Lifelong learning and validation at universities – the role of qualifications frameworks

Final Conference VALERU
October 12, 2016, Moscow
Dr. Eva Cendon
(1) What is lifelong learning?
(2) Why lifelong learning?
(3) Validation of lifelong learning
(4) How to frame lifelong learning at universities?
(5) Bologna Process and EHEA framework
(6) European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)
(7) Qualifications frameworks and their role
(1) What is lifelong learning?
lifelong – lifewide – learning

- lifelong – learning „from the cradle to the grave“
- lifewide – learning takes place everywhere
- learning – focus on the learner and on learning as an individual process
Types of learning

Formal learning
- takes place in an organized and structured environment dedicated to learning
- learning outcomes and learning contents are defined (in curricula)
- leads to the award of a qualification

Non-formal learning
- is organized and planned learning, similar to formal learning
- is not part of the public educational system
- takes place mostly in companies or other educational institutions

Informal learning
- is not organized or structured (objectives, time, learning support)
- results from daily activities in work, family or leisure

(Council of the European Union, 2012)
Forms of learning

- To Do
  - Vocational Training
  - Learning as Personal Growth
  - Economic and Social Outcomes of Learning

- To Be
  - Impact

- To Live Together
  - Learning for Social Cohesion

- To Know
  - Formal Education

(Delors & UNESCO, 1996)
(2) Why lifelong learning?
The changing world

- Demographic change
- Economic change
- Cultural change
- Social change
Concepts of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning for ALL
- emancipatory or social justice model
- equality of opportunity and life chances through education in a democratic society

Lifelong learning for all who want and are able to participate
- open post-industrial society model
- citizens of developed, multicultural and democratic countries

Lifelong learning for finding or keeping jobs in a changing labour market
- human capital model
- lifelong learning as continuous work-related training and skill development
- qualified, flexible and adaptable workforce
(3) Validation of lifelong learning
What is validation?

„Validation of non-formal and informal learning is [...] a process of confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes [...] acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with requirements of a validation standard.” (CEDEFOP, 2014, 288)
Procedure and outcome

- **validation** as umbrella term for different sorts of terms and understandings such as
  - accreditation of prior learning (APL)
  - accreditation of learning outcomes
  - recognition of prior learning (RPL)
  - recognition of learning outcomes
  - certification of prior learning
  - and certification of learning outcomes (CEDEFOP, 2014).

- The definition of validation implies two elements: it is both a *procedure* and the *outcome of this procedure*. 
In higher education validation can lead to...

- **access** to higher education
- **credit** for (part of) a study program in higher education

(Cendon, Dehnbostel, 2015a,b)
(4) How to frame lifelong learning at universities?
## Different ways of learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>academic learning</th>
<th>learning from experience</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>theory</td>
<td>practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>abstraction</td>
<td>experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>reflection</td>
<td>problem solving</td>
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<td>freedom of purpose</td>
<td>application and exploitation</td>
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<td>knowledge orientation</td>
<td>improvement of practice</td>
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<td>systematic learning</td>
<td>situated learning</td>
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Some (implicit) assumptions

- academic knowledge
- the quality of higher learning
- development of students
- role of teachers
- self-sufficiency of higher education
(5) Bologna Process and EHEA-Framework
Bologna Process: central action lines

- easily readable and comparable degrees
- three cycle structure
- use of credit system (ECTS)
- mobility
- cooperation in quality assurance
- European dimension
- Lifelong learning
The EHEA-Framework

- 3 cycles (Bachelor – Master – Doctorate)
- generic statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with qualifications at the end of a cycle
- Dublin Descriptors look at (1) knowledge and understanding, (2) its application, (3) making judgments, (4) communication, (5) learning skills
- Descriptors should be read in relation to each other
The value of the EHEA-framework

- structural dimension
- didactical dimension
- opening dimension
Structural dimension

- comparability of degrees
- structuring and description of qualifications
  - profiles
  - competencies
  - workload
  - level
  - learning outcomes
Didactical dimension

- focus on the quality of teaching in higher education
- student-centred learning as new mission of higher education
- innovative forms of teaching and learning
- adequate forms of assessment
Opening dimension

- preparing students for further learning in changing and insecure working contexts
- development of innovative study programs at the interface between academic and professional world
- flexible learning paths: recognition of non-formal and informal learning
(6) European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)
European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) as a meta-framework

- covers all levels of qualifications
- facilitates gateways between subsystems of education and training
- adopts and promotes the use of learning outcomes
- promotes validation of non formal and informal learning
Explaining EQF

- grid of descriptors defining 8 levels of qualification in terms of learning outcomes related to knowledge, skills, competence
- knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual
- skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)
- competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy
(7) Qualifications frameworks and their role
New ways of curricula development

from a teacher-oriented approach

content  teaching aims  assessment

learning outcomes  assessment  teaching method

to a student-oriented approach
Framing with frameworks

qualifications frameworks (EHEA, EQF...)

learning outcomes of study program

professional frameworks and standards

Re-checking modules with study program

defining modules

taxonomies (Bloom, Krathwohl...)

learning outcomes of module

defining modules

learning outcomes of study program

Re-checking modules with study program

qualifications frameworks (EHEA, EQF...)

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How qualifications frameworks support LLL at universities

- explicitness of academic learning and its quality
- transparency and clarity for students and teachers
- cyclic quality development (within curricula development)
- explicit quality assurance
- starting point for validation - students learning from outside academia can be measured and validated (learning outcomes)
Validation process – Five-Phases-Model

Phase 1: Information and Counselling

Phase 2: Identification and Balancing

Phase 3: Documentation and Assessment

Phase 4: Validation

Phase 5: Certification

Additional Qualification Measures
This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
References