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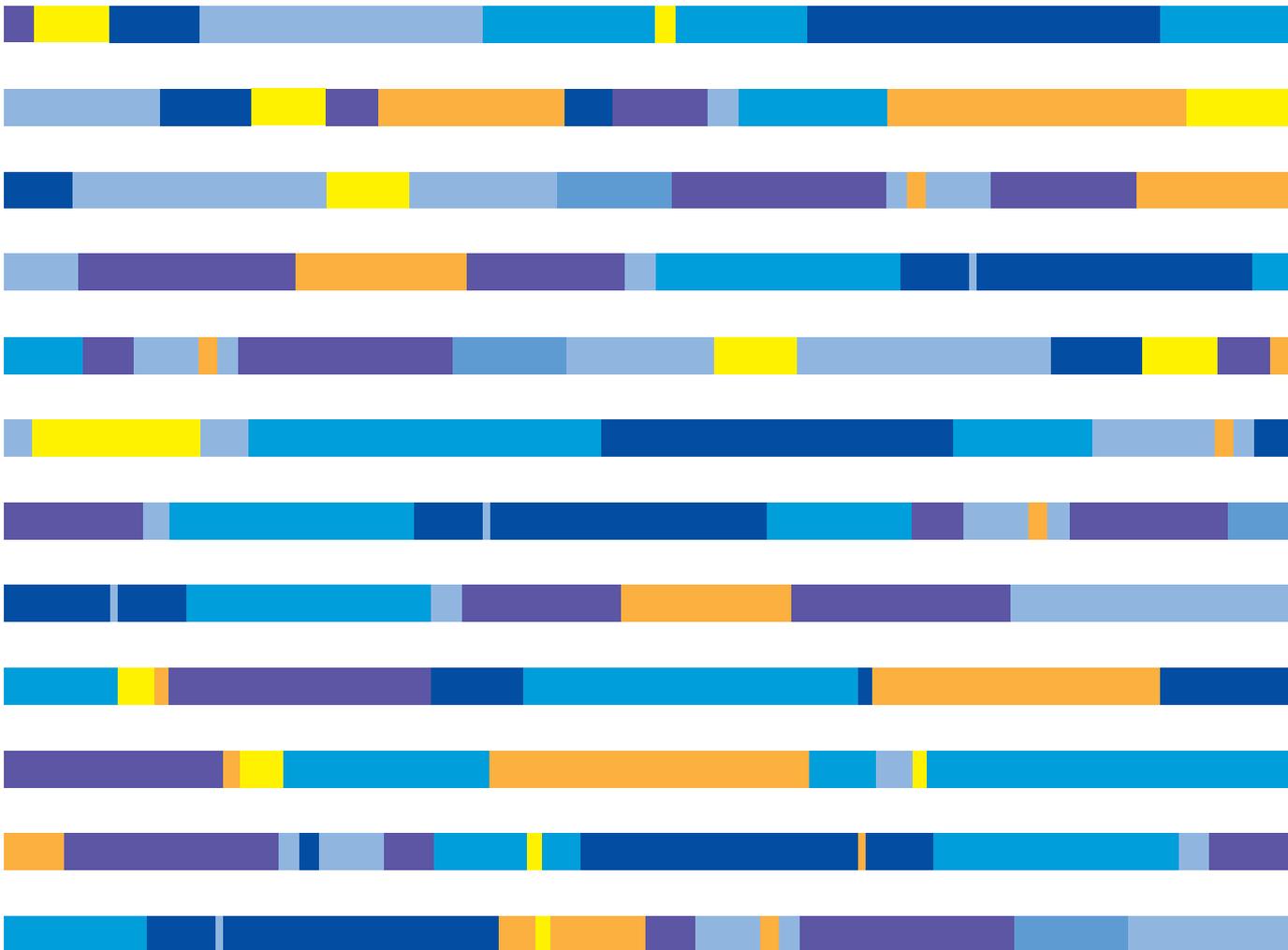
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European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update

COUNTRY REPORT: **FINLAND**

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Acknowledgements

This country update was produced by Anni Karttunen, as part of the 2018 update to the European Inventory on validation, a project managed by ICF (lead consultants: Manuel Souto-Otero, Ilona Murphy, Gabor Endrodi, David Scott and Andreea Hrimiuc) under the supervision of a steering committee formed by the European Commission (Koen Nomden, Godelieve Van-Den Brande; Martina Ni Cheallaigh and Corinna Liersch), Cedefop (Ernesto Villalba and Jens Bjornavold), and the ETF (Michael Graham and Kersti Raudsepp).

The report has benefitted from feedback from the European qualifications framework advisory group (EQF AG) members for Finland as well as other national-level quality assurance (QA) contacts with expertise in validation.

Work was carried out under DG EMPL Implementing Framework Contract EAC/47/2014-3: VC 2017/0692

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The publication has neither been edited nor proof-read by Cedefop's editing service.

Please cite this publication as:

Karttunen, A. (2019). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 update: Finland*.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/european_inventory_validation_2018_Finland.pdf

1 Introduction

In Finland, validation of non-formal and informal learning has gone through relatively profound changes since the 2016 Inventory. In 2015, planning of a major VET reform commenced and was implemented from 1st January 2018. The biggest changes introduced by the reform are the following:

- increasing flexibility of the VET system
- diminishing bureaucracy
- simplification of the system in terms of legislation (one law on VET - Act on Vocational Education - instead of two)
- reduction in the number of qualifications (164 qualifications instead of 351)
- one uniform funding system (instead of several sources of funding)
- bipartite assessment procedures (instead of tripartite) and certification changes (VET provider instead of the independent body - Qualification Committee).

Further details are provided in Chapter 2.2.

The changes have raised concerns over quality assurance mechanisms as well as the competence development of practitioners especially concerning the VNFIL processes. In the previous Competence Based Qualifications system, Qualification Committees had the responsibility of overseeing the validation process, supporting the provider organisations as well as acting as the certifying body. In the new VET system, the Qualification Committees no longer exist. Instead there will be about 40 Working Life Committees that also have a quality assurance aspect to their work in terms of monitoring the results and feedback etc. However, their role appears to be less hands-on than that of the Qualification Committees, for example the Working Life Committees do not award Qualifications as the Qualification Committees previously did.

As a result of the reform, the previous tradition of systematic competence development of practitioners no longer takes place. In Finland, there are well over 10 000 trained Specialists in Competence Based Qualifications, but in the new VET system the specialists are no longer required in the assessment process. Nevertheless, these specialists continue working in the assessment process. Also, previously it was stressed that a teacher, who has been teaching an individual, should not be assessing that individual's competences. In the current system the teachers may carry out the assessment of prior learning (formal, non-formal and informal) in cooperation with one work life representative from an organisation that represents the field of the qualification in question (bipartite). Whereas in the previous system, the assessors represented the employee and employer representatives and a representative from the provider organisation (tripartite). These developments which have taken place since the 2016 Inventory should raise some concerns with regard to the Council Recommendation of 2012, especially regarding the transparency of assessment, quality assurance mechanisms, which were previously embedded in the qualifications system, as well as the competence development of practitioners.

Attention should be specifically paid to the phases of identification and assessment because under the new legislation, there will be thousands of VET teachers, trainers and guidance counsellors who have little experience of VNFIL practices. Previously, the assessment was carried out in a tri-partite manner (employer, employee and VNFIL provider representatives). Furthermore the teachers, who had participated in teaching the VNFIL candidate, were not supposed to participate in the assessment process in order to maintain transparency. This QA mechanism has been altered in the new VET system and VNFIL providers should pay special attention to ensure a

transparent and objective process for the candidates. It should be stressed that in the VNFIL process, assessment concerns the knowledge, skills and competences that have been previously acquired and not the learning process as in traditional school-based learning. The tri-partite system operates through all aspects of the VET qualification system (preparing legislation, norms, co-operation structures, individual assessment situations and feedback system).

