

ASSESSMENT METHODS

A method is defined as a consciously chosen way of performance to achieve the set goal. It is also indicated that a method is the entirety of purposeful actions and means (V.Vaitkevičiūtė, 2001). Thus, a learning achievement assessment method is a way of performance or entirety of purposeful means and actions to identify learning achievements. In general, various methods are used in learning achievement assessment. In order to reveal a more overall image of person's learning achievements, in the practice of non-formal and informal learning achievement assessment, assessment methods are combined and/or integrated assignments are presented.

The inconsistency of names to call different methods applied in various countries can cause a number of discussions. Table ... indicates what assessment methods are applied and how they are called in five European countries.

Country	Name of Method (in Lithuanian and English)				
Denmark	Portfolio of learning achievements)	Struktūruotas interviu (Structured interview)		Testas arba egzaminavimas (Tests and examinations)	Stebėjimas (Observation and assessment)
Norway	Portfolio (Portfolio)	Interviu (Interview)	Dialogo metodas (Dialogue-based method)	Testas (Test)	Profesinis testavimas (Vocational "testing")
Great Britain	Portfolio ir refleksyvi ataskaita (Portfolio reflective report)	Klausimai ir atsakymai (Questions and answers)	Profesinė diskusija ir refleksyvi ataskaita (Professional discussion + reflective report)		Stebėjimas ar ekspertų liudijimas; simuliacija (Observation or expert witness; Simulation)
Spain	Portfolio ir konsultantų ataskaita (Portfolio counsellor's report)	Interviu (Interview)		Savianalizės pratimai (Self-assessment exercise)	Kompetencijų testas (Competence tests)
Lithuania	Mokymosi pasiekimų aplankas (Learning achievement portfolio)		Pokalbis (Interview)	Testas (Test)	Praktinės veiklos testas (Practical activity test)

Choosing assessment methods and assignments it is necessary to have in mind what kind of cognitive, psychomotor or affective domain skills are intended to be measured. It is necessary to say that cognitive goal achievement assessment assignments are most difficult to prepare properly. Here the taxonomy levels of cognitive goals are to be taken into account and different assignments are designed for each level.

It is obvious in practice that practical skill assessment tasks, when the assessment undergoes at the work place or environment close to work place, are less difficult to prepare than tasks for the assessment of theoretical knowledge. Usually one or in rare cases two alternative tasks are designed to evaluate each functional competency. Applying, for instance, only a test to assess

theoretical knowledge, more assignments should be prepared; therefore, they are divided further or simplified.

INTERVIEW

Interview is a universal method when communicating it is possible to obtain information about various learning aspects, activity motives, experiences that are unseen directly, a subjective approach to a vocational activity and/or life phenomena, and etc. The goal of the interview as a method of assessment is not only to reveal the level of theoretical vocational knowledge that the candidate possesses and to discuss competencies that the candidate intends to verify. According to J. Bjørnavold (2000), in some countries, for instance, in France, it is expected to find out about the person's motivation and needs related to vocational career purposes, learning ways in the community, enterprise, or etc. L. Nyatanga, D. Forman, J. Fox (1998) indicate that assessing prior learning achievement through an interview it is useful to determine the candidate's needs or certain ambitions. The authors claim that a crucial aspect of an interview is as follows: using the technique of interrogating and guided dialogue skills to reveal the evidence about the candidate's learning achievements. An interview is most often carried out at the beginning of the assessment, and it serves as an introduction to further process of achievement assessment. For instance, in Norway, the procedure of vocational assessment starts from an interview, when the candidate presents his/her learning and vocational activity experience, language skills and aspirations. After the first interview, specialists-professionals interview the candidate about concrete purposes and subjects (competencies). Then the candidate has to demonstrate his/her practical skills.

H. H. Clark (1996) states that each person's contribution to the interview depends on the assumptions of the interview and on what purposes are formulated. If the communicators agree as to the main conception of the interview (idea, content), then the process should proceed smoothly.

According to the nature of the interview process, two kinds of interviews are distinguished: *free* and *standard interviews*. A *free interview* is less structured and it is most often called a dialogue. Its aims are to motivate the candidate and orient to further stages of his/her learning achievement assessment. It is worth noting that the assessor leads the conversation more easily if at least some of interview questions are pre-planned beforehand (L.Nyatanga, D. Forman, J. Fox, 1998). A pre-planned interview, when the questions are formulated in advance and which follows a set structure and order is called a standard interview. Such a standard interview is often called a structured interview, which is applied in various stages of the assessment. For instance, in Denmark, competency assessment forms are used in a structured interview, which aim at identifying the suitability of competencies to subject or course content. A structured interview is also applied in Great Britain. It allows identifying the candidate's cognitive competencies, particularly those that are difficult to identify during observation. The assessor usually interviews the candidate and can ask questions to identify the candidate's understanding about the work he/she performs. In Norway, the assessor-specialist can use a computerised instrument or a paper questionnaire form.

A structured interview, in comparison with a free conversation, is less flexible. A semi-structured interview can also be applied. In Great Britain, a free interview method is called a professional discussion which aims at identifying the person's vocational knowledge. During the discussion the candidate is asked questions and has to explain how the work has been

performed or how s/he would behave in one or another situation. It is discussed how the candidate's evidence matches the standard requirements. In Norway, the assessor focuses his/her conversation on knowledge and experience and takes into account discussible issues and specific problems. Such a method leads to individual preparation as it happens during the assessor's and candidate's meeting.

