

Permeability in education and training – Introduction

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CEDEFOP EXPERT WORKSHOP ON
SUSTAINING PERMEABILITY,
IMPLEMENTING MECHANISMS,
TESTING CREDITS



The study

Cedefop study ‘From credit systems to permeability in education and training’

ITB-University of Bremen (DE)
in cooperation with 3s (AT)
and additional experts from different countries

Objective: to investigate

⇒ the issue of permeability in education and training

⇒ including the particular contribution of credit systems



Monday

Permeability in education and training

Permeability

possibility for a learner to transfer from one educational programme, educational sub-system or learning path to another with a view to achieving learning results that lead to a new qualification

⇒ involves personal development, allows for individual or non-traditional learning pathways

Permeability mechanism

arrangement of devices (such as norms and standards, curricula, assessment methods etc.) operating in a specific context with the aim to support and facilitate permeability

Research approach

Step 1:

Review of the state-of-play on permeability mechanisms in the countries taking part in the Education and Training 2010 process (32 countries)

⇒ semi-standardised questionnaire

⇒ involved expert interviews / expert survey

Development of a grounded typology of permeability mechanisms within VET as well as between VET and HE (and vice-versa)



Step 2:

In-depth case studies to support and illustrate the typology of mechanisms (15)

⇒ based on a common structure (context, aims and rationale, relation to learning outcomes, credit systems, qualifications frameworks, performance indicators, SWOT analysis, assessment of transferability)

⇒ analysis of documents, interviews



Research approach

Step 3:

Conclusions:

- ⇒ Making permeability in education and training a reality
- ⇒ Issues for further research



Thank you very much for your
attention!

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Permeability mechanisms in European countries: a typology

Wolfgang Wittig, ITB, University of Bremen
Cedefop Expert Workshop on sustaining
permeability, implementing mechanisms,
testing credits

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Towards a typology of permeability mechanisms

- Classification of mechanisms by several theory-based descriptors
- Main descriptors characterise the content and methodology of permeability mechanisms
- Theoretical typology is constituted by the main descriptors
- Existing mechanisms are compared with and situated within the theoretical typology → result: empirical typology

Descriptors for the typology: an overview

- Rationale / guiding principle / degree of accreditation (extent to which prior learning achievements can be used in a new learning pathway)
- Basis (type of learning that is accepted as justification for the transition of the learner)
- Scope (mode of identifying the persons who are eligible for permeability in the context of a given mechanism)

Descriptors for the typology (1): Rationale

- Access: applicants with certain learning outcomes are formally eligible for entry into a learning opportunity (necessary but not sufficient condition)
- Admission: applicants with certain learning outcomes are formally eligible and are selected for entry on the basis of these learning outcomes (necessary and sufficient condition)
- Exemption (partial equivalence): applicants with certain learning outcomes are allowed to skip parts of the target programme
- Full equivalence: target qualification is awarded completely on the basis of the candidate's prior learning outcomes

