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REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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GLOBAL EDUCATION, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES:

*How to Deliver High
Quality Business
Education in Accordance
With the Market Needs*



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CONTEMPORARY ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACHES FOR THE NEEDS OF THE LABOR MARKET - A REVIEW OF EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE IN MACEDONIA AND SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Mimoza Serafimova¹
Snezana Bardarova

Abstract

Lifelong learning is defined as an activity of learning through life, in order to improve knowledge, skills and abilities towards personal, civil, social and business perspectives. For a successful transition towards society and the economy based on knowledge, leading principle in the entire concept of learning and acquiring knowledge should be based on the process of lifelong learning.

One of the concepts related with lifelong learning and knowledge is the recognition and valuation of the learning based on experience. (*Recognition of prior learning - RPL*). The increased social importance of RPL reflects in the need for activating the entire knowledge in the society, based on knowledge, in the migration of the population, in the focus of the total increased representation of the elderly population, in the desire to increase the quality human capital and the creation of better possibilities for development of all the members of society. In following paper, systems of validation of informal and non-formal learning in several European countries and the concept of such systems will be presented.

The purpose of this Analysis is to contribute to the development of VNFIL (Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning) process in Macedonia by offering a targeted comparative analysis of common European VNFIL models and practices with focus on EU countries. It also offers a closer look at the Macedonian validation context with focus on usage of local potentials and a possible role of the Centre for Adult Education (AEC) in this process.

Keywords: entrepreneurial approaches, informal and non-formal learning, competences, reference, standards, certification.

JEL Classification: G1, G11, G12

INTRODUCTION

Different forms of learning (formal, informal, non-formal) can't be reviewed isolated from the era of living, but as a parallel

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complement form of lifelong learning, or as “Mix of learning”¹. Although this learning mix practically isn’t recognized enough, in the centre of attention more and more, is the importance of other, non-formal places of learning².

The non-formal places of learning that are different of the formal ones, have several significant advantages. Because they’re non-formal and the non-formal learning in context of the world is a need of the population from the real life, all people can constantly have their own learning and development of skills. The flexibility of the individuality of the learning situations enables entry for a large number of people that live in the reality of changes and needs, thus understanding the need of the unconventional biographies of learning³.

In order to support the meaning of the stated, we will enumerate the definitions of the European commission of informal and non-formal learning:

Non-formal learning:

“Learning, that doesn’t take place in general education or expert education schools, and which usually isn’t certified. At the same time, it’s systematic (regarding the goals, duration and learning resources), and from the point of view of the one who is learning, it’s often directed toward a certain goal”.⁴

Non-formal learning, regarding the education of the adults, concerns all contexts of learning, that aren’t externally (formally) planned, but from the point of view of the ones who are learning, are directed and conscious, and enable acquiring of knowledge. in order to keep up with the current knowledge during the profession and their constant update, leading discussions with coworkers and

¹Rauschenbach, T.; Leu, H.-R.; Lingenauber, S.; Mack, W.; Schilling, M.; Schneider, K.; Züchner, I. (2004): Non-formale und informelle Bildung im Kindes- und Jugendalter. Konzeptionelle Grundlagen für einen Nationalen Bildungsbericht. DJL München

²Rauschenbach, T. (2007): Im Schatten der formalen Bildung. Alltagsbildung als Schlüsselfrage der Zukunft in: Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung Heft 4-2007, S. 439-453

³Reichenbach, R. (2007): Soft skills: Destruktive Potentiale des Kompetenzdenkens in: Pongartz/Reichenbach/Wimmer (Hrsg.): Bildung – Wissen – Kompetenz. Bielefeld

⁴Reischmann, J. (2004): Kompetenz lehren? Kompetenz- und Performanz-Orientierung in der Andragogik zwischen Didaktik und Organisationsentwicklung.

the mutual solving of professional problems, reading expert publications, seminars and visits of conferences, means a foregone ongoing process of non-formal education.