Preparation for an interview

In order for the interview to proceed smoothly it is important to prepare for it and plan several aspects of the interview. The following planning aspects are worth mentioning:

- The purpose of the interview is defined - it is determined what is expected to be clarified during the interview, i.e. if the interview seeks to identify the candidate's knowledge, to specify how the candidate applies knowledge in his/her practical activity, if it is necessary to clarify the nature of candidate's inclinations and dispositions in a vocational activity.
- Clear questions should be formulated, directly related to the purpose of the interview. If only knowledge is assessed, then only concrete questions should be foreseen.
- Assessing the candidate's competencies, it is important to identify their knowledge and how this knowledge is applied during the practical activity. It is advisable to present practical activity situations that require knowledge application and skills of practical experience analysis. As adult learning is characteristic of self-education, it is possible to discuss situations that arise during the candidate's vocational activity. For instance, a free interview can start in the following way:

- *Tell me, please, how you serve a customer,*

or

- *Define how you transfer the documents at the end of the duty shift in hotel reception, and etc.*

- Interview assessment criteria are defined. Assessment criteria are also related to the purpose of the assessment, i.e. the expected assessment outcome. For instance, if the candidate's self-analysis is expected to be identified during the interview, then the following criteria can be formulated:

- If the candidate is able to define his/her activity process in a critical manner;
- If the candidate is able to highlight strengths and weaknesses of his/her activity;
- If the candidate sees his/her activity development perspectives;
- If the candidate analyzes the causes of certain vocational activity problems, and etc.

- Interview time is scheduled. The time of the interview should be suitable to both sides, i.e., the candidate and the assessor.

- Interview duration is scheduled. The interview should last no longer than 60 min. A too long conversation can tire the candidate and arouse negative feelings. On the

other hand, when the conversation is too short, a number of expectations can be left unexpressed and questions unanswered.

- A location favourable to the interview is projected and chosen. Choosing the location it is important to take into account physiological and psychological criteria. The place where the conversation will take place should be cosy, neat, sufficiently spacious, noise-free, inspiring mutual trust and allowing for the dialogue to expand.

An inexperienced assessor who is assessing learning achievements via an interview can face problems; therefore, it is essential to pinpoint the main listening mistakes that are often made during an interview:

- In a haste to receive the right answer, you “take over” – distract the speaker from expressing his/her thoughts, haste to draw conclusions, question the speaker, guess, and etc.;
- Lack of external attention – the candidate is expecting non-verbal feedback such as nodding, attentiveness whereas the listening assessor is reconsidering his/her problems in silence and asks the speaker to repeat something several times;
- Interfering the candidate’s speech by non-verbal communication, i.e., examining the person attentively or turning the eyes away from the speaker. This may prevent the speaker from conveying a great part of information.

L.Nyatanga, D. Forman, J. Fox (1998) note the following important aspects peculiar to an interview technique:

- If an interview and learning achievement portfolio methods are applied, the questions should be related to the information presented in the learning achievement portfolio;
- Ambiguous questions should be avoided;
- Questions that require revealing personal information and are not-related to learning achievements should be avoided;
- Questions should not impose the assessor’s opinion or attitude upon the candidate.

When an interview is used for assessment it is important to formulate questions so as they correlate with Bloom’s cognitive taxonomy levels (L.Nyatanga, D. Forman, J. Fox, 1998). For instance:

Question	Level
<i>What are the stages of client’s service in a restaurant?</i>	Knowledge
<i>Explain your role in the process of hotel personnel activity control.</i>	Comparison
<i>What are your weaknesses in planning your hotel’s budget?</i>	Analysis
<i>How can you evaluate the needs for nature conservation and development in rural tourism sector?</i>	Synthesis
<i>Why did you make such a decision and what were other possibilities to solve the task?</i>	Evaluation

The information obtained during the interview about the candidate’s learning achievements should be recorded in order to be used later for analysis and summarising. Information about the process of the interview and the content are important, as assessing

learning achievements obtained in non-formal and informal learning usually some methods are applied, and the learning outcomes revealed during them are compared. Data obtained during the assessment interview can be recorded in some ways:

- Writing down the assessee’s responses verbatim. It is rather a difficult way as the assessor should maintain the process of the interview;
- Recording the conversation from memory when the answers are written down just after the interview so that not to forget the accumulated information;
- Both ways discussed above are used. This way is reliable and allows the assessor to adapt to the process of the interview;
- If the candidate agrees, it is possible to use recording equipment. It is a reliable way but requires more time to rewrite the information.

The data about the assessment interview process can be accumulated using a certain prepared interview protocol or report form. For instance, in Great Britain a Professional discussion record form is used. Below a fragment of Professional discussion record form content is presented (see Fig.).