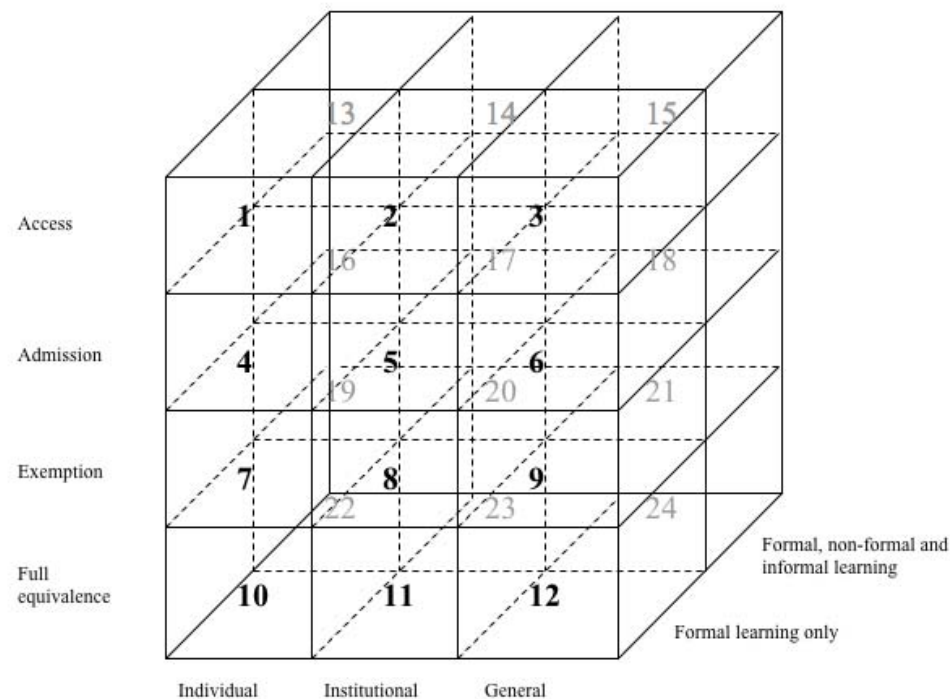
Descriptors for the typology (2): Basis

- Formal learning only: the permeability mechanism strictly requires confirmation of participation in a formal learning opportunity
- Formal, non-formal and/or informal learning: the permeability mechanism refers to at least one of the following:
 - Documentation of work experience
 - Documentation of work experience in a specific area
 - Assessed work experience
 - Any other achievement outside formal education and training

