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Methodology of Self- Assessment

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Introduction

The aim of this document is to provide an overview into why the partners in the FINER project chose self-assessment tools in the Target Finder Toolkit. To do so, this document will progress through the following subtitles:

1. Why use Self-Assessments
2. Why Self-Assessments are Needed.
3. What are the General Objectives of Self-Assessments
4. How are Self-Assessments Generally Structured
5. How are the Self-Assessment Questionnaires Presented in FINER
6. How & why did we Develop these Questionnaires in the Target Finder Toolkit
7. How to Create your own Self-Assessments
8. How to Develop a Regular Practise of Self-Assessment

Why use Self-Assessments

Self-assessment in education can be defined as “the involvement of learners in making judgements about their achievements and the outcomes of their learning” (Wride, 2017) and as such, this can provide transformative and personalised deep learning experiences for learners of all ages, especially when undertaken on a continual and recurring basis. Self-Assessment activities are ways in which people can enhance their personal development and overcome life’s challenges. By engaging in self-assessment, a person can assess their specific strengths and weaknesses and be equipped to take action to work on their weaknesses and hone their strengths to use them to the best of their abilities. Knowing and understanding both your strengths and weaknesses can boost your self-awareness and in turn, your self-confidence (Dhyani, 2023).

Self-assessment tools empower people to act in relation to corrective measures. As a person becomes more aware of what they are good at and what they may need to work on to improve on, usually their self-confidence also grows (Thompson, 2021). Self-assessment gives

a sense of agency, you oversee your own progress in this self-directed process. This is a confidence booster as self-assessment helps us to keep track of our progress meaning that any new skills, goals, or problem-solving abilities acquired are clear to us, making us feel a sense of accomplishment. Overtime using self-assessment tools can empower us to capitalise on our own unique strengths to succeed in our endeavours whether they be in relation to goals, problem solving or any other aspect of your life.

Why Self-Assessments are Needed

Self-assessments are needed as they encourage people to become actively engaged in their own self development and self-improvement. Self-directing your own evaluation is extremely useful as it allows for honesty whilst assessing aspects of yourself that may not have been explored in much detail previously. For example, asking yourself whether you “find it easy to empathise with others and imagine how you would feel in their situation” may not be a question you ask yourself on a regular day. Instead, self-assessment is a space in which people can be more constructive with themselves than in other aspects of their everyday life. A question like this insists on you genuinely thinking about yourself, your competencies and reaction to the question being asked. This kind of self-evaluation gives much room for growth and development in many areas important in the lives of young people such as goal setting, career planning and development, and knowledge and skills development. It also allows for advancement opportunities and goal achievement. With such honesty in self-directing your own evaluation people are more realistic in their tendencies whilst setting goals which are in turn more achievable.

Self-assessments can be valuable not just in someone's relationship with themselves but also in various other settings, such as personal relationships, work environments and lifelong learning. For instance self assessment in personal relationships adds a powerful examination into one's relationship behaviours. This form of self-assessment can be a challenging one as it pushes people to look at how they behave towards others and how they in turn treat their relationships with others overall. This requires a collaborative approach with those with whom you have a relationship with whether that be family, friends, colleagues or partners.

Making an interpersonal self-assessment in a personal relationship can help you develop interpersonal skills which are vital for self development and growth. Skills such as, listening skills, verbal communication, emotional intelligence and the ability to work as a part of a team or group. Self-assessments in personal relationships requiring a collaborative approach means that you will receive external feedback. This external feedback can provide different perspectives and help you gain a more well-rounded understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses.

Being actively involved in the self-assessment process is an important experience for young people to feel empowered in their own lives. The ability to take control of your own learning and decision making creates a much greater sense of independence and self-assurance. Having the tools to manage their own development is the key to the success of self-assessment (Academ, 2017). It can be commonplace that young people can feel like they don't have much control over their lives or what is happening around them. Understanding yourself and what you can do to develop your knowledge and skills can contribute to feeling more in control of yourself and surroundings (Thompson, 2021). With that said self-assessments are needed during the process of feeling more confident and empowered in one's own life.