Competency: Client service Professional discussion	
The candidate: Marie _____ Registration No. : _____	
The assessor: _____ Internal controller: _____	
Presentation/ Performance indicators	Record of professional discussion <i>At our regular Assessment Planning meeting Marie and I discussed her role within the organization and specifically how she deal with work load and customer commitments. It is apparent that Marie fully understands how to deal with the pressures of telephone calls in the Call Centre and making realistic commitments to clients. She sees it as paramount that commitments are kept and also that she must keep the customer informed if here are any issues.</i> <i>Some examples of extra commitment exist in her portfolio. Marie explained to me the company’s policy in relation to their customers and it was clear she not only understood the policy, but also that she felt the same herself – ie all customers should be given the time thei need to explain their problem, that all shoul be treeted fairly and that different circumstances need to be taken into account. Sometimes it is also necessary to explain that the customer cannot have their expectations met. She also explained their customer satisfaction survey (carried aut monthly)and obviuosly recognised the potential value of such a survey.</i>
Candidate’s signature: _____	

Assessor's signature: _____

Date: _____

Analysis of interview outcomes

Initial analysis of interview outcomes is performed during the interview when certain assumptions are verified related to the candidate's achievements, coherence of responses is analysed – how good is the candidate at remembering facts, if he can mention separate details, what motives enhance him/her to speak about one or another fact of experience and etc. Analysis of information about learning achievements continues after the interview. Aiming at interview data reliability the information presented by the candidate is compared with the information, obtained from other sources: certificates, recommendations, candidate's work samples and etc. Analysing the information obtained during the interview it is advisable to divide it into two groups: *objective facts and subjective facts (see Table)*. This material is summarised to obtain a more comprehensive view about the candidate's learning achievements and on this basis make decisions with regard to person's learning achievement validation (R.Laužackas, E. Stasiūnaitienė, 2005).

Table

Objective and subjective facts of an interview

Objective facts (what was clarified during interview)	Subjective facts –assessor's opinion formed during interview process
<i>Candidate's: Knowledge Skills Abilities Value dispositions Approaches</i>	<i>How the candidate behaves during interview, if non-verbal language supplements verbal information or contradicts it, gestures, speaking manners which can help (demonstrate listening skills, keeps eye-contact, speaks clearly, expresses ideas in an understanding way and etc.) or hinder conversation (speaks fast, does not listen to other's opinion, maintains eye-contact with difficulty, is withdrawn, feels unsafe and etc.).</i>

Making an assessing decision about the candidate's learning achievements and competencies it is important to take into account the entire information. Such fact summarisation allows formulating a more objective conclusion about the person's competencies. Ending the interview, the assessor should be sure that s/he has sufficient amount of information about the candidate's knowledge, level of preparation and can make argumentative judgements about his/her evaluation; then, without any emotions, to announce about the end of interview by nodding the head or verbally.

LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT PORTFOLIO

Learning achievement portfolio. Learning achievement portfolio in assessing non-formal and informal learning achievements is a purposefully constructed self-analysis based set of candidate's work samples, illustrating its efforts, learning progress and competencies acquired during experience. The purpose of learning achievement portfolios to prove that learning on the job or in any other setting the person acquired competencies, adequate to the requirements set for a certain profession. This set of documents and activity evidence records all stages of formal and non-formal learning and creative process stages and essential achievements important to the assessee.

Learning achievement portfolio structure and construction depend on its purpose. Learning achievement portfolio can be used for presentation of learning outcomes and is called *product portfolio*. In such a case its construction does not take up much time and it usually presents outcomes of various projects. In other case a portfolio can be used for demonstrating the best outcomes of a certain activity or learning achievement - a *showcase portfolio* and it contains evidence proving these achievements. In these cases learning achievement portfolio is applied as a summative assessment instrument. In the case of formative assessment, a process oriented learning portfolio is constructed and is called *process portfolio*, which illustrates and reveals the learning process and learning progress as well as candidate's efforts (Adams, T.L., 1995; J. Harris, 2000; D. Baume, 2001; A.A Bullock, P.P. Hawk, 2001; S. C. Williams, M. L. Davis, D. Metcalf, V. M. Covington, 2003; Ch. E. Rees, M.Shepherd, S. Chamberlain, 2005).

The authors note that learning achievement portfolio can hold formal learning certificates, employer reference letters, work samples: models, dummies, projects, photos, analytical written papers and etc., the candidate's self-analysis of his/her achievements, career perspective description, vocational activity assignments, work or voluntary activity plans, audio or video records of various meetings, copies of organization internal correspondence related to person's achievements and other evidence revealing person's learning and activity (L.Nyatanga, D. Forman, J.Fox, 1998; L.Sajienė, 2003; M.Dunn, CH. Morgan, M.O'Reily, S. Parry, 2004; R.Laužackas, E.Stasiūnaitienė, 2005).

An exceptional feature of a learning achievement portfolio is the candidate's self-analysis, performed reflecting about his/her experience (M.Dunn, CH. Morgan, M.O'Reily, S. Parry, 2004). V.Klenowski (2002) noted three processes peculiar to learning achievement portfolio construction: *concentration, selection and reflection*. The author states that if learning achievement portfolio, as an instrument, does not enhance selection and reflection it becomes an elementary set of documents.

A multifaceted use of this method is worth noting. Learning achievement portfolio, demonstrating the process of learning advancement, is used not only as an assessment instrument in counselling but is also useful while getting employment. It evidences that a person, learning on the job or in any other learning environment, acquired competencies adequate to the requirements set for a certain profession and presents employers significant information about the prospective employee. The process of constructing this set of documents develops self-analysis skills and fosters independent learning (D.Mokhari, D.Yellin, 1996; V. Klenowski, 2002). Analysis of learning achievement portfolio application possibilities, performed on the experience of the USA and Canadian researchers, indicates that this method is efficient in transforming the paradigm of traditional learning and teaching oriented to *what* learners learn and creating a new paradigm of teaching, learning and assessment emphasising *how* learners learn (J.B.Zucker, C.C.Jonson, A.T.Flint, 2001).

