Development of key competences and continuing education of adults in France

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Introduction

This research document integrates within the framework of the project on the “implementation of a platform for the development of key competence of adults” funded by the Lithuanian National Council for Scientific Research. As an input contribution, it feeds into the comparative study of the current practices of policy measures and institutional frameworks for key competences development through adult education within the French, German and Lithuanian contexts, leading ultimately to the preparation of policy learning recommendations and guidelines. The adopted research methodology for the French contribution to the project is mainly based on recent scientific desk research and documentation, completed by a set of interviews conducted with experts and representatives of different stakeholders involved in continuing education and key competences development of adults. The outcome report consists of three main sections. The first section is an overview of the main historical, legislative and institutional developments of key competences and continuing education for adults in a French context. The second section deals with the description and analysis of the main training mechanisms and policy instruments used to facilitate adults’ access to the acquisition and development of key competences. As for the last section, it is an examination of the institutional setting and roles of main stakeholders involved in key competence development within the adult education system.

1. Overview of main historical, legislative and institutional developments of key competences and continuing education for adults

1.1. Development of key competences

Although the debate concerning the notion of competences was launched in the 1970s between social partners (under the pressure of increased need for individualised human resources development and performance evaluation), the move towards the use of the concept of “competences” started effectively during the 1980s and intensified particularly since the 1990s. The major development of competence-based practice appeared at the beginning of the 1980s when the Ministry of Education introduced, through the process of designing its own awarded vocational qualifications, the certification referential standards (réfèrentiel de certification) connected with each occupational profile in terms of three sets of descriptors of competences and knowledge: (a)-capacities (capacités) as a way to qualify in general and transversal know-how, (b)-competences (savoir-faire) meaning the individual’s acquired know-how in connection with the actions undertaken in the surrounding technical and social environment, (c)- associated knowledge (savoir associés) corresponding the whole body of knowledge and information in the domain held by the individual and relevant related objects and environments (Maillard, 2013; Dif, 2010). The other major development followed in 1984 and was connected with the increased need to develop new competences through the involvement of the enterprises (Cannac & CEGOS, 1985). In 1993, the public authorities encouraged further the development of competence-based practices when the national employment agency called then ANPE (“Agence National Pour l’Emploi” transformed into “Pôle Emploi” since 2006) modified the labour market “Operational Repertory of Traded and Occupations” (ROME-Répertoire Opérationnel des Métiers et des emplois) to be competence-based system. According to ROME, “the concept of competence is a set of knowledge, know-how and “know-how to be” (social competences) which are connected with the individual’s occupation or job in a given situation of activity. In its 1997 version, ROME distinguishes between three types of competences: technical core competences, specific competences (or capacities) and associated competences (ROME, 1997). In its last version, they are regrouped into two main categories: key and specific competences (ROME, 2015). This development contributed effectively to stimulating academic debates about the notions of competences and encouraged the enterprises to adopt an individualised competence approach in human resource management and development and abandon relying on the use of the previous non-labour market focussed notion of qualification.

The development of key competences in France for both young adult people was mainly the result of two basic impulses: (a)-the conceptual framework of the programme “DéSeCo” launched by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) towards the end of 1997 (and published on 04/09/2003), which identified and classified the key competences into three categories (acting autonomously, ability to use tools interactively and interacting in socially heterogeneous groups) where each one of them is composed of three capacities; (b)- the EU reference framework defining (eight) key competences for lifelong learning (EU recommendation 2006/962/EC). In this context, the National Agency Against illiteracy (ANLCI- Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre l’Illétris), established in September 2003 a “national standards framework” defining four degrees of basic (core) competences: Structural benchmark competences (basics in writing, counting and communicating with others),
functional competences for everyday life, competences facilitating actions in various situations and competences reinforcing the autonomy of action in the knowledge society (ANLCI, 2003).

Also under the influence of the OECD, the Laboratory CRI (Conseil, Recherche, Innovation) connected with adult education provider GRETA (Groupement d’ETBlissées Publics d’enseignement) developed in 2005 a standards framework of nine practice-based key competences for vocational inclusion of adults, namely: motivation, ability of undertaking executive functions, capacity of developing cognitive functions, self-learning/knowledge, self-confidence (self-esteem), managing own emotions and stress, autonomy of thought and action, managing social relationships (living as a citizen) and communication (DIESE.NET-CRI, 2005).

Under the impulse of the European recommendations and those of the High Council for Education (HCE-Haut Conseil de l’Education) and as an implementation of the orientation and programming law on the future of the school (Act of 23 April 2005), the Ministry of National Education introduced (via the Decree of 11 July 2006) a common ground educational programme (within initial compulsory education) consisting of the following seven key competences: mastery of French language, practicing of at least one modern foreign language, basic competences in mathematics and in scientific and technological culture, mastering the usual ICT, acquiring humanistic culture, developing social and civic competences, autonomy and sense of initiative.

Also within the framework of the transposition of the recommendations of the European Parliament and Council of 18 December 2006, the Ministry of Labour and employment set out a framework programme for access to key competences for a sustainable integration into the labour market via the Circular of 3 January 2008 issued by its General Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training called the “DGEFP” (now DIRECCTE – Regional Directorate for Enterprises, Competition, Consumptions, Labour and Employment). The focus was only on the following five key competences, considering that the other three can be dealt with transversally: communication in French, mathematical culture and basic competences in sciences and technology, digital culture, learning to learn and communication in a foreign language. Although this programme targets primarily vulnerable people (such as job-seekers, early school leavers without or with insufficient qualifications and beneficiaries of assisted vocational inclusion employment contracts), it is also open to all beneficiaries of various adult education training instruments and related financing mechanisms, including innovative and experimental specific training programmes such as “planning management of jobs and competences” (GPEC-Gestion prévisionnelles des Emplois et des Compétences), “validation of acquired experience (VAE)”, alternating vocational training contracts, etc.

At the request of the ANLCI, the DGEFP (DIRECCTE) and several professional sectors, a practice-based referential standards framework for professionally situated key competences called the “Référentiel CCSP” (Référentiel des Compétences Clés en Situation Professionnelle) was established in March 2009. As it is constructed on the basis of observed work situations and not on pre-established definitions based on academic knowledge, the CCSP adopts resolutely a professional approach in identifying and defining key competences. In fact, it is based on connecting the analysis and description of a work situation in its various dimensions (activities, criteria, professional capacities) with an analytical inventory of general and applied knowledge used in this work situation. The identified professionally situated key competences are organized within this framework according the first three (out of the four) degrees of the “national standards framework” established by the ANLCI in 2003. Additionally, by taking into consideration the recommendations of the EU framework in its inventory of key competences, the CCSP also adopts an interdisciplinary approach where the key linguistic competences (reading, writing, and speaking) are looked at as a broader package covering other dimensions and constituting in all the key competences. The CCSP targets various users, namely: (a)-enterprises and local authorities as employers; (b)-private and public funding organizations and institutions such as the sectoral and inter-professional OPCAs (CVT accredited joint funding collectors), the State and local authorities and the national centre for local civil servants (CNFPT-Centre national de la Function Publique Territoriale); (c)-training providers; (d)-consultants and counselors in VET and vocational inclusion institutional operators such as: the employment poles, local missions and multi-year local plans for integration and employment (PLIE- Plans Locaux pluriannuels pour l’Insertion et l’Emploi; (e)- different employees, their representatives and job seekers (including beneficiaries of various vocational inclusion programmes and contracts) (ANLCI, 2009).

