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RECOGNIZING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF MIGRANTS: FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO THIRD MISSION SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BARI "ALDO MORO"

1. *Introduction*

According to data from UNHCR's fourth annual education report (2019), only 3% of refugees manage to continue their academic studies, which had been interrupted in their country. This percentage, although it has slightly increased from the 1% indicated in 2018, shows that migratory dynamics have grown wider and that the processes of cultural integration for those entitled to international protection turn out to be rather low. Therefore, migratory processes and social inequalities at national level are increasing, whilst the ability of education systems to promote the cultural integration of young refugees is decreasing. This is because academic systems are neither very inclusive yet, nor capable to reduce the mechanisms hindering the recognition of skills, qualifications and professional experiences of refugees and people with a migrant background.

Italian universities play a determining role in promoting actions for the academic integration and inclusion of refugees, also in light of the importance that internationalization, third mission and the Certification of Competences services (Palumbo, Proietti 2020) are hiring in the Italian academic community.

The experience reported in this essay focuses on the role of the University in internationalization and third mission and on the relevance of the Certifi-

cation of Competences services in promoting inclusion's processes (in terms of Lifelong Learning), which are contrary to wastefulness and inactivity of the cultural capital of the migratory resource.

2. *The Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences service*

This chapter is focused on the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (RVCC) service run by the *CAP* (*Centro per l'Apprendimento Permanente*; Centre for Lifelong Learning) at the University of Bari "A. Moro"[1] in collaboration with Puglia's Regional Administration[2].

This service offered by the CAP, a university service provider, falls within the framework of 'third mission' activity. As we can read in Novelli, Talamo (2014): "*The term "third mission" refers to all the activities universities use to initiate processes of direct interaction with civil society and the business community. The objective is to promote territorial growth in such a way that knowledge becomes instrumental to productive output.*"

The objective of the third mission is to connect the university to its territory in such a way that technology developed in the academic sphere can drive productive processes and services, and so promote innovation and social inclusion. The service this chapter focuses on is based on the application of a new operational model, Recognition and Validation of Competences (IVC), which aims to support the Region of Puglia in bringing out professionalism and codifying work experience gained in non-formal and informal settings and therefore unrecognised by any academic title. In this, the Puglia Region is following a 2004 directive issued by the European Community in Decision No. 2241/2004/CE of the European Parliament and Council, of 15 December 2004, relative to a single community framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences (Europass) (cf. Regional Council Deliberation 4/4/2019, No.632), with which Europe commits to support the processes of lifelong learning and learning on the job.

As the aforementioned Regional Council Deliberation outlines, this decision led to the European Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 concerning the key competences for lifelong learning. The first articles of this state: "[…]

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[1] The University "A. Moro", founded in 1925, is southern Italy's second largest university with 45,000 students (2020 figure).

[2] REGIONAL COUNCIL DELIBERATION 4 April 2019, No. 632, Approval of the content and experimental objective of the operational model for the Recognition and Validation of Competences service (IVC).

everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that allow full participation in society and successful transitions in the labour market. [...] *Fostering the development of competences is one of the aims of the vision towards a European Education Area that would be able 'to harness the full potential of education and culture as drivers for jobs, social fairness, active citizenship as well as means to experience European identity in all its diversity'"* (COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018, on key competences for lifelong learning, art.1).

This policy responds to various objectives which, from the perspective of the worker who decides to follow the IVC process, amount to the following: improve the employment prospects of people with little education; give visibility to hidden skills; improve the worker's appreciation of the skills they've acquired.

The adoption of this as an active work policy would seem to fulfill the objective of recognising jobs that are informal, largely unprotected, and under-valued in their documentable and reproducible skills.