Informal learning:

“It’s a form of learning that takes place in the everyday life, the work place, the circle of family, or during vacation. It’s not (regarding the goals of learning, time of learning or the incentive) structured and usually it isn’t certified. Informal learning can be directed, but in most cases it’s unconscious or unintentional”¹

This primarily affects the individuality: constant new impressions, impulses and experiences, in order to develop the personal judgment and attitudes. This enables the individuals to “confirm themselves in the living and working environment, and in front of the people with their own opinions and conscience”.²

Therefore, the informal and non-formal learning are forms of self-organized learning.

In the last few years, the educational debate in formal and non-formal part, is strongly molded from the idea of competence. The reason of such development are primarily the changes regarding the knowledge in the “post modern world”. For example, in the area of informatics, the level of knowledge of the individuals, in several theme areas, has only limited stability. That’s why owning competences, which enable acting in unusual situations, and fresh information as well, is more and more important.

At the same time, the period of individualization of the society, learning, and education is headed towards the responsibility of the individual.³ The importance of the “soft skills” and interdisciplinary qualifications in this context is constantly increasing.⁴

¹ European Commission (2001): Commission Communication: Create a European area for lifelong learning. Brussels, pp 33

² European Commission (2001): Commission Communication: Create a European area for lifelong learning. Brussels, pp 35

³Pries, M. (2004): Eine Art Zukunftspädagogik. Zur erziehungswissenschaftlichen Neuorientierung der Freizeitpädagogik im 21. Jahrhundert in: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (Hrsg): magazine Erziehungswissenschaft – volumes 29 (2004) . 10 <http://dgfe.pleurone.de/zeitschrift/heft29/beitrag4.pdf>

⁴ Lipski, J. (2004): Für das Leben lernen: Was, wie und wo? Umriss einer neuen Lernkultur in: Hungerland, B./Overwien, B.: Kompetenzentwicklung im Wandel – Auf dem Weg zu einer informellen Lernkultur? Wiesbaden

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In order to confirm the education of the individual, until recently in the centre was the term “knowledge” and the research to what extent the skills and knowledge can be reproduced.¹

From the middle of the previous century gradually in the debate of the educational politics are included other dimensions of the goal set from foundations, like the ability for critical thinking, solving problems with certain skills and the ability of cooperation.²

This development continues in the 80s. Terms like “transferable key qualifications” or concepts like “to learn how to learn” become more and more popular. “This trend is finally improved with testing of programs from OECD which deal with so-called “life skills”, which should enable people to deal with the modern and future demands, the everyday demands in the private and professional life, as citizens and employees, and regarding the further lifelong learning”.³

Meanwhile, “development of competency” has become central concept in the international debate of education. The ministers of education of OECD (2001) consider the development of competences necessary for the society based on knowledge.

“Our goal consists in the fact that we will enable all the citizens to acquire competences-as basic qualifications and assumptions for further learning, and personal and social competencies, which are necessary for participation in society based on knowledge”.⁴

If the non-formal and informal learning are reviewed in context of education for adults from one, and as aspect of professional development from other side, the personal responsibility and the responsibility towards the own organization gain disproportional meaning.

¹ Reichenbach, R (2007): Soft skills: Destruktive Potentiale des Kompetenzdenkens in: Pongartz/Reichenbach/Wimmer (Hrsg.): Bildung – Wissen – Kompetenz. Bielefeld

² Tully, C. (2004): Lernen im Wandel – Auf dem Weg zu einer Lernkultur der Informationsgesellschaft? In: Hungerland/Overwien: Kompetenzentwicklung im Wandel. Wiesbaden

³ Klieme, E. (2004): Was sind Kompetenzen und wie lassen sie sich messen? Auszug aus Pädagogik 6 (2004), S. 10-13