There are, however, several ongoing development and support projects that will address the above-mentioned issues and further develop the practices in provider organisations. However, there are several major VNFIL providers in the VET sector that are not participating in this development project, which may lead to different interpretations or understanding of VNFIL procedures and practices. The following example shows the objectives of one of the biggest development projects.

Parasta osaamista by Jyväskylä Consortium for Education - Gradia

Parasta osaamista (Best competences) is a 3-year network project, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and Finnish National Agency for Education in Finland. The aim is to support the staff to renew their ways of working under the implementation of the new VET reform. The project aims at developing common QA mechanisms and unified practices nationally to implement the changes.

The objectives of the project are to: Pinpoint key competence areas and competence development needs of teaching and guidance staff; Draft modular competence clusters according to the identified needs for staff development; Prepare and disseminate materials and training for staff development to VET providers, work place tutors and in-house training

The project partners in the network consist of ten VET providers and five Universities of Applied Science. The project is coordinated by the Jyväskylä Educational Consortium Gradia. The project will be completed by the end of 2019.

<https://blogit.jao.fi/parastaosaamista/hankekuvaus/> (fi / sv)

A second big development has been the implementation of the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules – FiNQF - in March 2017 based on a Government Proposal to Parliament for an Act on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules (2016)¹. Finland was one of the last of the EU countries to implement and enforce its NQF. This has slowed down certain developments in terms of transparency of qualifications (mobility between systems), strengthening systematically described learning outcome based curricula and/or qualification requirements, and mainstreaming validation procedures among sectors (e.g. liberal adult education) in which the learning outcome-based approach has not been fully adopted (see further details in Chapter 3). However, among educational sub-sectors VET has used LO based approach for the longest time (over 20 years). We see developments also in other sectors, specifically higher education. We do not agree with the conclusion concerning the impact of late adoption of the NQF. We have had a higher education qualifications framework since 2004. Of course the existence of the NQF reinforces the further developments which have been mentioned.

¹ https://www.oph.fi/download/182108_Government_Proposal_204-2016_on_Finnish_NQF_20.10.2016_.pdf (en)

2 National perspective

2.1 Overarching approach to validation

Validation of non-formal and informal learning has relatively long and established roots in Finland and the legislation and policies are well developed and detailed. However, there is no one single law regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning, but laws and regulations for each field of education define validation separately. These fields include basic education, general upper secondary education, vocational education and training and higher education. The core message of the legislation is that validation of non-formal and informal learning is a subjective right of the individual and the competences of an individual should be validated regardless of when and where they have been acquired². However, the legislation regarding non-formal education does not discuss validation at all, even though there are several practices in the sector.

Due to the separation in legislation, there is no single national validation policy or strategy in place, but the legislation steers validation procedures in each sector. Additionally, there are several guidance documents on validation in each sector. However, in 2017, two previously separate laws (Vocational Education and Training Act and Vocational Adult Education Act) were joined into one single law, Vocational Education and Training Act (531/2017) and was implemented from 1st January 2018.

Upskilling Pathways in Finland – low or no qualifications

Preparatory education for upper secondary vocational education and training (VALMA) is a training course for individuals with no qualifications (for both immigrants and Finnish native people). The purpose is to improve their basic skill levels in order to be better prepared to gain a VET qualification. Each student is provided with an individual study plan according to their competences and needs. Preparatory training lasts between 6-12 months depending on individual needs.

The course offers possibilities to improve language skills, IT skills, maths or natural science skills, and learning and life skills. It also offers possibilities to get acquainted with different occupations through attendance at workshops or in businesses and VET programmes.

The student automatically receives competence points in VET programmes for completing a VALMA course. Also, the identification phase is carried out at VALMA and the students can already begin a VET programme, while attending VALMA, depending on their competence level.

The existing validation arrangements are one of the corner stones for the VALMA students to proceed to VET programmes. This is because students are more motivated due to having their previously acquired skills and competences identified and possibly validated and credited towards the VET system.

VALMA is free of charge for individuals.

2.2 Validation in education and training

There is no one single system for validation in Finland but different validation procedures are applied in all the different sectors of education. In General Upper Secondary Education or Primary Education, validation is not used widely and there are no guidelines as to how validation should be carried out – though validation is

² Karttunen, A. 2016.

stated in the legislation. The renewal of the legislation in General Upper Secondary Education (the relevant government proposal³ was approved in April 2018) enters into force on 1st August 2019. It appears to strengthen the potential of validation in this sector: Firstly, the General Upper Secondary Education will start using credit points which facilitates recognition of prior learning. Secondly, it is proposed that practices for identifying and recognising competence acquired elsewhere before and during general upper secondary studies would be improved. There is a dire need for the students in General Upper Secondary Education to have a possibility for validation of non-formal and informal learning, as young people often have developed knowledge, skills and competences that correspond to the requirements of the curriculum. Good examples of this are language skills and IT skills. Furthermore, there are thousands of adults studying in General Upper Secondary Education, who potentially have gained a lot of relevant competences in non-formal and informal contexts.

Additionally to NFIL, all studies completed in another general upper secondary school would be recognised and accredited as such⁴.

In all other sectors (VET and HE) validation arrangements are implemented and typically cover the four stages of validation (identification, documentation, assessment and certification). The VET qualifications are modular and units of qualifications are awarded in increasing numbers. The increase is - at least partly - due to working life needs. This concerns mostly technical fields, in which candidates only take a module or modules that specializes in a particular specialist area concerning their work.⁵

In VET (both IVET and CVET) there are national standards (qualification requirements) and validation arrangements are well defined in laws and policies. The VET sector applies a competence-based approach and the qualification requirements are defined in terms of learning outcomes.

Validation in the VET sector is working well and the numbers of participants are increasing. The statistics cover only the CVET (Competence based qualifications) and there are more than 100 000 individual learners registered in the system, and the number is growing⁶. Each individual who participates in Competence based qualifications undergo the validation process. It is a prerequisite and an inbuilt process in Competence based qualifications

The new Vocational Education Act (531/2017)⁷ (Laki ammatillisesta koulutuksesta) was enforced on 1st January 2018. This Act combines the previous Vocational Education Act and the Vocational Adult Education Act and aims at forming a single legislative basis for the entire VET sector. Validation has a central role in the new system as the Act stipulates that a personal competence development plan (HOKS) has to be drafted for each individual, which includes the identification phase and can lead to documentation and assessment (and in certain cases, certification) of non-formal and informal learning. Also, the funding of the system steers towards validation, as 35% of the funding is based on the number of awarded qualifications or parts of qualification, which can be gained through validation or a combination of validation

³ <http://minedu.fi/delegate/file/39280> (fi)

⁴ <http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/5394394/11+most+important+changes.pdf/df474839-9c46-4040-b339-0dbfa1bc0eae/11+most+important+changes.pdf.pdf>

⁵ <https://vipunen.fi/fi-fi>

⁶ Karttunen, A. 2016.