Relevant information and guidance concerning the implementation of these framework programmes for the development of key competences to the end-users are provided through the following nationwide networks: (a)- the regional “network for the guidance and follow-up of the access to key competences and employment” (ROSACE -Réseau pour l’Orientation et le Suivi de l’Accès aux Compétences Clés et à l’Emploi) notably in cooperation with accredited counselors, the employment poles, the local missions and DIRECCTE (the Regional Directorate for Enterprises, Competition, Consumptions, Labour and Employment); (b)-the network of regional centres for the organisation and coordination of information concerning VET (CARIF-Centres d’Animation et de Ressources de l’Information sur la Formation) or that of the regional observatory for employment and training (OREF- Observatoire Régional Emploi Formation; (c)- Regional centres for resources information concerning illiteracy (CRI-Centres ressources Iletterisme) which take in charge the fight against illiteracy (via the provision of relevant information and technical support and sharing educational resources and teaching tools) (DGEFP’s Instruction of 18/01/2010 and Circular of 03/01/2008).

1.2. Adult education development
1.2.1. Definition and main general objectives:

In France, adult education refers to all other aspects of learning undertaken (formally and informally) by individual learners outside the formal initial general and vocational educational system in its three basic components: compulsory schooling from 5 up to 16 years old (at primary and lower secondary levels), upper secondary cycle (16-18 years old) and higher education (18-24/30 years old). Although adult education can have several forms and dimensions, it is at present composed of two basic types: (a) continuing adult education (usually referred as continuing vocational training or “formation professionnelle continue”) which is dominantly characterised by its professional character and provided basically for individuals who are already part of the workforce or are embarking into working life (including unemployed job seekers and early school leavers); (b) other types of adults education, such as socio-cultural promotion education, folk/popular education (éducation populaire), senior education diffused through public libraries, special colleges, free-time universities (universités du temps libre), literacy promotion education, etc. (European InoNet, 2013; Eurydice, 2010)

The French adult education objectives are, in practice, more connected with the specific nature and targets of any of the undertaken related policy measures and actions within the system. However, the basic objectives of the dominant and most representative component of adult education “CVT (continuing vocational training)” since its introduction at beginning of the 1970s can be grouped into the following overarching basic objectives (ANI, 1970; 1971 Act n°71-575 and the 2004 Act n° 2004-391): (a) Promoting the development of competences (key and specific); (b) - Facilitating access to different and higher levels of vocational qualifications; (c) Promoting professional inclusion, employability and adaptation to the requirements of change in technology, working techniques, conditions and transitions.

Additionally, the main objectives and actions of other types of adult education include basically the fight against illiteracy, facilitating access to self-learning, personnel development and socio-cultural promotion in general.

1.2.2. Main historical, legislative and institutional developments:

Adult education is far older notion than that of competences in its most recent understatinig as key competences. Historically, the founding text of the notion of adult education goes back to Condorcet’s “report and Decree project on the general organisation of public instruction”, presented at the National Assembly on 20-21 April 1792. Then different forms of adult education courses were developed in the 19th century in conjunction with the industrialisation process (Laof, 2013). Between the Two World Wars, encouraging laws were passed especially in connection with the development of technical education. After the Second World War and until the 1970s, adult education was mainly concentrated on social promotion due to the encouraging subsidies from the local authorities and the State. The development of adult education took an important turning point at the beginning of the 1970’s, through the first National Inter-professional Agreement (ANI – Accord National Inter-professionnel) concluded on 9th of July 1970 between social partners, with three important consequence: a)- introducing continuing vocational training within the framework of adult education and its compulsory financing by private enterprises with more than 10 employee (0.80 of the total gross wage bill), b)- creating the individual training leave for employee-self initiated and directed training (CIF-Congé Individuel de Formation), and c)- establishing for the first time the legitimacy of the role of social partners in continuing vocational training governance. This agreement was confirmed by law through the Act n° 71-575 of the 16th July 1971 called Delors’s Act and put into practice starting from the 1st January 1972. Since then, the current system of CVT has undergone important extensions and enrichments concerning related legislation and institutions, instruments, functioning and active role of social partners and other involved stakeholders on the enterprise’s level and on national, regional and sectoral levels. It has gone through the following main development stages (Eurydice, 2010, Lombardi, 2010; Terrot, 1997):

1.2.2.1. The 1970s stage was mainly dedicated to an effective implementation of the foundations of the current CVT system. This concerned basically: (a) the implementation of the compulsory contribution of the private companies with over 10 employees to accredited vocational training funds collectors and mangers (acting on branch/sectoral and regional levels), run by social partners, called “OPCA (Organismes Paritaires collecteurs Agréés)”; (b) the launch of the paid individual training leave CIF (Congé Individuel de Formation) for both employees and even job seekers; (c) The creation of the first Groupings of public schools ( GROupements d'ETAblissemets publics d'enseignement) for formal CVT provision in 1974.

1.2.2.2. The 1980s were marked by the diversification of CVT related responsibilities and contents mainly through: (a) the launch of the decentralisation process via transferring to regions the CVT financing and the responsibility of managing and implementing continuing vocational training (including apprenticeship) in order to allow for taking into account local territorial requirements and realities (Decentralisation Laws of March 1982 and 6 January 1986); (b) Extending CIF financing at 0.10% of gross wage bill to enterprises with less than 10 employees, enlarging social partners’ negotiating competences concerning CVT to take place at the levels of the enterprises’ committees and the professional sectors, including the reinforcement of CVT providers transparency (Rigout’s Act n° 84-180 of 24 February 1984, reforming 1971 Act); (c) tax exemption on companies’ contributions to CVT development (Act n° 88-1149 of 13 December 1988 for 1989 financing budget); (d) Promoting access of employees and skilled workers to higher education programmes at EOF levels 5 and 6 by introducing (via the Decree n° 85-906 of 23 August 1995) the regime of the Validation of Acquired Personal and Professional (informal and non-formal) learning (VAPP-Validation des Acquis Personnels et Professionnels).

1.2.2.3. During the 1990s, important efforts were put forward with the aim of improving CVT performance in terms of promoting accessibility to employment and labour market basically through: (a) the introduction of the training providers’ right for quality
control and accreditation via the Professional Office for Quality Accreditation of Training Providers (OPQF –Office Professionnel de Qualification des Organismes de Formation), which was effectively created in 1994 to deliver quality assurance certification (Act n°90-579 of 4 July 1990 on training financing, quality and control of CVT); (b)-Formal introduction of Competence Audit regime (BC-Bilan de Compétences) which allows its individual beneficiaries to have their professional and personal competences to be assessed for mobility, guidance and/or redefinition of clear career/learning projects through the Act of the 31st December 1991, following the Inter-professional Agreement (ANI) of the 3rd July 1991; (c)- Facilitating access of professionally experienced individuals to formal certification-based qualifications via the implementation of the regime of the Validation of Acquired Professional learning (VAP – validations des Acquis Professionnels) introduced through the Act n° 92-678 of 20th July 1992.