Learning achievement portfolio can be structured in different ways. For instance, it can have such structural parts:

- *Title page, where the candidate's name, surname and address are indicated;*
- *Content page which indicates the location of achievement portfolio constituent parts;*
- *Candidate's CV;*
- *Evidence of person's learning achievements which are ranked in a proper systematic order (diploma, certificates about completed studies or qualification courses, evidence basing personal or professional competencies: photos of models, samples of technical drawings and everything else that the candidate intends the assessor to take into account when the candidate's personal experience is assessed);*
- *Candidate's self-analysis about his/her learning advancement and acquired competencies.*

In a number of countries in the world candidates have a possibility to fill in e-portfolio. For instance, in Great Britain both paper and electronic versions of portfolio consist of 3 parts. The introductory part displays information about the candidate's personal data, the candidate's number in the National qualification system, information about the candidate's participation in the trade union activity and registration number, candidate's CV, work experience and personal confirmation. The assessor's contacts are also indicated, data and contacts of third parties. Declaration about the summarised candidate's learning achievements is presented together with learning achievement in relation to the standard and candidate's assessment plan. It should reflect the assessment feedback and assessment decision. The evidence part displays the candidate's learning achievement evidence, records of assessment evidence, for instance, a record about observation or professional discussion and record of questions and answers. Some candidates include a standard into their portfolio. Portfolio in Great Britain is assessed by each assessor separately.

In Basque region in Spain a standardized portfolio is used. In Part One, personal data and information about professional experience and learning are presented. Portfolio includes certificates issued by various companies, reference letters from colleagues, report of the meeting between consultant and the candidate and assessment evidence. The last part includes the candidate's vocational activity summary. Not all candidates prepare portfolios. In this Spanish region, those candidates who do not prepare portfolios have a possibility to present their experience by giving a report or presentation before the assessment.

Aiming at identifying person's professional competencies, learning achievement portfolio content is compared with national qualification requirements and standards and decision is made with regard to issuing a document certifying person's qualification or competencies.

It is worth noting that the value of learning achievement portfolio is reflected not only by its actual content but also principal selection of the material included into the portfolio, material preparation and presentation (Ch. E. Rees, M. Shephard, S. Chamberlain, 2005). The quality of learning achievement portfolio content is also determined by the support that the candidate receives from achievement assessment organizing institution: if a person is provided with qualitative consultations on how to include as objective and reflecting person's competencies data as possible in the learning achievement portfolio.

TESTING

A test is a thoroughly and according to the requirements prepared set of questions and/or tasks to assess and measure person's knowledge or skills (N. L. Gage, D. C. Berliner, 1994; R. Laužackas, 1997; R. Minkutė, 1998; R. Laužackas, 2005b; R. Laužackas, E. Stasiūnaitienė, M. Teresevičienė, 2005). N. L. Gage, D. C. Berliner (1994) indicate that

according to their purpose tests are divided into *ability or aptitude, progressiveness or achievement* tests, often called pedagogical or didactic tests and *interest, personality, and disposition* inventories. Ability tests check person's general abilities. Here the focus is not on learnt or acquired knowledge, but on ability to solve the forthcoming problems independently, precisely and fast. The object of measurement in progressiveness or achievement tests (sometimes called didactical tests) is knowledge, abilities and skills. Personality tests aim at identifying person's qualities, value dispositions. Ability and achievement tests are cognitive measures, whereas the tests of the third group are non-cognitive. As the latter tests have no right or wrong answers they are more often called inventories. The first two categories often emphasise maximal possibilities of the activities, whereas the third one – the manifestation of a typical activity. According to the way of test preparation they are classified into *standardized and non-standardized*. For instance, in Spanish Basque region, the candidate, seeking for evaluation of non-formally and informally acquired learning achievements, has to fill in a standardized test. Test tasks consist of closed type questions. Testing programme is prepared in such a way that the candidate sees a map of competencies in different colours, the competencies that a person lacks currently are marked in red.

A test, irrespective of the way of its preparation, i.e. no matter if it is standardized or non-standardized, consists of tasks different in their form and content. A *task* is an oral or written exercise, which is presented to the person seeking to identify or distinguish his/her learning achievements (knowledge, skills, competencies). Test may encompass various tasks.

Task performance result allows identifying what the candidate knows and is able to do. Task performance results form one of the sources used for learning achievement assessment. That task can not only help to define what has been achieved but also to identify what has not been achieved by a person. Tasks are prepared depending on what cognitive process levels – knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation – are targeted at in assessment (T. Angelo, T. P. Cross, 1993; R. Laužackas, 1997; J. R. Marzano, 2005).

The benefit of a test as a method of learning assessment is that in a short period of time, applying various tasks different in their form and content, it is possible to determine the assessee's learning achievements according to different levels of the cognitive process. Scientific literature indicates that a test creates a possibility for objective assessment as the assessee in most cases is not asked to interpret. The evaluation of task performance is simple and is not time-consuming. Simple and clear task presentation and evaluation form allows preventing mistakes and misunderstandings (T. Angelo, T.P. Cross, 1993; S. Habeshaw, T. Habeshaw, G. Gibbs, 1994).