The Council Recommendation also refers to the need to support work retraining systems in a continuously fluctuating job market: *"Supporting people across Europe in gaining the skills and competences needed for personal fulfilment, health, employability and social inclusion helps to strengthen Europe's resilience in a time of rapid and profound change"* (COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2018, on key competences for lifelong learning, art. 2)[3]. In this sense, the 'new normal', by which I mean the world which awaits us and which we are currently living in, is characterised by the limitations imposed by the health emergency and the emergence of new skills required by the enforced transfer to digital interaction. The need to face growing unemployment and global competition, will also require an attitude sharply focused on adapting to changing conditions. See Buheij & Buheij (2020, 241): *"Such a dynamic condition and environment require the workers to manage change continuously"*. If employability has until now been considered the capacity to educate oneself in order to find work, it can now, thanks to the changing conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, be defined as the ability to adapt to change, both within a single work environment and between jobs.

Thus the regional system of competence certification (SRCC) can, in this environment of increased complexity and demand for professionalism, provide tools for rendering workers' more competitive and professional, while also increasing regulation in the job market.

[3] Retrieved from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG.

The conditions of the 'new normal' that the Covid-19 pandemic is imposing recall what is stated in a theory of unorthodox rational action, an alternative to *thin rationality* (Salvati 2008), in which the actors are required to measure themselves against continuously changing environmental conditions. This, the model holds, results in a reduction in the capacity to acquire complete information: actions are always performed in conditions of *bounded rationality* (Simon 1982).

In *unorthodox rationality* risk is accepted in the absence of a *dominant* strategy (defined, in game theory, as the best strategy to follow irrespective of the course of action adopted by the other players). When one can't determine the best choice because the environmental conditions are changing too quickly, thus rendering it impossible to achieve a level of perfect information, the best strategy becomes to pass to a course of action modelled in the assurance game. In this, players are safeguarded by the presence of a regulatory principal represented by the State, or, as in our case, by the regional authority. From the perspective of the actor involved in the organisation, what is required is the ability to make decisions in an environment of quickly changing conditions.

In terms of organisational knowledge, the capacity to create a work environment in which information circulates becomes fundamental. For this reason, a constant flow of information should be ensured:

 "*This competency represents the capacity to process and exchange information between individuals through a common system, or a behaviour that creates a productive and harmonious environment*" (Buheij & Buheij 2020, 244).

The immaterial resources, or social capital, that an organisation can call on takes on considerable significance in the form of trust (Pelligra 2002). This becomes an essential resource where a sense of community, reinforced by the emergency situation, becomes pride in the squad, team spirit (Bartscher, Seitz, Siegloch, Slotwinski, Wehrhöfer 2020).

3. *The regional System of Certification of Competences*

Puglia's Regional System of Certification of Competences (hereafter referred to as SRCC), of which the CAP is one of the accredited bodies, falls within the framework of the National System of Certification of Competences (SNCC), as a welfare policy of inclusion (Maretti, Di Risio 2020). Its objective is to recognise skills acquired in informal and non-formal contexts, including through job experience (Manuti, Pastore, Scardigno, Giancaspro, Morciano 2015).

The normative process behind the current legislative asset was initiated in Italy with law No. 92/2012. This provided the foundations for the SNCC and defined lifelong learning as "any activity undertaken by a person in a formal, non-formal or informal way, at any stage in their life, with the aim of improving their knowledge, ability and competences, in a personal, civic, social or occupational context" (art. 4, clause 51).

Italian legislative decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013 establishes the standards and essential performance levels (LEP) of the SNCC. The inter-ministerial decree of 30 June 2015 determines an operational framework for the national recognition of regional qualifications and relative competences, and defines the phases of recognition, validation and certification of the competences (art.1, clause 5). Article 3 of the same decree establishes the National Framework of Regional Qualifications (QNQR). A further step was taken towards completing the normative framework with the decree of 8 January 2018. This instituted the National Framework of Qualifications (QNQ), a device for classifying and describing the qualifications issued through the SNCC.

Initially this emerging national context saw several Italian regions act in a way one could define as *maternage* or 'ferrying', thus leading the way for those regions which didn't yet have their own professional directories. Puglia is one of several regions that, following in the wake of trail blazers such as Tuscany, has adopted the model of already established professional directories. (Maretti, Di Risio 2020).