⁷ <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2017/20170531#Pidp451480336> (fi)

and learning either in the VET college or in a working place, depending on the needs of the individual.⁸

Table 2.1 What has changed in vocational education and training for education providers⁹

The old VET system (IVET and CVET)	New VET 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act on vocational upper secondary education and training Act on vocational adult education and training 	<p>ONE LEGISLATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act on vocational education and training more freedom and flexibility to meet competence needs no boundaries between education for young people and adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two licences to provide education granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture an agreement on organising competence-based examinations signed with the qualification committee 	<p>A SINGLE LICENCE TO PROVIDE EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> one uniform licence to organise vocational examinations and provide education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> various funding channels and separate quotas in vocational upper secondary education and training, vocational further education and training, and apprenticeship training 	<p>SINGLE FUNDING SYSTEM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> one uniform funding system for the provision of vocational education and training supports reducing discontinuation of studies, encourages taking care of every student shortens duration of studies and directs education to fields with a need for workforce more authority to make decisions concerning education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> funding calculated on the basis of student numbers minor performance-based funding 	<p>FUNDING WILL BE BASED ON QUALIFICATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> basic funding (50%) guarantees education in all fields and to all students 35% of total funding on the basis of all completed qualifications and parts of qualifications 15% of funding on the basis of employment and transfer to further studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a total of 351 vocational qualifications a rigid system, in which a qualification is created for every competence need 	<p>FEWER AND MORE BROAD-BASED QUALIFICATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a total of 164 vocational qualifications more optional studies specialisation within the qualification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> three plans for education four different individualisation plans 	<p>FEWER STATUTORY PLANS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> plan for the implementation of competence assessment (part of the quality management system)

⁸http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4297550/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf/c2419142-26b2-483c-975b-e1624d81c5ee/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf.pdf (en)

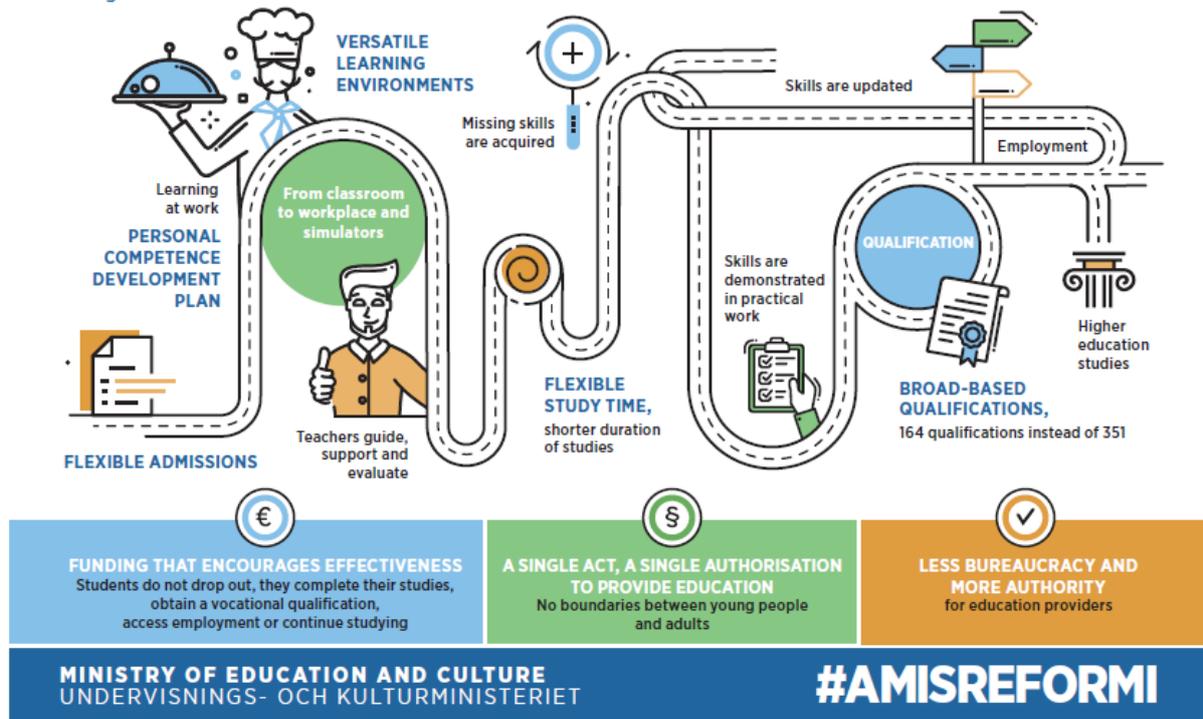
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http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4297550/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf/c2419142-26b2-483c-975b-e1624d81c5ee/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf.pdf (en)

The old VET system (IVET and CVET)	New VET 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 91 national qualification committees several bodies set up by the education provider to undertake vocational skills demonstrations the teacher is responsible for his or her own work, own class, etc. teaching mainly takes place in the education institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> personal competence development plan (HOS) <p>FEWER ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES – LESS ADMINISTRATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> about 40 national working life committees <p>TEACHERS' WORK WILL BE MORE DIVERSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shared expertise, more cooperation work is carried out in various learning environments and teachers travel to workplaces to provide guidance guiding and coaching are emphasised in teachers' work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the case of competence-based qualifications, the qualification is awarded by the qualification committee, in vocational upper secondary education by the education provider 	<p>EDUCATION PROVIDERS WILL AWARD QUALIFICATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> qualifications and certificates are awarded by the education provider less overlap in work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited possibilities to sell education and qualifications outside the EU and EEA 	<p>OBSTACLES FOR EDUCATION EXPORTS WILL BE DISMANTLED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all vocational qualifications and parts of qualifications and education can be sold outside the EU and EEA

NEW VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING as of 1 January 2018

Working life is undergoing changes. New occupations keep on emerging and old ones disappear. Technology advances. Revenue models are renewed. Students' needs are becoming more and more individualistic. Skills need to be updated throughout careers.



In the General upper secondary education Act (629/1998 §23)¹⁰ (Lukiolaki) it is stated that the student has a right to have their previously acquired non-formal, informal (and formal) competences assessed and recognised that are relevant to the general upper secondary curriculum of the general upper secondary school. The education provider is responsible for planning and organising the assessment procedures needed to verify competences. This option is not widely used. The new Law on general upper secondary education (714/2018) has been adopted and will enter into force on 1st August 2019. It strengthens the right of the student to have earlier prior learning recognised

The Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014, 37 §) (Ammattikorkeakoululaki) and the Universities Act (558/2009, 44 §) (Yliopistolaki) state that a student may - in accordance with the decision of the higher education institution - have his/her prior studies credited for, when studying for a degree or specialisation studies. In addition, a student may have prior non-formal or informal learning demonstrated in some other manner substituted for studies belonging to a degree or specialisation studies syllabus or counted towards a degree or specialisation studies.

“The EUROSTUDENT VI survey was conducted in Finland in spring 2016 using an online questionnaire sent to a sample of 24 000 higher education students. In Finland, the research project is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture’s Department for Higher Education and Science Policy, while the collection and processing of data is handled by Statistics Finland. According to the results of the article by Mäkinen-Streng, Ojala and Haltia, just under one-third of students had applied for the recognition of prior learning (RPL). Application for RPL credits is slightly more common among students attending universities of applied sciences than those at universities. Over half of students, who applied for RPL credits in both higher education sectors, were granted all or nearly all the credits they applied for. However, the prevalence of application for the transfer of credits and granting of RPL credits varies by field of study in both universities of applied sciences and universities.

At universities of applied sciences, the transfer of credits was most successful in the cultural sector, tourism, catering and sports sector, the humanities and education sector as well as the social services, healthcare and sports sector. At universities, transfer of RPL credits was most successful in the fields of law, theology and theatre. A successful RPL process reflected on how satisfied students were with their studies. Students, who had been awarded the greatest number of transferred credits, were more satisfied with their higher education studies than students, who had not been granted all or nearly all of the RPL credits they had applied for. In particular, the successful transfer of credits in recognition of prior learning saw an increase in how satisfied students were with their studies, while a poorly organised or realised process for the recognition of prior learning saw a drop in student satisfaction.”¹¹

The EUROSTUDENT Survey does not specify reasons for poorly organised or realised RPL processes, but indicates that those students, who had applied for and not been granted validation for the applied credits, felt frustrated that they had to “re-learn” subjects they felt they already had competences in. The frustration reflected poorly on their opinions on the quality and content of teaching, quality of guidance as well as the studying schedules and general organisation of courses. The less credits the students had been granted through RPL, the poorer was their evaluation of the above mentioned issues.