What are the General Objectives of Self-Assessments

The main objective of self-assessment is to help people understand the extent of their abilities. The objective therefore is that when people understand their strengths and weaknesses, they can work towards improving both aspects in many different ways in their own lives whether that be in a professional or personal sense. Although the practise of self-assessment can manifest itself in many ways, whether it be through meditation and mindfulness, or introspective self-reporting, or strengths/weaknesses finding, the main objective of self-assessment remains the same, it is about helping people understand themselves a little bit better than before (Thompson, 2021).

As well as understanding, another important objective of self-assessment is growth. For example, self-assessment helps people develop their decision-making skills. Effective decision making is a crucial part of growth. Regularly practising self-reflection helps people develop their critical thinking skills which in turn helps them to evaluate their choices and outcomes (Wride, 2017). Self-assessment being a reflective process, it encourages people to learn from past experiences and make adjustments that will lead to future successes and therefore, growth.

How are Self-Assessments Generally Structured

Self-Assessments can vary on their structure, depending on the context and their purpose however, they generally follow a similar structure as shown in the FINER Questionnaire in the Target Finder Toolkit. The following structure can be seen on the FINER self-assessment questionnaire it is, Introduction, Objectives, Procedure, Questionnaire/Quiz, and Feedback.

The **Introduction** simply provides an overview of the goals and objectives of the self-assessment topic in question. Like it does in FINER, it may also include a short description of the other elements of the assessment indicating what else can be expected from the rest of the document.

The **Procedure** section generally includes information about the rating or response scale participants are expected to use to complete the self-assessment tool. This scale should allow participants to rate their performance, skills, or other relevant factors based on predefined categories. Common rating scales include numerical scales, Likert scales or descriptive scales. It is also a section in which to include confidentiality and anonymity agreement that all participants' responses will be anonymous. This creates a safe and non-threatening environment for participants from the beginning which allows them to be honest and open in their self-assessment.

The **Questionnaire/Quiz** section should be the main body of the self-assessment. These questions/quizzes should include a series of questions that aim to have participants reflect on both the question being asked and on themselves and their own answers.

The **Feedback** section just as in the FINER Target Finder toolkit should provide comments, suggestions and recommendations based on the participant's score on the rating scale. This is a space for participants to self-reflect on their placement on the rating scale and in turn reflect on themselves. This section should also be encouraging of the participant's strengths, highlighting specific areas they scored high in. For example, in the 'Expand your Comfort Zone' section if a participant scored 21-25, this is a great example of positive feedback, *"It is evident that you have developed effective strategies, such as acknowledging your fears, setting SMART goals, practising positive self-talk, and reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of living within your comfort zone. Continue to apply these strategies and explore new ways to push your boundaries and expand your comfort zone even further."*

How are the Self-Assessment Quizzes Presented in FINER

The self-assessment questionnaire in the FINER target Finder Toolkit is compiled of a total of 50 questions, with each partner having contributed 10 questions. Each of these 50 questions are designed to evaluate how able young people are in making significant changes in their lives. Their responses are measured on a Likert scale of 5. This is a rating system that measures the agreement or disagreement of the young people taking part in the questionnaire. For example, one question states 'I consider myself a spontaneous person. I know how to seize the moment and I like to interrupt my daily routines.' The participant must then choose from a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) depending on how they feel about the above statement.

The aim of this self-assessment questionnaire is to provide an extensive assessment of how prepared participants are to make positive and necessary changes in their lives as well as to create tools for adult educators to help their students gain an understanding of their own level of preparedness. By using these tools and approaches, the adult educators can create their own assessments that can further assist in the empowerment of young people. The questionnaire is divided into 8 subsections:

1. Spot your Goals.
2. Expand your Comfort Zone.
3. Be a Problem Solver.
4. Adapt and Overcome.
5. Deconstruction.
6. Point of View.
7. Reconstruction.
8. Expression.

Participants must use the Likert scale to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statements, after this they will receive a score with feedback. The specific feedback will help participants to understand their strengths and weaknesses enabling them to improve their knowledge/skills/competences in aspects they may be lacking in.

