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

on the national context

ANaR Report Year 2 –2008- 2009

Country: Portugal
Name: Carmen Cavaco
Updated information for 2009 in red

I. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
1. National strategy	In Portugal, the VNF-IFL process was instituted in public policies, in 2001, with the creation of a network of 6 Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences Centres. In these Centres, through a process of recognition and validation of learning, accomplished by formal and non-formal educational modalities, people over 18 years could obtain a 4th year, 6th year or 9th year school certificate. The Centre's network was increasing in a moderate and progressive way, with special attention to the teams constitution and its monitoring by the government. From 2007, these Centres have been called New Opportunities Centres and the certification is extended to 12th school year, with a trend to the process of mass expansion. In 2005 there were 98 centres; in 2006, 270 Centres, in 2007, 269 Centres; in 2008, 459 Centres and in 2009, 455 Centres.

	The VNF-IFL process fits within a public policy that has progressively come to gain social visibility, revealing itself as a political asset in school and professional qualification of the Portuguese population. The VNF-IFL process appears to be a part of a national scope policy and the 455 New Opportunities Centres are distributed over the Portuguese territory. http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx http://www.en.anq.gov.pt/ http://www.novasoportunidades.gov.pt/
2. Main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation	The responsibility of the VNF-IFL process belongs to Agência Nacional para a Qualificação (ANQ – National Agency for Qualification), a public entity which is responsible to both Ministério da Educação (Ministry of Education) and Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade Social (Ministry of Work and Social Solidarity). The ANQ is in charge of the New Opportunities Centres' network, assuming development and management responsibilities of the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences, being responsible for the process regulation, the constitution of the centres' teams, process monitoring and evaluation. The New Opportunities Centres, under government guidance, go through a self-evaluation process on a regular basis. The government has been promoting external evaluation studies in the New Opportunities Centres, performed by competent entities in this domain. The New Opportunities Centres are distributed through Portuguese territory and are promoted by public and private entities, with national, regional and local scope basic and secondary schools, training centres, municipalities, companies, associations and syndicates, High Education Establishment).
3. Sectors	In Portugal, in 2001, the VNF-IFL process came up within an adult education public policy. It is a basic and secondary level school certification but, in the beginning it gathered a wide group of third sector promoters (development associations, municipal associations, syndicates), which represented more than a third of the promoters involved. From 2005, the trend was to orientate the process to youngsters, in order to complete 12th year and, at the same time, public entities started to predominate as promoters of the process, a fact that becomes clear in the significant increase of basic and secondary schools involved. The process of recognition, validation and certification of competences is based in the key benchmark competence, from where the teams establish the procedures of recognition and validation. The basic education level key benchmark competence has four nuclear areas: Mathematics for Life (Matemática para a Vida), Language and Communication (Linguagem e Comunicação) Information and Communication Technologies (Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação), Citizenship and Employability (Cidadania e Empregabilidade). The secondary education level key benchmark competence has three nuclear areas: Citizenship and Professionalisation (Cidadania e Profissionalidade), Society, Technology and Science (Sociedade, Ciência e Tecnologia), Culture, Language and Communication (Cultura, Língua e Comunicação)).

http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx (Basic and secondary education level's key benchmark competences are available in Portuguese version)

In 2008, the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences was created in a Vocational Education and Training sector, enabling to achieve a professional qualification certificate/diploma, level II or III, in sixteen professions. This VNF-IFL process, developed within the scope of training, coordinated by ANQ is promoted in the Training Centres of the Training and Employment Institute (Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional (national public entity, coordinated by Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade Social (Ministry of Work and Social Solidarity). And in New Opportunities Centres whose promoting entities are considered able to recognize and validate competences in the professional areas where it is possible to do the process.

http://www.avaliadores.anq.gov.pt/np4/?newsId=10&fileName=op_processos_rvcc.pdf (document about the organisation and functioning of professional RVCC)

http://www.iefp.pt/formacao/RVCC/Documents/RCVV%20Profissional/DIAGRAMA%20RVCC%20PRO.ppt (Professional RVCC organizational diagram)

