SUMMIT 2013
Surging to the Future: Research-informed policy, practice and
innovation in the Recognition of Prior Learning

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"RNFIL (RPL-PLAR), QF, VET
and the Labour Market"

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(The opinions expressed in this power point presentation are those of the author alone)

Translation of Acronyms ☺

- RNFIL: recognition of non-formal and informal learning [outcomes]

- RPL: Recognition of Prior Learning

- PLAR: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

- VET: vocational education and training

- QF: qualifications framework

- labour market ☺

- LLL: lifelong learning

Outline

1. Background: the Labour Market is Everywhere

2. Qualifications Framework (QF) and RNFILO

3. RNFILO in Practice: How Does it Work?

4. Systemic Principles for Setting an RNFIL System in Motion

5. Food for Thoughts and Recommendations

with special attention to Namibia, France and the EU processes

1. Background: the Labour Market is Everywhere

Objectives of RNFILO

- Recognising <u>all</u> learning <u>outcomes</u>

   However acquired, whatever the context (whether formal, non-formal or informal)

- i.e.: make the best possible use of people <u>competences</u>

   (skills, knowledge, attributes, attitudes, values, beliefs…)

- We'll see in both cases: the labour market is there!!

- But before that: rationale (labour market too)

- So many countries see in RNFILO a solution for addressing labour market issues

Rationale: the Labour Market is Everywhere

- Time and Cost (cheaper, not free, not cheap)

- Untapped human capital

- Motivation (not starting from scratch)

- Demography…

- Job matching

- Unqualified individuals/workers may have skills

- Crisis (assessment a good start before reskilling)

- Certificates awarded by vendors>Certification MoE

- Employers do it all the time (practical/informal)

- In short: a lot has to do with competences (visibility of), qualifications and the labour market

Main Rationale for RNFILO

- Creating <u>new routes to qualifications</u>!

      i.e. second chance for a <u>qualification</u>

Facts

- A lot of learning is happening at the workplace

- Most of the learning that can be easily codified is happening at the workplace

- Here again, the labour market is there

Definitions

- There are many (no consensus) but nevermind:

Formal learning

- Formal learning:

  - Structured in terms of <u>content</u>, <u>scheduling</u>, <u>organisation</u> and <u>financing</u>

  - Always intentional

  - With learning objectives

Informal learning

- Not structured

- Never intentional

- Often called "experience"

Non-formal Learning

-In between formal and informal

- It could be <u>adult</u> learning (Germany, Balkans, most of Africa, Haïti...)

- It could be <u>rather organised</u> (Ghana???)

- It could be <u>side learning</u>, together with formal learning typically

Definitions of the Contexts of Learning

-"My" definitions do NOT contain "[usually] leads to a <u>qualification</u>"

- It is the validation that leads to a qualification

- And if there is societal recognition of those qualifications, it is about the labour market again:

  - Improved employability

  - Increased productivity

Expected Benefits: Double Currency

- RNFIL has <u>value</u> and <u>currency</u> in the <u>labour market</u> (visibility of competences, qualifications mean employability/productivity)

-RNFIL has <u>value</u> and <u>currency</u> in the <u>lifelong learning</u> [formal] system (e.g. for resuming formal studies)

- **(This is, by the way, the difference between <u>recognition of qualifications</u> and <u>recognition of learning outcomes</u>)**

Possible Outcomes of RNFIL

- <u>Exemptions</u> of academic prerequisite, or of part of the curriculum (Chile)

- <u>Credits</u> (toward a qualification)

- <u>Partial</u> qualification (toward a qualification, or even for the labour market)

- <u>Labour</u> competence(s) certificate (Argentina, Chile…)

- <u>Full</u> qualification/certification (Mexico: second chance upper secondary qualification, *Bachillerato*)

Formalisation

- <u>Formalisation</u> of the validation/recognition process is needed especially when the objective is the labour market

- Typically in the case of regulated occupations

- But recognition does not necessarily mean a high level of **<u>formalisation</u>** (self consumption)

Recognition is …

… mainly about <u>qualification</u>
(in an ideal world: miror of competences;
i.e. knowledge, skills and attributes)

Summary

- The <u>labour market</u> is everywhere

- Non-formal and informal learning happens at the <u>workplace</u>

- The validation/recognition of all learning outcomes aims at <u>facilitating</u> (re-)entry in the labour market or staying in it

