

## **Validation Process for the Federal Certificate as Trainer for Adult's Candidate's profiles and experiences**

Summary of a study initiated by the Swiss Federation of Adult Learning as a contribution to the EU REFINE project

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### **1. The study's goals and proceedings**

The study's goals were to know more about the functions, education, age etc. of the people who successfully applied for the federal certificate of training adults (eidg. Fachausweis Ausbilder/in) by the way of assessing prior learning as well as their experience with this process. The study is meant as one of the Swiss contributions to the EU REFINE project.

A questionnaire with 27 questions was sent in August 2005 to 35 people (29 women (80 %) and 6 men (20 %)) from the German part of Switzerland who got the federal certificate by submitting their dossier in the years 2001 to 2004. The 35 people represent 1.5 % of all the 2353 candidates (67 % women, 33 % men) who got the certificate during these years.

For reasons of data protection granted to the candidates it was not possible to have a look at any of the 35 dossiers and to get the names of candidates who failed.

### **2. Federal certificate for training adults**

The federal certificate for training adults is a 'professional examination' (Berufsprüfung). These examinations are laid down in the federal law of professional education. They are part of the higher professional education (höhere Berufsbildung) and part of the tertial level B of the education system. The requirements to register for the examination and the requirements to successfully pass it are defined by the relevant professional organisations. The examinations are organised by the professional organisations themselves and supervised by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology. There are some 200 examinations of that kind in Switzerland.

There is no need to attend any course for this kind of certificates, if you feel able to pass the examination you just register.

There are of course courses where you can prepare for the exams. The course for the adult trainer has got five modules, the competences you will have by the end of the course are clearly described (module descriptions) The five modules are described according to the rules for modular professional education by the Federal Office for Professional Training and Technology. It is the first examination at that level where an APL procedure is possible and clearly regulated.

In Switzerland there are no commonly agreed rules and standards or state regulations yet for APL. But there is now a project running (Plattform Validation des Acquis, [www.validacquis.ch](http://www.validacquis.ch)) which should lead to regulations and standards by the end of 2006.

### 3. The study's results

21 people (60 %) replied. They showed the following characteristics:

Sex	19 women (out of 29), 2 men (out of 6)
Age	Non was younger than 30 One (5 %) was between 30 and 39 14 (67 %) were between 40 and 49 6 (29 %) were 50 or more (included both men)
Professional education	7 (33 %) started their professional career as an apprentice or trainee 14 (67 %) have a degree as a teacher (public school) be it as first or second education
Further Training and 2 <sup>nd</sup> professional education	20 (95 %) attended one ore more longer courses (> 200 hrs) or got a second degree in a field related to adult's education
Professional experience in training	17 (81 %) showed experience in teaching adults of more than 1000 hrs (300 hrs are required)

Whereas the women's share with regard to the normal way (= attending courses) is 67 %, their share in the APL way is 80 % or some 20 % higher. It seems that the APL way meets the needs of the women.

14 (67 %) of the people chose within the given guidelines their own form when setting up their dossier. 7 (33 %) people chose a dossiers specifically created by CH-Q for that purpose. CH-Q stands for Swiss Qualification Program, it is a non for profit organisation in the field of APL. People choosing their own dossier mentioned the greater flexibility and the broader possibilities for their creativity as a reason for their choice. People choosing the CH-Q dossiers said its clear structure and their expectance of saving time were the reasons for their choice. Six out of the seven people with the CH-Q dossiers attended a CH-Q course of 16 to 20 hrs beforehand. None of the 14 people choosing their own form did so.

There was little change in the jobs held before and after getting the certificate. The observation period was probably too short in order to see lots of changes (10 people submitted their dossier in 2004). But some of the people overtook more demanding jobs. The following jobs were mentioned in general

- trainer, instructor, coach (16)
- team leader, person responsible for further training for school-teachers (4)
- school director (1)

The study shows that 70 % of the candidates using their own dossier form needed less than 60 hrs and 85 % of candidates using the CH-Q dossiers needed more than 60 hrs to establish their dossier. Experts explain this surprising result with the fact that the latter attended 16 – 20 course hours and that CH-Q dossier seems to demand more work in detail. One has to be prudent with that result, since the hours needed mentioned by the candidates tend to be more estimated than exact figures.

When we look at the overall time needed there is no apparent difference between the two ways of setting up the dossiers. 60 % of candidates of either way needed four to nine months from their decision to submit a dossier to the day when they sent their dossier to the examiner. The shortest time needed was one month, the longest one 14 months.

Where did the candidates look for support or help? They primarily asked their colleagues at work (8) or they attended a CH-Q course (6). Both professional coaches and persons who already submitted a dossier were mentioned twice.

The candidates were asked to state the two main difficulties in setting up their dossier. The candidates said that they felt insecure about how their dossier was expected to look like (structure, content) (mentioned 13 times). They also felt insecure about how to prove the required competences (7). Another main difficulty was to procure the necessary documents (7). Interestingly enough the required assessment of oneself gave hardly no problems to the candidates (2). The experience of life and the sound education of the candidates might be this fact's cause.

The Quality Assurance Commission provides two documents in order to give support to the candidates (guidelines for the procedure and a description of the five modules e.g. required competences). Both were judged as helpful or rather helpful. They seem to be a real help.

What were the profits the successful candidates gained from the APL procedure? We can differentiate two kinds of profits. On one hand there are the effects of the certificate itself and on the other hand there are the profits from the profound analysis of one's own career. Whereas the profits from the certificate itself (recognition by employers, salary increase) were not judged positively in all the cases, there was an unanimously positive judgement of the profits from the analysis of one's own career: Higher self-confidence, greater knowledge of one's own competences, the knowledge how to set up a large dossier, the possibility to transfer one's own experiences to other people (customers), base for reorientation are some of the profits mentioned. Astonishing or not is the fact that these already well known profits not only show up with people who do so called unqualified work but also with people having an university degree.

#### **4. Final remarks**

It is said that APL especially meets the needs of women with their often interrupted careers and their part time working. The study seems to prove this fact: 67 % women's share for the 'course way', 80 % women's share for the APL way. Nevertheless the APL way is still an uncommon way to get a federal certificate or diploma. Less than 2 % of all the people who received the certificate adult's trainer got it by submitting their dossier only.

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