Annual National Review (ANaR) on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNF-IFL)

on the national context

ANaR <u>Updated</u> Report for 2010

Country: ICELAND
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This Report will replace the Report from 2008

I. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
1. National strategy: is there one? What is in place re the VNFL-IFL, at which level? If not, are there regional, local or institutional strategies? *Any reference or URL links to official documents, Websites?*	In Iceland a national strategy for the validation of non-formal and informal learning has been in development since 2002. Most of the work that has been undertaken on validation has been carried out by the Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC), which was established in December 2002 by the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA). The ETSC works according to a contract with the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. One of the main objectives of this contract is the development of a national strategy on validation. The focus has been on learners who have not completed Upper Secondary Education and since 2006 has been mostly industry based.
2. main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation: • Who has the main responsibility for VNF-IFL? Which ministry (ies), which institution (s), organisation or body (ies)? Who gives the main impetus and direction? • Who regulates, monitors and assesses practices and pilots new initiatives? • Or are they local, regional, sectoral, institutional initiatives?	The ETSC has been very active in carrying out specific projects and devising methods for validating informal and non-formal learning. The result of this work has been the publication of guidelines on how to validate informal and non-formal learning for use by providers and other interested parties (see: www.frae.is). The processes and procedures used are parallel with the common European principles for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The ETSC participates in this process as the role setter whereas the methods and methodology set by the ETSC in cooperation with stakeholders are used for the VNF-IFL. The ETSC is responsible for the methods, methodology, guidelines and training of assessors. Furthermore the ETSC monitors and registers check lists used for VNF-IFL and collects data from the various projects. Most of the projects are sectorial based, managed by Centres of Manual Trades and executed in cooperation with regional Lifelong Learning Centres and Upper Secondary Schools.
3. Sectors: where, which sectors: • Does VNF-IFL apply to all educational sectors? Or to specific ones (vocational education & training, Further Educ. Colleges, universities, adult education etc….) • Or/ and does it apply to other sectors: 3rd sector, private sector *Name some examples or references to examples (websites, documents etc….?)*	The primary focus in this first phase of VNF-IFL has been on the validation of non-formal and informal learning used for shortening a study path within formal education. The target group included individuals working within certified manual trades, who had finished a part of their upper secondary school level, had several years of working experience within the certified field and had completed their apprentice time. This work has been organized by the ETSC, coordinated by the Centres of Manual Trades in cooperation with Lifelong Learning Centres and Upper secondary schools. Pilot projects have also been executed in the care sector. A project called the Value of Work (based on a Leonardo project promoted by the ETSC, see: www.valueofwork.org) focuses on the private sector where service representatives in banks are validated against job standards. The 3rd sector approach is mainly based

	on portfolio work during shorter courses, mostly executed in regional Lifelong Learning Centres.
	See cases from Iceland presented on the Observal web page
4. Terminology: Is there a common definition of VNF-IFL, or are there specific terms used by different institutions implementing VNF-IFL? What would be the best way to translate it / them into English?	Termology is explained in the validation guidelines available on ETSC's website www.frae.is, direct links are: • Icelandic version: http://www.frae.is//files/%7Bcbefd033-ab8d-4192-9da8-77e9a4372100%7D_baeklingur.pdf • English version: http://www.frae.is//files/%7Bab4087d5-f333-4573-aced-9a2110fe9ade%7D_frae_baeklingur.pdf
5. National Qualification Framework: How do VNF-IFL practices or initiatives relate to NQF in place or in construction, if they do? If not, why not? *Brief description of the NQF (diagram etc)?* *Reference to docs or website?*	The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is now in the process of introducing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), to be linked to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The Icelandic National Qualifications Framework will encompass all education and training offered in the country, be it academic studies, VET, art studies, special education or adult education. In validation projects national curriculum standards are used and adjusted by stakeholders linked to each project. A clear focus on learning outcomes through the development of the NQF is seen as beneficial for the process of validation. The relationship between validation and the development of the qualifications framework is therefore clear to a large extent.

II. Impact of Validation

| **6. Impact on individuals**
• What impact has VNF-IFL had on individuals? On whom, in your opinion, has it had the most impact:
Validation candidates/ learners, practitioners, teachers/ academics/ tutors/facilitators in adult education, careers advisers, human resource managers…any more?
• In what way has it had an impact:
• in the actors/ stakeholders' attitudes, practices and methodologies, interaction with each others, understanding of different types of learning, better understanding of adult learners' needs, assessment practices, etc…? | The target groups of the VNF-IFL process in Iceland have been people with little formal education, social partners and other relevant actors. The projects have had impact on all stakeholders.

• People with little formal education, who have acquired competence through non-formal and informal learning are among the main target groups. The VNF-IFL has motivated many of them to finish their Upper Secondary level and gain their diploma. The validation candidates have gained more self esteem through the process through identifying and documenting their competences in a systematic way.

• Teachers and other stakeholders within vocational schools and Upper Secondary Schools were at first sceptical towards this new method of assessment, but those who have taken part in the compilation of standards and the assessment procedure have gained faith in this method and methodology and they are now positive towards the VNF-IFL.