1.2.2.4. The 2000s were characterized by a profound overhaul of the CVT mainly through the following important developments such as: (a)- the extension of the 1992 regime for the validation of prior work-based learning (VAP) to include all types of prior experiential learning with access to all types of vocational certifications under the new acronym VAE (Validation des Acquis de l’Experience) introduced through the “Social Modernisation Act n° 202-73 of 17 January 2002; (b) the creation of both the National Repertory of Vocational Qualifications (RNCP -Repertoire National des Certifications professionnelles) and its managing National Commission for Vocational Qualifications (CNCP -Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle) through the same “Social Modernization” Act of 17/01/2002; (c)- The creation of three CVT important instruments through the Act n° 2004-391 of 4/5/2004 on “Long-life Vocational Training and Social Dialogue”, following the National Inter-professional Agreement (ANI) of 20/9/2003 on “the Organisation of Labour Market”, namely: 1)- the Individual Right to Training (DIF-Droit Individuel à la Formation), 2)- the Professionalisation Contract (CP- Contract de Professionalisation) replacing the three previous vocational contracts (vocational qualification contract, vocational guidance contract and vocational adaptation contract), and 3)- the Professionalisation Training Periods (PP- Périodes de Professionalisation); (d)- Extending, with some adaptations, the CVT instruments to the public sector (civil servants) through the Act n° 2007-148 of 2/2/2007 concerning the “modernisation of the public sector services”; (e)- Renovating the CVT system and extending the role of the related accredited joint funds collectors and managers (OPCA-Organismes Paritaires Collecteurs Agrées) through the Act n° 2009-1437 of 24 November 2009 on “guidance and long-life training”, following the Inter-professional Agreement (ANI) of 5 October 2009 on the “development of long-life training and career security”.

1.2.2.5. Finally the first half of the 2010s was marked, especially towards its end, by undertaking a major reform of continuing vocational training introduced through the Act n° 2014-2016 of 5 March 2014 on “vocational training, employment and democracy” following the Inter-professional Agreement (ANI) of 14 December 2013 on “vocational training”. This consists basically of the following: (a)- Creation of the “Personal Training Account” regime which substitutes the “Individual Right for Training (DIF- Droit individuel à la Formation)” starting from the 1st January 2015, (b)- Reinforcing further the role of regions as key players in lifelong learning and career guidance; (c)-Redefining and extending the role of the accredited joint-funds collectors and managers (OPCA) in connection with the provision of information on access to training and career guidance, including the responsibility of securing the quality of its funded training in cooperation with regional authorities and job-centres; (d)-Revising the previous employers’ mandatory contribution to CVT funding to a unique contribution (as a percentage of the total wage bill) of 1% for companies with at least 10 employees and 0.55% for those with less; (e)- Entitlement of all employees to a “career interview” at least every two years for career assessment, guidance and development; (f)-Revising and reinforcing the guidance and governance mechanism of CVT provision through the creation of the following bodies: 1)-the national and regional councils for employment, training and vocational guidance (CNEFOP and CREFOP), 2)-the national and regional inter-professional committees for employment and training (COPANEF and COPAREF), 3)-Guidance operators of the council for professional development (CEP).

2. Main training mechanisms and policy instruments facilitating adults’ access to the acquisition and development of key competences

The current policy measures and actions undertaken to achieve the objectives of adult education in its basic CVT component and to facilitate access to the acquisition and development of key competences, can be grouped into three main categories: employer-directed training (ED-CVT), employee self-directed training (SD-CVT) and employee-employer directed training (EE-CVT).

2.1. Employer-Directed training (ED-CVT)

Employer-initiated and Directed CVT (ED-CVT) constitutes the dominantly used instrument within the French continuing vocational training system. It is generally carried out within the framework of the vocational training plan of the organisation (private or public). It includes all kinds of short term and medium term vocational training decided and implemented by the organisation in favour of its employees. It is the result of a concerted action within the enterprise between the management and the employees’ representatives, aiming basically at: (a)-the development of the employees’ competences and qualifications; (b)-ensuring the employees’ adaptation to their ongoing job requirements, and (c)-the promotion of the employees’ job retention, functional and promotional mobility. For the enterprise, the training plan is usually financed through
the firm’s overall mandatory contribution (representing now an overall minimum contribution of 1% of its total wage bill for companies with at least 10 employees and 0.55% for those with less) to accredited vocational training funds collectors and managers (acting on sectoral and regional levels) called “OPCA (Organismes Paritaires collecteurs Agréés)” (Act of 4 May 2004; Act of 5 March 2014).

2.2. Employee- Self directed training (SD-CVT)

Considered as the employee’s choice and preference guided form of training, self-directed continuing vocational training (SD-CVT) is usually carried out via the following formally institutionalised main vocational training regimes for key competence development of adults:

2.2.1. -Individual Training Leave (CIF – Congé Individuel d Formation):

Officially introduced in 1971, “CIF” regime (Congé Individuel de formation) was designed to allow any worker in the private sector to take (over his/her working life) a paid leave (under minimum requirements adapted to the nature of work contract) to undertake self initiated and directed training programmes independent of the organisation’s training scheme with the guarantee of maintaining the work contracts during the period of training. It was created to promote free choice and equal access to training by introducing three interdependent guarantees (MTEFP, 2014a; Dif, 2008; Gahéry, 1996; Guilloux, 1996):

Free-choice guarantee: It guarantees that the employee is free to choose any type of training programme outside the organisation’s usual training scheme. The undertaken training can be vocational with a variety of ultimate aims such as acquisition of key competences and higher qualifications for promotions and professional advancements/transitions, enhancing employability, job conversion and mobility, as well as for adaptation to changes in technology and labour market structures. The training programme can also be non-vocational with the aim of allowing the trainee to acquire general qualifications and/or to get more involved in the social and cultural life. The CIF duration is one year maximum, if the training is undertaken on a full-time basis, and 1200 hours in the case of part-time training. This duration limit can be exceeded via collective bargaining agreement (within the sector or the enterprise).

Equal chance guarantee for access to training: Accordingly, all workers with different types of work contracts can benefit from it. Initially, “CIF” was designed and implemented exclusively in favour of workers recruited according to non-limited duration work contract. It took twenty years for this regime (after its introduction) to adapt to the situation of precarious employment. In December 1991, it was formally extended to include employees on fixed duration contracts and temporary workers. In the case of a full/part-time open-ended contract, the candidate to CIF has to justify accumulating (continuously or discontinuously) a prior working experience of two (full-time or equivalent) years of which 12 months within the last company. For a fixed-term contract, the candidate has also to justify 2 years of prior experience accumulated over 5 years of which 4 months at least during the last year. As for employees working through temporary employment agencies, they need to justify only accumulating (continuously/discontinuously) a working experience of 560 hours of which 360 hours through the last temporary employment agency.