However, this method also has some drawbacks. Technical preparation of tasks that allows for checking various levels of the cognitive process is not so easy and requires a lot of work. There is always danger that only knowledge level cognitive process tasks dominate in the test. E. Jensen (1999, p. 270) indicates that all tests are subjective and <...> depend on the test developer's personal experience. Even a test designed by a group of people reflects the experience of the test developers, their values, i.e. subjective origin. It is worth noting that applying a test method it is more difficult to reveal the assessee's thinking process – how a person finds the answer, what is the basis that s/he makes his/her decision on.

Recommendations for learning achievement assessment task preparation and organization of testing

1. General principles of assessment task preparation require ensuring that the candidate's learning achievement assessment coheres with the standard of profession the competencies of which are to be validated.

2. It should be taken into account how the assessment tasks help to reveal the interrelation between the acquired cognitive, functional general competencies.

3. Tasks have to integrate diverse information. Tasks that check practical abilities should be oriented not only to narrow but also to broad areas of the activity, or they have to include a broad activity area and its part, integrate subjects from some professional activities and the candidate's vocational activity experience.

4. Assessment tasks should be designed with regard to per cent distribution in terms of cognitive goals. For instance, if 10 assessment tasks are to be prepared then 2 of them should measure knowledge, 3 – understanding 2 – application skills, 1 – analysis skills, 1 synthesis skills and 1 evaluation skills (see Table).

Table

Distribution of assessment tasks according to cognitive goals

(according to R. Laužackas, 1997)

Task No.	Cognitive goal levels					
	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
No.1		•				
No.2			•			
No.3	•					
No.4				•		
No.5					•	
No.6		•				
No.7						•
No.8	•					
No.9		•				
No.10			•			
%	20	30	20	10	10	10

5. Presented tasks should measure the achievement of the goal of a certain level: one measure knowledge, other – comprehension, the third ones – evaluation and etc. The task for measuring a higher level goal achievement is more difficult than the previous tasks, whereas the task that measures the achievement of evaluation goal is the most difficult. Consequently, the higher the level of the goal achievement, the more the tasks will be time consuming.

6. Tasks should include the assessment of various learning achievements. It is important to identify what field of competencies it is possible to assess using the designed tasks, i.e. whether they are suitable for assessment of narrow competencies or several different competencies.

7. Presence of assessment criteria. It is important to identify if the tasks formulations present competency assessment criteria and if these criteria are sufficiently clearly explained, if they are objective and reasonable, reflecting requirements for professional competencies set by certain concrete vocational activity content.

8. While assessing it is important to achieve the diversity of assessment tasks and to formulate the task clearly, in a concrete, exact and consistent manner.

9. Tasks should not be related only to information retrieval or reproduction of knowledge. Though such tasks are more easily prepared and it is not difficult to calculate the results, it is essential to remember that the purpose of assessment is to enhance and assess the candidate's thinking processes rather than his/her knowledge. Therefore it is recommended to

prepare the tasks of theoretical testing on the basis of Bloom's taxonomy. The assessor prepared tasks can require to answer by selecting the words "right" or "wrong", "yes" or "no", finding equivalents, filling in gaps, choosing the correct answer from several alternatives (multiple choice), solving a problem, matching or grouping and etc. Every type of task has its own advantages and disadvantages; it is a good measure of different tasks. For instance, 10 task (question) test can be created according to the following principle (see Table):

Table

Task (question) types	Cognitive goal level					
	Knowledge	Comprehension	Application	Analysis	Synthesis	Evaluation
1. Pair choice type task		•				
2. Situation			•			
3. "Yes" and "No"	•					
4. Situation				•		
5. Problem					•	
6. Choice of 2 options		•				
7. Essay						•
8. "Yes" and "No"	•					
9. Choice of 2 options		•				
10. Task requiring long answer			•			
Task distribution %	20	30	20	10	10	10

10. It is necessary to prepare the environment so that it suits to perform the tasks set in the test. Physical surroundings where the candidate's learning achievements assessment is organised should be spacious, calm and not disturbing attention.

11. Before starting the performance of test tasks it is important to introduce general test task requirements, time set for test and document (test sheet) processing requirements.

12. An adult person feels particularly responsible for his/her achievements, therefore it is likely that candidates may feel anxious and fear during the test. At the start of the test some time should be devoted to calm the testees down and some exercises to control emotions can be recommended (e.g. deep breathing).

13. It is important to keep learning achievement evaluation confidentiality. Test task performance results are announced only to the candidate himself/herself, discussing the mistakes that were made and right answers.

ASSESSMENT AT THE WORK PLACE AND OBSERVATION

The purpose of **assessment at the work place** is to identify if the person has competencies necessary for the chosen profession. Usually practical testing is carried out at the work place or in the assessment performing institution, where the environment close to the work place is created (J.Bjørnavold, 2000; R.Laužackas, M.Tereševičienė, E.Stasiūnaitienė, 2005).

This method is called differently in various countries. For instance, in Great Britain it is called *Observation of performance (of the task) in the workplace*. In Norway the whole assessment procedure is called *Vocational "testing"*, the most important part for which is candidate's demonstration of his/her competencies at the work place. It is evident that assessment or testing at the work place is closely related to the method of observation.

