

In many European countries the training of careers guidance practitioners is not formally established and based mostly on non formal and informal learning; a comprehensive system of qualification is lacking; where existing, qualifications are not comparable between different countries (see, amongst others, CEDEFOP, 2007). The development and implementation and adoption at European level of a framework for accrediting people delivering career guidance such EAF Accreditation Framework for the European Career Guidance Practitioners (from now onward EAF) could substantially contribute to the improving of the sector. Accreditation scope is threefold. First, accreditation of practitioners is a tool for internal quality assurance in organizations that employ them. Secondly, it is a tool for reassuring users and financers (public authorities) on quality of career guidance delivery. Last but not least, accreditation allows practitioners to assess their capabilities and to identify directions for improvement and training, and helps to rise their status distinguishing them by other not accredited colleagues.

3 EAF FEATURES

EAF is a framework for accrediting people delivering career guidance, launched in 2008. The framework is derived by a previous European project (Evangelista, 2008b).

EAF accredits main tasks. A main task is defined as the main identifiable and self standing activity a person delivering career guidance can accomplish (Evangelista, 2007a). The main tasks identified and accredited in EAF are the following:

- 1. Deliver information related to career guidance as a separate activity*
- 2. Perform career guidance interviews*
- 3. Carry out career guidance activities in small groups*
- 4. Support clients on 1:1 base during a time span, including by networking and advocating on their behalf*

Main task 1 is usually carried out by interactions lasting few minutes at the counters of career guidance services or by telephone or electronic mail. In this main task the practitioner doesn't examine in deep the situation of the client, and only information is delivered.

Main task 2 is usually carried out on appointment in a reserved space. During the interview the practitioner carries out a in depth analysis of the situation of the client and assist him/her in drawing out a realistic action plan.

Main task 3 is usually carried out with students (often focused on improving knowledge of self, of educational opportunities and on improving decision skills) and adult unemployed (often focused on improving job search skills).

Main task 4 is usually carry out with clients with low employability (due to age, gender, stigma, health issues, etc.) or motivation.

On each main task, accreditation is granted to the practitioner for working with mainstream (same culture of the practitioner) students and adults, both employed and unemployed. Practitioners can ask to be additionally accredited also for working with other clients groups such as migrants (differentiated by nationality), disabled, offenders and ex-offenders, native minorities.

EAF has a mosaic structure, that is to say each practitioner can choose the main task(s) in which to be accredited.

For example career guidance practitioner A can be accredited for Main task 2 Perform career guidance interviews. Career guidance practitioner B can instead be accredited under Main task 1 Deliver information related to career guidance as a separate activity, also with migrants coming from north Africa.

In Europe career guidance is delivered across different countries by people with different occupations and qualifications, so the traditional solution to accredit occupations is not practicable (Evangelista, 2007b). A main task based approach as in EAF solves difficulties in comparing diverse national occupations and qualification routes because it focuses on what the person does in practice, notwithstanding his/her occupational role or educational qualification. On the other side, a main task approach allows to compare occupations with different names in different countries.

4 THE ASSESSMENT IN EAF

EAF assessment is based on main tasks performance. This is to say during the assessment, the candidate must demonstrate to be capable to carry out the main task(s) for which he/she seeks accreditation.

In Step 1 evidences such as educational qualifications, experience, self administered learning, testimonies from colleagues and supervisors, documentation produced by the person whilst carrying out his/her work, etc. are collected and submitted in a portfolio by the applicant and evaluated. In Step 2 the candidate is examined through an interview (vis a vis or in videoconference using Skype or Messenger) focused on how he/she carries out the main task on which accreditation is requested.

To standardize the assessment, a score system for evaluating the evidences presented and a blueprint for the interview are provided. As for the blueprint, during the assessment interview a person asking for accreditation under Main task 2. *Perform career guidance interviews* will be assessed under the following elements:

- C.2.1. use interview techniques to manage the interview*
- C.2.2. assess the needs of the client*
- C.2.3. select and use career assessment tools when needed*
- C.2.4. assist client to determine a course of action*
- C.2.5. assist the client to implement the course of action developed*
- C.2.6. manage personal case load*

For the element *C.2.1. use interview techniques to manage the interview* the following questions will be used:

1. which are the main steps of your interviews?
2. in an interview, how do you (please tell me the exact words): explain your role / explain privacy arrangements / start the interview / end the interview / signal time is limited / ask permission to take notes / signal time is expiring /
3. which authors/models do you refer to when performing a career guidance interview?
4. what are the main challenges in managing an interview? How do you address them?

Similar list of elements and related questions are provided for the other main tasks but for brevity are not reproduced here.

5 EAF ASSESSMENT COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES

There are several approaches to assessment. For example assessment can be based on educational qualifications (accreditation is granted if the applicant holds the prescribed educational qualifications), experience (accreditation is granted if the applicant holds the prescribed experience), competencies (defined – Boyatzis, 1982- as personal features -skills, knowledge, etc.- causally related with good performance: accreditation is granted if the applicants holds the prescribed personal features). These methods are all indirect, that is to say speculative. If the candidate holds the prescribed qualifications / experience / personal qualities than PROBABLY will be capable to carry out the main task(s) for which accreditation is sought.

On the contrary assessment based on main tasks performance as EAF evaluates directly how the practitioner carries out the main task(s) for which he/she seeks accreditation, so the final result is

more reliable (Evangelista, 2008a, 2008c). On regard to other accreditation frameworks where assessment can be carried out at a distance (as for example EVGP Educational and Vocational Guidance Practitioner, promoted by IAEVG International Association for Educational and Vocational guidance), EAF is more reliable because accreditation is not based only on documents but also an interview is prescribed.

To know more or to participate in EAF you can contact the Author and/or visit <http://www.orientamento.it/english/index.htm>.

4. REFERENCES

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