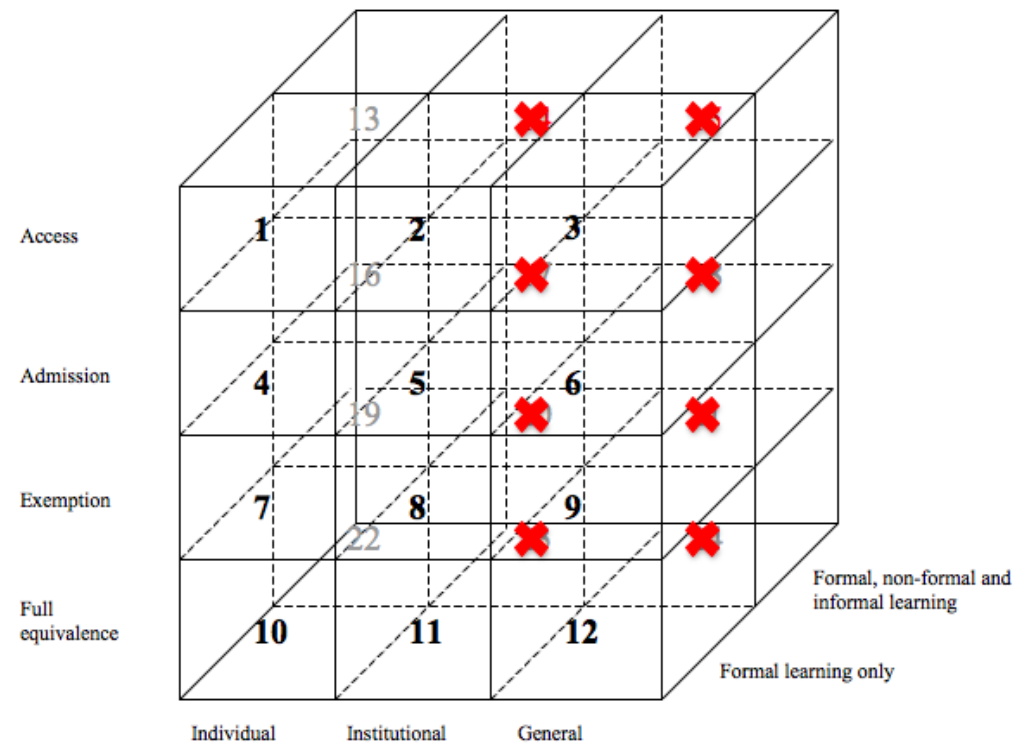
Descriptors for the typology (3): Scope

- Individual recognition: learning achievements of applicants are assessed on a case-by-case basis
- Institutional recognition: permeability is granted in the framework of cooperation between institutions (e.g. VET institutions and universities) and only to learners of these institutions
- General (blanket) recognition: equivalence of (formal) learning outcomes is checked only once, permeability is granted to any individual who has accomplished the qualification in question

The theoretical typology (1)



The theoretical typology (2)



Permeability types in European countries (1)

- Type 1: Individual access by RPL
 - Example: subject-specific university entrance qualification by IVET plus work experience (DE)
- Type 2: Individual admission by RPL
 - Example: recognition of work experience in the admission of mature students (MT)
- Type 3: Individual exemption by RPL
 - Example: accreditation of vocational learning in higher education by portfolio and interview (DE)
- Type 4: Full individual RPL
 - Example: Validation of Acquired Experience (FR)

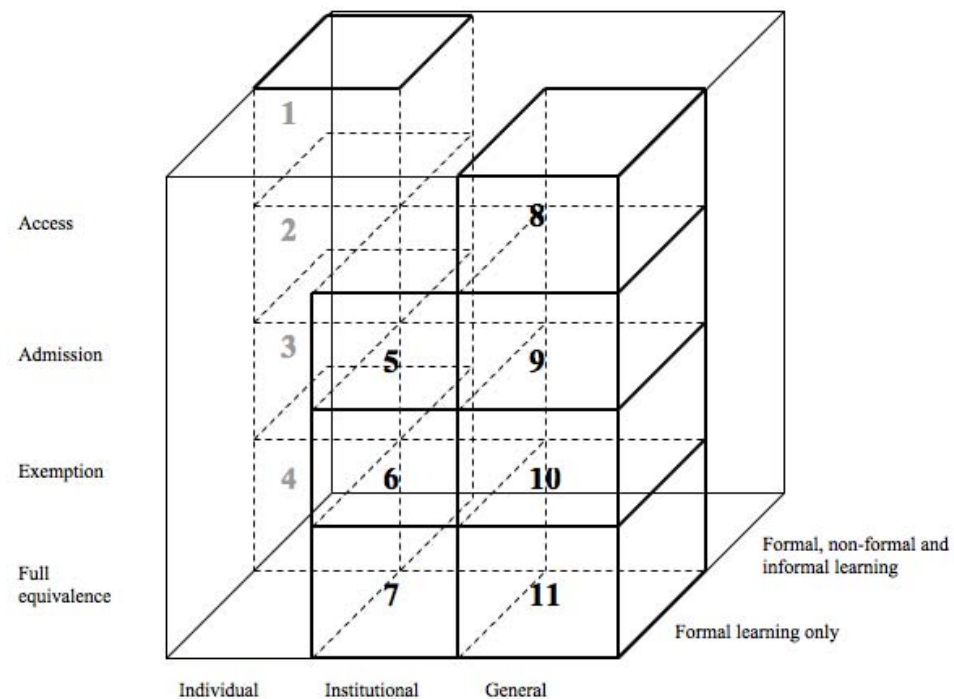
Permeability types in European countries (2)

- Type 5: Admission by institutional cooperation
 - Example: bridging programme between CVET and higher education (IS)
- Type 6: Exemption by institutional cooperation
 - Example: shortened Associate Degree programme for VET graduates of specific institutions (NO)
- Type 7: Full equivalence by institutional cooperation
 - Integrated programme rather than permeability mechanism
 - Example: dual studies (DE)

Permeability types in European countries (3)

