



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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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>In the years 2005-2007, the Dutch government invested nearly 40 million Euro in APL at upper secondary and higher vocational education levels, in developing a regional infrastructure and in promoting APL. This policy was put forward in the working plan for 2005-2007 <i>Strengthening Learning and Working</i> (PLW 2005). The ministries of Education, Culture and Science, of Social Affairs and Employment, of Agriculture and Nature Management, of Economic Affairs, of Integration and of Finances were involved.</p> <p>In the implementation strategy, management and practice come together. At management level educational institutions were encouraged to implement APL institution-wide. They signed agreements with the government to realise a certain number of APL procedures within one or two years and to guarantee a minimum quality standard of these procedures. Practices already in use for some years were spread and the quality-issue of the procedures was raised. To strengthen the promotion of APL by the already since 2001 existing Dutch Knowledge Centre on APL, regional one-stop-offices were set up also to actively promote the use of APL. It is a big step forward that all local partners in education and labour market are working more and more together and attune their procedures. The aim is that any individual can enter these local one-stop-offices to be guided in their development process. Companies are offered tailor-made solutions for their questions relating to human resources and all regional partners take their share to realise it.</p> <p>Since The economic crisis started both the government as well as the social partners joined forces to strengthen the use of VNF-IFL for workers that are in danger of losing their job. For them a possibility of subsidies procedures for their VNF-IFL is available at local offices. In these local offices the local authorities, social partners, job-agencies and relevant education-institutes are organised. In a sense this is an approach of creating a local community that is capable of finding integral solutions of personal labour-problems by using the instrumentation of VNF-IFL.</p> <p>VNF-IFL in the Netherlands consists of two specific instruments, both of which are subsidized if someone is in danger of losing a job:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'Ervaringscertificaat'. This is the formal procedure in which a candidate can get accreditation of his/her learning outcomes. It is a summative approach; the portfolio is referred to a specific standard and the accreditation consists of a number of credits that can be cashed in at a qualifying institute or school. The portfolio therefore is only a dossierportfolio or showcase of the relevant learning outcomes to be referred to the specific standard. This form of VNF-IFL can be called APL. 2. 'Ervaringprofiel'. This is a set-up for a generic, personal portfolio. It is formative oriented and aims at a validation of all the generic competences of a candidate. It advises on the possible opportunities for

	<p>accreditation or development steps. It also points out what to do when a specific qualification or diploma is at stake. This form of VNF-IFL can be called RPL.</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>A quality code for the 'Ervaringscertificaat' was signed in 2006 by the education sector, employers and employees. The quality code is an important step towards guaranteeing quality, garnering support and granting insight into the supply of APL. About 130 APL providers are currently entered and can be found in the 'Register for Recognised APL providers'. The quality code for APL itself aims to achieve more transparency and comparability and make APL more accessible. It contains the following items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The goal of APL is to define, evaluate and accredit individual competencies. 2. APL primarily answers to the need of the individual. Entitlements and arrangements are clearly defined and guaranteed. 3. Procedures and instruments are reliable and based on solid standards. 4. Assessors and supervisors are competent, impartial and independent. 5. The quality of the APL procedure is guaranteed and is being improved on an ongoing basis. <p>The accreditation of APL-suppliers at the levels of VET and HVE is now (2008-2009) underway.</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>The coming years the Dutch ministries of Education, Culture and Science, and of Social Affairs and Employment will continue to jointly promote life long learning by also focusing on APL. Themes will be among others learning & working programmes in the technical and health care sectors, 60.000 extra learning & working programmes for employees and job seekers older than 23 years old, and extra programmes for long term unemployed and young workers between 18 and 23 years old without basic qualification. See www.kenniscentrumevc.nl for examples</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>At this moment the commonly used term in the Netherlands is Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL). In Dutch this is '<i>de Erkenning van Verworven Competenties (EVC)</i>'. The authorities, as well as the social partners and the schools prefer this term because this approach mainly focuses on the summative effects of recognizing and assessing prior learning. The most important element in an APL-strategy is the assessment of the competencies that are collected in a portfolio with the goal of getting exemptions or a diploma, referring to a specific standard. The portfolio is in this context mainly a showcase of only the competencies that matter for the standard itself; all the other personal competencies are irrelevant. The choice for a specific standard is in practice more steered by the availability of an actual standard than by a free, personal choice. This is because most of the times a school - as the keeper of the standard(s) – tends to look more to the best chance of</p>