Assessing at the work place certain stages are identified – *preparation for the task, task performance and evaluation of the performed task/ identification of competencies*. Relative distribution of assessment at the work place into stages is necessary because not only performance of a practical task is assessed but also the assessee's preparation to perform the task: preparation of the work place and measures, outfit, activity planning and etc. During task performance the assessee is asked to demonstrate possible ways of task performance and identify how the chosen way of action can be applied in another similar situation. Assessment at the work place is one of the main assessment methods in various European countries. In Great Britain the assessor observes the candidate's usual practical activity at the work place and compares it to the professional standard. It is possible that during the usual practical activity the candidate may not be able to demonstrate all the competencies indicated in the standard. In such a case s/h is observed during a simulation which is a method of assessment applied when it is necessary to determine if the candidate has mastered competencies applied in unusual vocational activity cases. These are not competencies which are necessary for everyday vocational activity. Sometimes simulations can be organised in assessment centres instead of the work place.

Assessing person's practical skills it is important to assess the process of „skill transfer“. „Transfer“ is a complicated teaching-based procedure related to transformation of theoretical activity into practical activity in the human psychic, which manifests itself by application of the current experience to solve various work related problems which constantly arise in the changing work situations (J. L. Patry, 1999, cited in D. K. Detterman, 1993). „Transfer“ happens if the acquired things are used in a similar but new situation. Some aspects are important for the evaluation of „transfer“ process. First, intersituational stability or transfer from one situation to another under certain conditions prevails in the achievement area. In both situations action depends on the same competencies or group of competencies; i.e. when the practical situation changes the person's capability to perform that activity remains the same (J. L. Patry, 1999). Second, analysing different situations a person knows what kind of movement is necessary in various situation. S/h is capable of recognising the necessary information in the situation in order to act appropriately. The assessee has to have well acquired the general scheme of symbols and to be able to interpret it as manifestation of transfer situation. Sometimes it may happen that the assessee is incapable of relating two situations, identify their similarity, then it is not clear what skills are necessary, i.e. the assessee does not perceive the relation between situations and transfer does not happen.

H. Pillay, A.R. McCrindle (2005) indicate that in professional activity a strategy that helps to reorganise the thinking process is necessary. Such a strategy is characteristic of heuristics – special methods of creativity and discoveries. Practical activity strategies can be based on the usual sequence of consequent actions. However, if the practitioner evaluates theoretical (depending on this situation, ideological) basis, then the strategy with regard to learning and experience is more efficient and significant (S. Billet, 2002).

Performing assessment at the work place it is important to properly choose person's assessment criteria. Criteria for person's achievement assessment are not determined once and forever. Taking into account functional conditions of the situation they change and have to be interpreted adequately. Applying this assessment method, it is important to assess operations performed not only during the situation but also the assessee's behaviour, i.e. to analyse how, depending on the situation specificity, assessee acts and behaves. Very often it is difficult to

present exact instructions how a person should behave in every possible situation. Therefore assessee should be able to apply their skills according to a certain situation on the basis and interpretation of their personal experience. A number of tasks for competency assessment, presented at the work place are related to social interaction, therefore it is possible to state that certain actions are predetermined by situation specificity. Learning process adaptation to situation is a very individual phenomenon and it is often achieved through personal experience. Consequently, person's achievement assessment criteria should also be very flexible – if the situation is changing the criteria are changing as well. Flexibility of criteria is guaranteed by assessing principles the task performance is based on rather than only the nature of work performance, i.e. how the task was performed (S. Billet, 1999; J.L.Patry, 1999; R.Laužackas, M.Teresevičienė, E.Stasiūnaitienė, 2005). It is essential that learning achievement assessment identified differences between such parameters of the person's behaviour that are in an ideal way independent on the situation and those parameters which are situation dependent. In the first case it is not necessary to take into account the situation specificity whereas in the second case it is essential. Appropriate checking is necessary which could provide information if the assessee managed to join different behaviour elements into one entirety. Usually this checking is individual, qualitative and determined by the situation specificity (J.L.Patry, 1999).

Assessment at the work place is related to specific aspects. Tasks at the work place are very often different and require matching various skills in an optimal way, as the assessee are expected to realise at least some goals at the same time. For instance, it may be required to perform the task in the least expenses of time; however, it is not clear if this coheres with the goal to perform the tasks maximally well. Thus a contradiction between a “good performance” and “efficiency” criteria arises.

During the evaluation of the task performance the identified assessee competencies are compared with competencies defined in professional standards and decisions are made with regard to competency recognition, as stated by J.Bjørnavold (2000).

It is worth noting that assessing practical skills at the work place, other assessment methods are also integrated, for instance, free or structured interview, observation, reflection during activity performance.

OBSERVATION

The goal of observation is to supplement the possessed information about the person's learning achievements by the data obtained during observation. Observation is applied during evaluative interview, assessing the person's practical skills. It is important that observation was objective and observation results were easy to recall – in this way more facts are accumulated about the assessee's learning achievements.

During the performance of practical activity the object of observation can be behaviour, assessee's character features related to it, task solutions and activity products. These objects of observation perform the function of indicators, which allows making decision about the person's acquired learning achievements, which are impossible to observe from aside (G.A.Straka, 2005). According to G.A.Straka (2005), interpretation of observation data is rules which refer to “how to draw conclusions about the competencies the candidate possesses from what has been noticed” (p. 83).

During the interview with the assessee observation is indispensable – then more attention is devoted to the non-verbal behaviour of the assessee – gestures, posture, mimics. Observing the process of task performance it is necessary to highlight those person's competencies that s/he possesses and applies successfully. It is not advisable to interrupt or

criticise the assessee if s/he makes a mistake during the task performance. It is important to evaluate if the person is able to identify his mistakes and knows ways how to correct them (R.Laužackas, M.Teresevičienė, E.Stasiūnaitienė, 2005).