Autonomous funding and management guarantee: Since 1984, “CIF” has been financed through a special fund held and managed by an independent parity organism called OPCA (FONGECIF/OPACIF). This fund is fed by a mandatory contribution (specific to this regime) from the employers representing 0.20 % of the total amount of wages paid to their employees. During the training leave, the beneficiary employee receives his/her full salary as long as the letter is lower than the double of SMIC (the minimum guaranteed wage), otherwise the received salary will be within the range of 80% to 90% of the original salary.

The other costs such as training cost, transport and accommodation can also be taken in charge partially or fully by the OPCA (FONGECIF/OPACIF). Although in some cases, the State of local authorities can take in charge part of the training costs, its contribution remains however variable over time and generally limited to financing special cases of vocational training leave such as long term training leaves and the training leaves within small companies.

2.2.2. Professional Training Leave (CFP- Congé de Formation Professionnelle) :

The CFP is equivalent to CIF scheme (used by the employees of the private sector). It is accessible by any employee within the public sector after accumulating three years of full-time working experience (or equivalent). Its maximum duration is 12 months (and three years maximum accumulated leaves over the whole career of the beneficiary). During the training leave the employer takes in charge the payment of 85% of the salary, including all training related costs. After the completion of training leave, the beneficiary has to work for the same institution for duration equal to three times the training leave period. In this sense, the CFP is more or less similar to Payback Clause training leave instrument (MDFP, 2012).

2.2.3. Validation of Acquired Experience (VAE- Validation des Acquis de l’Experience) :

The Validation of prior experiential informal and non-formal learning is not a new notion to the French adult education system. Its development has been a gradual process in scope and contents under different acronyms: Validation for obtaining the grade of “Engineer” in 1934 (Act of the 10th July 1934). VAPP (“Validations des Acquis Professionnels et Personnels) in 1985 with the aim of facilitating access to formal higher education, VAP (“Validation des Acquis Professionnels”) in 1992 to cover all levels of professional qualifications and finally the VAE (Validation of Acquired Experience – “Validation des Acquis de l’expérience) introduced through the "Social Modernisation Act” (17 January 2002) to include, in addition to prior work-based learning, learning and key competences acquired through social and cultural activities. As “formative and “summative” instrument, the VAE establishes the individual’s right who has already accumulated (continuously and/or discontinuously) over
three years (on full-time basis or equivalent) of any remunerated and non-remunerated working experience, in at least one activity related to the contents of the targeted type of qualification/certification to apply for an exemption in the required exam-units or modules. The required prior experience does not include the periods of initial and continuing vocational education and training, traineeships/internships and any training periods connected with obtaining a qualification or a title. Thus the VAE allow its beneficiary (meeting this requirement) to get his/her prior experiential informal and non-formal learning assessed and validated (within a validation and certification awarding institution) through a process leading to obtaining a vocational certification (qualification) or a title (at any level) referenced and registered within the NQF Repertory (RNCP Répertoire Nationale des Certifications Professionnelles). The qualification obtained through the VAE are the same as those obtained through the formal track (IVET system). The procedure which guarantees a real access to VAE regime, in its last generalised version, is functioning through a succession of basic stages (Dif, Heraud and Nkeng, 2009; MTEFP, 2014b));

**Information and guidance:** Any individual interested in VAE has a direct access to many sources of information provision, guidance and even supervision on national and regional levels. In addition to documentation standpoints, repertoires and websites connected with national government ministries and sector bodies, each academy, local authority and university on regional level is equipped, at least, with one VAE information and guidance provision department/centre and related website

**Feasibility of the candidature:** This stage consists of preparing and submitting an access feasibility administrative application to the selected institution for the targeted certification. It is a three step process: pre-admissibility application preparation, pre-admissibility reviewing and justified feasibility decision.

**Candidate’s portfolio preparation and accompaniment:** This stage allows effectively the pre-admitted candidate to explicit and analyse his or her prior experiences in a more formalised and structured way by preparing the VAE folder of the “portfolio of acquired experiences and competences”. Starting from this stage, a coaching tutor is appointed by the validation institution.

**Assessment, interviewing and validation:** The assessment and validation process takes place at an accredited institution for this purpose, which is usually the certification delivery institution. The assessment and validation are taken in charge by a jury which must be appointed and chaired in accordance with VAE related general regulations and with those specific to each type of qualifications. The jury’s role in this stage can be divided into three key steps: (a) analysis and assessment of all the information contained in the application file to identify the applicant’s prior experiential knowledge and competences which comply with the requirements of the candidate’s targeted certification; (b) interview: this allows for obtaining complementary information and clarifications from the candidate concerning his or her submitted portfolio of acquired experiences and competences; (c) deliberation and final decision making: the VAE jury then proceeds to deliberation and takes one of the following final decisions: a full validation (and awarding related certification), a partial validation (some exemption units) or refusal to award the targeted qualification/certification. In this last case the validation process for the targeted certification stops, and the candidate might be re-directed to other educational or guidance instruments such as “bilan de compétences”.

The obtained VAE financing is dependent on the trainee’s employment status in the labour market:

For employed individuals, there are three open possibilities:

- Within the framework of employer-directed (usually through the training plan) via undertaking for instance a “Professional Training Leave (CFP)” for the employees of the public sector;
- Within the framework of “DIF” (Individual Right for Training) scheme, replaced since January 2015 by “CPF” (Personal Training Account);
- Within the framework of the employee self-directed CVT for the private sector employees, usually through an “Individual Training Leave (CIF)” or a VAE leave scheme (Congé VAE), which are financed through a funding collector and manager called OPCA (OPACIF/FONGECIF).

Concerning unemployed/job-seekers there are two possibilities:

- Employment pole (pole emploi) which manages unemployment insurance funds
- Regional authority (Regional council)

As for self-employed individuals, VAE is financed by a Training Insurance Fund collector and manager called FAF (Fonds d’Assurance Formation des non-salariés).

### 2.2.4. Competence Audit (BC- Bilan de Compétences):

After a period of experimentation during the second half of the 80s, the non-formal competence audit regime (“Bilan de Compétences: BC”), was formally generalised to all remunerated and non-non remunerated individuals (including job-seekers) at beginning of the 90s. BC established the individual’s right to have a voluntary access to personnel and professional assessment and guidance with aim of coping with work/learning transitions and defining a clear professional or training project for future developments. As a “formative” and “guidance” instrument, the competence audit does not lead to any formal recognition or certification but it might lead to undertaking a “VAE”. To have access to the “BC”, the candidate has to justify a prior salaried regular activity of 5 years, of which one year within the last organisation. The individuals employed according to a fixed-term work contract, have to justify only 2 years of work experience within this period of 5 years (of which 4 months on the basis of fixed duration work contract). As for temporary employees, they need to justify 5 years within the profession of temporary work (of which 1600 hours within the last organisation). The effective organisation of access to BC and its funding is dependent on the trainee’s employment status in the labour market (Dif, 2008; MTEFP, 2010):

For employed individuals, there are three open possibilities:

- Within the framework of employee-self directed learning by taking a “Leave for Competence Audit (Congé de Bilan de compétences: CBC). It is financed through a parity fund collector called OPCA (FONGECIF/OPACIF) for beneficiaries on
open-ended or fixed term work contracts and by FAF-TT for employees recruited through temporary employment agencies.