¹⁰ <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1998/19980629>

¹¹ Acknowledging Previously Acquired Learning and Skills – Prevalence, practices and experiences related to the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in higher education studies. Eurostudent VI article series.

Validation arrangements in the higher education sector are relatively new in comparison with the VET sector. However, most of the curricula are described in terms of learning outcomes, the validation methodologies are continuously developing, and validation is increasing in popularity as it is relatively well known among the students. New initiatives and projects promoting and developing validation arrangements are carried out in different areas of higher education.

In universities and universities of applied sciences, there is no upper limit for the number of credits that can be gained through validation. However, the final thesis cannot be replaced by validation.

2.3 Validation and the labour market

The labour market has a central role in the Finnish validation system especially in VET. More specifically the role of the labour market is crucial in:

- Assessing skills demonstrations (upper secondary vocational qualifications): In addition to the teacher, a working life representative and the student himself or herself participate in the assessment of the demonstrations.
- Quality assurance and supervision: Social partners take part in Working Life Committees (Työelämätoimikunta), which monitor the outcomes (e.g. rectification of assessments, feedback etc. and if need be, recommend corrective measures to the Ministry of Education and Culture). NB! In the old system a similar body used to be called the Qualification Committee, with slightly different responsibilities: the Qualification Committees used to award qualifications, whereas in the new VET system the VNFIL providers award qualifications themselves.
- Planning and development of VET: Social partners take part in the Working Life Committees that operate under the auspices of the Finnish National Agency for Education for the planning and development of vocational education (including the qualification structure).
- Provision of workplace learning opportunities and assessment environments for students.

There are no examples where labour market organisations would independently carry out validation activities in the full meaning of the process. The VET qualifications system is built to serve the labour market and ensure its hands-on participation in the validation processes.

2.3.1 Skills audits

PES

The employment service provides individual support and counselling for job seekers. The Act on Public Employment and Business Services (914/2012) defines the services to be offered to a person who registers him-/herself as a client for the PES. These services and tasks include different forms of skills audits. TE offices (local PES) offer training, activation services, career planning and CV and job application writing services. During the initial job searching phase, the jobseeker and the TE office work together to identify competences and individual needs. They develop a career plan and identify the future training required.

Various online services have also been developed to support career planning. They provide access to information about training and employment opportunities and ways of assessing each individual's interests and objectives.

The employment service also procures training services from various training providers. The majority of the procured formal training consist of CBQs, in which all candidates will have their competences validated. In practice all labour training includes skills audits as the core of the training. The main target groups for these services are unemployed people, people at risk of unemployment and immigrants.

Employment services undertake skills audits especially in the VET sector. This is particularly relevant for special target groups (unemployed people and immigrants), for whom skills audits (mapping and documenting competences) are undertaken in specially designed courses.¹²

Formal education and training

HE and VET providers conduct skills audits. For VET providers it is mandatory by law (Vocational Education Act (531/2017)) to conduct skills audits to map the existing competences and prior learning of all individuals who are enrolled in order to draft a personal competence development plan, which can lead to validation. Most HE institutions carry out the same procedure, but it is not mandatory by law.

In General Upper Secondary Education, skills audits are hardly used, even if validation as an option is stated in the legislation.

Immigrants

The Act on Immigrant Integration (439/1999) states that each immigrant who registers as a jobseeker or applies for income support has the right to have an integration plan.

The initial assessment defines the need for measures and services promoting the integration and employment prospects of the individual. The initial assessment is initiated by the municipality or the Employment and Economic Development Office. Identification of skills and competences, recognition of formal training (diplomas or certificates), as well as vocational planning and career guidance may be included in the integration plan, if deemed appropriate.

Third sector

Various third sector organisations offer skills audit services - mainly in relation to supporting the integration of immigrants, but there is no legal basis compelling them to participate. Liberal adult education has an important role in Finland but there is no legislative directive which requires them to apply skills audits/validation of prior learning. However, liberal adult education organisations have several initiatives, which promote validation and tools developed to make their customers' competences visible. (See more details in Chapter 2.4)

2.4 Validation and the third sector

It should be noted that only formal education providers (mainly VET and HE) can give a formal certificate / diploma or award a qualification through validation in the Finnish system. The third sector organisations provide their own certificates, which are not part of the formal education system. However, the acquired competencies may be the same as in the national qualification requirements and formal education providers validate those.

There is no national data or quality assurance mechanisms in place regarding validation in the non-formal sector. The legislation concerning the third sector does not address validation.

¹² Karttunen, A. 2016.

The role of third sector actors is mainly to inform their target groups about the possibility for validation (e.g. third sector associations which focus on the needs of immigrants). Their employee and employer members can also act as co-assessors in the validation process and provide guidance for their customers. However, there is a growing number of NGOs and other third sector actors, who have adopted Open Badges and are systematically developing learning outcomes in co-operation with formal training and other validation providers. There are also initiatives to map different kinds of learning environments, such as workshops and promote studification of workshop activities (see example in the box below).

Some third sector organisations provide validation services and have developed tools for validation. Sivis Study Centre is a nationwide adult education institution. It is maintained by an educational NGO called the Association for Educational Activity (Opintotoiminnan Keskusliitto ry), which acts as an umbrella for its 67 member organisations.

Sivis Study Centre has developed an e-learning platform for its members, which promotes and instructs how to validate the competences of their customers. They have developed a methodology and a learning outcome-based certification. The outcomes of the validation can be taken advantage of in formal training as the learning outcomes are made visible. They are currently developing an online course on validation of non-formal and informal learning and as the participant passes the course, an Open Badge will be awarded which makes the participant's gained competences visible.

Many third sector organisations are active in developing Open Badges in order to validate the competences gained in the world of associations, voluntary work, scouting etc.

In 2016, the Finnish national validation network within the Nordic Network for Adult Learning collaborated on a report "Liberal adult education certificate as a tool for validation"¹³. This report, and the recommendation within it, aim at development of the documentation practices of learning in liberal adult education. The goal is also to offer support in developing validation practices in the non-formal sector. The purpose is to bring forward some elements that will improve the chances of using liberal adult education certificates as a means of recognition in other forms of education.

As the certification awarded by several liberal adult education organisations were examined, there was little information available that could be used for validation purposes in other forms of education. The recommendation that the report proposes provides guidelines to liberal adult education providers on what kind of information should be included in their certificates.

Studification of Workshop Activities

The National Workshop Association (Valtakunnallinen työpajajyhdistys) is a non-governmental organization that offers training, development and information services in the field of workshop activities and social employment for its member organisations and interest groups. They have about 220 member organisations and their activities cover geographically over 90% of Finland. Validation is one of their core strategic goals.

They have received funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture to strengthen the co-operation between workshops and education providers, including identification and documentation of competences in the workshop environment.

¹³ https://nvl.org/Portals/0/dokumenter/2016/NVL_report_Tool_for_validation_080916_new.pdf

The project is a network project and encompasses national and regional actors, providing them with training and consultation. Guidelines and a handbook will be developed about strengthening co-operation between formal education and workshops together with tools and support models for validating informal learning.

The project is running in the period 2018-2019.

<https://www.tpy.fi/kehittaminen/osaamisen-tunnistaminen/tyopajatoiminnan-opinnollistaminen-hanke/> (fi)

3 Links to national qualification systems

National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules in Finland - FiNQF

“Provisions on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules are laid down in Act¹⁴ and Government Decree¹⁵ on the National Framework for Qualifications and Other Competence Modules. The framework enables overall scrutiny of the Finnish qualifications system, because it includes general education, vocational education and higher education qualifications. The framework and its competence-based descriptions of qualifications support lifelong learning, improve the clarity and effectiveness of the Finnish system of qualifications, increase qualifications’ national and international transparency and comparability and further national and international mobility.

