

Romania between low and high: The validation of non-formal and informal education

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Abstract

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a priority for the policy agendas of all countries. Although learning usually takes place in a formal context, much of the learning is done either non-formal or informal. Experience and skills obtained in non-formal or informal context cannot be used in employment due to lack of opportunity for certification. Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes contribute to the visibility of human capital, capitalizing it to the whole society in various ways. Non-formal and informal learning specific issues are part of the European agenda for some time. Since 2001 began a series of initiatives to recognize competencies acquired in this way, the results varied from one Member State to another. In December 2012 the European Council adopted a recommendation for validation of non-formal and informal education. Therefore, by 2018 all Member States must build and deploy national systems of recognition of skills acquired through non-formal and informal.

Purpose of Study

– The aim of this paper is to analyze the evolution of Romania regarding non-formal and informal learning, with an emphasis on validation.

In terms of research methodology are considered the qualitative methods. The analytical method that will facilitate the collection of necessary information from the literature used in order to identify the main studies. The main sources of information are from different Inventories, as well as works by well-known authors in the field.

The research will highlight the importance and the role of informal education within the Romanian education system.

Keywords: formal education, informal education, intellectual capital, non-formal education, validation.

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1. Introduction

The fundamental feature of the world economy is today, globalization and use of information technologies and communication.

The knowledge society has replaced gradually the industrial society, which has replaced it, in turn, on the land, the last two being focused on the production of material values. Knowledge is power quality, as Alvin Toffler defines suggestive as it is very versatile, amplifies the extent, strength and wealth, is effective, and makes the power and wealth depend on it. The company is focused on epistemological knowledge, capitalizing on its greatest extent.

Winston Churchill in a speech at Harvard University, in 1943, said that the empires of the future will be true empires of the mind, and hence, future development will be based on other factors.

In 1975, Gary Becker developed a theory of human capital. He concluded that people's level of education and experience are critical factors in income.

Nowadays education is not what it was. Now more than ever a continuous education is required, it is what we call lifelong learning.

Therefore, knowledge policies - research, innovation, education and training - are of exceptional importance for the future of the Union, in transition to a Europe of knowledge.

In the EU context epistemological company began to focus on continuing education, lifelong education (lifelong learning).

Lifelong learning has become a priority of all educational systems. Although the basic role of formal education remains essential, lifelong learning, together with non-formal and informal education, come to customize and develop skills closer to market demands and society.

Lifelong learning can take many forms, it carried on both within and outside traditional education and training systems. The strength of these programs is that places the responsibility of the individual in the center of the learning process - the same as for non-formal education, which is reflected as a method of training activities of the European program of lifelong learning. The three concepts - formal, informal and non-formal - complement each other in the lifelong learning process. In short, if formal, official, takes place in an educational institution (school, college, etc.) and education is informal or unorganized spontaneous environmental influences, family, group of friends, media etc. on the individual, non-formal education coming to customize and develop at home, at work, in the community and sometimes at school, outside the formal curriculum, the skills, abilities, knowledge that everyone feels at heart.

The European Commission has brought together its educational and training initiatives under a single umbrella - Lifelong Learning Program. It comprises four sectorial programs and two subprograms.

2. Validation within the European context

Specific issues of non-formal and informal learning are part of the European agenda for some time. The EU has started to focus on non-formal and informal education since 2000.

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 foreshadowed strategic goals for Europe by 2010. The strategic objectives defined in these documents were meant to influence the development of education and training systems in Europe.

Since 2001 began a series of initiatives to recognize competencies acquired in the non-formal and informal way, the results varied from one Member State to another.

The Communication on lifelong learning (November 2001) shows that valuing learning is the top priority, stressing the need for mutual learning in Europe. In other consecutive European documents is signaled the pertinent idea developing official ways on validation of non-formal learning experiences has been identified as a key result - learning is more attractive and relevant to the individual.

The Copenhagen Declaration, November 2002 highlights the need for a common set of principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater comparability between approaches in different countries and at different levels. This new focus of education policy is taken into account by Norwegian and Irish initiative at the Conference in June 2004. Initiatives such informal European countries reflects a strong European time point that exists in a particular area validation of society. The most important elements that can be shared by all European countries are related to quality continuing education.

The development of common European criteria and principles of validation follows three levels:

- validation in relation to formal education and training of trainers;
- validation in relation to the labor market;
- validation in relation to voluntary work.