4. *Certifying the professional qualifications of refugees: a challenge for the academic third mission*

This protocol, adopted by the Regional Council of Apulia and the CAP and later extended to the Universities of Foggia, Salento and the Polytechnic of Bari, concerns the construction and implementation of the Regional System of Validation and Certification of Skills of the Apulia Regional Council (SRVCC). This embraces the experimentation set up by the CAP for the issue of the certification of skills/qualifications acquired in non-formal and informal contexts in terms of heritage earned by the individual over the course of his/her life, which must be valorised, clarified and recognizable, with particular reference to the target of political refugees or beneficiaries of international protection, namely the CAP users (Scardigno 2018). The researchers of the CAP and the Professional Training Section of the Apulia Regional Council collaborated on the definition of an experimental working methodology for the provision of the

service for the identification and validation of skills, and the CAP of the University of Bari was acknowledged as 'certifying authority' for the identification and validation of skills.

The experimentation began with the request, sent to the CAP, to examine the experiential and training background of two users of Afghan origins, who had been in Italy for a few years, involved on a daily basis in intercultural mediation at acceptance centres, public structures and bodies. The two users aspired to carry out their professional activity with the formal recognition of the qualification of 'intercultural mediation expert'. The service centre of the university accepted this innovative request, making the commitment to lay down the bases of an ever more structured service, accessible also to those who might need it in the future. The activity started with the drafting of the request for participation and the compilation of the 'Consent to the itinerary for the identification and validation of skills' sheet. Those responsible for the acceptance and validation at the CAP therefore undertook the itinerary for the recognition and clarification of formal qualifications as well as non-formal and informal experiences, in view of their potential certification by the Apulia Regional Council. The starting point, within the Regional Repertory of Professional Figures, was to identify the profile for which certification had been requested. The description sheet of the skill units, with relative knowledge and skills, was compared with the curriculum presented by the users in order to verify any similarities. The figure identified as the target of their certification for both users appeared to be made up of three areas of competence: the acceptance of foreign citizens, the facilitation of the exchange between foreign citizens and their territory of reference, and the development of social integration activities.

Starting from there, individual interviews were carried out, in which the CAP researchers asked the users to provide a description as detailed as possible of their formative and professional experiences relevant to the field of reference. This information, documented by proof (letters of reference, work contracts, certificates of participation, diplomas etc.), was included in the clarification document, which highlights the experiences and the activities carried out, translating them into meaningful and documentable learning processes. In particular, by making reference to the experimentation carried out with the two users – respectively citizens with subsidiary protection and international protection – the analysis of the curriculum and its translation in the clarification document highlighted major overlapping between skills, knowledge and abilities outlined in the sheet of the Regional Repertory. In addition, the studies documented by various sources of proof, have been numbered so as to make them available in the confirmation process as foreseen by the certification itin-

erary. The CAP contributed then to enhancing the curriculum of the two users, inserting among the documented studies and those in progress the so-called soft skills, i.e. interpersonal skills useful for carrying out the role of intercultural mediation expert alongside their other technical skills.

The phase following the drafting of the clarification document consisted in the validation of skills, which, in concrete terms, entailed the analysis of the evidence produced to support the studies declared. Once the reconstruction phase was completed, the itinerary foresaw the possibility – in relation to the percentage of coverage of the skills expected by the users – to complete the itinerary with the definition of a plan of action regarding the potential completion of study careers, and/or the integration of relevant professional experiences. In the case of the two users, given that the percentage of coverage of the three areas of competence investigated was over 70%, it was possible to continue along the path of formal certification. The validated skills were formalized in the Certificate of Validation, and this stage came to an end with the identification of the contents to investigate in the direct assessment followed by the official request for the constitution of a third-party evaluating commission. This shall be made up of experts in the subject area in question, as well as experts in validation and certification from the CAP, representatives of social sectors, of the Ministry of Labour and the Sector of Professional Training of the Apulian Regional Council. The exam consisted in a technical-practical test of the skills not covered by the users' curricula. The itinerary came successfully to a close, with the awarding of the certificate of professional qualification as 'intercultural mediation experts' for both users, the first two beneficiaries of international protection in Italy to receive a professional qualification recognized by the Regional System of Education and Training.

