

The logo for VALMOPRIS features the word "VALMOPRIS" in a blue, sans-serif font. The letter "M" is highlighted in yellow and is topped with a semi-circle of seven yellow stars, similar to the European Union flag.

## Introduction – Competence Oriented Learning\*

## Personal development in a changing (learning) world

In our social, political and economical environment it is getting more and more important, that the public will need to take an active and constructive role in the processes of policy making and decision making required.

Adults are facing the changes as well. To them the world offers challenges, opportunities and sometimes threats. In the midst of all that, they wish to develop themselves, to realise the perspectives they are aiming for.

Adult learning is not for economical and political purposes only; it is a means of self-development, of expression of ones own freedom, potential and identity.

Adult learning and adult education seek to find the balance between personal actualisation and societal development.

# Lifelong Learning and Quality in Adult education

To face the challenges of the changing world people will need to learn throughout their whole lives to develop what needs to be developed, to adapt to new situations and to elaborate further the things that require innovations or changes.

Adult education is of vital importance in bringing about the changes needed in view of global developments.

Educating adults is a specific field of expertise; it will have to meet high standards, ambitions and expectations. This will only be possible if the profession of adult education sees itself, and is seen as a professional domain with its own professional structures; standards; quality policies and professional development programmes.

## A competence oriented approach to learning

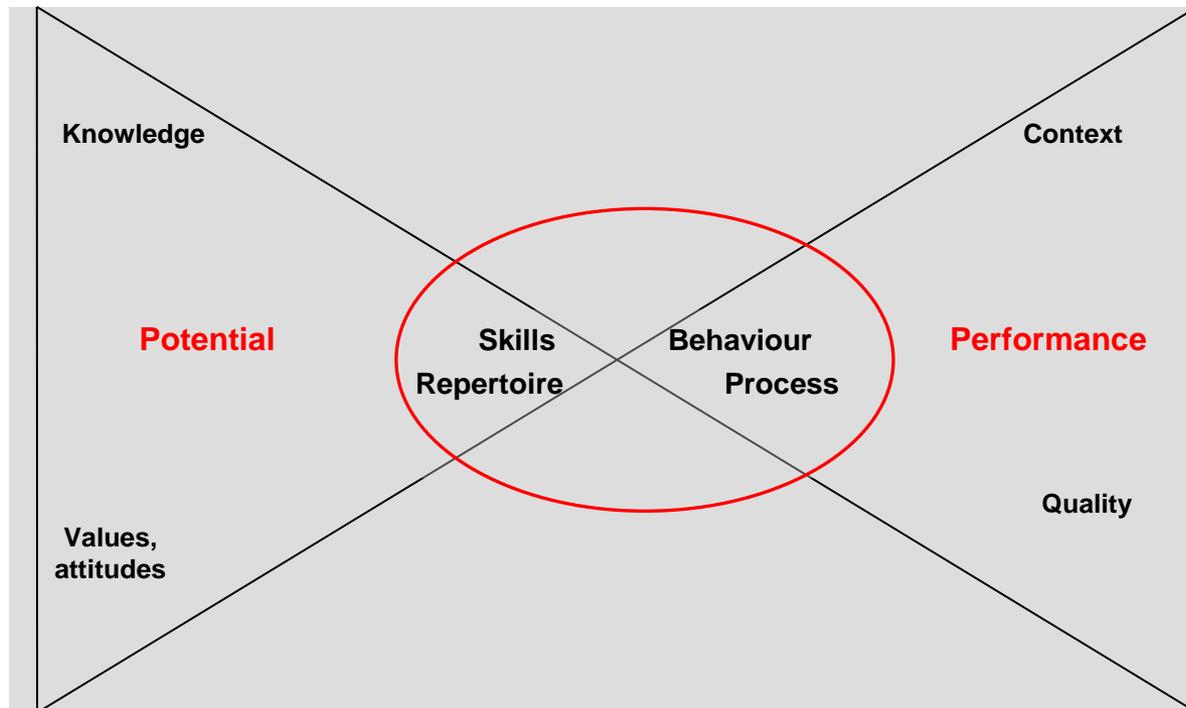
Adult life long learning requires a competence approach.

This implies that learning is leading to actual change of performance. In traditional approaches to teaching and learning the emphasis was on learning activities that would raise the level of knowledge, attitudes and skills. These three components however merely represent someone's potential.