In 2005 and in 2006 was launched the European Qualifications Framework. EQF is the European Qualifications Framework in lifelong learning perspective. EQF was adopted in 2008. The document legitimizes non-formal and informal education.

By 2006, document preparation remains a pertinent issue of the European Inventory of Non-Formal Learning which will be a crucial tool for defining European infrastructure, comparability, and quality to support the strengthening of European validation approaches. The document will be monitoring tool

In the 2007 European Inventory update, countries were categorized according to their level of development, as being either at a high, medium or low level. Categorization provides only an overall assessment. In fact, the situation is often complex and multi-faceted at the national level, as different degrees of progress and development are in operation in different sectors (e.g. vocational education/training, higher education, the private sector, etc.) within the same country.

In the 2010 update of the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning - Final Report' (<https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2011/77643.pdf>, page 8-14) there are 4 types of classifications.

2.1. Countries with a high degree of development

In 2007 this category was defined as countries which have “moved from the introduction of validation policies to the implementation of validation practices”. Given developments in this area, it is now more appropriate to include in this category countries which have established practices for validation, encompassing all or most sectors of learning, and which already show a significant level of take-up. In this category, countries generally have a national legislative framework or national policy in place, which might be one national policy relating to validation in all sectors, or a set of policies / laws relating to different sectors which together form an overall framework.

Countries which would fall under this category include Finland, France, Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal.

2.2. Countries with a medium-high degree of development

This category would include either countries where there is a national system, or a framework of systems, for validation but take-up remains relatively low, or countries where there is a particularly well-established system of validation in a certain sector with a high level of take-up, but not a national framework in place.

Countries which would fall under this category include Denmark, Germany, Romania, Spain, Sweden, UK (England, Wales, Northern Ireland), UK (Scotland)

Countries with a medium-low degree of development are likely to have established validation systems in one or more sectors, but not amounting to an overall framework for all types of learning. Validation systems are utilised, but take-up remains more limited than in countries with a high or medium-high degree of development.

Countries which would fall under this category include Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (Wallonia), Czech Republic, Estonia, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

2.3. Countries with a low degree of development

This category was previously defined as encompassing countries in which “as yet there is little in terms of policy or practice which actually facilitates the validation of non-formal and informal learning”. This category now includes countries which may be in the process of developing, or approving legislation or policy relating to validation, or tools which might support the introduction of a process of validation such as occupational profiles, as well as those countries where very little activity, if any at all, is taking place.

Countries which would fall under this category include Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Turkey.

Based on the 2010 country updates, countries can be divided into two main categories those with a centrally designed and managed system of validation on the one hand and those with local project based initiatives on the other. These two main categories encompass several different approaches. In countries with a centrally regulated approach, validation is driven by a national law, policy or strategy, a national framework with devolved responsibilities, or is based on centrally-designed qualifications which include a validation ‘component’ or validation procedures to facilitate access to formal education / training or employment. In countries where local or project-based initiatives are prominent, these may emerge in response to an identified need to support specific target groups, or from demand from employers in a certain sector. Pilot projects focusing on testing a methodology for a specific target group, or among a small number of providers are another source of less centralised approaches.

On 20 December 2012 the European Council issued a recommendation for validation of non-formal and informal. By 2018 all Member States must build and implement national systems of recognition of competencies acquired through non formal and informal learning.

3. Validation in Romania

For recognition and validation of non-formal and informal education system Education in Romania was introduced by the Education Law 84/1995 and amendments imposed by law 268/2003 continuing education portfolio.

Methodology, terminology and concepts concerning non-formal education, informal education and their validation were established in the National Education Law no.1 / 2011.

In Romania non-formal learning is done on these types of institutions:

Educational Institutions

- Education and Training Center
- Private and public providers of education and training
- Nongovernmental organizations and government
- Employers who offer training to their employees
- Childcare centers and student clubs
- Cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, cultural centers, libraries, documentation centers, cinema sites, cultural centers
- Professional associations and cultural unions.

In Romania, there is a legal framework for the validation of non-formal and informal in terms of professional skills. Validation is provided by various institutions.

We present a brief history of these institutions

- COSA was founded in 1994 - Council for Occupational Standards and Certification
- 1996 COSA elaborated the occupational standards
- 1996-2001 COSA coordinated and financed the development of 300 occupational standards
- 2003 COSA was integrated into the CNFPA - National Council for Adult Training
- 2004 CNFPA get the role of National Authority for Qualifications
- 2011 Qualifications Authority was established

Their activities were regulated by different legal documents:

- Government Ordinance 19/2000 completed by the Ordinance 76/2004 concerning the training of adults

- Law 133/999 and 559/2004 on the organization and functioning of the National Council of Adult Training - CNFPA

Law 253/2003 which broadened the duties and powers of the National Qualification Authority.

