UNESCO GUIDELINES on Recognizing all forms of learning with focus on non-formal and informal learning

Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo
Deputy Director

20 June 2013
Bangkok, Thailand
Structure

❖ Context
  ➤ As an implementation strategy of lifelong learning
  ➤ UNESCO Background
  ➤ CONFINTEA VI – Belem Framework for Action (BFA)

❖ Features
  ➤ Vision and purpose
  ➤ Principles
  ➤ Key areas of action
  ➤ UNESCO commitments

❖ Feedback and some reflections on good practices
  ➤ Comments
  ➤ Lessons from good practices
Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) of all forms of learning outcomes is a practice that makes visible and values the full range of competences (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that individuals have obtained in various contexts, and through various means in different phases of their lives.
Shanghai Consensus: Transforming TVET

3. Adapting qualifications and developing pathways

Support \textit{flexible pathways} and the accumulation, recognition and transfer of individual \textit{learning} through transparent, well articulated outcome-based qualifications systems; \textit{reliable measures for assessment, recognition and validation of qualifications}, including at the international level; \textit{exchange of information} and development of trust; and \textit{partnerships} among all relevant stakeholders. \textit{Quality assurance} mechanisms should be integrated into all parts of the qualifications system.

\textbf{Link TVET with general education} to ensure flexible pathways \textit{at all levels} and \textit{facilitate the progression} of TVET learners to higher levels of education as part of lifelong learning strategies.
BELEM FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: Harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future

To support the follow-up and monitoring at the international level, we call upon UNESCO and its structures:

(j) to develop guidelines on all learning outcomes, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning, so that these may be recognised and validated;
UNESCO GUIDELINES on Recognizing all forms of learning with a focus on non-formal and informal learning

Contributions from 42 Member States
• **Recognition** is a process of granting official status to learning outcomes and/or competences, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value in society.
Validation is the confirmation by an officially approved body that learning outcomes or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies.
Accreditation is a process by which an officially approved body, on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes and/or competences according to different purposes and methods, awards qualifications (certificates, diplomas or titles), or grants equivalences, credit units or exemptions, or issues documents such as portfolios of competences.
• **Competences** indicate a satisfactory state of knowledge, skills and attitudes and the ability to apply them in a variety of situations.

• **Learning outcomes** are achievements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do as a result of a learning process.
**Vision:** As a **key lever** in making lifelong learning a reality, RVA could make **visible and give value to the hidden and unrecognised competences**. May **significantly improve individuals’ self-esteem and well-being, motivate them to further learning, and strengthen their labour market opportunities**.

**Aim:** To **propose principles and mechanisms that can assist Member States in developing or improving structures and procedures to recognise the outcomes of all forms of learning, particularly those of non-formal and informal learning**.
Specific purposes of Guidelines:

• To develop a common understanding
• To outline the major considerations in developing a national RVA system
• To assist Member States in developing tools, standards and mechanisms;
• To advocate for the importance of recognising the value of non-formal and informal learning; and
• To create an international platform for continuous dialogue
Principles:

Ensuring equity and inclusiveness in access to learning opportunities.

Promoting the equal value of learning outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Competences accumulated through non-formal and informal learning should be treated on a par with those obtained through formal learning.

Ensuring the centrality of individuals in the RVA process.
Principles:
Improving **flexibility** and **openness** of formal education and training.

Promoting **quality assurance** in the entire RVA process.

Strengthening **partnerships** among all stakeholders.
Key areas of action at national level

- Establishing RVA as a key component of a national lifelong learning strategy
- Developing RVA systems that are accessible to all
- Making RVA integral to education and training systems
- Creating a coordinated national structure involving all stakeholders
- Building the capacities of RVA personnel
- Designing sustainable funding mechanisms
1. Establishing RVA as a key component of a national lifelong learning strategy

Lifelong learning goes beyond formal education and training. It includes learning at work, in the family and community, and in leisure time. A national lifelong learning strategy aims to facilitate individuals’ access to labour market and to attain professional and social mobility. Such a strategy would be incomplete if it did not include the RVA of competences or outcomes gained in all learning competences enabling them to continue learning, enter the settings.
2. Developing RVA systems that are accessible to all 5

When available and accessible, RVA processes should allow broad groups of populations to have their learning outcomes assessed, validated and recognised, whether acquired nonformally or informally. This gives individuals an incentive to continue to learn, empowers them and enables them to become more active in the labour market and in society in general. For disadvantaged groups particularly, it can create a more level playing-field in education and training.
3. Making RVA integral to education and training systems

In most cases, traditional qualifications of formal education and learning have been defined with reference to fixed durations, subject, levels and location of study. The integration of RVA into formal systems stresses the importance of what learners actually know, are able to do and understand. This integration is crucial to creating alternative pathways in open and flexible education and training systems, meeting individuals’ diverse needs.
4. Creating a coordinated national structure involving all stakeholders

RVA concerns stakeholders from different sectors (formal education institutions, industry and enterprises, social partners, adult education providers and voluntary organisations) and depends on their commitment to its smooth operation. It is therefore necessary to create a structure that involves all stakeholders through social dialogue and building consensus on principles for developing, implementing and financing national RVA systems.
5. Building the capacities of RVA personnel

The quality of RVA hinges significantly on the capability of RVA administrators, assessors, facilitators, counsellors and other practitioners to set up and maintain inclusive RVA practices. The ongoing and continuous training of RVA personnel ensures reliability and trust in RVA practices.
6. Designing sustainable funding mechanisms

Although RVA has multiple benefits, the cost can be a barrier to its promotion, in particular to meeting the learning needs of the disadvantaged. Developing a sustainable funding mechanism is key to establishing an RVA system. To make RVA available on a broader scale and accessible to more learners, funding has to come from diversified sources.
UNESCO Commitments:

- Developing an RVA observatory;
- Facilitating policy dialogue and peer-learning;
- Facilitating collaborative international research;
- Providing technical assistance and capacity building.
Does your country have a policy framework to recognise, validate and accredit non-formal and informal learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Africa</th>
<th>Arab States</th>
<th>Asia and the Pacific</th>
<th>Europe and North America</th>
<th>Latin America and the Caribbean</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of countries answering</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region/Type of RVA Policy</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Basic Education</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Qualification Frameworks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe and North America</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Countries with different stages of RVA (TRANTALLIDI)

A. Countries where validation has become a practical reality for individuals (e.g. DK, FI, FR, NO and PT)
Have made a deliberate decision to integrate validation into the qualification system.
A systematic shift to learning outcomes in Education and Training policies and practices is important.

B. Countries where validation is on the Policy agenda and is emerging as a practical reality (e.g. DE, AT, BE, CZ, IT, IE and SI)
These countries have validation high on the political agenda but it is still practically limited.
Political agreement on the importance of lifelong learning.
Political agreement on the importance of opening up for the quality of non-formal and informal learning.

C. Countries where a limited priority is given to validation (LV, MT, BG, CY, HU, PL)
In these countries validation is an entirely new theme and can be still controversial.
Identifying knowledge, to give it a name, visibility and legitimacy on personal, professional and social levels is a complex multidimensional process with Technical, Professional, Economic and Socio-cultural dimensions.