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INTRODUCTION

Now the academic society and employers in Russia are active in initiating the discussions of assessment, recognition and validation (certification) of qualifications.

So, it is necessary to determine the principal terms connected with validation, because the academic circles do not have the clear understanding of key issues of the problem that could lead to the system development which is not recognized by employers and become useless.

First of all it is necessary to note that the fundamental issue of recognition or validation (certification) is the notion "learning outcomes", understood as integrity of knowledge, understanding, experience and values which a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning.

These learning outcomes or competences are described in professional standards and are grouped into qualifications which correspond to the appropriate level framing the qualification framework either industrial or national.

Hence assessment during validation (certification) procedure the conformity (non-conformity) to requirements of professional (occupational) standards is being evaluated that leads to issuing (non issuing) the certificate.

Development of validation (certification) systems is conditioned by the concept "Learning society" or society based on knowledge, presupposing Life Long Learning and activation of non-formal and informal learning taking into account different formats and possibilities of learning including experiential one at the working place and e-learning. The results of the abovementioned forms should be recognized as well.

The mechanism of validation (certification) development is a necessary condition for individual motivation to continuing learning. Moreover, the contemporary society is characterized by rapid development each individual should renew constantly competences and receive the official recognition of possession which provides career development and salary increasing.

A) VALIDATION AND TERMS CONNECTED WITH IT

Definition of validation

The general definition of validation that is equivalent to the Russian term "признание" is most commonly used in legal acts pertaining to validation of education abroad and subsequent recognition of the relevant documents (high school transcripts and other documents proving successful completion of the secondary school). In Russia two levels of validation are outlined: academic validation (recognition of documents on education) and professional validation (that allows the applicant to work in the RF). Hence, the general definition of the term "validation" is borrowed from the Order of the Ministry of Education of the RF as of April 14, 2009 #128 [2]:

- Validation and recognition of equivalence of the documents on education in the Russian Federation is performed on the basis of international agreements regulating issues of validation and equivalence of the documents of education and having legal effect of the territory of the Russian Federation, Education Law of the Russian Federation and the present Order taking into consideration international experience on validation issues and recognition of equivalence of documents on education;
- Validation and recognition of equivalence of documents on education in the Russian Federation is performed by the Federal Service of Supervision in the sphere of education and science upon the application of the document bearer.

The definition of *validation of non-formal/informal education* is given in the Russian federal program "The Development of Education in 2013-2020" [6] as the process of formalizing the results of any educational experience gained in the course of a specially organized or spontaneous educational activity which leads to the development of a specific skill or a competence.

Definition of formal learning

It is learning provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective [6].

Definition of non-formal learning

It is learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective [6].

Definition of informal learning

It is learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or "incidental"/random) [6].

Definition of competences¹

Competences represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities.

Competences are developed and acquired by the students during the educational process. Some competences are subject-area related (specific to a field of study), others are generic (common to any study programme). It is normally the case that competence development proceeds in an integrated and cyclical manner throughout a study programme.

Definition of learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements – made by the academic staff – of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. Learning outcomes have to be expressed in terms of the level of competence (knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities) to be obtained by the learner. Consequently, the study programme learning outcomes should align with the programme competences, not necessarily on a one to one basis, but overall. Learning outcomes must be accompanied by appropriate assessment criteria which can be used to judge whether the expected learning outcomes have been achieved. Learning outcomes, together with assessment criteria, specify the

¹ Definitions of competences, learning outcomes and qualification are taken from TEMPUS project EQUASP Glossary of Terms as some partners of VALERU project are consortium members of EQUASP project [3].

requirements for the award of credit, while grading is based on attainment above or below the requirements for the award of credit. Credit accumulation and transfer is facilitated if clear learning outcomes are available to indicate with precision the achievements for which the credit will be awarded.

Definition of qualification

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a recognized programme of study.

B) FRAME CONDITIONS AND REGULATIONS FOR VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL/INFORMAL LEARNING IN RUSSIA

The first official document which mentions non-formal/informal education in the Russian Federation is the official letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of 3 March 2008 #03-369 "On the Contemporary Educational Models" [5], which said, in particular, that «...life-long learning is becoming a more and more significant element of contemporary educational systems. As part of the system of life-long learning, both the non-formal education (which includes courses, trainings, short programs) and informal (spontaneous) education (which is mostly self-taught) are becoming more and more important".

Article 17 of the Russian Federal Law "On Education" approved on 29 December 2012 [7] stipulates that in the Russian Federation education can be received both at educational institutions or outside the formal educational system (e.g. at home or as self-education, etc.).

The Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of 19 December 2013 # 1367 «On Approving the System of Organization and Implementation of Educational Programs in higher Education" [4] stipulates that the higher educational institution can shorten the length of educational programs for certain individuals by recognizing the results of previously gained education (separate units or modules) and practical experience, e.g. in the vocational educational institutions or in the programs of supplementary education.