⁴ Kaiser, R. (2007): Informelles Lernen – informelle Lerner in: Kaiser, A./Kaiser R./Hohmann R.: Lerntypen - Lernumgebung – Lernerfolg. Bielefeld. pp 11

“Non-formal learning is characterized with the fact that the individual, based on the acting on the problem or interest, which he himself has set, and which he considers relevant, sets goals(learning), for which realization he develops a working plan, or learning activities, independently implements them, while deciding how to deal with the difficulties that will appear, and finally confirms when he will consider the such adopted competences favorable for realization of the learning goal”.¹

1. GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF EUROPEAN MODELS AND PRACTICES

The main goal of the concepts related to lifelong learning and knowledge, beside the recognition and valuation of the learning based on lifelong experience, is to support this form of acquiring competences and those who have acquired competences in informal or non-formal way, and their valuation and recognition in a valid, certified way.

The last decade is a period of numerous debates for different accesses toward confirmation of the non-formal and informal learning and their factors for success. The biggest problem for recognition of the experiential learning is its implementation in the qualification framework on European and national level. On the seminar for recognition of experiential learning “Quality and implementation of the procedures in the higher education (*Recognition of Prior Learning: Quality Assurance and Implementation of Procedures in Higher Education*), held in Amsterdam in December, 2008., the question of how to achieve recognition of experiential knowledge, initiated responses and suggestions formed as-use of the learning results, the importance of building a qualification framework, the importance of including different affected sides in partnership with the higher education and defining the education qualifications and their educational validation, implementation of mutual principles and directions for recognition of experiential knowledge on European and national

¹ Education ministers of the OECD (2001): Investing in competencies for all. Paris, pp. 3

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level and forming centers of development of experiential knowledge.¹

The use of the term “Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning – APEL has been accepted. With the recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union of the 23rd April, 2008, a short term has been set for the states-members of the EU, until the end of 2010, to form a related system of the national qualification framework with the Europeans. The same recommendation states that until 2012, each state-member should secure enablement of all the individual certificates and qualifications which bring reference of a certain EQF level, or, each individual qualification has to be described from measurable indicators of the appropriate levels.²

On 3rd October, 2013, was adopted the Law of the National framework of qualifications, which edits the levels and sublevels of qualifications, types and volume of qualifications, authorities for suggesting, adopting and classifications of the qualifications, authorized institutions that will act accordingly to this Law, and the association of the National framework of qualifications with the European framework of qualifications and the quality framework of the European space of the higher education.

2. EXAMPLES OF SOME EUROPEAN STATES FOR THE FUNCTION OF THE SYSTEM OF VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

- Portugal

The Portuguese system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is based on a Referential of Key Competences. This referential provides standards used to assess the portfolio of competences of each adult in order to achieve a certification.

The system was created mainly to address the issue of the very low levels of qualification (both educational and professional) of the Portuguese population. General education certification was the

¹<http://www.asme.org/shop/certification-and-accreditation/nuclear-quality-assurance-nqa1-certification>

² <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/academic/apel.htm>

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priority in the first years of the system and this is still what generates the most demand from the Portuguese population.

For the purposes of general education, the referential is organised into four areas of competence: mathematics, ICT, Language/Communication and Citizenship/Employability. These, in turn, are divided into three levels of certification:

B1 – four years of school,

B2 – six years of school and

B3 – nine years of school. As of June 2007,

the system integrates a B4 level, equivalent to 12 years of schooling. This is a more complex standard organised across three areas and 88 themes.

The system now also integrates the certification of professional competences. For the moment, the scope of this sub-system is limited to those professions where the standards of competences are available. The system has the objective of promoting an integrated approach between school and professional certification. (PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 16)¹

Some countries concentrate on the process of identifying and documenting non-formal and informal learning, for purposes of better employability or professional appraisals (DE), without necessarily leading to a qualification.