In 2001, with governmental initiative, a public discussion took place for the first time, about recognition, validation and certification of competences in higher education. In the following, came out a set of changes in legal documents that regulated the access to higher education. The law 64 of 2006 regulates the special access option tests that became to be known as "Tests to people over 23 years". It is a modality to attend higher education, directed to candidates over 23 years who do not have the access requirements through the traditional way. Although it is a Portuguese Government national policy and it defines a set of procedures that must be taken into account, higher education institutions have the autonomy to define, with some freedom, certain elements concerning the organisation and functioning of this specific way to attend higher education. The candidates perform an access test, made by the university to which they wish to apply in order to evaluate their knowledge in the disciplinary area of the course they want to attend; they are also subject to a curricular appreciation and an interview. These elements allow for the classification of the students, which are limited by the number of vacant places to this specific access area. The candidates who are able to attend higher education through this way, after the entrance, can ask for a request of accreditation of the curricular units for which they consider to have the necessary knowledge through the valorisation of their experience. This process is monitored and managed by each University/Institute. The student presents a portfolio, which is analysed and discussed by a jury which is composed by teachers of the chosen disciplinary area. Although the project discussed in 2001 concerned the implementation of a process of recognition and validation of acquired experienced in higher education, the practice in the Portuguese higher education institutions, in the scope of "Older than 23" (Maiores de 23), is far away, in essence, from the premises inherent to such processes. There is a valorization process of the candidates but academic tests, similar to school model, reign in the selection

	process and in the attendance to higher education. The candidates that can attend to higher education through this way can, once applied in the course they chose, ask for accreditation for curricular units, and in function of their experience but the process is considered slow, difficult and expensive to students, who prefer, in most cases, to attend the curricular unit.
4. Terminology	**Give the definition (s) and terms used in your own language, and your translation in English** In Portugal, the VNF-IFL process is called Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences. Recognition (Reconhecimento) – personal identification process of the prior acquired competences, whereby adults have the opportunity to have moments of reflexion and evaluation of their life experience, which will take them to the recognition of their competences. Validation (Validação)- formal act performed by a properly accredited entity with the goal to attribute a certification with school and/or Professional equivalence Certification (Certificação) – Official confirmation of the competences acquired through experience and identified in the recognition and validation process. Competences (Competências) – skill to act and react in an appropriate manner before more or less complicated situations, through the mobilisation and combination of knowledge, attitudes and personal procedures, in a determinate and significant context and informed by values.
5. National Qualification Framework:	The National Catalogue of Qualifications was born in 2007, was conceived and it is managed by the National Agency for Qualification (Agência Nacional para a Qualificação). It is an instrument that allows the management of the non superior level qualification system; it integrates 247 professional qualifications in 39 education and training areas. For each qualification are define the Professional profile, the training benchmark and the recognition, validation and certification of competences, of scholar and Vocational Education and Training domains. **Link: http://www.catalogo.anq.gov.pt/ConsultaCatalogo/Qualificacoes/Paginas/Qualificacoes.aspx**

II. Impact of Validation

6. Impact on individuals	The national scope evaluation studies, performed by external agencies, reveal that the biggest individual impact of this process is the increase of the self esteem of the certificated adult. In political terms, there was an association of this process to the insertion into work and professional progression; nevertheless, the two national evaluations performed so far reveal that the impact on this level is much reduced. Another positive impact of this process in individual terms is the fact that in some cases people continue further studies. Centro Interdisciplinar de Estudos Económicos (Interdisciplinary Centre for Economical Studies) (2007). *O impacto do reconhecimento e certificação de competências adquiridas ao longo da vida: actualização e aperfeiçoamento*. (The impact of the recognition and certification of competencies acquired throughout life: update and improvement). Lisbon: DGFV . In http://www.en.anq.gov.pt/ Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Portuguese Catholic University) (2009). Primeiro estudo de avaliação da Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades (First evaluation study of the New Opportunities Initiative). Check in: http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx There are six Thematic Papers available in Portuguese: 1. Public Policies; 2. Perceptions; 3. Case studies; 4. Panels; 5. Quality and Satisfaction; 6. Self evaluation.
7. Structural and institutional impact	The structural and institutional impact of the process of recognition and validation of competences performed in Portugal at a school and professional certification level of basic and secondary levels it is an aspect that has not been properly studied yet. However, if we consider a local scale, some studies reveal that the policies and practices of recognition of experience have originated in the disappearance and/or the reconfiguration of other practices directed to the same type of public. With processes of competitive interdependence going on, the local entities reformulate their practices in order to guarantee their survival and minimize overlapping opportunities offered to the same public. On the other hand, through this process it was possible to capture the under schooled adult public that usually didn't adhere to recurrent education (second chance school for adults). The entities who promote the New Opportunities Centers began to have contact with lots of adults, who were unknown before, and started to gather data about their knowledge, problems and interests, which allowed to orientate the adults to the adequate training opportunities and, where there was no offer locally, the agency itself could organise that training if it was credited as a training body. In some places, it was possible to establish articulation and exchange information networks about the training offers available through several agencies locally. The RVCC process in schools allowed increasing the public in some situations to double. Companies have shown very little receptivity to the organisation of collective processes of certification of their workers. Usually, the adults, on their own, go through the process and, after obtaining certification, only in specific cases, are able to get a professional progression or professional mobility process.

