Presentation 4: Qualifications Systems to Promote Lifelong Learning; the Case of Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning

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ASEM Lifelong Learning Conference: “Increasing Opportunities and Removing Obstacles for Lifelong Learning”
Nha Trang, 29-30 October 2009

(* the opinions expressed in this power point presentation are those of the author alone)
Agenda

• Background
• Qualifications systems for LLL
  – Pressure for Change
  – Policy Responses
  – Mechanisms
  – Example: Qualifications Framework
• Recognition of non-formal and informal learning
  – Definitions
  – Rationale
  – Country Practice
  – Food for Thoughts

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This link is identified as *mechanisms*

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Process and Participants

Country Report and/or Thematic Groups:

Australia, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (French speaking), Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom

www.oecd.org/education/lifelonglearning/nqs

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However

There are few conclusions we can draw from quantitative evidence 😞
1. Dual system / alternating schemes
2. Qualifications framework
3. VET in upper secondary education
4. Central organisation of education
5. Regulated entry to the labour market
6. System for recognising non-formal or informal learning
7. Credit system
8. “Credentialism”
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Pressures for change

What are the recent policy responses to the lifelong learning agenda that involve national qualifications systems?

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Pressures for change (1/6)

Broad economic pressures

- Discrepancy between job training and qualifications => Qualifications Framework and standards
- Global economic trends or local needs (needs to be responsive to innovation, development of enterprise, human capital, skills shortages…)
- Qualifications systems: seen as having the potential to better link education and work
- Pressures from enterprises (full range of qualifications, basic skills…)
- Promotion of greater mobility creates pressure on national qualifications systems

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Pressures for change (2/6)

International pressures

- Relative ranking in PISA/TIMSS/IALS/ALL

- EU: recognition for labour mobility and mobility of learners => qualifications structures that are consistent with other countries (European Qualifications Framework)

- Parity between different recognition systems

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Pressures for change (3/6)

**Demographic pressures**

- Ageing
- Immigration
- Indigenous population
Pressures for change (4/6)

Social and cultural pressures

- Not divorced from economic and demographic issues
- Learning for its own sake
- Behaviour, citizenship and democracy
- Broaden ways of gaining credit (recognition of non formal and informal learning)
- More flexible vocational education and training for people in disadvantaged situations, for social inclusion and work
- Matthew effect, SMEs => pressure on Qualifications systems to give upper secondary education

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Pressures for change (5/6)

Pressure from learners

- Communication
- Coherence
- Transparency
Pressures for change (6/6)

Pressure from technological change

- Using opportunities created by the new technologies (most up to date production methods)
- Also for training and retraining
- Technology has encouraged the growth of international qualifications

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The 9 Policy Responses

1. Increase flexibility and responsiveness
2. Motivate young people to learn
3. Link education and work
4. Facilitate open access to qualifications
5. Diversify assessment processes
6. Make qualifications progressive
7. Make the qualifications system transparent
8. Review funding and increase efficiency
9. Better manage the qualifications system

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20 Mechanisms: A Checklist

1) Communicating returns to learning for qualification
2) Recognising skills for employability
3) Establishing qualifications frameworks
4) Increasing learner choice in qualifications
5) Clarifying learning pathways
6) Providing credit transfer
7) Increasing flexibility in learning programmes leading to qualifications
8) Creating new routes to qualifications
9) Lowering cost of qualification
10) Recognising non-formal and informal learning

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20 Mechanisms: A Checklist

11) Monitoring the qualifications system
12) Optimising stakeholder involvement in the qualifications system
13) Improving needs analysis methods so that qualifications are up to date
14) Improving qualification use in recruitment
15) Ensuring qualifications are portable
16) Investing in pedagogical innovation
17) Expressing qualifications as learning outcomes
18) Improving co-ordination in the qualifications system
19) Optimising quality assurance
20) Improving information and guidance about qualifications systems

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Qualifications frameworks can make progression routes clear, remove dead ends and can bring coherence and quality assurance to qualifications systems.
Example: *Establishing a Qualifications Framework*

*Individuals* might be *motivated* to learn if they can be *guided* towards *appropriate* qualifications for their aspirations. They might also have confidence in nationally approved qualifications.

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Employers will find a framework helpful in setting out qualification requirements for a job and in relating an applicant’s qualification profile to a standard reference point. It may help rationalise training provision.
Establishing a Qualifications Framework

Providers might find a framework of qualifications useful for promotional material as they can market qualifications according to a well-known structure and, like recruiters, they might feel more secure in the knowledge that certain qualifications are national benchmarks.
Want to know more?

With Mike Coles (QCA)

For a short summary see:

[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf)

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Main Conclusions in 2007

- Together with:
  - Qualifications Frameworks
  - Credit Transfer Systems
  - Involvement of all Stakeholders
  - Information and Guidance
  - ...

- ... recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a mechanism to promote Lifelong Learning

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Participating Countries

22 countries on 5 continents
(16 review visits)

Australia, Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom

www.oecd.org/edu/recognition

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Idea: RNFIL

• Recognising all learning, whatever the context (whether formal, non-formal or informal)
Issues and Questions

• What is it?
• How do you measure it?
• How do you assess it?
• What is recognition?
• Who does it?
• Does it work?
• **Many terms** (English):
  – **RPL** (Australia, South-Africa, Ireland…), **PLAR** (Canada), **APL** or **APEL** (UK…)
  – **RAS** (Recognition of Acquired Skills)
  – (Recognition of previous knowledge 😞)
  – Recognition of Learning Outcomes

• **Other languages**:
  – Anerkennung von non-formalem und informellem lernen (Austria, Germany), **EVC** (Flanders, Netherlands…), **VAE** (France), **RANFI** (Mexico), **Acreditación** (Spain)…
Recognition of What: NFIL

- Many definitions of NFIL
- Not consensual
- Formal learning: structured in terms of content, scheduling, organisation and financing
- Informal learning: unintentional
- Non-formal learning: varies a lot (in between, for local specificities)
Recognition

- Recognition too has many meanings (corresponding to different objectives in fact)
- **Keyword:** here it’s social recognition: whether outcomes have value and are used in the society?
- **Key issue:** recognition does not necessarily mean a high level of formalisation, but it needs some
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Rationale for Organising RNFIL

- Time and Cost (untapped human capital)
- **Motivation** (not starting from scratch)
- Skills shortages (availability or… visibility)
- Visibility of skills, knowledge and competences
- Distribution of qualifications
- Demography…
- Employers do it all the time (practical/informal)
- Regulated occupations / ISO process / Public contracts…

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A Very Didactic (Edifying) Exercise

- There has always been:
- Formal recognition of formal learning
- “Informal” recognition of formal learning
- And more recently:
- Formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- To avoid the risk of relying on:
- Informal recognition of non-formal and informal learning
Why is RNFIL a Policy Tool?

• RNFIL is a policy tool because:
  • Job matching
  • Training has a cost
  • Unqualified individuals/workers may have skills
  • It’s flexible: continuum of outputs, from self assessment (portfolio) to full certification
  • Motivator for resuming formal studies

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Overview of Key Issues and Practice

- Rhetoric
- Information, advice and counselling
- Legal framework
- Piloting/Evaluation (data… 😞)
- “Physical” support: [e-]portfolio and the like (ProfilPASS, Competence passport/card…), certification
- Assessment methods: exam, simulation, observation, interview (standards…)

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Overview of Key Issues and Practice

Financing and fees
Quality assurance
Dedicated assessment centre(s)
Aims and outcomes: exemptions, credits, full qualification
Recognition of NFIL will not create economic growth
Recognition of NFIL does not create the skills, knowledge and competences it is meant to recognise…
…But it is still a learning process

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## Applications of RNFIL

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<td>Exemptions from formal programmes</td>
<td>Hungary, Chile, UK, Belgium (Flanders)</td>
<td>Modular higher education programmes, with exemptions available, specific credits. University discretion over exemptions</td>
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<td>Discrete applications</td>
<td>Belgium (Flanders), Hungary, Canada, Greece, Germany</td>
<td>ECDL, language certificates, professional bodies</td>
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Why is RNFIL not Universally Used?

Barriers in Short

Psychological (stiffness, legitimacy of NFIL): culture shift
Understanding what it is about (“you will give degrees to everybody”)
It has a cost
Input process unknown (therefore not quality assured)
It does NOT create skills, knowledge and/or competences
Many actors and stakeholders are against RNFIL (trade unions, universities, employers…)
**Example:** Employers: risk of reduction in commitment to formal training programmes; or employers may fear upward pressure on wages if workers are more qualified

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RNFIL: Islands of Good Practice

- **RNFIL** is an option if:
  - Some groups of the populations or individuals are highly skilled but unqualified (no certification)
  - RNFIL is widely accepted as being a learning process
  - Labour market or some occupations are highly regulated
  - The move from learning to assessment is widely accepted

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• RNFIL is an option also if:
• RNFIL are carefully designed
• Social recognition of NFIL is not an issue (second best qualifications accepted by the society, and employers in the first place)
• The society and the system are flexible enough so different forms of recognition – from self recognition to certification – are accepted
The take up is small
In short: legitimacy, credibility and information/guidance
RNFIL is not free, not even always cheap (cheaper than training)
Nevertheless, for some people, under some circumstances: excellent opportunity; Higher Education a good example: access (exemption of academic prerequisite), Exemption of all or part of the courses (awarding of credits), Full certification
Therefore:
All learning should be recognised
In some instances, the recognition process could/should be formalised (and even could lead to certification)
Read More? QS and QF:


Read More? RNFIL:


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Merci

Questions and comments please to: patrick.werquin@oecd.org

http://www.oecd.org/document/17/0,3343,en_2649_35845581_42097617_1_1_1_1,00.html