In the FiNQF, qualifications, syllabi and other extensive competence modules of the Finnish national education system are classified into eight levels, based on the requirements. Statutory regulations on the level descriptors and the positioning of qualifications, syllabi and extensive competence modules on the framework levels are enacted by a Government Decree.

Finnish qualifications, syllabi and other extensive competence modules are placed, according to the Government Decree, at the following levels of the FiNQF:

- Basic education syllabus at level 2
- The Matriculation Examination and the general upper secondary school syllabus at level 4
- Upper secondary vocational qualifications and further vocational qualifications, Basic Examination in Prison Services, Fire Fighter Qualification, and Emergency Response Centre Operator Qualification at level 4
- Specialist vocational qualifications, the Sub-Officer Qualification (Fire and Rescue Services) and the Vocational Qualification in Air Traffic Control at level 5
- Bachelor’s degrees (universities of applied sciences) and Bachelor’s degrees (universities) at level 6
- Master’s degrees (universities of applied sciences) and Master’s degrees (universities) at level 7
- Universities’ and National Defence University scientific and artistic postgraduate degrees (licentiate and doctor degrees), the General Staff Officer’s Degree, the

¹⁴ https://www.oph.fi/download/182270_Act_93-2017.pdf (en)

¹⁵ https://www.oph.fi/download/182107_Government_Decree_120-2017_27.2.2017_.pdf (en)

Specialist Degree in Veterinary Medicine, and Specialist training in medicine and Specialist training in dentistry at level 8”¹⁶

“The objective of the (FiNQF) Proposal is to facilitate mobility within the education system by defining the relationships between qualifications and other competence modules. A further objective is to promote transition to further and supplementary education and to enhance validation and recognition of prior learning when moving within the qualifications system, thus supporting lifelong learning.

A key objective of the Proposal is to focus more attention on the learning outcomes required by qualifications and assist educational institutions and higher education institutions to focus more on learning objectives and learning outcomes when developing their curricula and programmes. Clear and understandable descriptions of qualifications and other competence modules will improve the quality of Finnish education. The objectives set for qualifications and other competence modules and attainment of them will also serve as a key premise for quality assessment.”¹⁷

The FiNQF is learning-outcome based, which makes the formal qualification structure more transparent. It has been beneficial also for the non-formal sector, as they have been able to describe and reference their courses and course curricula according to the FiNQF levels in order to promote validation between non-formal and formal education providers.

In VET competence points are used (equal to ECVET) and learning is not time-bound but competence bound. Results of validation are not singled out in certification, but both – validation and school-based learning - bear equal status. All qualifications are modular and assessment criteria are described for each module, making assessment targeted and reliable.

4 Standards

In the Finnish VET system there are national qualification requirements that are described in learning outcomes and include skills requirements, assessment targets, criteria and methods. The Finnish National Agency for Education is responsible for developing the qualification requirements in close co-operation with working life and education providers. The standards and the certification are the same for formal education and validation procedures. The market value of the Finnish VET qualifications is high, because working life is closely integrated with the qualification system and the qualification requirement development processes as well as with assessment procedures and helping candidates to take up further learning options.

As the qualification requirements are the same for both formal education and validation purposes, the assessment stresses learning outcomes and not the learning process. In CBQs this has been the practice since 1995 and in the new VET system the practice remains the same. The learning outcomes-based qualification criteria are the corner stone of the quality assurance in the Finnish VET system. There are no separate occupational or educational standards.

The Finnish Agency for Education has developed a massive e-portal called Opintopolku (<https://studyinfo.fi/wp2/en/>). (NB! the English site does not cover all of the features of the Finnish or Swedish versions). The service consists of several forms of services regarding education both for individuals as well as for educational authorities. Finnish residents can find all formal certificates, diplomas or qualifications

¹⁶ https://www.oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/qualifications_frameworks (en)

¹⁷ https://www.oph.fi/download/182108_Government_Proposal_204-2016_on_Finnish_NQF_20.10.2016_.pdf (en)

awarded in the service (by using Finnish bank identification codes, mobile certificate or certificate card). The portal even registers modules or parts of qualifications of every learner.

The educational authorities have access to the database and can better plan individual learning paths and receive information to support recognition of prior learning from the database. The service also includes national qualifications requirements for all VET qualifications. The idea is that in the future also non-formal adult education can also register their courses and information regarding individuals' studies in the system.

In higher education there are no national standards, but the institutions are responsible for curriculum development. Most HEIs have developed learning outcome-based curricula, which are helping to make validation procedures easier to follow and more transparent.¹⁸

5 Organisations and institutions involved in validation arrangements and its coordination

In Finland the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the qualifications structure, i.e. which qualifications are included in the structure and which are for instance obsolete or too marginal and need to be removed. This Ministry is responsible for strategic planning and guidelines in education and research and is also in charge of the development of legislation regarding validation.

Finnish National Agency for Education - EDUFI (previously The National Board of Education) has a more executive role. EDUFI decides on the national qualifications requirements of VET qualifications that are developed in co-operation with working life and training providers. The EDUFI is responsible for providing regulations and guidelines on assessment to validation practitioners and it has a strong role in quality assurance in respect of validation. The EDUFI also allocates funding for the development of validation in many respects, e.g. innovative projects that aim to improve validation practices and competence development of validation professionals. EDUFI is also responsible for coordinating – at national level – the co-operation between stakeholders, Working Life Committees and VNFIL providers.

Qualification Committees no longer exist in the new VET system, but there are about 40 sectoral Working Life Committees that are responsible for the quality assurance of assessment and for conducting skills' demonstrations. The Committees decide on rectifying an assessment in the case of an appeal. One of their main roles is also to take part in the development of the qualifications system, structure and requirements.

Education and training providers

VET

Vocational Education and Training organisations provide the most validation services in Finland. They co-operate closely with local / regional work life e.g. in terms of assessment and on-the-job learning. VET organisations provide IAG services and work in close co-operation with PES.

In the new VET system, the VET organisations are responsible for certification, which used to be the role of the Qualification Committees in the previous system.

¹⁸ Karttunen, A. 2016.

Higher Education

HEIs are autonomous and may independently decide on validation procedures. With increased emphasis on learning outcomes or rather recognition of prior learning, validation is also becoming more common in higher education institutions.

There is relatively little cooperation on validation procedures with employers or any other stakeholders. Cooperation is mostly intradisciplinary.

Private sector actors including social partners

Private sector actors including social partners have an important role in collaboration and development activities in CVET and IVET. In comparison to many other European countries, the involvement of the private sector in the validation of informal and non-formal learning in Finland is significant and practical. For example, their engagement in the VET system stretches from national to local level and from strategic work to being involved in assessment procedures¹⁹. (See also chapter 2.3 Validation and labour market).

A growing number of companies are also making use of the opportunities provided by the competence-based education system by encouraging their employees to have the learning they have acquired at work and in other parts of life (in formal, informal or non-formal settings) validated. The VET system is particularly appealing for them as it is based on the needs of employers. Furthermore, the basic idea behind the system is that adults with previous work (paid or unpaid) and/or study experience should only study those areas of competence that provide them with skills that they do not as yet command. It therefore enables employees to shorten their study time by having their prior experience validated. This reduces costs (time and training) for both the company and its employees²⁰.