How & why did we Develop these Quizzes in the Target Finder Toolkit

To develop the questionnaire each partner organisation developed 10 questions which totalled in 50 questions for the self-assessment tool.

The purpose of the self-assessment questionnaire in the FINER Target Finder Toolkit is to improve young people's understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. This way they are better equipped to hone their strengths and build on them as well as developing their weaknesses and working on them. The main reason behind the development of such a

questionnaire revolves around the idea of empowerment. Giving young people the tools, they need to change their lives requires them firstly understanding the information to take the necessary steps. This is what the questionnaire aims to do. Giving young people the agency to take measures needed to improve their own lives is at the epicentre of this self-assessment tool.

How to Create your own Self-Assessments

Anybody can create their own self-assessment. There are a few points to consider when doing so. Take setting yourself a goal for example and how you would do a self-assessment of that. A great tool to use would be the SMART approach. This tool allows you to create goals in a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time efficient way. If you have set yourself a goal using the SMART approach it can also be used to self-assess the success of that goal.

It's important to be **specific** when you are self-reflecting. Ask yourself specific questions about what went well and what didn't as well as asking why that may have been. Being particular will help you further your understanding of the situation and therefore grow from it.

Ask yourself, was your goal **measurable**? Were you specific about what you wanted to achieve, and can you measure the difference/success of what you achieved since you started?

Was your goal **achievable**? Did you get what you wanted from the process, if so, how? And if not, why? These questions will help you to develop so that the next goal you set yourself will be even more successful or achievable. Self-reflecting on this aspect can help you to be realistic with the tasks and goals you set for yourself in the future.

Ask yourself if the goal you set for yourself was meaningful in your life? Reflect on whether the goal was **relevant** to you and your life at present. This could help you in the future with decision making, for example prioritising what is important and what is not as important would be a skill to take away from this, through self-assessment.

Ask yourself whether you completed your goal in the **time** frame you had wished to. Reflecting on this will improve your time management skills. You will see whether you handled the goal time frame proficiently or whether you may need to develop your time management skills further.

How to Develop a Regular Practice of Self-Assessment

Developing a routine where self-assessment is a regular practice in your life is a valuable tool for continued growth and development. A regular practice of self-assessment does not have to mean that every day you reflect thoroughly on your strengths and weaknesses or your goals. Simply put it means being consistent with holding yourself accountable. The following are some guidelines to follow to help establish a consistent self-assessment routine.

Create a consistent time that you can sit in in a quiet, relaxed space and reflect on the specific aspects of your life you would like to. This time could be weekly, fortnightly or anything that suits your schedule, if it is consistent. It can, however, be helpful to develop this time into your self-care routine. Practising self-care is all about being present and focusing on the things that you can control. Self-reflection is something completely within your control, you are self-directing and navigating through challenges and helping yourself notice your successes along the way.

Another point to remember is a continuation from the last. That is to remember to highlight the highlights. Don't be afraid to call attention to areas you have shone in. Highlight points in your self-assessment that you feel proud of and show your success. Stating your accomplishments and giving yourself a space to boast about yourself will encourage you to continue to practise self-assessment in your routine. Everybody needs a space to highlight the highlights (Academ, 2017). This is an opportunity to practise self compassion. An attitude that is needed. Recognising your downfalls can come very easily but acknowledging your wins and

achievements can be harder. It is important to treat yourself with the kindness and compassion you deserve and that you would show a friend or family member.

Another aspect of self-assessment is to remember to keep track of your progress in self-assessing. This allows you to monitor changes, identify any patterns you may exhibit and as mentioned above, celebrate milestones and achievements. In order to keep records of self-assessment results and reflections there are many different methods of doing so. For example, journaling, using self-assessment apps or quizzes online are all great tools for managing progress of your own self-assessment journey.

The last and possibly most important point to remember is to be specific. Be specific about both the positive and negative aspects of your self-assessment. This way you will begin to see patterns in your reflections which will help you to pinpoint areas you can grow and develop within. This will encourage you to continue to perform self-assessments as you will begin to see changes from truly understanding the different parts of yourself you are reflecting on.

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