

TRU School of Business & Economics
TRU Prior Learning International Research Centre

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“Promoting Lifelong Learning: Recognition of
Non-formal and Informal Learning in
the Context of National Qualification Systems”

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and

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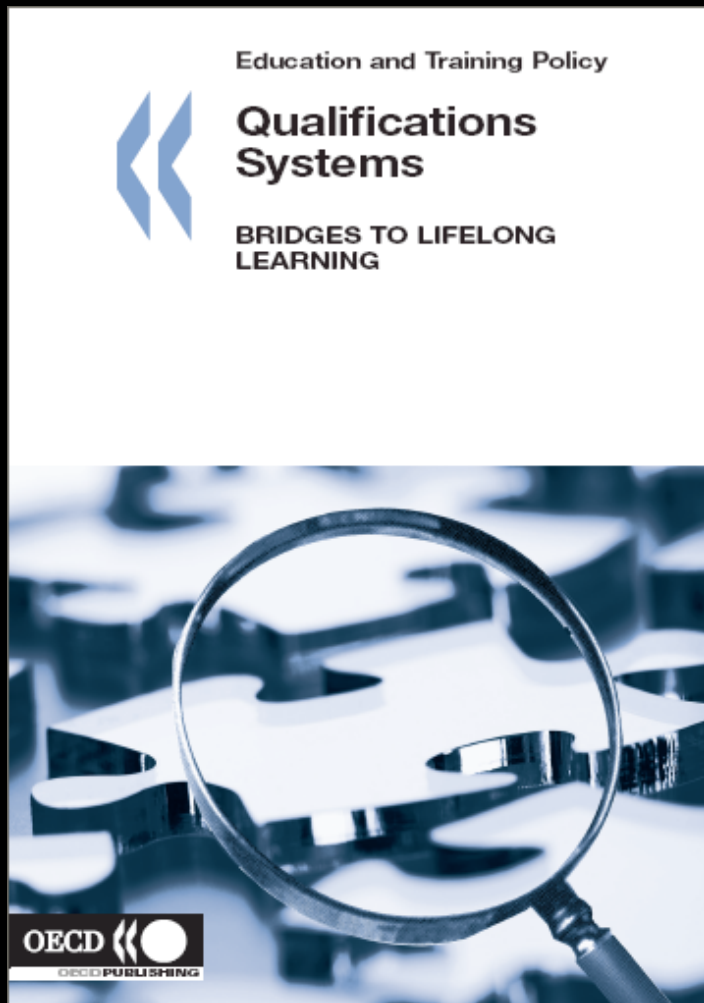
Agenda

- Background and Main Idea
- Terms and Concepts - Definitions
- Rationale
- Applications and Country Practice
- Some Issues
- (Reference)

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Qualifications Systems as a **Policy Tool**



with Mike Coles (QCA)

For a short summary 😊 see:

[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/
10/2/38500491.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf)

Main Conclusions (in 2007)

- Together with:
 - Qualifications Frameworks
 - Credit Transfer Systems
 - Involvement of all Stakeholders
 - Information and Guidance
 - ...
- ... **Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL)** is a potential mechanism to promote Lifelong Learning
- Therefore: new OECD activity (2007-2010)

Based on an OECD Activity in...

... 22 countries on the 5 continents:

Australia, Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Canada, Chile,
Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece,
Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy,
Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia,
South Africa, Spain, Switzerland
and the United Kingdom