Applying the method of observation it is important to make conclusions on the basis of objective data about the person's learning achievements and behaviour, their analysis and avoid biased opinion. One of the essential aspects of observation is assurance of positive interaction between the observer and observee and enhancement of the assessee's trust. . Observation allows formulating only certain conclusions about the assessed person's achievements and is only a part of the assessment process. Observing each other's activity and analysing it both the assessee and the assessor participate in the developmental process which can change positively the approaches of both the participants. Observation, as a way of person's learning achievement assessment is not void of some shortcomings. Decisions made on the basis of observation can be influenced by the observer/assessor mood, different level of education, interests, social status and other aspects. R.Laužackas, M.Teresevičienė, E.Stasiūnaitienė (2005) indicate such possible shortcomings of observation:

- *The assessor can start comparing the assessee's behaviour or activity with his/her own experience and achievements;*
- *The tendency of the desirable result is possible when the assessee's and/or assessor's expectations are desired to be met without reserve;*
- *The expression of preconceived opinions sometimes may occur: the approach to the assessee as a person, his/her activity, communication manner and etc. is either too positive or too negative and this can have impact upon the assessor decisions that are made;*
- *Complexity of the situation – the assessee can be presented with either too difficult, too complicated situation when “skills transfer” does not happen;*
- *When the purpose of assessment and criteria are not clear for the assessor. It is difficult to observe and analysed the situation from all points, it is hard to make decisions without being subjective;*
- *Due to lack of experience various assessor's communication mistakes are possible – advice, comments, criticism for the assessee during the assessment.*

G.A.Straka (2005, cited in J.U. Schmidt, 1998) indicates slightly different mistakes of observation:

- *position effect* – when the observer formulates his/her conclusions about the candidate's competencies on the basis of the first and last impression;
- *sequence effect* – when the person's activity is evaluated in comparison with the activity of the previously observed person rather than on the basis of the set requirements;
- *lenience/strictness effect* – when particular significance is attached to the identified desirable competencies or actions whereas undesirable competencies or gaps are avoided or vice versa.

It is best to record observation facts into observation protocols just after the observation or during the observation. Observation records and descriptions have to be stored. A form is presented below which is filled in by the assessor observing the candidate's activity in the National Qualifications Framework 2nd level client service sector in Great Britain.

Criteria	Notes
Candidate appropriate appearance	
Desk tidy, equipment in work order, effective use of space	
Health and Safety awareness	
Ready to deal with customers	
Customer greeting, communication	
Needs identification, confirmation, ensure customer understanding	
Locate info to help customer	
Working with colleagues, sharing info	
Resolution of any problem	
Dealing with conflict	
Quite, busy or candidate under pressure	
Knowledge of customer rights, including Data Protection, Equal Opportunities, Disability Discrimination	
Knowledges of company organization, contacts	
Knowledge of services and/or products	
Knowledge of codes of practice, legislation, contractual agreements	

After observation the time for discussion of the person's practical skills assessment is allocated when the assessor presents his observation analysis and the assessee reflects and analyses his mistakes and shortcomings.

SELF-ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Self-analysis is cognition determined by self-awareness. Spontaneous self-analysis is applied in the context of lifelong learning. Spontaneous self-analysis maintains the congruity of a person and helps to develop; each person in a certain activity reflects about his/her behaviour, feelings, intentions spontaneously, in his thoughts, evaluates and matches them with other people's opinions and assessment. Analysing one's learning, professional and societal activity independently or with the help of a teacher, consultant, assessor, and the person aims at obtaining about himself/herself and his/her learning achievements (Dictionary on Psychology, 1993).

Reflection means deep musing, consideration based on the analysis of something. From a philosophical point of view it is cognition the object of which is the subject of cognition (Dictionary of International Terms, 1999). It is indicated in literature that reflection is ability to critically view one's past and analyse purposefully as well as plan the present and the future (H.Blacker, 2001; R. R. Rogers, 2001). The importance of reflection in learning can be explained on the basis of theory which analyses human development in the activity (C.Argyris, D. Schön, 1984). Irrespective of what formal knowledge will be conveyed during the learning process, the person forms a peculiar understanding of a phenomenon or activity, i.e. creates his/her theories. Two theories are worth mentioning – *idea based and use based*. Idea based theory is the one that the person recognises, perceives and commits himself/herself to follow in his activity. It can coincide or not coincide with the used theory; it is possible to judge about its existence on person's actual actions that are performed. In order

for a person to identify his used theory cohering it with the idea based theory, a person should constantly reflect upon his/her activity – speak and clarify systematically the actions s/he performs aiming at better design of one’s further actions. H.Blacker (2001), citing J.Dewey (1933), notes that reflection as a method of problem solving allows looking back critically and figuratively, to analyse one’s goals and plan.

As critical view to one’s activity, performed work, its assessment, identification of strong and weak sides, is possible only thinking reflectively, it is possible to stat that reflection is experience based learning condition (L.D.Richardson, M.Wolfe, 2001, cited in H.Blacker, 2001). Experienced based learning is a type of learning that requires coherence between action and reflection, i.e. reflecting about ones’ activity. *Experience* is defined as subjective understanding of the current situation. The essence of experience is in part determined by the previous individual person’s way of learning. D. Schön (1987); L.D. Richardson, M.Wolfe (2001) distinguish between reflection of some kinds. *Reflection before the activity* is performed before the event and is future oriented. This reflection helps to foresee, project the action of the situation having evaluated the present or prospective impacts. *Reflection during activity* happens during the event (e.g.: performing a task, during employee-customer, teacher-learner interaction) and is oriented to the present. Reflection during the activity allows evaluating the situation more flexibly. *Reflection after the activity* performed after the event (after a certain situation) is directed to the past.