5. *The RVCC service as a system: the firsts regional qualifications as "Family Care Assistant"*

Regarding the current regional context, within which the experiences we refer to in this article should be read, we are in the middle of a trial launched in Puglia by Regional Council Deliberation No. 632/2019.

Thanks to this trial, we have initiated a system of collaboration between the Regional Work, Cooperation and Vocational Training Department, Professional Training Section, and Educational and Training Institutions (ETIs). The aim is to create a short list of accredited bodies for the provision of a competence registration service. The very first people to use this service were two Afghan

refugees who, after a process of registration, recognition, validation and certification, were awarded the qualification of technician of intercultural mediation. The trial has continued with the professional figure of "Family Care Assistant", (Regional Council Deliberation No. 632/2019) art. 428 of the Regional Directory of Professional Figures.

The certification of competences, to be experimentally conferred on this professional figure, falls within the sphere of *lifelong learning* in that it recognises learning acquired while working on a job. Indeed, the learning 'returns' to the profession to highlight aspects that can be used to construct an educational programme.

In this sense, the IVCC service functions as a 'third mission' service in that it provides professional validation and recognition for a figure that's as necessary in a rapidly ageing population as it is vulnerable to a lack of employment protection and the scarce regulation of its delicate skills, while also reinforcing the web of territorial relationships between the university and local authorities. The actors involved and the regional system of professional training and higher education are stakeholders in the territorial development for which these alliances[4] are necessary.

The university reassumes its role as a propellant of local development, steering it towards social justice (Barca 2019), while also accepting its responsibility for maintaining a system that connects the university and community (in this case the regional system of vocational training and world of work, the third sector, and social enterprise):

"*The universities' standing, prestige and reputation continue to be determined by internal, disciplinary values and scholarly attainment. However, they are also intimately associated in official thinking with the appropriateness of the services rendered to the community—where that community can be local, regional, national, or even inter-national. This change in the mission, role and tasks laid upon universities affects the relationships between the university and its environmental constituencies. In short, the legitimacy of higher education in society will increasingly be a direct function of the nature, quality and evolving ties with the Stakeholder Society*" (Jongbloed, Erders, Salerno 2008, 307)*,*

"*In other words, universities are playing—and according to some should play—a broader and more visible role in the educational, social and economic well-being of local communities and the nation. The third mission therefore consists of a knowledge transfer function as well as a more general community func-*

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[4]   With regard to regional development, it doesn't seem out of place to recall, once again, the notion of institutional trust, a precondition for the effective mobilisation of social capital, not exclusively orientated towards individual and/or specific ends (Cartocci 2002, Trigilia 1999, Barca, Forum Diseguaglianze Diversità, 2019).

tion. It is an umbrella term that refers to a wide variety of principles and strategies for economic and social development" (Jongbloed, Erders, Salerno 2008, 313).

Moving in this direction is a proposal, launched by the Forum Disuguaglianze Diversità (2019), to evaluate a university's third mission in terms of cases that have successfully promoted social justice (*15 proposte per la giustizia sociale - 15 Proposals for Social Justice -* pp. 76-77; Barca, Forum Disuguaglianze Diversità 2019, pp. 21-22).

With this in mind, the objective of the trial is to recognise skills acquired 'on the job' (Römgens et al. 2019) and to translate them into professional qualifications recognised by the Region of Puglia.

In terms of institutional actions, the process led to the creation, as a preliminary step, of a Regional Table on Lifelong Learning, following the signing of an Agreement Protocol between the Region of Puglia and Puglia's universities for the creation and activation of a Regional System of Validation and Certification of Competences (SRVCC).

As we said above, the experimental recognition of a qualification as a "Family Care Assistant" follows the processes established by the CAP in awarding the professional title of "inter-cultural mediator" to two Afghan citizens, both of whom had no formal qualifications but a decade of professional experience.