- Type 8: General access by recognition of formal learning
 - Example: *Berufsreifeprüfung* – VET diploma providing general access to higher education (AT)
- Type 9: General admission by recognition of formal learning
 - Example: Preferential admission in higher education for holders of relevant VET qualification (LT)
- Type 10: General exemption by recognition of formal learning
 - Example: Transition from the two-year course for car service mechanics to the third year of the car mechatronics course (DE)
- Type 11: Full general recognition of formal learning
 - Example: Mutual recognition of regional VET qualifications issued at the end of three-year programmes (IT)

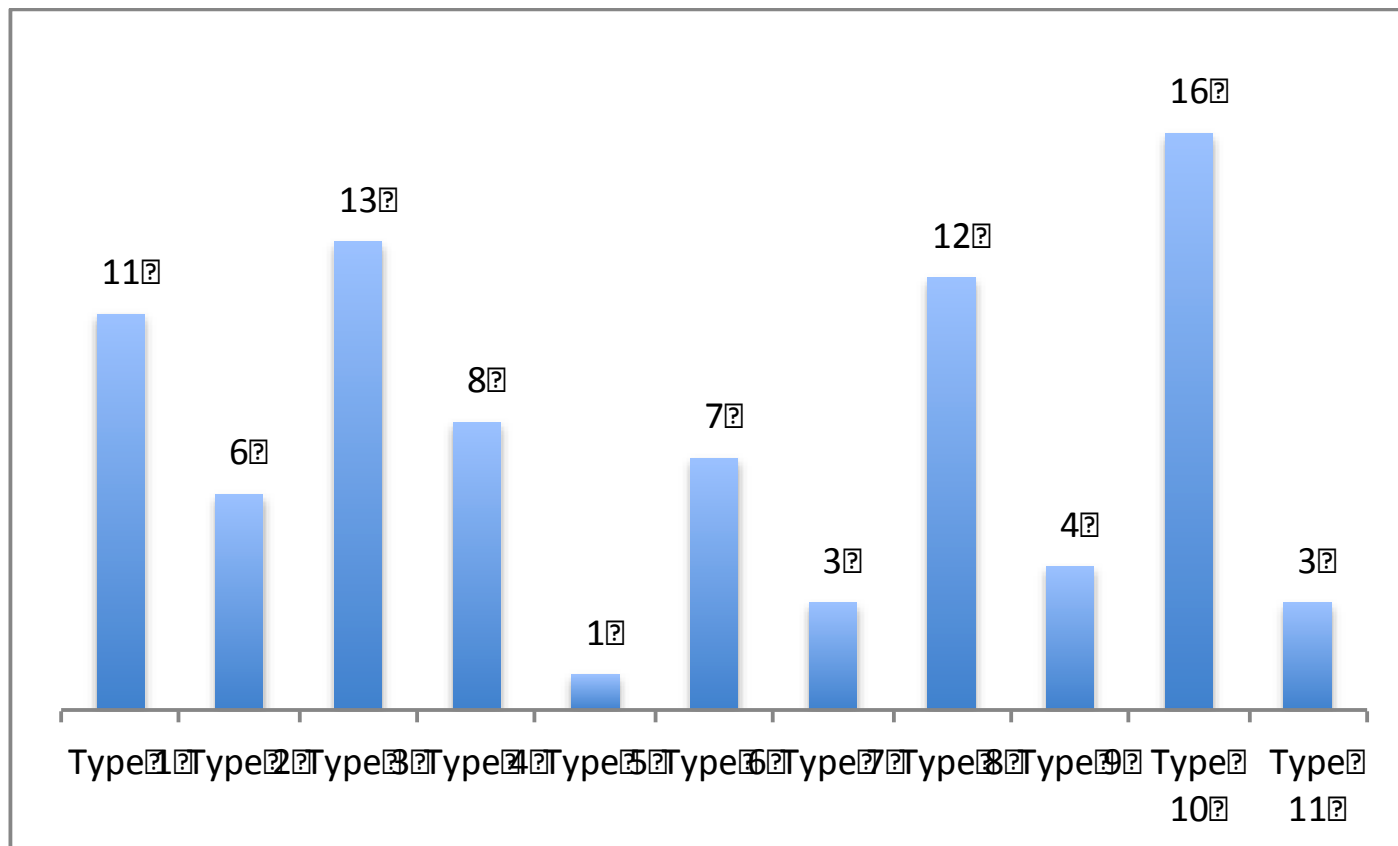
The empirical typology: an overview



The empirical typology: some general observations

- Two distinct groups of types: individual recognition combined with broad range of learning outcomes (1 to 4) and general recognition combined with formal learning only (8 to 11)
- Types that involve institutional cooperation (5 to 7) constitute a less important class (exemplified by few mechanisms)
- Expectations suggested by the theoretical typology are largely confirmed
- Permeability in terms of “access” is not relevant for mechanisms with institutional scope

Distribution of the types: numbers of examples identified



Distribution of the types: cross-country results

- “Exemption” types 3 and 10 are the most frequent types, followed by the “access” types 1 and 8
- Number of different types per country ranges between two and five in most cases
- Distribution of types across countries shows no specific pattern (no tendency to prefer either individual or collective types; one and the same type represented in countries with diverse systemic backgrounds)
- Most of the types (and mechanisms) concern permeability from VET to HE

Thank you very much for your attention!

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Some Conclusions
& Further Thoughts
on
Credits & Permeability

Andreas Saniter, ITB, University of Bremen

**CEDEFOP EXPERT WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINING PERMEABILITY,
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Broad range of preconditions

- Unitisation of IVET?
- Established CVET?
- School or apprenticeship-based?
- SCHE?
- Regional or national systems?
- NQF implemented?

Approaches

- General mechanisms