• Human resource managers as well as facilitators within the adult education are in favour of |

• Do you have evidence whether it is felt as a positive, negative, problematic impact? *Some evidence/ reference to examples of this impact?*	this approach and find it a positive supplement to other assessment methods. • The presence and access to an educational and vocational counsellor has proved to be very important throughout the whole process. The VNF-IFL process has broadened and increased the tasks of educational and vocational counsellors in Iceland. In general the discussion on VNF-IFL sets focus on various learning environments, which in return broadens perspectives towards methods of learning as well as teaching.
7. structural and institutional impact: • Has it had an impact on education and training (or lifelong learning) policies? • On other legislation, official/ governmental organisations, bodies, institutions? • On the negotiations between social partners (who are those anyway in your country?) • In the private sector, on staff qualification and training strategies within companies? • On civil society/ NGOs/ adult education sector? • On building bridges (of communication, working partnerships…) between different systems of certification, sectors etc?	A Comprehensive National Lifelong Learning Strategy is being implemented in Iceland on the basis of new laws for all education sectors. A law was passed in June 2008 for Upper Secondary Schools, and in March 2010 a law for Lifelong Learning was passed. Both state an individual entitlement to the validation of non-formal and informal learning towards credits/units at that Upper Secondary level. The validation process requires the validation bodies to follow regulations which will be set forth by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. See: http://www.nymenntastefna.is/English/ The ETSC was established in December 2002 by the Icelandic Federation of Labour (ASÍ) and the Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA). The role of the Centre is to be a collaborative forum of the founding parties for adult education and vocational training in co-operation with other education bodies operating under the auspices of the member associations of ASÍ and SA. The Centre operates in accordance with its articles of association and a service agreement with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The objective is to enable individuals who have not graduated from the Upper Secondary Level to obtain an education and improve their position in the labour market. As such, the existence of the ETSC and the work carried out there, are a part of the negotiations between social partners, which are labour, employers and the government.

III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

8. Stakeholders' engagement: how would you rate the stakeholders' level of interest in your country regarding the VNF-IFL? • Which stakeholders in particular are very interested? • Which ones are not so/ not at all interested? Why is that so? Any particular or obvious reasons? *Reference to examples, documents?*	**1 to 5: Very Low to High?** There is a common interest in the development of VNF-IFL in Iceland from all sites. Social partners would like to see a rapid development, while the school system is somewhat reluctant to this kind of approach due to the fact that it is a new approach which may to those who are not linked to it seem to downgrade formal education. Nevertheless the level of interest is high (5) by all stakeholders

9. Debates-discussions: Are there any (few/many) discussions concerning VNF-IFL? • Has it stimulated discussion on specific issues (social inclusion, employability, learning society, accessibility for older learners, women, migrants…) • On the nature of assessment, knowledge…? • Between which stakeholders mainly/ or within which sector mainly? *Any evidence or references to those?*	One reason for the more reluctant view of the school system is that there is a certain fear that the VNF-IFL is a way to minimise the formal education in some way. The social partners as well as individuals undergoing the validation process see this more as a way to find the real status of the competence the individual has in order to prevent him/her having to repeat learning what he/she already knows. By doing so, this kind of recognition can support further participation in continuing education and provides economic gain and saves time for the individual and the society. VNF-IFL has proven to be a very effective motivator towards participation in lifelong learning. The VNF-IFL is in rapid development and the main issues in focus are the nature of the approach, its methods and development of tools for supporting the process and ensuring quality.
10. Research and VNF-IFL: Does research feed these debates? *Are there examples of this? Reference to reports, research findings etc…?*	A Master's thesis has been conducted on the experience of participants in the validation process. Results support that VNF-IFL is very effective in enhancing self-esteem and motivating individuals towards continuing learning. (Master thesis by Auður Sigurðardóttir; *Að stíga skrefið – í nám á nýjan leik að loknu raunfærnimati,* February, 2010)
11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance: • Are there any emerging? If so which ones? What type? (strategic, operational, organisational, attitudinal, cultural, financial etc…) Is there resistance appearing? • At which level? • In which sector in particular? • From which category of actors/ stakeholders? *Evidence available? Some examples?*	Regulations for the practice of validation are in development in relations to the new educational laws. Stakeholders need time to develop trust towards this new approach. For most of them, once they get to know the methods and methodology used for the VNF-IFL process, they find it appealing. The ETSC has emphasized close cooperation and consensus among stakeholders in each project executed. It is considered important to give time for further developments in order to work on quality issues and the gaining of trust towards the concept of validation through continuing cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

Any other comments

In Iceland the validation process is conducted in groups of 20-30 individuals within the same sector. The participants go through the process as a group – obtain information, develop their portfolio and are in many cases offered an educational pathway towards completion of their studies in a group. The assessment is conducted individually and each individual has unlimited access to a career counsellor during the process. All of the above has proven to be extremely important for the successrate of the completion of studies – which is the main goal of the validation process.