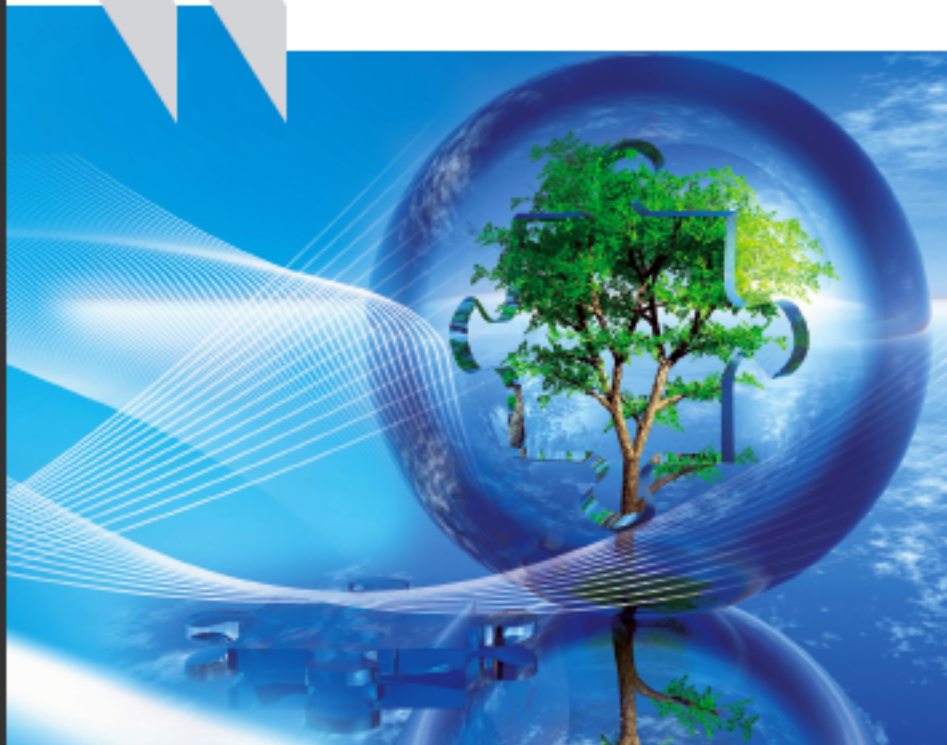
www.oecd.org/edu/recognition



Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning

OUTCOMES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Patrick Werquin



Main Idea behind RNFIL

- Recognising all learning outcomes, however acquired, whatever the context (whether formal, non-formal or informal) - Assessment, tangible
- i.e.: make the best possible use of people competences (skills, knowledge, attitudes, values...)

Benefits: Double Currency

- RNFIL has value in the lifelong learning (LLL) system
(because people gain access to the lifelong formal learning system and can resume formal studies)
- RNFIL has in the labour market
(because people competences are made visible and communicated to the wider world) - Employability

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Terms and Concepts

- Many terms (English):
 - **RPL** (Australia, South Africa, Ireland...), **PLAR** (Canada), **APL** or **APEL** (UK...)...
 - **RAS** (Recognition of Acquired Skills) or **RAC** (Recognition of Acquired Competences): BEL-Flanders
 - (Recognition of previous knowledge ☹)
 - Recognition of Learning Outcomes: EU
- Other languages:
 - EVC (Flanders, Netherlands...), *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience* (VAE, France), RANFI (Mexico), *Acreditación* and *Certificación* (Spain)...

Recognition of What?

- Many definitions of NFIL ☹️ - Not consensual ☹️☹️☹️
- Formal learning: 😊
 - Learning that is structured in terms of content, scheduling, organisation and financing
- Informal learning: 😊
 - Not structured, never intentional
- Non-formal learning: ☹️☹️☹️ (the least consensual)
 - Varies a lot. Proposition: In between formal and informal, with variations to allow for national/regional/local or sectoral specificities)

Recognition

- Recognition too has many meanings ☹️
- Keyword: here it's **social/societal recognition** 😊😊😊:
whether outcomes have value (and therefore currency) and are used in the society, in the labour market typically? (not specific to RNFIL). (As soon as you agree, you have issues because this not happening!!!)
- Key issue: recognition does not necessarily mean a high level of **formalisation**, but it needs some (continuum of outputs, from self esteem to qualifications for the labour market). Where quality assurance comes in!!

Some Key Observations

- More or less formal recognition of more or less formal learning
- Recognition should NOT necessarily require a heavy costly validation process
- Validation does NOT necessarily mean recognition

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Rationale in Countries

- 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 from the Ministry of Education
- Employers do it all the time (practical/informal)

Rationale (cont'd)

- Interesting complement to the national qualifications framework (NQF):
 - Transparency
 - Equity
 - Learning outcomes...
- Visibility of skills, knowledge and competences
- Skills shortages (availability or... visibility)
- Distribution of qualifications
- Regulated occupations
- ISO processes
- Public contracts

Rationale (cont'd)

- Most adult learning experience does not lead to a qualification
- Equity
- Creates new routes to qualifications 😊
and/or Developing existing (formal) routes

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How?

- Exemptions (of academic prerequisite)
- Credits (toward a qualification)
- Interim qualification (toward a full qualification)
- Partial qualification (some component of a job)
- Full qualification (LLL and/or LM, depending on the standards used)

Country Practice in Short

- Some countries have a legal framework
- Some do not

- Some countries recognise academic knowledge, skills and competences (Portugal)
- Some focus on competences for the labour market (Belgium Flanders)

- Some may award full qualifications on the basis of recognition of non-formal and informal learning (France), many do not!!

- Some use existing standards (from the world of education), some create specific ones (close to the labour market needs). If employers knew what they needed: tool for employability!!