Third sector organisations

Third sector actors inform their target groups about validation opportunities (e.g. third sector associations which provide services for immigrants). Their employee and employer members can also act as co-assessors in the validation process and provide guidance services for their customers. Third sector organisations can also serve as training environments, in which assessment can take place. An example is where a local VET provider can make a training agreement with a third sector organisation to serve as a training/learning environment (so that the environment meets with the qualification requirements in question).

Some third sector organisations provide validation services and have been involved in the development of tools for validation for example the OK Study Centre²¹. OK Study Centre has developed an e-learning platform for members which promotes validation and which also helps to show how to validate the competences of their customers. They have developed a methodology and learning outcome based certification. It should be noted that the outcomes of the validation can be taken advantage of in formal training because of the way that the learning outcomes are made visible. OK Study Centre has recently launched a web-based training course for their member organisation (NGOs) on the validation of non-formal and informal

¹⁹ Karttunen, A. 2016

²⁰ Nevala, A. 2012

²¹ Karttunen, A. 2016

learning. After passing the course, a specially designed Open Badge will be awarded to the participants.

Open Badges are increasingly popular among the third sector actors in order to validate competences gained. Examples of these activities are related to volunteering, associations, scouting or adult education. There are several on-going initiatives and projects which benefit from the use of Open Badges.

6 Information, advice and guidance

6.1 Awareness-raising

Currently there is a massive awareness-raising campaign in Finland due to the VET reform. The Ministry of Education and Culture allocated EUR 60 Million to support the implementation of the new legislation.

The money is allocated for several purposes including a network of 20 VET reform ambassadors which has been appointed. The network is coordinated by one VET organisation (Ammattiopisto Luovi) but the ambassadors are VET experts from various organisations. Any VET provider or other stakeholder may for example ask an ambassador to give lectures about the reform or ask them to provide guidance on assessment, validation of non-formal and informal learning or how to compile the Personal Competence Development Plan. They can provide information and guidance online or provide face-to-face guidance. The service is free of charge to the user.

The Finnish National Agency for Education as well as the national reform support project “Parasta Osaamista”, which supports the development of the changing role of teachers have organized dozens of seminars, webinars and other events on the reform all over the country.

The Finnish National Agency for Education also has a dedicated website in order to provide support concerning the VET reform.²² Additionally, the national support project for the reform “Parasta Osaamista” has a dedicated website, in which one can follow the development work, get materials and see when and where seminars or workshops will be held.

HEIs also provide a lot of information on validation opportunities in their particular organisations. They have produced materials for new students on what validation of non-formal and informal learning is and how to become validated. That information is freely available on the organisations’ websites and brochures that are sent out to new students.²³

6.2 Information, advice and guidance

In 2011 the Ministry of Education and Culture published a National Strategy for Life Long Guidance (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö. 2011). The strategy discusses improving validation of non-formal and informal learning through improved guidance procedures across the different stakeholders. The strategy gave the task of coordinating regional guidance networks and regional strategies to the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. In 2013 there were several regional LLG strategies and guidelines being developed. Validation of non-formal and

²² www.oph.fi/reformintuki

²³ <http://portal.savonia.fi/amk/en/students/studying-savonia/recognition-prior-learning-rpl>

informal learning has been discussed in some of the regional LLG development plans and strategies. The regional LLG networks are not organised similarly in each region, but generally the networks include members from all levels of education, trade unions as well as educational and employment authorities.

The Finnish National Agency for Education has published criteria for good guidance in 2014 and the updating process has commenced in 2018.

The regional employment centres provide advice and guidance on education and validation possibilities. They work in close co-operation with the VET providers of the region.

In Finland there are several guidance and counselling service centres for adults, which form a national network and provide information and guidance regarding all adult education, the CBQs and validation in HEIs.

The validation providers are at the core of guidance and counselling. In VET it is the legal obligation of the provider to arrange adequate guidance and counselling services to the enrolled students. Each individual is provided with a personal competence development plan, in which the learner's individual study plan and prior learning are documented. The competence development plan is updated according to the needs of the individual.

In HEIs validation is commonly initiated during the Personal Study Planning Guidance process, since it is acknowledged that guidance is an integral part of validation and is one of the quality assurance factors in the provision of validation. ²⁴

There are several online platforms, in which the individuals can get IAG services on validation. There are national platforms and all provider organisations have their own websites, in which there is more detailed information about the services they provide.

Like validation, IAG services are commonly part of the education and training system and are free of charge. It is common that the PES purchase IAG services in the form of short courses, which include mapping of prior experience and learning and introduction to various study paths and possibilities in validation.

7 Validation practitioners

7.1 Profile of validation practitioners

In the old CBQ system, formal training was provided to become a Specialist in Competence Based Qualifications. They could be teachers, guidance staff, employee and employer representatives as well as private practitioners. However, in the new VET system, it is no longer a requirement to have certified specialists participating in the assessment process in validation. Instead, teachers and work life representatives carry out the assessment and decide on the outcome; the profile of the practitioner in the new system is the profile of a teacher or a guidance counsellor. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure the relevance of the practitioners' profiles and the associated competences.

In HEIs there is no specified profile for validation practitioners in Finland.

However, the government has launched a relatively big support programme in 2017 for the implementation of the new VET legislation, which includes strengthening the competence development of teachers, guidance staff and support personnel.

²⁴ Karttunen, A (2016)

7.2 Qualification requirements

In VET the teachers (who are in fixed-term employment) must fulfil the qualification requirements specified in the Teaching Qualifications Decree (986/1998). In many cases the VET teachers either have an MA in the field they are teaching or the highest non-academic qualification available in the field. Additionally, they often study a formal vocational pedagogical teacher's qualification while in employment. Teachers also need to fulfil the requirements regarding work experience, in accordance with the above-mentioned Decree. The guidance counsellors often have an MA in social studies, study counselling, education theory or equivalent studies.

Currently in HE there are no formal qualification requirements to work in the field of validation. The assessors / guidance counsellors have teacher / counsellor qualifications. Further training for validation activities is provided in HEIs, but it is not a requirement.

In the non-formal sector, there are no national requirements for practitioners, but more and more non-formal education and training providers are developing Open Badges for adult educators in their sector.

7.3 Provision of training and support to validation practitioners

Universities of Applied Sciences provided the Specialist in Competence Based Qualifications training, however, after the VET reform of 2018 this is no longer required. It was also possible to receive the qualification through a validation process. Specialists have been trained since 1995 and there are over 12 000 trained specialists in Finland. Approximately 800 specialists were trained per annum. As the CBQ system has evolved over the years, further training has also been provided for Specialists who need to have their competences updated.

Even though there is no more training which leads to this special qualification, the training needs of practitioners are covered by flexible training modules which are planned and implemented jointly by universities of applied sciences, VET providers and labour market representatives.

The Qualification Committees played an important role as a support network for practitioners. They provided fora for discussion and development of validation procedures and assessment. The Qualification Committees will not exist after 2018, but there are about 40 working life committees that operate nationally. Their responsibility is quality assurance of assessment and conducting skills' demonstrations. They also take part in the development of the qualifications system.

With the VET reform there are a lot of development projects, networks and workshops for practitioners to adapt to the new VET system. The Ministry of Education and Culture allocated EUR 60 Million to VET providers between 2017 and 2020 for implementing the reform. The funds are directed at various development and support projects as well as information campaigns.²⁵ (See example box in Chapter 1)

Digiostu – staff training project

DigiOstu - staff training project ran between 2016 and 2017. It was funded by the National Board of Education.

²⁵ http://minedu.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/ammatillisen-koulutuksen-reformin-toimeenpanoa-tuetaan-60-miljoonan-euron-tukipaketilla (fi)

The aim of the training was to increase the competences of VET staff in validation of non-formal and informal learning of immigrants. The training was provided both as a web-course and contact learning.

The main themes of the course were: Validation of immigrants' competences; Guidance as an integral part of validation; Developing quality in validation.