Regarding the accord signed with the Region of Puglia, the CAP offers a service of recognition and validation of training and professional experiences and their translation into Units of Competence relevant to the qualifications covered in the Regional Directory.

The recognition process is made up of several stages: reception, identification of the informal and/or non-formal skills, validation of these skills, and certification.

During the reception phase[5], the purpose of the service is explained and a 'contract' between the user and operator, through which the free service is accessed, is defined. This phase aims to "*Prepare people so that they can actively and knowledgeably participate in the fruition of the IVC*" (Department of Economic Development, Innovation, Education, Training and Work, Vocational Training Section, IVC Trial, Training for service providers, University of Bari 1-3 July 2019)[6].

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[5] Some authors use the expression 'take responsibility for' to define this phase, recalling the terminology used to refer to users of social services. However, we maintain that while the service is evidently social in nature, we are not dealing with 'needs' which, in the case of services attributable to social assistance, are managed by figures from a different profession (social workers).

[6] The launch of the trial was preceded, in July 2019, by a training course run by the Accompanying Technical Committee of the Region of Puglia's IVC Trial, for professionals in the field (experts in the identification and recognition of competences, validation experts, sector experts),

The reception phase is followed by the identification stage in which accredited service centre personnel are called on to "*support the person in identifying their competences and collating documentation from evidence and proof of their acquired skills*" (Department of Economic Development, Innovation,…).

As one can read in the note published on the University of Bari's website to accompany the awarding of the first titles, and the press conference held to present the initiative, an event attended by the University Rector and officials from the Region's Vocational Training Division: "*The instructional work carried out by the CAP will enable the user to decide if they want to continue with the certification process run by the Region and take a technical and/or theoretical test allowing them to fill any gaps in their CVs and obtain a professional qualification in relation to a specific professional project.*"[7]

The identification phase is completed with the production of a «Transparency Document». At this point the user can decide whether to continue onto the validation phase, during which an expert translates the presented evidence into skills and competences grouped into relevant Units of Competence (UC). The UCs are the modules which, in reference to the Directory of competences, define the profession for which the qualification is being requested[8].

During the evaluation phase an expert carries out a technical examination of the "Transparency Document" as well as any direct evaluation, here intended as an evaluation test in the presence of the user. This might take the form of hearings, technical interviews or performance tests (attachment 5 of the inter-ministerial decree of 30 June 2015 "Definition of an operative framework for the national recognition of regional qualifications and relative competences in relation to the national directory of educational and training titles and professional qualifications with reference to article 8 of legislative decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013").

The evaluation function covers the assessment, which, at the very least, requires a technical examination of the «Transparency Document». It might also require a direct evaluation in the presence of the candidate in the form of hearings, technical interviews or performance tests. In every case pre-defined

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selected by the accredited bodies. An online introduction was followed by three days at the University of Bari "A. Moro", Department of Training, Psychology and Communication Science.

[7] https://www.uniba.it/centri/cap/notizie/assistenti-familiari-2018si-diventa2019-con-regione-puglia-e-universita-di-bari-29-luglio-2020.

[8] From this point on, the treatment refers to the text of normative materials distributed during the training course for 'service providers' as identified by the accredited bodies (1-3 July 2019, University of Bari "A. Moro").

evaluation standards are applied. The need for and depth of the evaluation will be determined by the quantity and quality of the documentation presented in the «Transparency Document» assessed against criteria of value and relevance.

To this end, the following essential actions have been identified:

1. verification and evaluation of the candidate's documentation, including the evidential documents presented in the «Transparency Document»;

2. planning of the competence evaluation procedure in line with the user's characteristics, job environment and reference standards;

3. planning of the operational procedure for the evaluation with respect to criteria of collegiality, objectivity, impartiality and independence, as provided for in the regional regulations, as well as fairness and user privacy;

4. definition, where necessary, of the objective indicators under observation and the minimal standards in relation to the relevant professional standards;

5. detailed planning of the testing procedure and definition of the relative evaluation criteria;

6. producing the procedures and verification tests in accordance with the planning of the trial and in conformity with the reference regulations of the validation and certification system;

7. attention to the traceability of the whole process through reporting and information or documentary systems.