FEEDBACK

During assessment, irrespective of the assessment methods, the candidate should receive constructive **feedback**. Negative feedback can be even more useful particularly if it is provided in a constructive way and accepted properly. Constructive feedback is not only positive reviews and remarks. Constructive feedback emphasises what should be improved; still, possible alternatives are provided how to do that. The assessor who provides feedback should analyse the current situation and look for solutions together with the candidate and find common agreement with regard to the assessee’s competence development. Feedback is important because it performs the function of formative assessment.

Criticism – is a negative feedback when only negative and critical information about eh candidate’s achievements is presented which the candidate is likely to reject. Criticism is likely to cause the candidate’s defence. Due to this reason the candidate will try to avoid feedback or even activity which could be the reason of criticism. Such feedback is not useful for the candidate’s activity development.

Drawbacks of negative feedback:

- It will not have impact upon the candidate’s behaviour change and will prevent hope that the improper behaviour will be interrupted;
- Difficulties will emerge in maintaining and creating friendly relations with the candidate as s/he will convey negative information to others.
- A possibility to maintain good relations will be based on frustration or other negative emotions and this in turn will have impact upon communication with the candidate.

Constructive feedback enables the candidate to obtain not only critical remarks but also positive comments about himself/herself, his/her behaviour, actions, impact upon the situation or other people. This fosters growing, changing, obtaining new information which can be important in the candidate’s further activity.

Before presenting feedback it is important to think *what should be said to the candidate? why is it important to say? when is the most suitable moment to present this information? what environment will the discussion be in?*

Before providing feedback it is always necessary to ask the candidate to self-evaluate the performed work or presented knowledge (e.g. during an interview). Knowing how the candidate assesses the performed work or presentation, it will be more easily for the assessor to provide not only positive but also negative feedback. It is advisable to avoid demonstrating one's own achievements as of a more experienced professional in order to achieve more learning effect – it is better to use one's experience as illustration for advice. Positive information has a positive impact upon the assessee's self-esteem which leads to better well-being and the person is more prepared to change. Positive self-assessment is particularly important for the candidate to be more open to learning. If positive feedback is presented first, the candidate's self-confidence is enhanced and s/he then is more likely to accept negative feedback, is less resistant to receive information about his/her mistakes. Positive feedback presented after negative is less heard and is less perceived as positive. And vice versa, when positive information is first presented, the candidate will feel better, and negative information presented later will be better heard and perceived more positively. For instance, feedback comment can be formulated in this way: *“During the interview I liked your comprehensive answers and questions you asked for clarification very much.... ”* or *“Your voice tone and intonation show that you know how to listen attentively”* and etc.

Sharing one's critical comments it is worth remembering that feedback should, first of all, reflect not what was done wrongly by the candidate but what you, if you were in the candidate's place, would do differently. For instance, *“It seemed to me that you are afraid to go deeper into the client's problem. I would have asked more about ...”*, *“I would pay more attention to the unit manager's oral information... ”*, *“a colleague made an inadequate to the situation decision, if I were in his place I would have discussed how this order is actually implemented and only then I would”*.

Therefore it is necessary to choose priority areas (group according to importance) and present it sincerely and positively. However, sincerely does not mean that everything should be presented openly and to the end.

The most useful feedback is when it is presented in a **succinct and concrete** manner. Abstract and generalised feedback is less informative, therefore it is important to be concrete.

Observing the candidate's activity at the work place, it is very important *to name* what was going on. Feedback can be more useful if it is related to the improvement of candidate's activity, choice of activity methods or strategies. The assessor should distinguish in the candidate's activity what is individual. Feedback information should be based on concrete examples or specific situations or events which were observed in the activity. It is necessary to explain the candidate what has been done very well, what were the mistakes and what forced the assessor to draw appropriate conclusions.

The presented information will be of no use if it will be directed to criticise the candidate's appearance or other negative characteristics. For instance, labels such as *“a chatter-box”*, *“incompetent”*, *“absent-minded”* create unsafe and unpleasant atmosphere. On the contrary, feedback will be significant if you will speak about behaviour which helped or hindered the learning process. Therefore it is very useful to find out how one or another behaviour affect the candidate's vocational activity. For instance, such an observation can be rendered:

“During the five minutes of the conversation you interrupted the client three times; therefore, the conversation was longer and the client did not receive the necessary information in an operative way”.

Providing the feedback, the assessor should speak on behalf of himself/herself, as the provided feedback is based on his/her experience, perception, opinion and value dispositions. The candidate should understand that the presented feedback is based on the assessor’s thinking, interpretations and generalisations. Speaking on behalf of assessor such phrases could be used: *It seems to me that..., I’ve made an impression ..., I would prefer such an interpretation ..., On the basis of my experience ..., I think it could help*

One of the most important objectives of professional activity development is to provide a right for the candidate to assume responsibility for his behaviour and actions. The assessor should model the process of providing feedback and guarantee the candidate’s preparation to reflect what he has heard about his/her behaviour and decide what s/he intends to do to achieve the expected outcome and evaluate one’s possibilities, choices objectively and plan his/her personal and professional growth.