8 Quality assurance

In Finland there is no specific quality assurance framework concerning validation procedures but aspects related to quality are important in activities of VET providers. As validation is embedded in the formal qualification system, the quality assurance mechanisms that apply to education and training with special emphasis on assessment are also applied to validation procedures.

As the non-formal education providers in Finland have less established and systematic validation systems, there are no established quality assurance systems in place either. In HE validation is assessed through external audits and there are quality assurance guidelines for validation.

On the other hand, the quality assurance mechanisms (Karttunen, 2012) regarding CBQs were well developed and relatively extensive. The corner stone of the quality assurance in VET qualifications are the national qualification requirements that are developed in cooperation with experts from working life and education. These requirements determine the learning outcomes along with assessment criteria.

Until 2018, the Qualification Committees (Opetushallitus, 2012b) have had an important role in quality assurance. They monitored and supervised the validation procedures and also supported CBQ organisers in their work. The Qualification Committees performed external audits on CBQ organisers with the aim of improving and supporting validation procedures and co-operation with employers. With the VET reform 2018, the Qualification Committees no longer exist and the main responsibility for quality assurance is within the provider organisations. The newly formed Working Life Committees have a role in the quality assurance of assessment and conducting skills' demonstrations.

Until 2018, the CBQ providers were obliged to have a contract for the arrangement of competence tests. The providers were also required to compile a detailed plan to arrange competence tests. The contract and the plan had to be approved by the Qualification Committee in charge of the qualification in question. Each qualification required a separate plan. In the VET reform 2018, the VET provider has one uniform licence to organise vocational examinations and provide education.²⁶

Before the VET reform of 2018, at least one of the assessors had to be a certified CBQ assessor. The assessors underwent a training programme 'Specialist in CBQs', which is 25 Finnish credits. The employer-based assessors participated in the same training. In the new VET system, that requirement no longer applies and the teachers are assessing competences in co-operation with work life experts.

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http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4297550/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf/c2419142-26b2-483c-975b-e1624d81c5ee/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf.pdf (en)

9 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

9.1 Funding

The renewed VET has simplified the funding from the viewpoint of the provider organisations: there is only one uniform funding system for all VET instead of various funding mechanisms depending on the type of VET being provided. This enables flexibility for the providers to decide, e.g. how best to organise validation procedures in their organisations. Also, the current funding system steers the organisers towards validation, since the funding is no longer based solely on the number of students, but the number or qualifications or parts of qualifications. The situation is that 35% of the funding is based on the number of qualifications (or parts of qualifications), 50% is basic funding and 15% of the funding is based on employment after certification or transfer to further studies.²⁷

There are various ways of gaining funding and support for validation depending on the life situation of the individual.

The Education Fund is a fund administered by the social partners of the Finnish labour market. Its purpose is to support employees' vocational studies by granting them financial assistance (Adult Education Allowance) and to support the development of the vocational qualification system by granting scholarships for competence-based qualifications (Scholarship for Qualified Employee). The Fund also provides information and advice on benefits and makes proposals for the development of legislation within its field. The maximum allowance period is 19 months if the applicant has a working history of at least eight years.

The scholarship for qualified employee is available for those who have passed the competence tests of CBQs. The scholarship is granted on condition that the person has at least five years of working history in Finland before he/she has passed the tests, irrespective of whether the applicant is unemployed, employed or on study leave.

In the case of unemployment, an individual can study during the period of unemployment (according to an individual agreement with the local employment centre). The unemployed person may use the unemployment allowances solely for studying purposes. The maximum allowance period is 24 months.

In apprenticeship training the students are in paid employment. The employers receive a grant for each student. The apprentices in Finland are mainly adults, unlike in other countries. The qualifications carried out through apprenticeship training are mainly CBQs and individualised. In the VET reform, possibilities for apprenticeships have been strengthened for all learners.

The funding system for validation purposes is sustainable as it is linked with formal education and traditionally in Finland education is free.²⁸

9.2 Distribution of costs

As validation procedures are embedded in the formal training system, there are no calculations as to what the costs are which are borne by organisations. The funding

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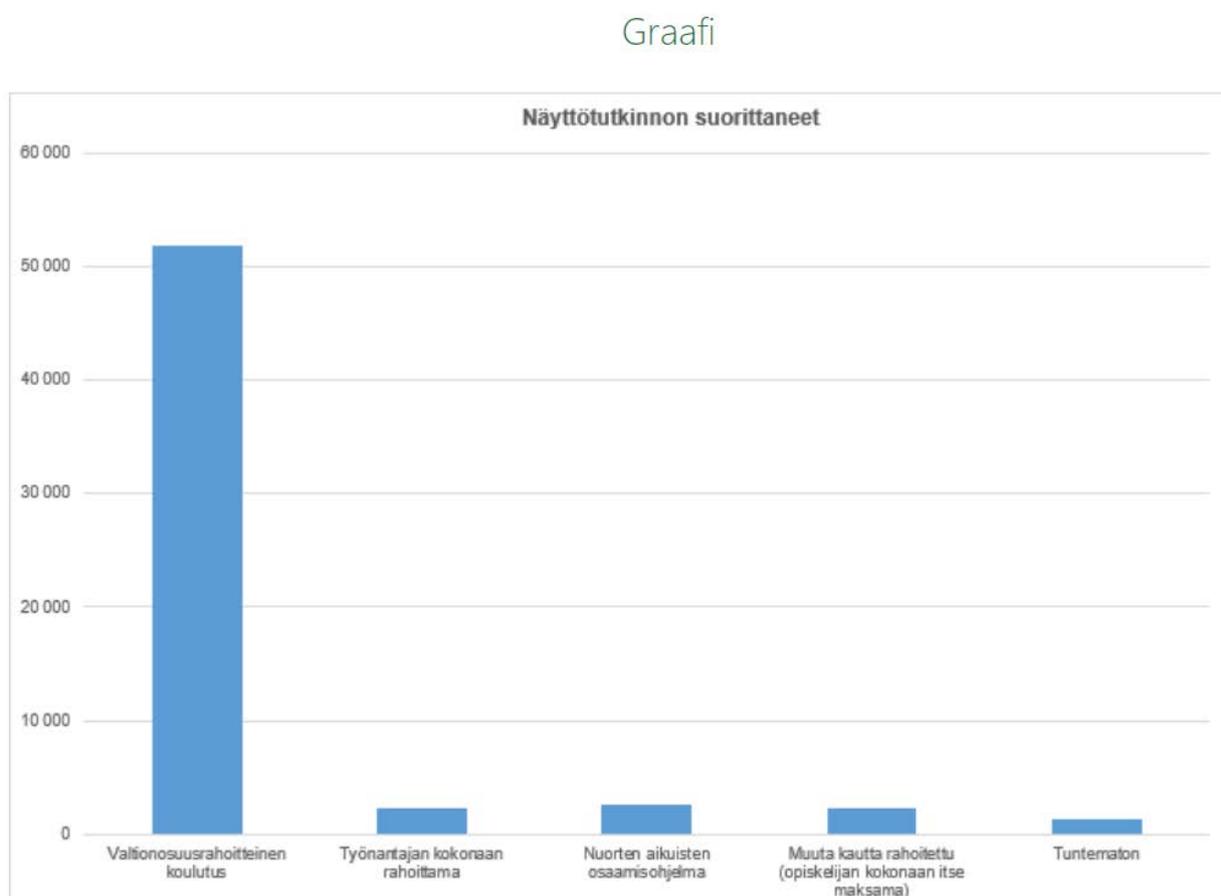
http://minedu.fi/documents/1410845/4297550/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf/c2419142-26b2-483c-975b-e1624d81c5ee/OKM_AKR_what+will+change+for+education+providers.pdf.pdf (en)