Summary (cont'd)

- Even the <u>paradigm</u> shift puts the labour market at the forefront:

   - Before:

      Education/Training -> Learning -> Assessment -> Qualification -> **Labour Market**

   - With RNFIL:

      Labour Market -> Experience -> Learning -> Assessment -> Qualification -> Education or re-etry in the Labour Market

Consequences of the Key Findings

- Key objective of validation/recognition is to deliver <u>qualifications</u>

- <u>Societal</u> <u>recognition</u> of those qualifications is needed for them to have currency in the society (mainly labour market and lifelong learning formal system)

- This require pre-established agreed <u>standards</u> of assessment

- This puts the <u>Ministry of Education</u>, traditionally in charge of deciding what has value in terms of learning, at the forefront

- But all <u>other ministries</u> providing training and/or delivering qualifications should be involved

Consequences of the Key Findings

- The system <u>must</u> be fragmented (to cater for specific needs, for ministries staff and workers in the field covered by the ministries)

- But a <u>coordination</u> mechanism is needed (gouvernance)

- That is for the systemic level

2. RNFILO and Qualifications Frameworks

Another Reason for doing RNFILO

- For <u>equity</u>, so that everybody is on the picture

- And the <u>qualifications frameworks</u> is the picture

National Qualifications Framework

- <u>Component</u> of a qualifications system; with a credit transfer system and other instruments (Coles and Werquin; OECD, 2007)

- A <u>classification</u> device

- <u>Descriptors</u> (knowledge, skills and attributes)

- <u>Levels</u> (5 to 12 according to the country)

- Few countries have fully <u>implemented</u> their NQF

- The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) a <u>meta-framework</u> (i.e. a translation device), not a template

RNFILO and NQF

- Links between RNFIL and qualifications framework:

  - Learning outcomes

  - Assessment

  - Visibility

  - Equity

  - Mobility

RNFILO and NQF

-But NQFs are dealing with <u>outcomes</u> (qualifications), where RNFILO systems are dealing with <u>processes</u> (documentation, assessment, certification…)

- Bridges between non-formal and informal learning and formal learning (easier because the qualifications framework is a classification device), and because RNFILO lead to a qualification

Equity and the NQF

- Fully possible if VET stops to be a second best option (everywhere except maybe in …

… Germany

RNFILO and the Labour Market

- Recognition programmes usually requires <u>eligibility</u> conditions (meaning applicants have worked)

- RNFILO may <u>not be suitable</u> for people without competences at all (or not meeting pre-established agreed standards); addressing extreme <u>poverty</u> might not be easy (low literacy issue); addressing out of the labour force issues as well (because applicants haven't worked [enough])

- Recognition of NFILO does <u>not create the competences</u> (skills, knowledge) it is meant to recognise… even if … it is still a <u>learning process</u>

3. RNFILO in Practice: How Does it Work?

Practical Arrangements

How Does it Work?

Here again, approaches vary a lot. Common patterns:

- <u>Information and guidance</u>

- <u>Documentation</u>

- <u>Assessment</u>

- (full) <u>Certification/Qualification</u> (or not)

How Does it Work in Detail?

In detail:

- <u>Information and guidance</u> (needs vary a lot)

- <u>Documentation</u> (Portfolio, previous jobs or training periods…)

- <u>Assessment</u> (Portfolio - Simulation, Observation, Written tests, Interview, Panel…)

- (full) <u>Certification/Qualification</u> (or not)

How Does it Work and the labour market?

The labour market is everywhere:

- <u>Information and guidance</u> (information or even decisions often come from employers, colleagues, unions)

- <u>Documentation</u> (many documents come from previous jobs/employers)

- <u>Assessment</u> (many methods involve the workplace)

- (full) <u>Certification/Qualification</u> (or not) (mainly useful in the labour market)

4. Systemic Principles for Setting an RNFIL System in Motion
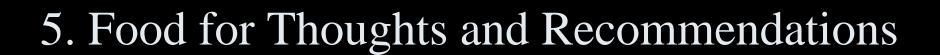
Systemic Level

- Establishing a RNFIL system means:

  - <u>Standards</u> of assessment

  - Assessment is the key guarantee for <u>legitimacy</u> (PLAR)

  - <u>Coordination</u> mechanisms

  - <u>Involvement</u> early in the process of all stakeholders and actors

  - Sense of <u>ownership</u>

Principles for Setting RNFIL in Motion

- Keep RNFILO as a flexible tool: <mark>continuum</mark> of outputs, from self assessment (portfolio) to full certification (quality assurance)

- Workers in the informal economy and/or not familiar with adult learning can use RNFILO as a <u>stepping stone</u>

- One has to start <u>somewhere</u> ("Low hanging fruits", "Quick win")

- Create success stories: <u>Ambassador</u> programmes

Principles for Setting RNFIL in Motion

- Valid approach also valid for <u>young people</u>, but not too young

- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is primarily meant for people with no/less formal learning and no qualifications (<u>target</u>)

- RNFIL-ready (target)

- Start from labour market -> competences needs -> qualification -> assessment (not education and training)

5. Food for Thoughts and Recommendations

Critical Factors for Sustainability

- Work on <u>barriers</u>, some clearly psychological:
  - Legitimacy of NFIL (culture shift)
  - Credibility ("undeserved" award)
  - Understanding what it is about ("you will give degrees to everybody")
  - Input process unknown (therefore not quality assured)
  - Many actors and stakeholders are against RNFIL: <u>universities</u> (fear of competition), employers (upward pressure on wages), trade unions (reduced commitment to learning)
  - Shift from learning to assessment
  - Ownership of the standards

Critical Factors for Sustainability

• Clear rhetoric

• Clear definitions, clear (mutually exclusive) concepts

• Information, advice and counselling

• Legal framework or social consensus

• Piloting/Evaluation (Data… ☹)

• "Physical" support: [e-]portfolio and the like (ProfilPASS, Competence passport/card…), certification

• Assessment methods: examinations, simulation, observation, interview (standards…)

Critical Factors for Sustainability

• Financing and fees

• Quality assurance

• Dedicated assessment centre(s)

• Appropriate definition of objectives and expected outcomes: exemptions, credits, full qualification

• Qualification for RNFIL officers/staff/assessors

• Critical mass for opening a recognition process

• "Group" recognition of NFIL (even if fundamentally a concept for an approach by individual)

Critical Factors for Sustainability

- Do NOT oversell the concept:

    - Recognition of NFIL may not be suitable for people without knowledge, skills and competences

    - Recognition of NFIL will not directly create economic growth

    - Recognition of NFIL does not create the skills, knowledge and competences it is meant to recognise… even if … it is still a learning process

    - Recognition of NFIL is not free (not even always cheap, but cheaper than formal learning)

    - Recognition of NFIL is probably not a universal solution

Perspective

• Lot of good practice (upper secondary attainment, <u>higher education</u> (<u>access, credit, full certification</u>), labour market…)

• Will create new routes to qualifications

• Many forms of learning can be recognised

• Some learning can be codified and the recognition process formalised (qualification)

• A wide range of opportunities (continuum)

• A suitable option in many cases, for many people

Main Issue

The take up (number of participants) is small

Food for Thought

- Most people do not realise the assessments in the <u>formal</u> learning system are based on random sampling: why should the NFIL system do more?

- If we assess workers, with a job, they do NOT all meet the <u>standards</u> in all the components of their qualification

- <u>Legal framework</u> (Denmark has quality assurance in it)

- Quality assurance for credibility and legitimacy (at least when a qualification is awarded: cost issue) - And <u>better data</u>

A Possible Checklist for a Suitable Approach

- Before designing and implementing a policy, answer <u>key questions</u>:

    - Objectives (labour market, LLL, <u>poverty eradication</u>, targeting working poor…)?

    - Who is legitimate to validate learning outcomes? Who will best guarantee <u>value/currency</u>?

    - <u>Standards</u> and type of <u>assessment</u>?

    - What are the conditions, to necessary changes, for credits/qualifications awarded to be <u>recognised</u>?

    - Would the awarded qualification be rubber stamped as different?

Recommendations

- Involve as many stakeholders and actors as possible up front (sense of ownership, motivation… and value/currency/societal recognition)

- Start somewhere ("deliver deliver deliver")

Merci

Comments and questions please to :
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