Examples of Applications

Type of Application	Exemplar Countries	Typical Examples
Second chance school certificate	Canada, Mexico, Norway, Chile, Spain	GED, <i>Bachillerato</i> , adult education referenced to school system

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Exemptions from formal programmes Entry into higher education	South Africa, Hungary, Chile, UK, Belgium (Flanders)	Modular higher education programmes, with exemptions available, specific credits. University discretion over exemptions

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VET system redesign	Spain, Mexico, Hungary, Australia, UK	Creation of RNFIL-friendly qualifications
Discrete applications	Belgium (Flanders), Hungary, Canada, Greece, Germany	ECDL, language certificates, professional bodies

Countries with a System

Model	Characteristics	Countries
System	<p>Inclusive policy, a vision, a <u>culture</u> of RNFIL and a global system.</p> <p>In detail: legal framework or political consensus, practice, all groups or individuals, financial provision, quality assurance, all levels and sectors of education and training, significant <u>participation</u>, high level of acceptance by the society, evaluation of the system (data, research...)</p>	
Quasi-System	<p>Inclusive policy, a vision and a global system.</p> <p>In detail: legal framework or political consensus, practice, all groups or individuals, financial provision, quality assurance, all levels and sectors of education and training,</p>	

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Quasi-System	<p>Inclusive policy, a vision and a global system.</p> <p>In detail: legal framework or political consensus, practice, all groups or individuals, financial provision, quality assurance, all levels and sectors of education and training,</p>	<p>Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway</p>

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Model	Characteristics	Countries
Consistent set of practices	Vision. In detail: many practices, access for most individual profiles, some financing available. Not all levels or educational sectors.	
Fragmented set of practices	Clear objectives. In detail: practices, target groups, some financing. Few levels or educational sectors.	


Countries with a System

Model	Characteristics	Countries
Consistent set of practices	Vision. In detail: many practices, access for most individual profiles, some financing available. Not all levels or educational sectors.	Australia, Canada, South Africa, UK, Belgium (Flanders)
Fragmented set of practices	Clear objectives. In detail: practices, target groups, some financing. Few levels or educational sectors.	Germany, Spain, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Iceland, Switzerland

Countries with a System

Model	Characteristics	Countries
Some practices	Some convincing attempts in very specific fields, sectors or institutions.	
Initial stage	Some actors show some interest in the RNFIL concept. Some attempts in very narrow fields, sectors or institutions on a small scale. Some rhetoric in the context of lifelong learning. Some broad documents. A lot of inertia.	
Nothing	No practice, no policy orientation documents, no rhetoric, no interest whatsoever for the concept of RNFIL	

Countries with a System

Model	Characteristics	Countries
Some practices	Some convincing attempts in very specific fields, sectors or institutions.	Austria, Chile, Slovenia
Initial stage	<p>Some actors show some interest in the RNFIL concept.</p> <p>Some attempts in very narrow fields, sectors or institutions on a small scale.</p> <p>Some rhetoric in the context of lifelong learning. Some broad documents. A lot of inertia.</p>	Hungary, Greece, Czech Republic
Nothing	No practice, no policy orientation documents, no rhetoric, no interest whatsoever for the concept of RNFIL	<p>none</p> 

Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible

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Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible
		Germany, Canada (other provinces and territories), Korea, Chile, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italia (Val d'Aosta, Macerata), Czech Republic

Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible
	<p>South Africa, Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Canada (Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan), Denmark, Italia (Emilia Romagna), Mexico, Norway, Pays-Bas, UK (Scotland and England), Slovenia, Switzerland</p>	<p>Germany, Canada (other provinces and territories), Korea, Chile, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italia (Val d'Aosta, Macerata), Czech Republic</p>

Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

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<p>(France) Ireland</p>	<p>South Africa, Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Canada (Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan), Denmark, Italia (Emilia Romagna), Mexico, Norway, Pays-Bas, UK (Scotland and England), Slovenia, Switzerland</p>	<p>Germany, Canada (other provinces and territories), Korea, Chile, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italia (Val d'Aosta, Macerata), Czech Republic</p>

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Some Issues and Food for Thought

- The take up is small
- The input process is unknown
- Resistance is high and everywhere
- Need for a culture shift!!!!
- Most people do not realise the assessments in the formal 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 standards in all the components of their qualification
- It does NOT create skills, knowledge and/or competences it is meant to recognise (the process can only recognise what is there). Not a training process!!
- May not be suitable for low skilled people

Some Issues and Food for Thought

- Standards and ownerships of the standards
- Legal framework (and quality assurance in it)
- Recognition and training should not be competitors, but complements
- Supply of education and training (modular, flexible...)
- Assessment is key!!!!!! (simulation, observation, tests, interviews, written examinations...)
- Quality assurance for credibility and legitimacy (at least when a qualification is awarded: cost issue)
- And better data (a must in South Africa)

M e r c i

**Questions and comments please to:
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Read More on RNFIL?

- Werquin, P. and C. Wihak, 2011. Islands of Good Practice: Recognising Non-formal and Informal Learning, in Harris J. (ed.), "Researching Recognition of Prior Learning", NIACE, UK. (forthcoming)
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