- Within the framework of DIF instrument (financed by the employer) which has been replaced, since January 2015, by the personal training account (CPF- Compte Personnel de Formation);
- Within the employer-directed training scheme/plan.

As for the unemployed individuals, the BC is accessed through employment centres of “pôle emploi” and financed partially or wholly by the State or local authorities.

The competence audit takes place within one of more than 921 institutions accredited as “BC-Centres” (including “Centres Interinstitutionnel de Bilans de Compétences: CIBC”). The assessment process in itself is formally fixed by the 1992 implementing Degree. It goes through a succession of three individualised stages (Dif, 2001; Dif, 2008; MTEFP, 2010):

- **Preliminary information and guidance stage** which allows the CIBC to: (a)-collect and analyse the necessary information about the candidate’s needs and commitment in the process, (b)- Inform rigorously the beneficiary about the BC process, its stages and the assessment methods and techniques used.
- **Assessment stage**, which allows the beneficiary to: (a)-analyse his or her motivations, personal and professional interests, (b)-identify his or her personal and professional competencies (including general knowledge), (c)- construct his or her project for professional development.
- **Concluding guidance stage** , which allows the beneficiary through an interview to: (a)-have access to detailed results of the assessment stage, (b)-identify the favourable and non-favourable factors for the construction of a professional or a training project, and plan the principal steps of its implementation.

### 2.3. Employee-employer directed training (EE-CVT)

The EE-CVT is usually carried out through the following formally institutionalised main vocational training instruments for key competence development of adults, namely: the “Personal Training Account (CPF)” replacing the “individual right for training (DIF)” since January 2015 and the “alternating vocational training”.

#### 2.3.1. Personal Training Account (CFP – Compte Personnel de Formation) :

Introduced within the framework of the recent reform of vocational training system via the Act of 5 March 2014, following the National Inter-professional Agreement (ANI) of 14 December 2013, the CPF (personal training account), replacing effectively since January 2015 the previous “individual right for training DIF” (“Droit Individual à la Formation”) which was created ten years ago via the Act n° 2004-391 of 4/5/2004. The DIF was created to allow any employee (within the private and public sector), under certain conditions, to have access to training through the use of training credits in terms of acquired 20 hours per year cumulative within the limit of 120 hours maximum over 6 years. However, the performance of DIF during the last 10 years of its implementation was relatively low, as its usage rate was about 4.9% representing only 66,000 beneficiaries in 2012 with an average duration of training of 22.5 hours (Galtier, 2015; Gérard, 2015; MTEFP, 2014c). Thus, the CPF was introduced to take over and cope with some of DIF’s observed problems of accessibility and performance as it has the following basic characteristic: (a)- It is personally attached to the individual through his/her working life starting from the age of 16 up the retirement (including apprentices, beneficiaries of professionalisation periods/contracts, unemployed job-seekers and young school leavers without qualifications); (b)- It is credited for any individual who is working on a full-time basis by 24 training hours per year over 5 years up-to 120 hours, then by 12 hours per year for further two years and half up to a total of 150 training hours maximum (without taking into consideration specific cases of extensions). As for those working on a part-time basis, these credits are calculated in proportion to the hours worked; (c)- The accumulated credit hours already acquired through DIF, can be used within the framework of CPF over a period of 6 years until 2020. (d)- Accessible types of training are basically for the development of competences, skills and access to further qualification (including accompaniment through the VAE process); (e)- The funding of the accumulated credit hours is taken in charge by the employers or the OPCA/OPACIF (for the employees), the regional authorities or the employment centers (for job-seekers) according to their specific listing of eligible types of training. As the CPF’s use is, at present, limited the private sector, the DIF continues to be used within the public sector.

#### 2.3.2. Alternating vocational training:

Alternating training (“formation en alternance”) is a “dual system” based on alternating periods of work and training within a private or a public organisation and a CVT provider. It composed at present of two instruments: the “Professionalisation Contract (CP- Contrat de professionalisation) and the “Professionalisation Period”, both created through the Act n° 2004-391 of 4/5/2004 on “Long-life Vocational Training and Social Dialogue”, following the National Inter-professional Agreement (ANI) of 20/9/2003 on “the Organisation of Labour Market”.

#### 2.3.2.1. Professionalisation contract:

The “Professionalisation Contract (Contrat de professionalisation: CP)” is a dual system based on alternation between on-the-job training (from 75% to 85% of the duration of the contract) and in-house training (15% to 25% of the contractual time) within a training provider such as CFA. Following the National Inter-professional Agreement of the 5th December 2003, the CP was introduced through the 2004 Act (of the 4th of May) on “lifelong vocational training and social dialogue” as a substitute to the
previous three vocational inclusion contracts (vocational qualification contract, vocational guidance contract and the vocational adaptation contract). It targets the professional integration or reintegration within the labour market of both young and old people, including those (mainly job-seekers) who are already living on the minimum social allowances (such as ‘ASS’ and ‘RSA’) provided by the public authorities. Its duration goes from 6 to 12 months, with a possible extension to 24 months, via sectoral agreement, according to the specific case of the beneficiary and/or the nature of the undertaken training. During this period, the beneficiary is coached by a tutor and receives a salary from the employer representing a percentage of the minimum guaranteed wage which goes up from 55% up to 85% (and even beyond) depending on the age and the qualification level and sectoral bargaining agreements. The funding of training actions is provided by an accredited funding collector and manager called OPCA obtained initially through the mandatory contribution of the enterprises (1% of the gross wage bill of companies with at least 10 employees and 0.55% for those with less). At the end of the professionalisation contract, the successful beneficiary is awarded a "Vocational Qualification Certificate (CQP: Certificat de Qualification professionnelle)", a title or a qualification referenced by a collective agreement and registered within the NQF Repertory (RNCP) (MTEFP, 2014d; Dif, 2012).