Later, Government Ordinance no. 76/2004 established the foundation for the validation centers and institutions accredited by National Qualification Authority to carry out the assessment for the recognition of professional skills based on occupational standards. The ordinance also made reference to the importance of assessing and recognizing skills acquired through non-formal and informal. Order No. 200 416 4543/468 August 23, issued by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family (amended and supplemented by Order No. 3329/81 of 23 February 200 517) finally established procedures for assessing and certification of informal and non-formal.

Therefore, the system of validation of non-formal and informal structure includes four distinct stages:

- Identifying learning outcomes and consultants - individuals become aware of the skills they have and are professionally oriented;
- Documentation and evaluation of learning outcomes - is established that has acquired certain knowledge, skills and competence;
- Validation of learning outcomes - recognizes that learning outcomes meet the requirements;
- Certification of learning - formally confirmed learning outcomes.

The principles that guide the assessment and certification of professional competencies in Romania are:

- **Validity:** the evaluation is based on evidence of professional competencies assessed on the basis of activities described in the occupational standard;
- **Credibility:** the evaluation of competencies employs certain methods that lead to the same results on a consistent basis;
- **Impartiality:** the evaluation allows the participation of everyone interested in validation, without the existence of vested interests;
- **Flexibility:** the evaluation is adapted to the needs of candidates and to the particularities of the workplace;
- **Confidentiality:** the information regarding the manner and the result of the process sits with the beneficiary; and
- **Simplicity:** the process of evaluation is easy to understand and can be easily applied by all involved persons

Education non-formal education / informal Romania has tradition and valuable items that can be taken: education is conceived as a whole, society and facing the local profile.

If we were to make a short historic should start from the nineteenth century to remind Gh. Barițiu (1860) V.A. Urechia, M. Kogalniceanu , and Titu Maiorescu.

History of Romanian society is linked to adult community education in Romanian villages; Non-formal education was achieved and validated the local community.

V. A. Urechia and M. Kogalniceanu the school of art in Iasi founded the first school for adult evening classes and Sunday for apprentices, journeymen and young people who have not attended primary school.

Spiru Haret: sericulture schools, furrier, capitalizing folklore, folk medicine;

Stanciu Stoian: Peasant Higher School, Targu Fierbinti, today, Ialomita county;

Gh. T. Dumitrescu: Peasant School of Poiana Campina, Prahova county;

E. Neculau: Peasant University of Ungureni, Botosani county ;

Leon Topa: Peasant University, Rosa Stanca, Chernauti city;

Dimitrie Gusti: basically builds a dynamic training system of training - education of the inhabitants of Romanian villages, based on the education requirements of the Romanian Peasant and Romanian specifics.

4. Conclusions

In the current European context, education is seen as an essential element in order to sustainable development. Current Romanian educational system seeks to integrate into the wider objectives of the Lisbon Summit.

The National Strategy for a proper sustainable development of Romania, Horizons - 2013-2020-2030 bring focus on the consistency of the informal and non-formal. Promoting lifelong learning through lifelong learning for Romania represents a Directive of action.

The validation of non-formal learning and informal context allows individuals to receive recognition for what they have learned through professional, volunteer or leisure, or in any other context for learning. The validation procedure is developing in European countries and is used in different contexts, as demonstrated in the European Inventory update for validation of non-formal and informal.

The reason for development and diversification of these forms of education and training is the increasing relevance of skills obtained. The importance of the informal and non-formal in education becomes significant.

Certificates and diplomas related to different qualifications often remain valid during a person's working life, knowledge, skills and competencies required in the labor market and society as a whole is evolving rapidly. Therefore formal certificates and qualifications, once achieved, are sometimes insufficient to ensure continued employability over a lifetime. In other words, the completion of a formal qualification should now be seen rather as a step ladder lifelong learning than an end in itself.

We should note that in the labor market, the qualification certificates based on the validation and certification of competencies have the same value as certificates for participation in formal training

Romanian employers have generally become more interested in validation of non-formal and informal learning.

In the private sector, there are a few examples of Romanian private companies that have made efforts to develop validation methodologies.

In the third sector, there is a growing number of NGOs which contribute to the development of methodologies for validation of informal and non-formal learning.

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