



Workshop 5: The Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

– Working Document –

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Terminology

« Each country, sometimes each institution, has its legal, technical or preferred nomenclature »

- **In Beflex project (questionnaire):**
 - ◆ **we use 'APEL' as shorthand, aware that this acronym means very different policy, practice, purposes and target groups in different countries,**
 - ◆ **but we refer to “recognition and validation” of non-formal and informal learning**
- **Remark:**
 - ◆ **This presentation is based on some results from Beflex (for the time being: questionnaire and 3 case studies (NL-UK-B) – but main results of several European surveys**

From C. Corradi, N. Evans, A. Valk (eds): « Recognising experiential learning. Practices in European universities » 2006



European Context

- **Bologna declaration**

- ◆ *« Encouraging a common frame of reference, aimed at improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility as well as employability »*

- **Trends IV report May 2005**

- ◆ *« The recognition of non-formal/non-academic qualifications is part of the wider theme of LLL that has been very neglected so far in the Bologna discussion ... except for a minority of countries »*

- ◆ *« The issue is not clearly understood ... limited awareness ... »*

- **Bergen communiqué 2005 :**

- ◆ *in London 2007, Ministers would look at the extent to which universities were « creating opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, including procedures for the recognition of prior learning »*



Diversity - Validation of Non-formal & Informal learning

- **Existence of regulatory frameworks**
 - ◆ *from intentions, projects or recommendations to laws*
 - ◆ *F.i. emerging arrangement (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Iceland, Italy and Spain)*
- **Top down or bottom up initiatives**
 - ◆ *General framework*
 - ◆ *Or long tradition, General principles but dispersed initiatives and practices (f.i. the Netherlands, Ireland and UK)*
- **Level of implementation:**
 - ◆ *from limited experimentations (Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein)*
 - ◆ *to global system (Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Luxemburg, Norway, Portugal, Sweden)*
- **Level of impact and development: from sectoral approaches to implication of all stakeholders, from few institutions involved to all institutions concerned**

Extract from Communication of Michel Feutrie (USTL – EUCEN) in Copenhagen 2007



Validation : emerging common process

■ The process 'how to assess?' – emerging common process

- ◆ *Information and counselling*
- ◆ *Guidance and preparation for assessment*
 - portfolio, dossier, ...
 - with assistance (tutor) or not
- ◆ *(Check on completeness ... additional assignments)*
- ◆ *Assessment*
- ◆ *Running follow up*



Beflex Results : some figures

■ APEL is available

- ◆ *For admission : 52% now – 13% in the next 2 years*
- ◆ *For part of diploma: 52% now – 14% in the next 2 years*

■ Impact of Bologna process on APEL

- ◆ *For entry: 43% no impact – 38% impact – 19% no answer*
- ◆ *For dispensation: 40% no impact – 41% impact – 19% no answer*

■ Legislation – Bologna process

- ◆ *in some countries, the law implementing the Bologna BMD structure also opens up the possibility*
- ◆ *Recent legislation – Bologna tools are not having a major impact on APEL development ... or at least not yet*



Beflex : diversity and observed trends (1)

Objectives of Validation: *'for what?'*

- Admission (to 1st or 2nd degree ?): to enable applicants to gain entry to university programme
- Dispensation (for 1st , 2nd or 3th degree ?): to award exemption for some lectures within a university programme
 - ◆ *Access to exams*
 - ◆ *Adapted complementary programmes*
- Full diploma (1st or 2nd degree)



Beflex : diversity and observed trends (1 con't)

Observed:

1. Universities starting with APEL : focus on Masters

◆ *Explanation ?*

- **One trend of Bologna Reform ? : development of new Masters more professionally oriented or targeted at adult with professional experience**
 - Link with background paper on ECTS ?
- **Easier to fit an APEL arrangement into courses specifically designed for people with certain work experience**
 - Link with university strategy
 - Link with legal framework and university strategies to implement APEL (e.g. Belgium)
- **Easier where courses are defined in terms of learning outcomes (<-> content)**
 - Example?



Beflex : diversity and observed trends (1 cont)

Observed (cont')

2. Bachelors 'untouched' by APEL arrangements - Exception: UK and France : long tradition including bachelor degree

◆ *Explanation ?*

- Normal evolution ?
- Protection for the traditional 'academic' courses' ?

3. Development of APEL is growing around specific courses rather than as a part of university strategy or policy

◆ *Explanation ?*

- Normal evolution: progressive implementation ?
- Depends on evolution of the legal framework or on university strategies



Beflex : diversity and observed trends (2)

Formalisation of process: 'by which way?'