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>The evaluation study about the New Opportunities Initiative performed in 2009 strengthens the conclusions of the first evaluation study of the recognition, validation and certification of competences project. In other words, the most notorious effects of this process are verified in an individual level, in the domain of self esteem reinforcement of the certified adults.</td></tr>
</table>

III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

8. Stakeholders' engagement	Although the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences exists in Portugal since 2001, it has rarely been discussed or debated publicly. This is a new social practice marked by complexity, which should be subject of reflexion, debate and research. Between the existing opinions, normally there is a radical trend to, on one hand, the ones that defend that this practice has a "miracle" solution to diminish the low qualification base of the Portuguese population. On the other hand, there are those who criticise these practices and try to undermine it. Normally, neither of them knows these practices, their characteristics, specificities, complexities, tensions, potentialities and fragilities. These practices are associated with a certain "consensus" because they were able to unite, in political terms, several key actors (political parties, syndicates, and employers)
9. Debates-discussions	Until the present moment there was no debate/discussion about the policies and the practices of the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences. The dominant discourse about these practices is the political one, which aims to advertise the process, enhancing the number of certified adults and the goals to attain. The analyses of the legal documents which regulate these practices, makes clear that they are part of the European Lifelong Learning Policies, where the increase of the school and professional qualification is perceived as part of active employment policies (employability promotion) and social politics (promotion of social insertion of the so-called socially excluded groups)
10. Research and VNF-IFL	Recently, some research has come up, at a Master and Doctorate level, orientated to study the policies and practices of recognition, validation and certification of competences in Portugal; however, they are still very scarce. The research is about diversified dimensions: public policies of education and training adults analysis, organisation and functioning of the process of recognition of acquired experience, the adults' perception about the process, the rise of new Professional activity (validation counsellor), among others. Examples of research concluded in 2008: - Simões, Ana Filipa Besteiro (2008). The process of recognition, validation and certification of competences. Master Degree Thesis (O processo de reconhecimento, validação e certificação de competências. Tese de Mestrado. Lisboa:

Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação.)

- Sousa, Cátia Alexandra Ferreira (2008). The E-learning role in the recognition of competences. Master Degree Thesis (O papel do e-learning no reconhecimento de competências. Tese de Mestrado). Lisboa: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação.

- Rico, Hugo (2008). The impact of the RVCC process: certified adults' perspectives. (O impacto do processo RVCC: perspectivas dos adultos certificados). Coimbra: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação.

Examples of Studies finished in 2009:

