

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

The objective is to produce each year a state of play (approximately 3 pages in English) about main events, key issues, debates and discussions, which have arisen during the year.

This grid is informal. It provides just few questions to guide your reflection.

You may wish to use it or not, or leave blank some of the categories, or increase the spaces for others, depending on what content you can provide. It is FLEXIBLE. It is only a tool to guide your report.

✿ *It would be useful for the Observatory to give references (when they only exist in your own language) and terms used in your **own language**, then give the English translation you think most appropriate for the terms used, or the official translation usually given; whichever, the question of terminology will be discussed throughout the project for the purpose of the Observatory itself.* ✿

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Date: 19th June 2009

1. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
<p>1. National strategy: is there one? What is in place re the VNF-IFL, at which level? If not, are there regional, local or institutional strategies?</p> <p><i>Any reference or URL links to official documents, Websites?</i></p>	<p>It is difficult to say whether there is a national strategy in place or not. What is certain however is that national agencies are very much to the fore in this area. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland which is a national body has done a lot of work in this area. See www.nqai.ie In the area of VET significant work has been undertaken by the national body responsible for this area i.e. Further Education & Training Awards Council (FETAC) www.fetac.ie and in the area of Higher Education the Higher Education & Training Awards Council have done excellent work also see www.hetac.ie The University sector is autonomous and not governed by any of these bodies and each one has its own set of policies and procedures. Perhaps it is fair to say that we do have a national strategy but that its implementation is on a sectoral basis.</p>
<p>2. main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? 	<p>As is evident from the answers to question one responsibility is at a sector level. That said there are two Ministries with an involvement in the field. The Department of Education & Science is obviously very involved but allows the agencies mentioned above to drive the implementation strategies. The other department is the department for Enterprise Trade & Employment. This latter department has a very important role in the area of training, reskilling and upskilling of those in employment. The National Training Agency (FÁS) comes within the remit of this Department and consequently has a strong interest in the field also.</p> <p>Regulation is by sector so FETAC will regulate those operating in this space and HETAC will regulate the initiatives in its area of responsibility. The NQAI are probably the national regulator but again noting that the Universities are free to do what they like. Consequently the NQAI keep an eye on the matter from a national perspective, FETAC & HETAC operate at the sectoral level and the individual universities operate on an institutional basis.</p>
<p>2. Sectors: where, which sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p><i>Name some examples or references to examples (websites, documents etc....?)</i></p>	<p>.I feel that my answers to one and two combined give the answers to the questions in this section.</p>
<p>4. Terminology:</p> <p>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?</p>	<p>Give the definition (s) and terms used in your own language, and your translation in English</p> <p>There is no common definition but that said the definitions used by various bodies are not all that different. For instance the definition we use at the University of Limerick is as follows;</p>

	<p>Recognition of prior learning (RPL) at the University of Limerick encompasses all types of prior learning including, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement (APL&A), Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC), Learning Outside Formal Teaching (LOFT).</p> <p>RPL is an assessment process to determine the extent of the achievement of an applicant of the learning outcomes, competency, or standards for entry into and partial completion of a programme of study. The prior learning may have been acquired by formal, non-formal or informal routes.</p> <p>Perhaps the most comprehensive report on the issue is contained in the NQAI's report for the OECD and this is available at http://www.nqai.ie/RecognitionofNon-FormalandInformalLearninginIreland..html</p>
<p>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? <i>Brief description of the NQF (diagram etc)?</i> <i>Reference to docs or website?</i></p>	<p>As will be observed from previous answers the Irish Qualifications Authority plays a pivotal role in the area of VNL/IFL. The terms used might be slightly different but basically are exactly what we we are referring to in the OBSERVAL work. The development of the field is very clearly integrated into the Irish NQF.</p> <p>There is little need for me to expand on this matter but to refer you once again to the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland site www.nqai.ie here you will see very clearly how the framework and the work of OBSERVAL is linked and indeed much more than linked it is fully integrated. The range of publications available through this site is extensive and valuable to our work.</p>