- Sector-specific mechanisms
- Linkage to NQF
- Focussing on individual development or labour market
- Formalisation
- LO or input-controlled
- VET => VET or VET => HE

Motivation

- Economic development (industry => service)
- Technical innovations
- Socio-economic reasons (jobless youth)
- Obsolete traditions (removal of barriers)
- Individual career or educational interests
- European policies

Developing not overthrowing

Collateral damages:

- UK in the Thatcher area
- Transition states after the Soviet area (e.g. Lithuania)

Well-intended:

- NQFs in South Africa and Oman failed
- Germany and Bologna
- Attempts to “sell” European VET systems to Asia

Improvement not substitution

Respect traditions and preconditions

**The success of a mechanism strongly depends
on the needs and potentials:**

- Regional
- National
- Sectoral
- Individual

Prudence

**Be aware of (intended or unintended)
secondary effects, e. g:**

- Degradation of ordinary qualification pathways
- Bureaucracy
- Academic drift in VET
- Freedom of research & education
- Dead end tracks of employees' careers coming from VET

Consequence

Mechanisms should consider potential additional needs, e.g.:

- Additional lessons
- Funding
- Time schedule
- Independent supervision
- Assuring social capital

Rationale: Exemption

**“Non traditional” HE students are not as interested in exemption as expected by policy makers and training providers.
Supposedly due to a bundle of reasons, e.g.:**

- Peer-group effects
- Often rather short time saving
- Uncertainties about the real identity of LO (even at the workplace there might be a difference between being an apprentice or a student)
- Questions of self-confidence: An ability to show (better) competences in relation to traditional students within these modules.

Rationale: Full equivalence

...is a positive approach for disadvantaged groups (foreigners, people with no access to the qualification system) -

BUT

...might lead to an erosion of the traditional educational systems (de-institutionalisation of qualifications) :

- Might be cheaper/faster
- Is an opportunity for the smart ones only
- Ignores the skills of trainers and teachers (and the ones who might need a systemic learning environment).

Thinking & Concluding in Progress –

**Many thanks for
comments
and suggestions!**

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