- Cartaxo, Albertina (2009). O processo de reconhecimento, validação e certificação de competências – nível secundário: Análise da actividade de um Centro Novas Oportunidades (The process of recognition, validation and certification of competences – secondary level: Analysis of the activity of a New Opportunities Centre). Dissertação de Mestrado. (Available online in the Repositório da Universidade de Lisboa). Lisboa: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação/Universidade de Lisboa.
- Correia, Alexandra (2009). Reconhecimento, validação e certificação de adquiridos experienciais: a participação no associativismo local como contexto para o desenvolvimento de competências de cidadania no Centro Novas Oportunidades da Terras Dentro (Recognition, validation and certification of the acquired experience: the participation in a local association as a context to develop citizenship competences in Terras Dentro' New Opportunities Centre). Dissertação de Mestrado. (Available online in the Repositório da Universidade de Lisboa). Lisboa: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação/Universidade de Lisboa.
- Simões, Cláudia (2009). Análise da dinâmica de um grupo de adultos em processo de reconhecimento, validação e certificação de competências de nível secundário (Analysis of an adult group dynamic in process of recognition, validation and certification of competences of secondary level). Dissertação de Mestrado. Lisboa: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação/Universidade de Lisboa.
- Carvalho, Maria Goreti (2009). Os ambientes virtuais de aprendizagem como estratégia para o reconhecimento, validação e certificação de competências nos Centros Novas Oportunidades (The virtual environmental of learning as strategy to recognition, validation and certification of competences in New Opportunities Centres). Dissertação de Mestrado. (Available online in the Repositório da Universidade de Lisboa). Lisboa: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação/Universidade de Lisboa.
- Cavaco, Carmen (2009). Adultos pouco escolarizados: Diversidade e interdependência de lógicas de formação (Under school adults: Diversity and interdependence of training logics). Dissertação de

Doutoramento. (Available online in the Repositório da Universidade de Lisboa). Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação. Universidade de Lisboa.

Costa, Cristina (2009). E-portefólios e histórias de vida enquadrados na web 2.0 : estudo de caso no processo de reconhecimento, validação e certificação de competências nível secundário (E-portfolios and life stories in Web 2.0: case study in the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences of secondary level). Aveiro: Universidade de Aveiro.

- Dias, Carina (2009). O profissional de reconhecimento e validação de competências: que competências? (The recognition, validation and certification of competences' Professional: what competences?) Dissertação de Mestrado. (Available online in the Repositório da Universidade de Lisboa). Lisboa: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação/Universidade de Lisboa

- Mesquita, Maria Manuela (2009). Avaliar para reconhecer: o lugar e o papel da avaliação no processo de reconhecimento, validação e certificação de conhecimentos e competências adquiridas ao longo da vida (Evaluate to recognize: the place and the role of evaluation in the process of recognition, validation and certification of knowledge and acquired competences throughout life). Porto: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação. Universidade do Porto

- Moreira, Liliana (2009). Os Impactos do Processo de Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências nos Percursos de Vida dos Indivíduos. O Passado (Memórias), o Presente (Experiências Presentes) e o Futuro (Projectos) (The impacts of the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences in the individual´s life path: The Past (Memories), the Present (Present Experience) and the Future (Projects). Available online. Porto: Faculdade de Economia. Universidade do Porto.

- Pereira, Ludovina (2009). Professores-profissionais de reconhecimento e validação de competências entre teorias e práticas (Teachers-Professionals of recognition and validation of competences between theory and practice). Dissertação de Mestrado. Lisboa: Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação/Universidade de Lisboa.

11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance	The process of recognition and validation of competences in Portugal was, at first, conceived and managed in a very sustained and controlled way, with special attention to monitoring and training the teams who apply this process and to the processes of sharing, discussion and reflexion, between the government and the Centres' teams. During this first phase there was a concern with the quality and the construction of the social credibility of the process. In latter years, the main concern was the mass expansion of the process so that the goals presented in the New Opportunities Initiative (Iniciativa Novas Oportunidades) could be achieved, with a significant increase of the New Opportunities Centres, a standardisation through the definition of the duration and the procedures for each one of the phases and a central regulation of the process, through a management information system. The teams who work in these Centres live permanently in tension between the numbers demanded by the government and the desired quality that a process of this kind demands, which poses several problems and challenges, in a moment where its autonomy margin is becoming more reduced.
	The individual and social impact of this process is associated to its quality and the gained social credibility.

Any other comments

Some New Opportunities Centers accept disabled and incapacitated people in the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences. In these cases, the instruments of recognition and validation are adopted in function of the type of the candidate's disability and/or the candidate's incapacity.

http://www.anq.gov.pt/default.aspx (available in Portuguese, "The Methodological Guide to the admission of disabled and incapacitated people in the process of recognition, validation and certification of competences – Basic Level)