2.3.2. Professionalisation period:

The professionalisation period is the second type of the dual CVT based on an alternation between on-the-job training and in-house training introduced via the Act n° 2004-391 of 4/5/2004 on “Long-life Vocational Training and Social Dialogue”, following the National Inter-professional Agreement (ANI) of 20/9/2003 on “the Organisation of Labour Market”). It concerns primarily permanent employees possessing insufficient or non-adapted qualifications/competences to technological and organizational changes, having 45 years old and more with at least 20 years of professional activity of which one year minimum within an enterprises. It is also extended to other categories of individuals such as workers usually employed on a fixed-term grounds by an employer/or a group of employers involved in promoting vocational inclusion through economic activity, as well as the beneficiaries of the limited duration “unique vocation inclusion contract” CUI (Contrat Unique d’Insertion). The minimum training duration is fixed (through the Decree n° 2014-96 of 22 August 2014) at 70 hours distributed over 12 calendar months maximum, during which the trainee maintains his or her salary if the training is undertaken during the working hours. But, if the training takes place outside working hours, the trainee benefits of 50% of the usually received net salary. Its basic aims consist of allowing its beneficiaries: (a) to develop their knowledge and competences; (b) access to a vocational qualification validated and registered within the NQF repertory (RNCP-Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles) by the “National Commission for Vocational Qualifications (CNCP-Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle). A tutor may be appointed to inform and guide the beneficiary trainee. As for the costs of undertaken actions of training, coaching and assessments actions during the professionalisation period are financed by an accredited joint funds collectors and managers called “OPCA” on the basis of a flat rate not exceeding the real cost of €12 per training hour (M.T.E.F.D., 2015b)

All type of vocational qualifications and titles accessible via these CVT instruments (including the VAE) are the same as those awardable within the whole French Education and Training system. They are all referenced and registered (according to the five-level-classification grid of 1969) within the NQF Repertory (RNCP- Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles) held, updated and managed by the National Commission for Vocational Qualifications (CNCP-Commission National des Certifications Professionnelles). 15% of CVT provision market is focussed on obtaining a certification. The obtained certifications are classified into three basic categories according to their delivering bodies (Dif, 2010; Eurydice, 2010):

National vocational certifications and titles awarded under the name of the State (by different ministries) and created on the basis of the decision undertaken by the advisory bodies (such as the professional consultative commissions). They are automatically incorporated in the RNCP repertory (RNCP).

Vocational Qualification Certificates (CQF-Certificats de Qualification Professionnelle): They are sectoral or inter-sectoral certifications created and developed by the sectors under the responsibility of social partners. Their registration (for 5 years) within the NQF repertory (RNCP) is requested by the concerned sector bodies and approved by the National Commission for Vocational Qualifications (CNCP).

Certificates and titles delivered by the Chambers, public or private institutions under their own names: They are registered within NQF repertory (‘RNCP’) at request and after the approval of the “CNCP”.

3. Institutional setting and role of main involved stakeholders

The institutional setting and role of main involved stakeholders in the development of key competences of adults via continuing vocational education and training can be described and analysed under the following headings: training providers, governance and guidance bodies, quality assurance mechanisms and main financing arrangements.

3.1. Training providers

Within the CVT system, the training provision is an open competitive market. But in order to be a training provider and hence have access to the private and public co-funding, any training organisation has to declare its activity and register within the Regional Controls Department of Vocational Training (SRC- Service Régional de Contrôle de la formation professionnelle)
integrating on regional level within the Regional Directorate for Enterprises, Competition, Consumption, Labour and Employment (DIRECCTE –Direction Régionale des Entreprises, de la Concurrence, de la Consommation, du Travail et de l’Emploi) created in 2010 via the implementation of the Decree n° 2009-1377 of the 10th November 2010 concerning the reform of re-organising the territorial services of the State. In 2012, there are 62658 institutions involved in CVT provision (for employees, self employed individuals, job-seekers and others) as a main or secondary activity. But only 19500 of them are involved in CVT provision as a principal activity. The attained average access rate to training of 43.2% within all these training providers is observed to be increasing as the level of the trainees’ prior qualifications and the sizes of employers’ companies increase (PLF, 2015). They are composed of two basic categories: dominantly private followed by public and semi-public training providers (PLF, 2015, FFP, 2014):

3.1.1. Private providers:
They dominate in adult education provision in terms of their number (97% of all providers) and their share in provided training (87% of all beneficiary trainees) and achieved turnovers (of 78% of the total). They regroup three types of private providers: profit-making providers, non-profit making providers and individual self-employed trainers (PLF, 2015; FFP, 2014):
- **Profit making providers:** They are directly or indirectly related to companies or sectors. They constitute the first and most dynamic organisations in adult education provision as they represent over 54% of all private providers (8.2% of increase in number between 2011 and 2012). Their share in training provision market represents 54% of all trainees with a turnover attaining 50% of all achieved turnovers by adult education providers in 2012.
- **Non-profit making providers:** They represent 20% of adult education providers and train 25% of the total beneficiary trainees with a market share of 26% of all providers’ achieved turnovers in 2012. These providers are basically composed of various associations for vocational inclusion and literacy promotions, including the “Association of the French Folk Universities” called AUPF (Association des Universités Populaires de France). AUPF is a member of the EAFA (European Association for Adult Education) and brings together a large network of a large number (about 100) of folk education providers such as UP (Universités Populaires), UTL (Universités du Temps Libre), UPT (Universités pour Tous), UR (Universités Rurales), UI (universités Indépendantes), etc. Their role consists basically of promoting literacy, general knowledge, citizenship culture, social, cultural and leisure education (AUPF, 2014).
- **Individual providers:** Although, they represent 23% of adult education providers, they take in charge only 7% of trained individuals with an attained market share of 3% of the providers’ overall turnovers.

3.1.2. Public and semi-public training providers:
Although they represent only 3% of all training providers, their share in training provision represents 14% of all trainees with a turnover attaining 21% of the total turnovers achieved by all adult education providers in 2012. They can be grouped within the following types of providers:

3.1.2.1. Providers connected with the Ministry of Education:
- **Universities:** Since the 1984 Act on higher education placing CVT on the same level as initial education and research, each university has a CVT provision department which works with the university’s other departments of associated higher education institutes and schools. Special arrangements and timetables within the implementation of CVT programmes are usually offered for adult learners including the validation of acquired experiential learning.
- **National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts (CNAM-Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers):** Created in 1794, CNAM provides CVT programmes (usually in the evenings and on Saturdays) leading to obtaining higher education degrees. Some of these degrees can also be obtained on regional level within higher education schools accredited for this purpose.
- **Groupings of public schools (GRETA- GROupements d'ETAblissemets publics d'enseignement):** Created in 1974, there are now about 257 GRETA in France locally distributed (at least one in each regional Department) all over the regions. Different types of training programmes and courses are provided within their over 6500 training centres. Additionally, they provide online courses through the use of ICT. As GRETA schools are functioning through the use of their own financial recourses, the provided training is paid for.
- **National Centre for Distant Learning (CNED-Centre National d'Enseignement à Distance):** It provides a wide range of continuing vocational training courses for all types of people (employees on traineeships, job seeker, people preparing for examinations leading obtaining qualification, etc.). It provides employers as well as organisations in charge of the management of CVT programmes with services adapted to their specific requirements. Additionally it designs tailor-made special training courses and programmes for large organisations.

3.1.2.2. Providers connected with other ministries:
- **National Adult Vocational Training Association (AFPA-Association nationale pour la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes):** Founded in 1949, AFPA’s basic aim consists of promoting professional inclusion of job-seekers and enabling economically active people to acquire qualifications and develop their competences.
- **The professional chambers:** chambers of agriculture, industry, commerce and various trades.
- **Vocational training institutions under the authority of other ministries** such as the ministry of agriculture, industry, healthcare, etc.
3.1.2.3. Providers connected with the regions such as the National Centre for the Management of Territorial Public Services (CNFPT-Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale) which provides basically continuing and initial vocational training and preparation for competitive territorial examinations for public sector employees on municipal, inter-municipal and regional levels.