The actions necessary for this function require a level of professionality correspondent to at least an EQF (European Qualification Framework) fifth level (attachment 8 of the inter-ministerial decree of 30 June 2015 "Definition of an operative framework for the national recognition of regional qualifications and relative competences in relation to the national directory of educational and training titles and professional qualifications with reference to article 8 of legislative decree No. 13 of 16 January 2013").

The evaluation stage is followed by a technical interview or, where it's considered necessary, an integrative test. These are designed to highlight the abilities and competences necessary for completing the professional profile as defined in the official job directory and are fundamental to the certification process. In fact, in most cases the documentary proof (contracts, training courses, work experience referred to in the competence identification phase) brought to support the reconstruction of informal and non-formal educational processes is insufficient to show that the requirements of the competences and abilities referred to in the official job directory have been met. These competences and abilities have been identified in the trial as prerequisites for acceding to the regional training course, completion of which results in the candidate qualifying as a certified family care assistant.

6. *The trial's local context collaboration between university and local authority
in inclusive perspective*

For the user, the final objective of the IVC process is to qualify as a so-cial-health worker (in Italian *operatore socio-sanitario*, OSS). This qualification is gained after a free training course run by the Region of Puglia; a prerequisite of access to the course is the certification issued at the end of the IVC procedure. In this way, a virtuous collaboration is created between the local authority and regional universities, as is happening in other Italian regions to various extents (Maretti, Di Risio 2020).

Regarding the OSS course run by the Region of Puglia, the certification of "Family Care Assistant" provides recognition, in terms of training credits, that allows access to a 'fast track' and so opens the door to the possibility of qualifying after less training time. This trial represents the creation of a modality through which "*competences acquired by adults in previous contexts of formal, informal and non-formal acquisition are recognised as credits towards a personalised training process*" (Porcaro, Sibilio, Buonanno 2020).

The first users to participate in the trial were a group of 250 candidates. Requisites for entry to the trial were that they had been working in structures providing social-health care and had five years of professional experience. The final OSS qualification corresponds to a professional profile listed in the regional directory; this was included after an earlier trial aimed at uncovering hidden professional figures that could be described as home care providers. The R.O.S.A. project (*Rete per l'Occupazione e i Servizi di Assistenza*, Network for Care Jobs and Services) was launched as a trial in Puglia in 2008. It was aimed at people who had worked as home care providers and who could qualify as family assistants after a training process[9]. This policy is part of the Region of Puglia's efforts to address the life/work balance: following the issue of so-called 'conciliation vouchers' (Balenzano, Moro 2018), anyone employing a worker listed in the regional directory of qualified home carers could claim a regional conciliation voucher.

Competences certified and attained through regional training courses, starting with those for family care assistants, can be developed into the skills of social-health workers. The process is also open to foreign home care providers

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[9] "Launched in trial form in 2008, the ROSA Project is a qualification initiative targeted at home care providers. It aims to regulate the job of care provider by providing economic support to the families who employ them". It comes as part of a policy to "support home care for people who are not self-sufficient and to search out and prevent undeclared work - see http://www.pariopportunita.regione.puglia.it .

as the only pre-requisite is that applicants must be working. An obvious obstacle to this is the permit to stay (*permesso di soggiorno*) as anyone who applies to be added to the directories, maintained by Job Centres, must be employed, a state for which a permit to stay is necessary.

During the competence identification stage, it's vital to listen to the candidates in order to collate their experiences. The expert's skill lies in their ability to help the candidate narrate their life story in such a way that it can be reconstructed as a sequence of events. The expert's role in the identification is to lead the person by asking questions and, above all, by listening. The way in which the professional experiences recounted in the user's interview were lived not only gives an idea of the activities themselves and their context but also of the degree of autonomy and responsibility they entailed.