The letter also describes the possible procedure of such recognition: the student needs to provide the transcript or some other documents which details the results of the education received.

The existing documents base the recognition of the results of the non-formal and informal education on the evaluation of the official papers provided by the individual (certificates, transcripts, diplomas, other qualifications). However, they call for the creating of the system which will allow assessing the degree of the developments of competences by measuring the corresponding learning outcomes.

C) EXISTING PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES IN RUSSIA

In Russia some NGOs realize projects on migrants training. There are some public, religious, national associations cooperating with Federal migration service. Mainly they organize training in Russian language that gives migrants the right to work in Russia.

The necessity of migrant training and retraining is obvious. The Concept of Migration policy contains the statement «considering the increasing amount of migrants at our labour market the policy of professional education should be completely changed. Instead of complaining ... we should organize short term courses and trainings to teach them and help to obtain those professions we have in demand» [1].

D) REGIONAL PROJECTS (TAMBOV REGION PROJECTS)

1. Independent non-profit association "*Regional Agency for Qualifications Certification*" was organized in 2013 in the Tambov region. Constitutors of it are Department of Education and Science of the Tambov region and Tambov Regional Chamber of Commerce. The main task of this agency is to organize independent certification of working professions qualifications. Today the Tambov regional agency certifies bakers, confectioners, cooks, welders, machinists, etc.

2. *Procedure of workers qualifications evaluation at JSC "Komsomolets" n.a. N.S. Artemov.*

The procedure of workers qualifications certification is carried out by the Qualifications Commission of the enterprise. Qualifications Commission improves worker's category if the company requires professionals of this specific rank. First the applicant and his supervisor (master, foreman) submit the application to Qualifications Commission for assigning. Then Qualifications Commission organizes an initial inspection of the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the applicant. Job Qualifications Commission is governed by the Regulations on the Qualification Commission or the Regulation on certification. The statute of the Qualification Commission includes:

- Members;
- Powers;
- Procedure for preparing and conducting qualification certification;
- Final decisions, etc.

The Commission consists of a Chairman (Deputy Head of the company), secretary, managerial employees, trade committee representatives, heads of departments and others. Sometimes Qualifications Commission invites representatives of the educational center "Spectrum".

Evaluation procedure consists of theoretical task and skills testing. All tasks are adopted in accordance with the company requirements.

According to the evaluation results the Commission makes final decision by voting. The commission's decision is reported to the employee immediately after voting. Secretary of the Commission keeps the minutes of the evaluation process and results gained.

In RF there are special procedures for certification of teachers, doctors and some other occupations.

E) UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION (TULA STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY - TSPU)

TSPU has an internal procedure for recognizing some of the results of non-formal/informal education. The elements of recognition of non-formal education include:

1. Recognition of the results of language courses taken through the Language Center outside the formal educational programs and inclusion of the results in the official transcript (450 hours, which corresponds to 12 credits);
2. Recognition of the practical experience gained through the programs run by the Center for Citizenship Development and inclusion of the results in the official transcripts (corresponds to 1 to 3 credits);
3. Recognition of the programs of supplementary education (such as "Leo Tolstoy Legacy", "Problems of Safety in Educational Institutions", "Form Supervision", etc) and the inclusion of their results in the official transcript (correspond to 1 to 3 credits);
4. Recognition of the results of study abroad programs taken as part of the organized academic mobility as well as an individual initiative (based on the evaluation of the official transcript/references, etc);
5. Recognition of some of the results of the previously undertaken vocational training based on the evaluation of the officially provided documents (transcripts, certificates, diplomas, references, etc).

The recent examples of recognition of the results of informal education have a short history at TSPU include:

1. The experience gained by the students in the translation and interpreting program who served as volunteers at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sochi in 2014 was recognized as internship in translation and interpreting based on the documents they provided.
2. Students in the law program who undertook a course of study at the Garant-Tula company.

F) SUMMARY

To improve its competitiveness the education system of the Russian Federation is aimed at finding and implementing innovative solutions for the strategic development of education. Realization of informal and non-formal learning in RF could be presented as innovative educational approach.

However, currently in Russia there is a low involvement of citizens in these educational sectors due to the lack of learning outcomes validation. Such an approach would satisfy the needs of citizens and develop human potential of the country by improving the dynamics of some perspective sectors of education including informal and non-formal learning.

The transition to such system will result in reforming of existing education system that is not easily accepted by professional community. It is necessary to arrange the following measures:

- Monitoring of non-formal and informal learning system in various educational segments;
- Determination of adapted successful models;
- Understanding the experience of such system functioning in the USSR;
- Correlation of national system with foreign;
- Clarification of NFL and IL relevance and strategic necessity for competitive and successful future of Russia;
- Development of administrative procedures in the field of NFL and IL;
- Development of criteria and methods for results evaluation in NFL and IL.

Some of these problems and challenges can be solved and achieved within the framework of VALERU project.

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