3.2. Governance and guidance organisations and institutions

3.2.1. The accredited joint funds collectors (OPCA):

The social partners' accredited joint funds collectors called OPCA (Organismes Paritaires Collecteurs Agréés) are created through agreements between the social partners (i.e. basically between employers and employees organisations) and formally approved by the public authorities on national and/or regional levels. Their basic role consists of the following: (a)-collecting and managing all mandatory, conventional or voluntary contributions for CVT financing; (b)- contributing to the funding of CVT instruments (including guidance provision to beneficiary trainees); (c)- guaranteeing the quality of their financed training programmes; (d)- acting as a privileged contacts for employers concerning the implementation of CVT instruments and their related funding arrangements. The OPCA can be grouped into three basic categories (MTFD, 2014; Bentabet & Théry, 2006; Dif, 2008):

- The Sectoral, and inter-professional OPCAs which include SMEs’OPCA’s (called AGEFOS-PME) created and approved on national level by the state. They also include the regional OPCAs (called OPCALIA) which are created and approved on regional level.
- Regional inter-professional OPCAs (OPACIF/FONGECIF) created and approved specifically for financing, the personal training account (CPF), individual training leave (DIF), competence audit training leave (CBC) and VAE training leave.
- Other OPCAs connected with different types of professions such as FAF (Fonds d’Assurance Formation des non-salariés) for self-employed.

On the whole, out of 99 OPCAs for CVT financing, 31 are in charge of the funding management of self-directed CVT schemes and they are called OPACIF or FONGECIF (25 regional and 5 national).

3.2.2. The joint fund for guaranteeing career paths development (FPSPP):

The FPSPP (Fonds Paritaire de Sécurisation des Parcours Professionnels) was created through the Act n° 2009-1437 of 24 November 2009 concerning guidance and lifelong vocational training as a successor to the previous “unique equalization fund (FUP-Fonds Unique de Péréquation)”. It is an association composed of representatives of employers’ and employees’ organizations on national and sectoral levels for taking the following main responsibilities (FPSPP, 2014): (a)-re-allocation of some of the OPCAs’ collected funds; (b)- financing the training actions undertaken by small and medium enterprises (TPE and PME); (c)- financing the jobseekers’ personal training accounts (CPF’s) and employees’ individual training leaves (CIF’s).

3.2.3. The consultation bodies:

They are mainly composed of the following two categories:

3.2.3.1. National and regional Councils for employment, training and vocational guidance (CNEFOP and CREFOP): CNEFOP (Conseil National de l’Emploi, de la formation et de l’Orientation Professionnelle) and CREFOP (Conseil Régional de l’Emploi, de la Formation et de l’Orientation Professionnelle) are the new consultation bodies on employment, training and vocational guidance respectively at national and regional levels through the implementation of 2014 major reform of CVT system (Act n° 2014-2018 of 5 March 2014 ) via the Decree n° 2014-966 issued on 22 August 2014. They consist of representatives of employees’ and employers’ organizations, regions and the State. As a substitute to the previous CNE (National Council for Employment) and the CNFPTLV (National Council for Lifelong Vocational Training), the CNEFOP plays a consultative role concerning employment and training related legislation, regulation and the unemployment insurance agreements of the UNEDIC (National Interprofessional Union for Employment in the Industry). Thus, CNEFOP constitutes a forum for consultation, information provision and assessment, including monitoring the personal training accounts (CPF) and the quality of training providers. As for the CREFOP, it replaces both the previous CRE (Regional Committee for Employment) and the CCREFP (Regional Coordination Committee for Employment and Vocational Training) at regional level. Thus, CREFOP ensures the coordination between different stakeholders concerned with guidance, training and employment related policies, including monitoring the quality of training on regional level.

3.2.3.2. National and regional inter-professional joint committee for employment and training (COPANEF and COPAREF): The national interprofessional joint committee for employment and training (COPANEF- Comité Paritaire interprofessionnel National pour l’Emploi et la Formation) replaces the previous national joint council for vocational training (CPNFP- Conseil Paritaire National de la Formation Professionnelle). The COPANEF defines the joint policy guidelines for training and employment and ensures their monitoring and coordination with the policies undertaken by other involved stakeholders. It also establishes the national listing of eligible types of training undertaken within the framework of the personal training account scheme (CPF), including taking an arbitrating decision concerning the allocation of employers’ mandatory contribution to CVT funding (of 1% of the overall gross wage bill of companies with at least 10 employees, starting from the 1st January 2015). As for the regional interprofessional joint committee for employment and training (COPAREF- Comité Paritaire interprofessionnel Régional pour l’Emploi et la Formation), it replaces the previous regional interprofessional joint commission for employment
3.2.4. Guidance Operators of the Council for Professional Development (CEP)
The CEP (Conseil en Evolution Professionnelle) was created within the framework of the implementation of the CVT reform in 2014, through the Decree of 16 July 2014 fixing the specifications relating to the council for professional development (provided for in Article L. 6111-6 of the Labour Code). The CEP provides and individualised support and accompaniment to individuals in constructing their career projects by facilitating their access to training and qualifications and training, through the action of its network of regional actors, namely: Employment centres (pôles emploi), local mission agencies (Missions Locales), Cap employment for handicapped people (Cap-emploi), OPCA and the Association for Executives employment (APEC-Association Pour l'Emploi des Cadres) (M.T.E.F.D, 2014e).

3.2.5. Regions: 
In addition to their traditional contributing role to the organisation and funding of CVT and apprenticeship since the beginning of the 1980s, the regions take in charge (within the framework of the recent reform of vocational training) via the “regional department for vocational training” (SPRF - Service Public Régional de la Formation professionnelle) the following responsibilities (M.T.E.F.D. 2014e): (a)- financing the training of job-seekers, people with disabilities and detainees in prisons; (b)- managing all the programmes and actions concerning the promotion of literacy.

3.2.6. Deposits and consignments bank (CDC): 
The “deposits and consignments bank” (CDC- Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations) is a public financial institution undertaking financial and economic activities on behalf of the State and local authorities. Its role within the framework of the implementation of the recent reform of CVT system, consist of taking the responsibility of managing all the personal training accounts “CPF’s (Comptes Personnels de Formation) created staring from the 1st January 2015 (M.T.E.F.D, 2014e).