The identification expert is guided in the recognition of employment experiences by the Regional Skills Directory which establishes the profile's professional content in the form of competences. The result of this inquiry and collation is a draft document of competences. In the following stage, the evaluation expert will use this evidential document to measure, in percentage terms, the degree of cover that the document demonstrates. The process of having everything transparent in the documents (certificates, work contracts, courses followed, high school educational qualifications) is aimed at disseminating a 'culture of evidence' and developing the capacity to 'keep track' of professional results and training.

In Italy, law No. 92 (the so-called Fornero law) of 28 June 2012, provides the basis for the system of recognising competences. It attempts to trace how much of one's professional development took place during the different phases of one's life through formal means (educational qualifications, for example), non-formal means (learning in intentional contexts) and informal means (learning on the job).

In this way, what is learned in daily life is valorised as informal learning when it is framed as part of a growth process that can be reconstructed by highlighting one's capabilities. An example of such learning would be the role of a caregiver who worked for family members for years and in so doing acquired competences in family care provision[10].

The evaluation expert draws up an assessment for each UC (unit of competence), suggesting what should be done in the next stage of the interview. The interview is necessary in every case, even when a UC is covered 100 per cent, as

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[10]   This policy comes as part of efforts to promote home care in place of institutionalisation. For an examination of the reasons for home care see Dal Pra Ponticelli (ed., 2004).

it represents an interaction which, developing from the narration which itself recognises many milestones in the skills and competences covered by the UC, helps verify what has been revealed.

Where there are documented skills, these are translated into evidence. Planning for the identification of evidence involves the following steps: collecting the experiences; translating and modulating these experiences into activities; looking at the activities to identify which competences are implied in relation to the Areas of Activities (ADA) listed in the National Job Atlas; identifying the skills developed; returning to the presented and reconstructed documentation.

It's up to the identification expert to decide if the minimal prerequistes, which allow for the extraction of the skills from the documentary evidence and narration, have been met, and whether the candidate can proceed to the evaluation exam. The documentation, which is always the user's responsibility, is fundamental to the question of whether the minimal levels have been met and whether the process can continue. And unless there are too many gaps to enable identification, it is always possible to call the candidate for a further interview in order to complete the documentation. In cases where there are too many gaps and the competences cannot be professionally recognised, the fact of having retraced them can lead to an increase in self-awareness. Even writing a CV represents an occasion to reflect on how much one has achieved up to that point in time. Thus, asking a candidate to take a self-compiled CV to the centre also serves a pedagogical purpose.

For the professional figure that's the subject of this trial, examples of evidence produced in formal contexts might include a nursing course or a high-school diploma from a school specialising in social sciences. Other formal cases could include internships, for which one could provide contracts with objectives and hours of presence.

In non-formal experiences, learning takes place in an intentional and deliberate fashion, meaning that there are formal objectives and a tutor is present, but it results in no formal qualification. If, for example, someone had started but not completed an apprenticeship and so had no qualification to show for it, one would talk of non-formal learning (conversely, if they had completed the apprenticeship one would talk of formal learning).

Evidence can be presented in document form if the documents are official.

"*The evidence must be 'detailed', it must recount pieces of the person's life*". For example, if a project's contract includes an outline of the project, we have a description of the activity carried out[11]. Qualifications, in turn, represent mile-

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[11]   From the training run by the Accompanying Technical Committee of the Region of Puglia's IVC Trial, held at the   University of Bari "A. Moro", Department of Training, Psychology and Communication Science.

stones, set points in a person's professional experience. Self-certified evidence is considered first party evidence. And where this is accepted, its value in the collation process is not great. The value of second and third party evidence increases when it's accompanied by qualifications awarded by regionally-accredited organisations or educational institutions.

The last stage of the IVC process is the validation interview. This is not an exam interview even if questions might be asked about the content of a competence, not just about work experience. The start point remains the candidate's experience, from which it can be deduced whether they have reached the relevant level of knowledge and ability.