(Source – Portuguese presentations during the PLA, PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 52)²

- Germany

According to the German national report, the large variety of practices and programmes for validating non-formal and informal learning in VET being developed can be distinguished according to their main target audience:

¹ PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 16

² PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 52

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a) Practices for the individual documentation of competencies that support people in assessing their personal professional profile and in planning their career

Most initiatives are oriented towards specific target groups like pupils, employees, migrants, disadvantaged youths, women returning to the labour market, persons planning a different professional career etc.

b) Practices for the assessment and documentation of competencies applied in companies / businesses

Most practices in this field are ad-hoc and either related to the hiring procedure, the human resource development approach or the preparation of job references. Usually the application of these instruments and its impact on the pay scale is regulated individually within each company.

c) Practices for the documentation of competencies focusing on their integration into the national VET system

There are a number of sector-based practices in the field of further or continuing VET (CVET). Their frames of reference are more or less closely related to existing occupational profiles, they follow the lines of credit systems in higher education and a step-by-step, modular design. (PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 17)¹

Countries also encourage non-formal learning and informal learning by making it a pre-requisite for the award of certain qualifications (i.e. learners have to have a period of on-the-job training to obtain a qualification). Such practices can also necessitate the identification and documentation of the learning outcomes acquired. (Source – German report – see Annex C) PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 33)²

¹ PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 17

² Source – German report – see Annex C) PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 33

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- Slovenia

The Slovene report notes that one of the methods for the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning leading to publicly recognised qualifications is through:

- **Formal education programmes which incorporate work practices in cooperation with an external provider** (e.g. individual and collective learning contracts, which are the successors of the previous dual system). To illustrate this: during the period from 1997/98 to 2005/06, 8,852 apprentices accounting for 4% of the entire population enrolled into different vocational education programmes in the dual system of education; woodworking, car mechanics, hairdressing and catering were among the more popular choices.

Furthermore, in 2007, the legislation in VET introduced the possibility to use validation processes in schools for youth and also for adults. Validation processes can be used any way schools decide. The primary aim of validation for young students is to encourage them to be professionally active and to enable them having their on-the-job experience recognised as a part of their learning requirements.¹

3. NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN MODELS AND PRACTICES

The Republic of Macedonia as an EU candidate country has been making a continuous and significant progress towards aligning its education with the European education policies and standards. This includes a relatively new development, namely the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), is a new process currently being developed by the Macedonian Center for Adult Education (AEC) and the European Training Foundation (ETF), which in common with other relevant stakeholders create the development for validation of formal and informal learning in Macedonia.

¹ Source – Slovene report – Annex in PLA on validation of non-formal and informal learning for VET teachers and trainers – Summary Report, 14-17 January 2008, Lisbon, Portugal, pp 54

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The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) steers and actively participates in a number of related legislative, strategic and operative initiatives, such as the development of the Macedonian Qualifications Framework (MQF) and its referencing to the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

4. VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN EU AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MACEDONIA

The legal framework of qualifications in the Republic of Macedonia will be reviewed in the following part:

In the Macedonian framework of qualifications, there are eight levels and six sublevels:

level I affects the completed basic education, and the participants acquire a certificate, and in the non-formal education and training it affects the knowledge and skills for functional literacy and numeric skills and the participants acquire a certificate.

level II affects the expert training in duration of two years and the participants acquire a certificate for expert training, and in the non-formal education and training it affects the trainings for acquiring qualifications or part of qualifications (level of complexity 1 and 2 accordingly the standards of occupation) and the participants acquire a certificate.

level III affects the expert education for occupation, in duration of three years and the participants acquire a diploma, and in the non-formal education and training it affects trainings for acquiring of qualifications or part of qualifications (level of complexity 3, accordingly the standards of occupation) and the participants acquire a certificate. The students with special educational needs for level III educate four years and acquire a diploma.

level IV affects the gymnasium education, technical education and the artistic education in duration of four years, and the participants acquire a diploma, and in the non-formal education and training it affects trainings for acquiring qualifications or part of qualifications (level of complexity 4 accordingly the standards of occupation) and the participants acquire certificates. Students with special educational needs for level IV educate five years and acquire a diploma.