3.3. Quality assurance mechanisms
The quality assurance of provided training and awarded qualifications within the adult education system is taken in charge through the following mechanisms (Centre Info, 2012; Dif, 2012; Eurydice, 2010; Lambardi, 2010; CEDEFOP, 2008 & 2009):

- There is a regular overarching process for quality and performance evaluation of the educational and training system and methods: Different organisations take part in the assessment of the performance of the whole educational and training system, including notably the involvement of the High Council for Education (Haut Conseil de l’Education,) set up in 2005.
- The Professional Office for Quality Accreditation of Training Providers (OPQF –Office Professionnel de Qualification des Organismes de Formation) which was established in 1994 (following the Act n°90-579 of 4 July 1990 on training financing, quality and control of CVT) at the initiative of the Ministry of Labour and the Vocational Training Federation (FFP) as a tripartite representation of the General Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training (DGEMP), the training providers and their clients (companies and the accredited joint funding collectors “OPCA”). The OPQF delivers quality assurance certifications to CVT providers in recognition of their professionalism and performance on the basis of the following criteria: (a) effectively matching of provided training programmes and courses with the beneficiary trainees’ needs for the development of skills and competences, (b)-compliance with training provision related procedures, regulations and professional code of conduct, (c)- financial sustainability, and (d) clients’ satisfaction.
- The existence of referential framework of standards which combines both occupational and qualification/certification standards for each type of qualification registered within the NQF repertory (RNCP- Répertoire National des qualifications Professionnelles). These qualifications and their referential standards are designed and updated by the consultative professional commissions (CPC-commissions professionnelles consultatives) connected with the ministries involved in vocational education and/or different forms of traineeships. There are 14 sectoral CPCs in charge of the design and updating of qualification and their related referential standards connected with the Ministry of National Education.
- Although most of the training providers are not ISO certified, some of them use ISO to inspire their internal management evaluation such as the introduction of a number of labels, in the early 90s, concerning the quality assurance of training organisation and trainers. Since 2000, a quality label called “GRETA-Plus” is granted to the network GRETA (GRoupeements d’ETAblissemens publics d’enseignement) by the Ministry of National Education. This quality label establishes the same quality requirements through a common referential framework governing both the organisation of GRETA network and its provided training and services. In addition to its integration of some elements of ISO approach, this quality label is more in conformity with the referential of good practices “AFNOR BPX 50-762 for tailor-made training and service provision. AFNOR quality referential includes 21 commitments detailed individually in a document published by AFNOR on its website (www.afnor.org). The label “GRETA-Plus” is granted for duration of three years but it has to be confirmed each year following an audit organised by the academy where the concerned GRETA is located.
• At regional level, the regional councils, which are now in charge of vocational training for young and adult people, have adopted “quality charters” (Chartes qualité). These charters are negotiated and co-signed by the vocational training bodies representing particular sectors and the training providers that enter into contractual agreement with the region. They cover various aspects of training such as improving the quality of training provision and services connected with accompaniment and work placement.

3.4. Funding arrangements

The financing of adult education in France is taken in charge basically through four main primary contributors, namely: the enterprises, the State, the local authorities and the individual learners themselves. During the training periods, the training related costs and eventually the salaries of the beneficiary trainees are taken in charge through the use of different modes of financing depending on the employment status of the beneficiary trainees and the used type of training instrument or action:

3.4.1. Enterprises:
They constitute by far the largest contributor to CVT funding basically through the following:
• The mandatory contributions as a percentage of the total gross wage bill paid to their employees (1% for companies with at least 10 employees and 0.55% for those with less), which are collected and managed by the social partners’ joint funding collectors and managers accredited by the State called OPCA (Fonds Paritaires Collecteurs Agréés). Part of these collected funds is re-allocated via the “joint fund for guaranteeing the development of vocational career-paths” (FPSPP - Fonds Paritaire de Sécurisation des Parcours Professionnels) (MTEFD, 2014e).
• Direct financing of their employees’ training which is usually undertaken within the framework of the implementation of the enterprises’ training plans. It represents on average 3.5% of the total gross wage bill (Eurydice, 2010)

On the whole, two-thirds of CVT beneficiaries in 2011 are employees of the enterprises (European InfoNet, 2013).

3.4.2. State:
In addition to financing the training of its own employees and certain categories of job-seekers, the State supports financially some specific training instruments and actions such as the professionalisation contracts through partial exemptions/reductions of employers’ costs in terms of their social contributions and taxes.

3.4.3. Regional and local public authorities:
In addition to taking the responsibility of financing the CVT of their own employees within the regional public sectors, the local authorities contribute (partially or fully), in collaboration with the employment centres (pôle emploi) and the local missions (ML-Missions Locales), to the funding of vocational inclusion training programmes of job-seekers (including early school leavers without or with insufficient qualifications). The beneficiary job-seekers chose their training programmes/courses within an accredited list of providers such as AFPA, GRETA, CNAM, etc. Handicapped people benefit from CVT through the contributions of a special fund called AGEFIPH (Association de GEstion du Fonds pour l’Insertion professionnelle des Personnes Handicapées).

On the whole, the job-seekers represent 12% on average of total beneficiary learners in 2011 (European InfoNet, 2013).

3.4.4. Individual learners:
They also contribute to financing their own individual learning. They represent on average 5% of all CVT beneficiaries in 2011 (European InfoNet, 2013).

Conclusion

In the light of the above analysis, it can be concluded that the effective introduction and use of the notion of “competences” in France has gone through the following practice-based development stages starting from the early 1980s:
• The first pioneering use was connected with the process of designing the vocational qualification standards within the Ministry of National Education based on three sets of descriptors of competences and knowledge: capacities as general and transversal now-how, know-how competences and associated knowledge. As these descriptors are directly connected with related occupational standards, they are derived from their relevant job/activity analysis and serves as a basis for both curricular development and assessment within the whole educational and training system, including the validation of prior experiential informal and non-formal learning.
• The second main use of the notion of “competences” was mainly connected with the creation in 1993 of the labour market Operational Repertory of Trades and Occupations “ROME” which distinguished, in its 1997 version, between three interrelated types of competences: technical core competences, specific competences and associated competences. In ROME’s most recent version, these competences were regrouped into key and specific competences.
Mainly under the influence of the outcomes of the framework programme “DéSéCo” launched in 1997 by the OECD, the National Agency for Fight Against Illiteracy “ANLCI” established, in 2003, a “national standards framework” defining four degrees of key competences: structural benchmark competences (basics in writing, counting and communication with the others), functional daily life competences, competences facilitating action in various situations, and competences reinforcing the individual’s autonomy in the knowledge society.

Within the framework of transposing some of the recommendations of the European Parliament and Council of 18 December 2006, the ministry of labour and employment set out and implemented in 2008 a “framework programme” for promoting sustainable integration within the labour market of mainly vulnerable people (such as job-seekers, early school leavers without or with insufficient qualifications and beneficiaries of assisted vocational inclusion contracts) to have access to the following five key competences: communication in French, mathematical culture and basic competences in sciences and technology, digital culture, learning to learn, and communication in a foreign language.

In order to meet the needs of professional sectors and other users, a “referential standards framework for professionally situated competences” called CCSP (référentiel des Compétences Clés en Situation Professionnelle) was established in 2009 on the basis of connecting the analysis and description of observed work situations (not pre-established definitions based on academic knowledge) in its various dimensions (criteria, activities, professional capacities) with an analytical inventory of general and applied knowledge used in these work situations. As a result, the identified professionally situated key competences are classified within this referential framework according to the first classification degrees of key competences of the previous “ANLCI’s National Standards Framework” of 2003.

References


