



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

The learning outcomes approach and its implications for assessment, validation and certification in Europe

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29 June 2012, New Dehli, International conference on:
'Recognizing prior learning in adult learning and skills development:
a key to lifelong learning



My question...

How is the shift to **learning outcomes** influencing European lifelong learning policies and practises, in particular as regards;

- Qualifications frameworks
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning/recognition of prior learning

My basic assumption....

formal learning is only the tip of the ice-berg. The learning outcomes approach helps us to approach what's under the surface...





Learning outcomes - the definition

Learning outcomes are *statements of what a learner knows, understands or is able to do at the end of a learning process.....*

Learning outcomes - their main purposes and areas of use

- For defining and describing qualifications
- For setting standards and writing curricula
- For assessment
- For defining qualifications levels and frameworks
- For facilitating the learning process



Learning outcomes – high expectations...

- Allows for a better matching to labour market needs
- Shifts focus towards the actual knowledge, skills and competences held by individuals, not on where they acquired them
- Opens up qualifications systems to a broader range of learning experiences, at work and at home

An implicit criticism of a too strong focus on education inputs - duration, location, teaching methods and materials. The shift to learning outcomes is about balancing inputs and outcomes



Learning outcomes - the state of play

- A broad political support, but differences between countries
- Well established in vocational education and training, weaker in general and academic education
- Applications of learning outcomes not always consistent

Learning outcomes, the challenges

- Can all learning be described in learning outcomes?
- Is there a danger for us narrowing/trivializing the learning process?
- How can learning outcomes facilitate and strengthen the teaching and learning processes?
- How to best balance the focus on inputs and outcomes?



National qualifications frameworks – main drivers of learning outcomes.....

All 27 EU member states have implemented or are implementing national qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes - a decade ago only Ireland and UK had frameworks

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

.....has triggered these developments. By 2013 all EU countries will have linked their national qualifications levels to the 8 levels of the EQF, defined through learning outcomes - as levels of knowledge, skills and competence....



Qualifications frameworks - modernizing education and training by....

- Increasing transparency of education and training systems
- Increasing international comparability
- Indicating horizontal and vertical learning pathways
- Opening up qualifications to learning acquired outside formal education and training
- Creating a platform for dialogue between a broader range of stakeholders, including employers and employees
- Acting as reference point for quality assurance



Qualifications frameworks – changing the certification process

- Influences the setting of standards and writing of curricula
- Influences the range of learning experiences to be taken into account when awarding qualifications
- Influences the assessment approaches and methods, they must capture skills and understanding as well facts
- Influences the certificates and diploma itself – they need to signal what the holder knows, is able to do and understand



Learning outcomes – a precondition for validation and recognition of prior learning

Validation is ... 'the confirmation by an authorised body that a learner has achieved outcomes according to an agreed standard. Validation is used as an , umbrella' term and covers

1. Identification of knowledge, skills and competences (KSC)
2. Documentation of KSC
3. Assessment of KSC
4. Formal recognition of KSC



European policies on validation

- Validation is a key to adult and lifelong learning
- Validation facilitates the utilisation of existing experiences and knowledge

- European principles on validation in 2004
- European guidelines on validation in 2009
- European Inventory on validation updated every second year since 2004

An European Union Recommendation to the 27 member states to be adopted 2012/2013 to introduce comprehensive validation systems by 2015 – closely integrated in national qualifications frameworks

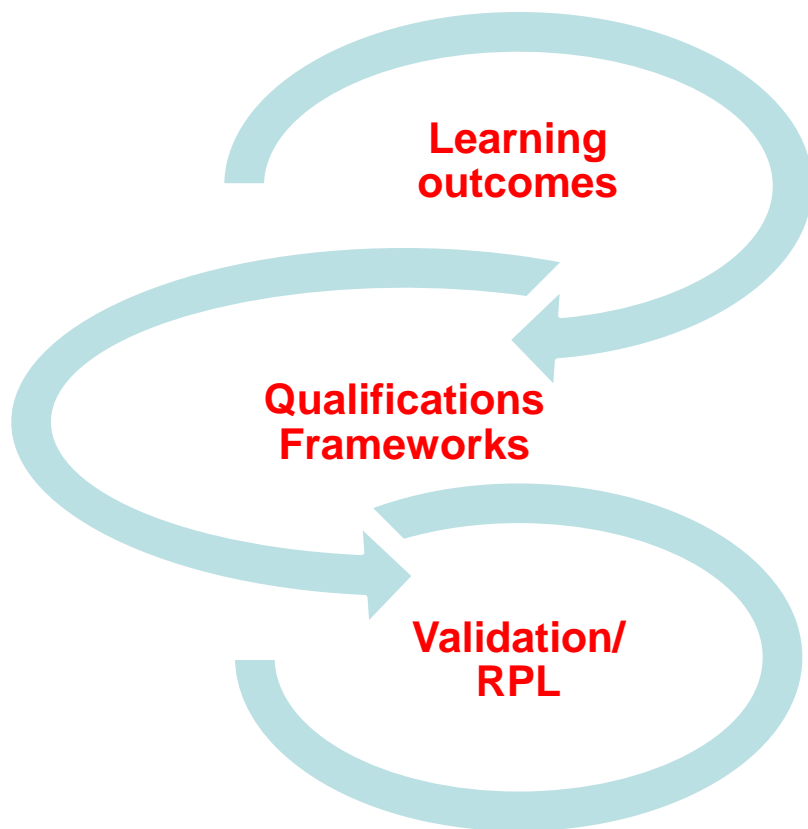


National policies on validation – mixed results

- Rich experiences across Europe
- Number of users still relatively low
- Initiatives are fragmented and limited in scope
- Only few countries have fully implemented validation as part of their national systems (France, Portugal, Netherlands...)
- Some countries are making strong progress (Norway, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg etc.)

Challenges

- The shift to learning outcomes is incomplete
- Lack of trust to learning acquired outside schools
- Low awareness of this opportunity
- Fear that qualifications acquired this way are inferior in quality



- Learning outcomes a precondition for lifelong learning
- Learning outcomes helps us to broaden our perspective on education
- Qualifications frameworks are important instruments to promote learning outcomes
- The shift to learning outcomes combined with qualifications frameworks promotes validation



Relevance to India?

The challenge to make visible and value all knowledge, skills and competences is as critical to India as it is for Europe!!!

- Learning outcomes based validation standards are critical to success
- Assessment methods must be able to capture the richness of individual experiences
- Ensuring the credibility of the validation systems is a priority
- Systems must be simple, transparent and available where people live, work and learn
- Systems must open to future learning progress – dead ends should be avoided
- The role of a comprehensive qualification framework, covering all levels and types of qualifications could be considered