	<p>success when measured against any given standard than to the best match of a standard and personal ambitions. So, in effect, APL is more standard-steered, and as most standards are kept by schools (upper secondary and higher vocational levels) also strongly school-steered.</p> <p>With Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) the primary focus lies on the identification and recognition of the competencies that someone might have obtained in any period in his/her life and in any kind of learning environment. In Dutch this is '<i>de Herkenning van Verworven Competenties (HVC¹)</i>'. In this context the portfolio consists of all personal learning experiences. Only after collecting all the relevant, personal competencies together with their proof, a choice is made by the person. In this way the personal ambitions are better articulated and depending on the personal goal a specific choice for the kind of accreditation or validation is made. RPL, therefore is more personal steered and might involve not only summative but also formative goals.</p> <p>When looking at both terms – RPL and APL - VPL stands for the process of Valuation of Prior Learning (VPL). VPL embodies the necessity to make top-down processes such as APL meet the bottom-up process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). If combined APL and RPL are constituting the integral or even holistic process of Valuation of Prior Learning. So, VPL is the real designation of developing, implementing and embedding lifelong learning in society, in the Learning Society so to say; VPL is for the sake of citizens as well as providers and organisations (profit, non-profit, voluntary work, labour-agencies, communities, etc). VPL is able to manage in a flexible way the diversity of goals all these parties and partners have in making use of lifelong learning strategies.</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>VNF-IFL-practices relate to the NQF (which at the moment is being build up in correspondence with the EQF) that in its turn is linked to vocational education & training (VET) and Higher Vocational Education (HVE).</p> <p>VET has four sectors (economy, technical, service & health and agricultural sector) and four qualification levels: assistant in training (level 1), basis-vocational education (level 2), professional education (level 3) and middle management / specialists (level 4).</p> <p>HVE has levels 5 (associate degree) and 6 (bachelor).</p>

II. Impact of Validation

6. Impact on individuals	The main targets of APL in 2007 (more than one target is possible for each APL-procedure):
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¹ The term 'HVC' was introduced by mr. Sjoerd Stienstra at the conference on EVC [APL] in Willemstad, Curaçao, October 31, 2008.

<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 others, understanding of different types of learning, better understanding of adult learners' needs, assessment practices, etc...? Do you have evidence whether it is felt as a positive, negative, problematic impact? <i>Some evidence/ reference to examples of this impact?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 54% is used for shortening learning programmes, - 51% is aiming at exemptions, - 44% is looking for qualification or certification, - 40% focuses on career-development, - 12% seeks a validation of the portfolio itself. <p>Impact is strong, especially when understanding that APL is the first step in the process of making the learning system more flexible and lifelong available.</p> <p>APL affects all kinds of targetgroups for reasons of employability, empowerment or update/upgrade. All kinds of sectoral specialists use APL for setting goals for their professionalization, e.g. education, healthcare, technology.</p> <p>Positive effects: on raising awareness of the necessity and the functionality of learning in education and HRM; understanding the need for a bottom-up process of recognition and self-management of competencies.</p> <p>Negative effects: the danger of expectations for exemptions that are too high; the time-consuming character f making up a showcase for an APL-procedure</p>
7. structural and institutional impact: <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? 	On the role of qualifications In the Netherlands the role of APL is in general a conventional approach, i.e. a summative one. This has to do with the low rate of Dutch unemployment and the supply-dominated learning system. However, the stimulus for applying APL – and therefore turning APL into VPL - isn't so much the goal of certification but more the goal of enriching one's portfolio for the sake of empowerment and employability. This is reflected in the growing appreciation of VPL as a means to set up personal development schemes. Currency of qualifications There is one national standard for VET and Higher Vocational Education (HE). APL is more and more used to bridge the gap between the systems of education and human resource management (HRM) on the basis of translating prior learning to mutually recognizable qualifications. Therefore APL – and again as it is changing into VPL - is more and more aiming at building up continuing education on top of initial VET and HE. There is an awareness that double currencies of qualifications will have negative effects because the status of formally acquired diploma's is very strong; so, non-formally acquired diploma's will be stigmatized as less valued.

