

# Assessment of prior learning

in a lifelong perspective

ASEM, 2015.03.08

Bjarne Wahlgren  
Aarhus University

# Lifelong learning

- One purpose is to improve the existing competences
- Qualifying for a new profession, a new job
- It requires a formal qualification, often described in competences
- Integrating the existing competences
- Assess the competences, both formal, non-formal and informal

# Two tracks

- Practical experiences equate theoretical knowledge
- Specific experiences equate specific scholastic knowledge
- Both tracks require assessment of the actual competence to build an adequate training program

# Competence in the educational system

- Normally based on knowing that and knowing why
- Normally based on theoretical knowledge
- Normally based on academic tradition
- Often based on formal learning

# Competence in practise

- Normally based on knowing how
- Normally based on practical knowledge
- Normally based on real life problems
- Often based on non-formal and informal learning

# To use prior learning

- Should competences be assessed according to an occupational standard or according to an educational standard?
- And what happens if the existing competences do not fit with the scholastic standard?
- A challenge: how to equate experiences and knowing how with knowledge and knowing that/why

# An example: pineapple mousse

- How to prepare an pineapple mouse
- Don't use raw pineapples
- Why?: the gelatine will ravel
- Why?: because it contains a certain enzyme
- What is the name of that enzyme?
- How is the chemical process?
- What to do? Cook the pineapple
- What kind of knowledge is needed?

# An example: training for a skilled position

- Unskilled workers want a skilled qualification
- E.g. as a carpenter, hairdresser, child care assistant or gastronome (chef)
- How can the training process be shortened based on prior learning?



# An example: a chef

- What is needed to be a qualified gastronome (a chef)
- How do students demonstrate their prior learning from five years of practical experiences as catering worker?
- How do teachers assess the students competences
- How do teachers translate the assessment into a educational plan

# The actual assessment process

- 21 different competences are required
- Preliminary interview
  - Previous experiences within the occupation
  - The content of the professional activities
- A written test assessing knowing that, why and how
- A practical task
  - Preparation of dishes
  - Questions related to the preparation
- Describe the competence profile on that information
- Develop a training program according to the formal requirements

# Challenges

- Reliability of the assessment
- Validity of the training program
- Securing the balance between scholastic and practical knowledge
- Elaborate a specific training program according to the special needs of the student and not just use the existing modules and do what we normally do

# Conclusion

- Competence can be elicited through practical performance within the educational system
- When the required competences are well defined
- When knowing how, knowing that and knowing are well balanced
- When the teachers are well trained to make the assessment