II. Impact of Validation

<p>6. Impact on individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>The impact has been widespread and it would be difficult to determine where the impact has been most felt. There is little doubt that there has been a huge impact and benefit for the individual learner. That said one could argue that impact has been more influential in the organisations where it has been introduced. For instance the affect that it has had in the University sector is nothing short of phenomenal. It has moved from something that was viewed with suspicion to one that is seen as standard academic practice.</p> <p>Needless to say it also has had a large impact in the area of work-based learning. In this regard the value of on the job learning is now being translated into formal learning outcomes and accreditation. In an environment where there is a national skills deficit the role of informal and work-based learning is a key economic driver and is seen as such at governmental level.</p>
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<p>others, understanding of different types of learning, better understanding of adult learners' needs, assessment practices, etc...?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have evidence whether it is felt as a positive, negative, problematic impact? <p><i>Some evidence/ reference to examples of this impact?</i></p>	<p>On the issue of evidence of satisfaction or otherwise I provide herewith a link to a press release which was issued by the Construction Industry Federation pertaining to a FETAC initiative for the construction industry. http://www.fetac.ie/rpl/CIF_PRESS%20RELEASE_FETAC_awards_2_.pdf</p> <p>This press release although specific doses give a view that is shared by many employers both in the private and public sector. It also underscores the changing attitudes of all of the stakeholders. It is also a clear indication that there is a very positive attitude to the development from the learner, the employer and the educational establishment delivering the programme.</p> <p>Importantly it also shows that there is a high level of awareness in the general population as to what prior learning is in all its formats formal or informal and this is a very positive development for all concerned. It would be fair to conclude that there is a very positive attitude to the issue of recognising prior learning amongst the stakeholders.</p>
<p>7. structural and institutional impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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?) On human resource management in the private sector? On civil society/ NGOs/ adult education sector? On building bridges (of communication, working partnerships...) between different systems of certification, sectors etc? 	<p>One of the cornerstones of Ireland's economic development for the past thirty years has been a centralised approach to wage bargaining. In the early years this was solely about wages but over time this developed to full partnership programmes covering all of the social partners. Within these programmes education played a vital role and gradually the issue of informal and informal learning particularly associated with work-based learning and learning attained through involvement the voluntary sector such the trade union movement and community organisations became a major component of these national partnership agreements.</p> <p>Consequently it is self evident that this policy and resultant practices have had an impact on all of the areas referred to in this section. It most certainly has built bridges. These have been constructed through work and education and community involvement and learning. Overall it has had a significant impact to date and will continue to do so. As proof of this I outline the structure that the Higher Education Authority's recent call for proposals for funding and one of the key areas mentioned is RPL. It is no longer on the fringes of the educational agenda but firmly at the centre. Further details on the Authority is available at www.heai.ie</p> <p>Format for Submission of Each Part-time Programme Proposal should adhere to the following criteria as laid out in the attached call for proposals document. Please insure that all submissions from UL Colleges are formatted as such.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Name of institution and contact details; Institutional rationale for making submission - coherence/synergies with existing course provision, how the programme builds on the institution's strengths; Proposed intake, NFQ level and expected duration of course;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Programme Title; 5. Entry requirements; 6. Estimated non-completion rate; 7. Access arrangements for under-represented groups; 8. Accreditation position; 9. Credits to be provided; 10. Arrangements for Recognition of Prior Learning 11. Summary of course objectives and content: Include a description of the proposed educational programme, addressing issues of curriculum content and structure, pedagogy, innovation, quality assurance (internal and external); 12. Admission: Provide details of admission and advertising arrangements, particularly in targeting the unemployed which should include arrangements for advertising through Fás and local Social and Family Affairs Offices; 13. Costs: Estimated annual recurrent cost of proposed course up to and including when fully operational supported by detailed costing; 14. Collaboration and Co-operation: Include details on how proposals support a strategy for interdisciplinary and inter-institutional and regional collaboration and co-operation in the development and delivery of labour market initiatives;
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III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

<p>8. Stakeholders' engagement: how would you rate the stakeholders' level of interest in your country regarding the VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders in particular are very interested? • Which ones are not so/ not at all interested? <p>Why is that so? Any particular or obvious reasons? <i>Reference to examples, documents?</i></p>	<p>1 to 5: Very Low to High?</p> <p>I would suggest that the level of interest is somewhere between 4 & 5 and perhaps nearer to 5. It would be hard to say that one stakeholder has a higher interest than the other as all have a significant interest in the field. I really do not have supply any further links at this stage as the one provided previously have a link to the issue under discussion.</p>
<p>9. Debates-discussions: Are there any (few/many) discussions concerning VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it stimulated discussion on specific issues 	<p>The answer to the questions posed in the next three sections are best answered through a single link. The link is to a funded project called Education in Employment and is one of many dealing with RPL and related matters. From this link you will see that there is plenty of discussion in Ireland on</p>

<p>(social inclusion, employability, learning society, accessibility for older learners, women, migrants...)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the nature of assessment, knowledge...? • Between which stakeholders mainly/ or within which sector mainly? <p><i>Any evidence or references to those?</i></p>	<p>this issue involving all of the actors.</p>
<p>10. Research and VNF-IFL: Does research feed these debates? <i>Are there examples of this? Reference to reports, research findings etc...?</i></p>	<p>There is extensive research being conducted in many organisations.</p>
<p>11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any emerging? If so which ones? What type? (strategic, operational, organisational, attitudinal, cultural, financial etc...) <p>Is there resistance appearing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At which level? • In which sector in particular? • From which category of actors/ stakeholders? <p><i>Evidence available? Some examples?</i></p>	<p>Of course there are problems and difficulties but they are out in the open and being discussed in a very constructive manner with all of the stakeholders contributing to the debate. There is little or no resistance to the development of the field indeed the opposite is true. There is much support for the development and a very active research stream which will ensure that the discipline will continue to grow and foster.</p> <p>The final link I referred to is; http://eine.ie/</p>

Any other comments