7. *The IVC Service during pandemic time*

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted all aspects of society, not just the health, economic and social sectors. Everything from economic activity and the provision of services to family and social life, work, and education have been affected. One of the first decisions the University was compelled to make was how to continue with the teaching, research, third mission duties, and administrative functions that all universities, however large or small, are required to perform.

These decisions have required universities to reconcile the right to education with the security norms imposed during the lockdown[12] . In compliance with the principle of autonomy the universities enjoy and under which their activities are regulated, they are free to establish the modalities for the resumption of the next academic year, whether on a face to face basis or remotely, depending on the epidemiologic situation of their home region. After teaching activities, both curricular and residual, were initially, and necessarily, halted, and research seminars, conferences and third mission activities, both in terms of public engagement and 'by third parties' were suspended, a re-organisation phase was initiated. Just a week after the Prime Minister's Decree of 9 March

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[12]   Italy was the first European country to be hit by the pandemic. In response to it, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte decreed a state of emergency that remains ongoing at the time of writing (October 2020) and is set to remain in force until 31 January 2021. The first phase of lockdown led to the closure of all businesses except those defined essential (effectively only health services and food stores), as well as an order forbidding citizens from leaving their homes except for work or health reasons. A so-called 'second phase' was initiated in mid-May when the Prime Minister activated decree No. 33 of 16 May, which came into force on 18 May. This allowed for travel within one's home region and the gradual re-opening of commercial activities and services, with the exception of schools.

2020, the so-called #iorestoacasa (or #imstayingathome), curricular courses for first and second level degrees were being taught online. This led to an immediate increase in digital socialisation, even by teachers who had previously favoured traditional teaching methods in their lessons[13] .

Providing this service during the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted, once again, how the 'new normal' requires more fluid competences and a new method for identifying the link between knowledge and skills. In fact, while knowledge can be measured through credentialist-style qualifications, (ed. Rossi, 1997), competences and skills trace a continuous learning process in tune with the current times, which call for constant adjustments in respect to the continuously changing environment: *"Therefore, measuring knowledge could be discrete facts, but measuring competency and abilities to apply knowledge in ambiguous circumstances is what can make the difference in a post-COVID-19 pandemic era"*. (Clarke 2008, Buheij & Buheij 2020).

In Puglia, the figure of a family care assistant was selected for the initial trial due to the high number of undeclared workers active in the field (after the trial, the process for ensuring transparency and the certification of competences will be implemented for other professional profiles). Over the years, training in this sector has developed without any guidelines, leading to the proliferation of unregulated training courses and frequent occasions of non-transparent and opportunistic behaviour. It therefore seems strategic not only for the professional system but also for the harmonious balancing of family-care responsibilities, and, most importantly, for the wellbeing of the users, to introduce regulation of the required competences by highlighting and certifying them. This policy also appears to be crucially important from the perspective of employment and welfare intervention.

As observed by Palumbo and Proietti (2020), the certification of competences can contribute to the success of *learnfare*, which pertains to the right to life-long learning, hereby considered in an emancipatory fashion, instead of the mere expression of compliance to market exigencies. This way, universities could play a truly inclusive role towards those categories which have left their training environment too soon, so that may find themselves unprepared facing

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[13]   For a useful description of the way university teaching went from 'in person' to online, see M. Knapp, 2020, *From "Face-to-Face" to "Face-to-Screen": Virtual Classrooms as Synthetic Situations*, Issue 45: Pandemic (Im)Possibility, vol.1:
https://www.europeansociologist.org/issue-45-pandemic-impossibilities-vol-1/%E2%80%9Cface-face%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%9C-face-screen%E2%80%9D-virtual-classrooms-synthetic. This process was accompanied by a huge training campaign at universities which involved writing, in record time, 'guides' for delivering online lessons, exams and graduation sessions (Meister 2020).

policies aiming to activation (Cantillon 2011), but without ensuring whether their recipients are provided with the levels of competence required.

Recognition of a certified professional figure could lead to virtuous regulation processes and safeguards for workers who often operate in the Third Sector, itself the subject of new regulatory processes (legislative decree 117/2017, the so-called Third Sector article).

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