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level V sublevel VB affects the post-middle education (specialist education and major exam) and the participants acquire a diploma for specialist education and diploma for major exam.

level V sublevel VA affects the short expert study programs in the higher education and the participants acquire a certificate.

level VI sublevel VIB and VIA affects undergraduate studies in duration of three and four years, and the participants acquire a diploma.

level VII sublevel VIIA and VIIB affects masters and specialist studies and the participants acquire a diploma.

level VIII affects doctor studies and the participants acquire a diploma.

The expert qualifications acquired non-formally are valued and confirmed from an expert commission formed by the Sector commissions. The expert evaluation and confirmation means evaluation of the proofs and evaluation of the practical skills and knowledge. A certificate is proof of acquired expert qualification.

The Sector Commission of qualifications has a president and eight members: one member of the authorized Ministry, Ministry of education and science, association of employers from the appropriate sector, representative syndicate of the employees from the appropriate sector, the universities, the Center of expert education and training, Center for adult education, Bureau of development of the education and the authorized body for regulated professions (law chamber, medical chamber, engineers' chamber, etc.). This law is applicable from September 30, 2015.¹

CONCLUSION

The analyzed experiences for validation of non-formal and informal learning in some of the states of EU reveal that the national contexts of the states could be very heterogenic regarding the different characteristics of validation, from the levels of identification, valuation and certification, but also the stadium of development of the process, even in the use of different meaning of the terms in different states.

But, the imposed consistent need, and the foregone development of these types of individual learning for following

¹ Official Gazette of RM no. 137, 07.10.2013

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the needs and problems, will unconditionally initiate permanent upgrades of the systems and law frameworks. The exchange of experiences, especially with the states with longer history from the one of The Republic of Macedonia, will significantly contribute for increase of the efficiency of this system of validation.

Specific to Macedonian context of validation of non-formal and informal learning

- Macedonia is steadily progressing towards aligning its education with the European standards and guidelines. It has completed the process of referencing its National Qualifications Framework to the EQF and has started the process of participatory design of VNFIL that is led by the AEC and the ETF and fully based on European guidelines and standards.

- Following European standards, it is important that Macedonia designs its VNFIL process with due respect to the existing education structures, with realistic planning of resources and optimal usage of local potentials and capacities.

- The main issues to be addressed are closing the gap between demand and supply of labour, fostering LLL, employment of adults and validation of their employment relevant qualifications.

- It is crucial to ensure equivalence of VNFIL certificates with those obtained from formal education, based on transparent quality assurance procedures and usage of learning outcomes in all VNFIL procedures, and a transparent and well elaborated VNFIL process.

- Optimal usage of local capacities and potentials will be crucial for creating sustainable VNFIL solutions in Macedonia. Thereby,

- the Adult Education Centre as a public AE institution has both, strategizing and coordinating capacities and could act as a main hub for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The AEC has interest and capacities to act a main VNFIL promoter in the country, recruit and coordinate capacity development of counsellors, assessors and validation commissions, keep and update registers of validation providers,

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counsellors and assessors, and significantly contribute to stakeholder coordination,

- other public bodies (Centre for VET, State Examination Centre) have capacities to share their vast experiences to support the validation process (networks, experiences, procedures, templates),

- Economic Chambers and Association of Employers have capacities to enable contact with employers for validation purposes,

- other national bodies (National LLL Centre, National Agency for European Educational Programmes and Mobility) have capacities to actively support the VNFIL development and implementation through their projects, networks, events and expertise,

- VNFIL information offices could partly use structures already offering related guidance and information, such as agencies and NGOs, and

- VNFIL career centres should lean on existing career centres in VET schools or within projects/NGOs.

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