²⁸ Karttunen, A. 2016

to organise training is provided mostly by either the state, municipalities or employers, and to some extent by the students themselves. The funding includes validation procedures. There is no earmarked money for validation, but it is an integral part of the entire education system. Validation is not charged in HEIs either, but it is an integral part of the guidance and counselling right after enrolment.²⁹

Validation is normally carried out free of charge. This applies to students at all levels of education from general, non-formal to vocational and higher education. In case there are some special costs (e.g. materials) the training / validation provider may charge a reasonable fee (not in labour market training). The fees are not determined by legislation.³⁰

Figure 9.1 Number of individuals awarded qualifications or partial qualifications in the competence-based qualification system in 2017 by source of financing



First column: state funded (over 50 000 individuals)

Second column: fully paid by employer

Third column: Young adults' competence programme (national development project)

Fourth column: fully paid by the candidate/student

Fifth column: source unknown.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Total: 60 3031 individuals

Source: <https://vipunen.fi>

9.3 Evidence of benefits to individuals

According to the Finnish Statistical Yearbook on education 2014 (Kumpulainen, 2014), the employment rate at the end of 2012, of those who were awarded qualification either in further or specialist qualifications (CBQs) in 2011 was 73%. They were in full-time employment. 10% were unemployed. 13.5% were continuing with further studies (either alongside working or as full-time students) and 3.5% were involved in other activities (such as military or non-military service, stay-home parenting, retired or on unemployment pension). The overall unemployment rate in Finland in 2012 was about 8%.

The corresponding figures of the individuals who were awarded a qualification in IVET (school-based qualification) look very different: only 49, 6% of the individuals were in employment, the unemployment rate was 15.2%, engaged in further studies 20, 6% and involved in other activities 14.6%.

These numbers, obviously, are not only explained by the presence or absence of validation, but the age group of individuals, their prior experience and networks in working life etc. It is a fact, however, that the study times are far shorter (or non-existent) in a system that embraces validation; the individuals are in general more motivated to gain a qualification through a combination of validation and possibly further learning. It is also financially beneficial for the individual (less time spent in education, better chances of retaining or gaining a job, better opportunities to be promoted etc.).

There is little or no research or statistics on the actual benefits to the individuals, but as the statistical examples indicate in chapter 9.4.1, the numbers of individuals keep growing (and have been growing since 1995). This is a positive sign that individuals find the VET qualifications, which are based on the idea of validation, beneficial.

9.4 Beneficiaries and users of validation processes

9.4.1 Validation trends

Table 9.1 All registered individuals in the CBQ system (including apprenticeships) and the ratio between men and women.

Year	Total	Men	Women
2015	115,341	53,048	62,293
2016	120,737	55,607	65,130

The table above shows the numbers of individuals aiming to get a qualification through CBQs has been growing by over 5 000 individuals between 2015 and 2016. The long-term trend shows a continuous increase in the numbers of participants (since the mid-1990s) with some fluctuation between individual years. This is an indicator that the CBQs are well known and the individuals see them as beneficial.

There is no national data available on the other educational sectors. However according to interviews and the initiatives taking place in other sectors as well as government priorities, the upward trend appears to be positive in all sectors. 2017 data was not available during the writing of the report.

9.4.2 Validation users

The table above shows that women outnumber men in the CBQ system. The trend is the same in all sectors of post primary education. The representation of different age groups in the CBQs ranges from 15-19 years old to over 60 years old. Majority of the participants are between 20-50 years old.

The CBQ system in Finland is not only focused on people with low qualifications or special target groups, but the entire working age population is targeted with different objectives: even employed individuals may wish to update their old qualification or they may have changed careers and wish to have their competences validated. Some may lack a qualification altogether and wish to gain one. The needs of the individuals are very versatile and the various target groups include long-term unemployed people, immigrants, people at risk of unemployment and people with permanent jobs.

9.4.3 Validation and disadvantaged groups

Validation arrangements in all sectors include special target groups depending on the nature of the qualification and the background of the individual. However, after the unprecedented influx of refugees in 2015-2016 in Finland, special measures have been taken.

“On 17 February 2016, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed a steering group tasked with monitoring and supporting higher education institutions, which had been given the task of supporting the educational paths of immigrants, who qualify for higher education studies and who have a higher education. Pilot higher education institutions that participated in the Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland project (hereinafter SIMHE) in 2016 included the University of Jyväskylä and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. In 2017, the University of Helsinki, the University of Turku, Karelia University of Applied Sciences and Oulu University of Applied Sciences also joined the project.

On the basis of SIMHE project experiences, the steering group feels that fundamental improvements are necessary in the practices for the recognition and accreditation of prior learning of immigrants. Immigrants have a great deal of prior knowledge and education, but these are not sufficiently recognised in working life or the education system.”³¹

SIMHE project has quite successfully developed validation and guidance methods and models for immigrants in Finland and the project is continuing.

The Ministry of Culture and Education started a new programme “Immigrants in Vocational Education and Training” (Maahanmuuttajat ammatillisessa koulutuksessa – MAO), which provided funding to develop for example methods and tools for guidance and validation for immigrants (especially refugees). The ministry allocated EUR 20 Million for Finnish VET providers to improve the validation and guidance methods and practices of immigrants. The projects are overseen by the ministry and the best practices are disseminated through EPALE.

10 Validation methods

VET

In the application phase (identification) the applicant is interviewed, and the qualification options or possible qualification requirements are discussed depending

³¹ http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/80706/OKM_38_2017.pdf

on the needs of the candidate. Self-assessments are commonly used. In Finland there is an e-tool (www.osaan.fi), which comprises all VET qualifications and the assessment criteria. The candidate may make a self-assessment to verify if s/he has the required competences to take the competence tests. The candidate is also asked to provide any evidence of his/her competences related to the learning outcomes of the qualification in question.

In cases where the candidate has reliable documented evidence of competences (e.g. from non-formal settings) the documentation is delivered to the assessors. They may recognise a qualification unit or units or the entire qualification on the basis of the evidence. In cases where there is no documented evidence or one cannot verify competences on the basis of the documentation, competence tests will take place.

The competence tests are in most cases carried out in an authentic work environment. The VET provider will have drafted an individual competence development plan in cooperation with the candidate. The test situation is monitored and assessed by a working life representative and a representative from education (bipartite assessment). The assessors decide and record the results accordingly. After the competence test the assessors and the candidate review the test situation and give feedback to the candidate. The training provider will award the qualification and the certificate.³²

HE

Competence tests are also carried out within HEIs, but they are usually carried out as simulations: for example, in IT studies it is a relatively common practice to arrange IT workshops, where the candidates must perform assigned tasks. However, the Universities of Applied Sciences have adopted competence tests that take place in authentic working environments as well.

Third sector

In liberal adult education, declarative methods are often used, e.g. when awarding Open Badges. Some require written assignments or other written evidence (e.g. previous work samples).

11 The position of validation in society: visibility and trust

As the statistics in Chapter 9.4.1 indicate, individuals have embraced validation and taken the opportunity to build up their skills and competences only in the areas where needed. Getting a qualification or a part of a qualification relatively quickly through individual learning paths is significant for most individuals. The numbers of people embracing validation opportunities have increased ever since the system was put in place in 1994. As working life stakeholders and concerns have played a key role in the VET system and validation arrangements from the very beginning, the market value of validation is very high among employers. Trade Unions as well as employee organisations all see the benefits of VNFIL and promote them quite visibly in different fora.

National strategies strongly emphasise validation as a means to motivate, shorten study times and save resources. It can be seen on many fronts as there are several

³² <https://eperusteet.opintopolku.fi/eperusteet-service/api/dokumentit/4614532>

government initiatives (including legislation) which emphasise the importance of validation.

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