In a **competence oriented approach** we focus more on **improving a person's actual performance in an actual situation.**

We focus on providing the **feedback** and inputs needed **to help the person raise his/her level of performance.**

# A competence oriented approach to learning



In this scheme we see the traditional emphasis in the left part of the scheme and the performance oriented part in the right half of the model.

**A competence oriented approach includes both:** It provides people with the competence to do things at a high quality level in a real context (the performance part) based on an integral base of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes.

# Competence oriented education

Competence based learning and competence based education do not consist of traditional teaching situations. They are based on the idea that the learners learn by experience and discovery.

Adult learners need to be actively involved in the learning situation. They learn best in meaningful contexts, and in co-operation and interaction with others and with their environment.

Thus they enable themselves to acquire knowledge, construe knowledge, and check and cross-check their newly constructed ideas with those of others.

It emphasises the necessity of teaching in a highly responsive and learner-centred way without neglecting the obligation of showing learners new horizons and perspectives.

In competence based education we stress the importance of powerful or rich learning environments that enable learners to engage in meaningful learning processes.

# Key features of a competence oriented approach

## *Meaningful contexts*

For learning to take place it is recommended that educators create or look for meaningful contexts in which learner will experience the relevance and the meaning of the competences to be acquired in a natural way.

## *Room for initiative and creativity*

In order to acquire competence(s) it is required that the learners are given room to take initiatives. It is a vital condition since competence implies taking initiatives, being creative, seeking to fulfil ones own ambitions.

## *Constructive learning*

The philosophy of competence based education has its roots in the social constructivism that pervades our views on learning these days. Learning is conceived as a process of constructing one's own knowledge in interaction with one's environment, rather than as a process of absorbing the knowledge others try to transmit.

# Key features of a competence oriented approach

*Cooperative, interactive learning (with peers, teachers and other actors.)*

The basic idea behind competence based education is to help learners develop and construct their own knowledge and seek ways to make optimal use of other people's competence in their own learning itinerary. This is what social constructivism is about. Co-operation and interaction are both domains of learning, and vehicles of learning

*Discovery learning*

Open learning processes require learning that may be characterized as active discovery as opposed to receptive learning. This does not imply that learning content should not be made available and accessible. It means that the way of acquiring this knowledge or these competences, cannot be just a process of providing information, but should always be embedded in a discovery based approach.

# Key features of a competence oriented approach

## *Reflective learning*

Competence based learning requires, apart from a focus on the key competences, also an emphasis on the learning processes as such. By reflecting on one's own needs, motivation, approach, progress, results etc. one develops learning competences/strategies that may be considered meta-competences.

## *Personal learning*

In the competence oriented theories learning is conceived as a process of constructing ones own personal knowledge and competences. Information, knowledge, strategies, only become meaningful for a person if they become an integral part of his/her own personal body of knowledge and competences. In education this implies that learners need to be able to identify with the contexts, the people, the situations and interests which are included in the learning domains involved.

# Key features of a competence oriented approach

The process which leads to competence acquisition involve five basic elements: motivation, room for initiative, action and reflection.

*From learning to act towards acting to learn*

# Competences of the adult educator

To facilitate competence oriented learning adult need to be competent as well. Competence oriented adult educators:

- are sensitive to, and able to connect with learners and with their needs during learning meetings;
- are able to motivate learners both in the sense of giving expert information as well as in radiating their own enthusiasm;
- are capable in personalising information (turn it into stories of people one may identify with);
- are good inquisitive learners demonstrating their learning abilities as a model;
- are skilled teachers and able to demonstrate their ability if needed;
- can listen perceptively and empathically to their learners;
- can observe accurately the behaviour of the learners in practice situations and during learning sessions

# Competences of the adult educator

- are open minded in their evaluation and judgement of the behaviour and personal characteristics of the learners;
- are able to give adequate feedback (given the needs of the learners during learning sessions)
- find a balance between comforting and confronting  
are able to work strategically and systematically both during sessions as well as during preparations
- are aware of the theories they use, of the underpinning of their actions and act accordingly;
- are able to reflect upon their work and on its (practical and) theoretical basis;
- are able to deal with diversity of many kinds (gender, cultural, style, age, stage, social background);
- are able to be analytical evaluative and critical towards their own work.