- ◆ *Recognition*
- ◆ *Assessment*
- ◆ *Accreditation or Giving credit: award credits, units, modules, award of full qualification*
- ◆ *for the admission, to award credit for part of university programme for whole diploma, ...*

Observed

- *Recognition (e.g the Netherlands): - no credit -*
 - ◆ *E.g. in (Fr) Belgium: access for one person to one specific programme in one specific university for a specific academic year – fully individualised*
- *Credit (e.g. UK, France)*
 - ◆ *Credit system with minimum and maximum (e.g. London MET)*
 - ◆ *Other examples ?*



Beflex : diversity and observed trends (3)

Scope: “What is assessed ?”

- ◆ *Prior learning*
- ◆ *Prior experiential learning (knowledge gained through experience) or Skills (personnel experience)*
- ◆ *Global capacities*

References and standards: “on which basis or in comparison with what?”

- ◆ *Based on future capacity: ability to follow a university programme (references could be the learning outcomes)*
- ◆ *Based on acquired performance (references could be the professional profiles or (European or National) qualification framework*

Observed

- **Bridges between university learning and learning that takes place outside**
 - ◆ *Example: Open Univ of the Netherlands (academic computer science programme)*
- **Questions?**
 - ◆ *European or National Qualification Framework (EQF) would/should help?*
 - ◆ *Learning outcomes would/should help?*



Beflex : diversity and observed trends (4)

Actors within University: 'who?'

- ◆ *Pedagogical responsible, academics responsible of a programme*
- ◆ *Dedicated committee: designated staff within every department/faculty/...*
- ◆ *Central coordination within institution*
- ◆ *National or regional authority*

Observed

- ◆ *Central coordination: e.g. London MET central unit in charge of the monitoring the process ... objective: last data available: 15% of students claim credit through APEL*
 - *E.g. London MET case study: Departmental APEL coordinator AND APEL Board*
- ◆ *Dedicated committee: e.g. in France – counselling and guidance*
- ◆ *Combination of local autonomy (academics responsibility) and regional coordination: e.g. Fr-Belgium*



Beflex : diversity and observed trends (5)

Tools : ‘which support?’ - *For whom? To do what?*

◆ *Convergent tools for the assessment*

- Portfolio as accumulation of evidences
- Dossier presenting organised experience in reference to qualification’s requirements
- Observation at work or simulations
- Traditional tests or examinations

Observed

◆ *“We need tools ...” but a lot of different tools exist (Transfine or Refine)*

- Needs of Training?

◆ *Quality process - Global process monitoring*

- e.g. London MET: academic regulations to ensure consistency and equity of decision-taking
- Quality code e;g. Quality Code of the Dutch RPL Knowledge Centre



Workshop's Agenda and method

- **Presentation of the observation and Beflex results –**
Fri 11h30-12h30
- **Discuss and complete the ‘survey’ –** Fri 14h30-16h
 - ◆ *Share experiences or practices*
 - ◆ *Identify the diversity*
- **Identify the enablers –** Fri 16h30-18h
 - ◆ *How to reduce diversity in this context: Bologna & APEL*
 - ◆ *How to have a more convergent approach of APPEL within Bologna*
- **Write recommendations –** Sat 10h-11h



Workshop discussion

The workshop was focused on the question : “Does Bologna process enable Validation or not? »

■ **Potential enablers**

◆ ***Credits***

- Award credits for the ‘assessment process’ – eg MET case study
- Award credits for the ‘assessment results’

◆ ***Diploma supplement***

- How?

◆ ***Learning outcomes***

- ??

◆ ***Collaboration with professional/regional/social partners***

- ??

◆ ***Quality standards***

- ??

During the workshop, many discussions concern practices sharing and other questions emerge on

◆ ***Financing of validation process***

◆ ***Value of validation***

◆ ***Distinction between Learning or Knowledge?***



Key Questions

- **Key questions**
 - ◆ *What should EUCEN be doing about APEL?*
 - ◆ *What should the Bologna follow-up group be doing to promote further development?*



Workshop participation

- **16 people for the 2 first sessions - 8 people for the third one - 12 for the last one**
- **Diversity of experience (in operation of validation or in research – long tradition or quite new in the field) – major resources people**
- **5 from UK, 5 from France, 3 from Slovenia, 1 from Latvia, 1 from Finland, 1 from Switzerland, 2 from Belgium**