	<p>Labour market developments</p> <p>Concerning the labour market developments a reflection on Dutch evidence where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a shift is occurring from internal firm-mobility (lifetime employment) to intra-sectoral (building sector) and even inter-sectoral mobility (education), ▪ generic competencies are becoming more relevant in education (VET/HE) and labour market (HRM). This opens up inter-sectoral mobility using the same generic competencies as an access-point and workbased learning as a way to deal effectively with acquiring the needed specific competencies. In this way structural portfolio-build up is (going to be) stimulated, ▪ APL is changing into the more holistic VPL and becoming an integral part of HRM – and therewith turning HRMN into the more dynamic HRD - , especially to fill in vacancies in unskilled and highly-skilled occupations. APL opens up HRM in this sense because it stresses the fact that you might be valued to perform in a function without having the <u>formal</u> qualifications; and APL changes into VPL and even more, HRM into HRD, ▪ Creating professional registers is more debated than the obligation of qualification. This means debating how to prove and maintain competencies instead of focusing on qualifications. A register might also be a way to enforce qualitycontrol of personal competence-management in different functions (cross-sectoral or multi-sectoral) and professions.
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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?</p> <p><i>Reference to examples, documents?</i></p>	<p>In the Netherlands the consensus on the macro-level is very strong. Government and social partners already in 2000 concluded that APL was one of the main solutions encountering the needs of the knowledge society. A lot of the obstacles to implementation on sectoral, regional and even organisation (schools and firms) levels are still very strong. Fear of poaching, a run on higher wages and losing a position on the 'learning market' are the main arguments against using APL. Practice however is showing more and more that the profits are bigger than the fears. APL effectively reduces the non-necessary learning and therefore leads to a higher output of learning itself. The biggest problem is more to convince the individual learner to invest in him/herself and to make the learning system offer flexible and work-based learning paths.</p> <p>The introduction of RPL in 2009 was instigated in 2009, due to the economic crisis.</p>
<p>9. Debates-discussions: Are there any (few/many)</p>	

<p>discussions concerning VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? <p><i>Any evidence or references to those?</i></p>	<p>Dutch themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Put the individual learner with her/his portfolio in the position of co-makership b. Focus on learning outcomes instead of learning-input c. The total VPL-process is portfolio-based; i.e. recognition, accreditation and development. So make sure the bottom-up process of RPL is as well organized as the top-down process of APL. d. Make sure the standards for qualification and/or competence-management are transparent and interchangeable. EQF offers good reference material to set up levels in standards. e. Competency-systems (qualification-standards & competence-management) must be linked in order for the individual to take a pick where, how and why to employ and enrich one's portfolio. f. Lifelong learning is about stimulating the learning triangle: individual (portfolio-build up), organisation (competence-based HRM) and education (output-oriented, learning-made-to-measure).
<p>10. Research and VNF-IFL:</p> <p>Does research feed these debates?</p> <p><i>Are there examples of this? Reference to reports, research findings etc...?</i></p>	<p>Yes. Research is done in the development and anchoring of APL/RPL into the learning system and in HRM (sectors).</p> <p>Research is needed into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the added value of APL/RPL, among other things focussed on its economic, financial and social effects, - linking APL to the European Qualification Framework (EQF and its NQF's)
<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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrating on <u>marketing</u> is highly important. With regard to marketing, the relationship between providers and companies is the most problematic. • <u>Educational awareness</u> should be raised in an organisation or company. • <u>Information provision</u> must be made crystal clear to the individual employee or job-seeker. Of course all of this is highly dependent on the scenario chosen for the use of VPL. • <u>Self-management of competencies</u> is crucial: in the division of roles between those involved, the emphasis for the individual is on personal process management; for the organisation on the formulation of aims and the accompanying formulation of demands for competency development; and for the educational institution it is on the development of flexible learning-made-to-measure programmes. This step involves the creation of <u>personal portfolio-formats</u>. • <u>National coverage</u> of the VPL advisory function: more transparency, uniformity, harmonisation and collaboration are needed at national level to strengthen the effects of VPL. • <u>VPL should be possible at Masters level</u>, because even academic competencies can be acquired in non-formal learning settings.

Any other comments