



Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (RVA)

An initiative for achieving greater participation in Lifelong Learning and Education for All



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Institute
for Lifelong Learning



The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), one of UNESCO's six educational institutes, is a non-profit international research, training, information, documentation and publishing centre on literacy, non-formal education, adult and lifelong learning.

UNESCO carries out five established functions:

- (1) laboratory of ideas;
- (2) standard-setter;
- (3) clearing-house;
- (4) capacity development in Member States; and
- (5) catalyst for international cooperation.

UIL's Medium-Term Strategy (2008-2013), inspired by UNESCO's Strategic Plan (C4), comprises the policy parameters and methodological principles of UIL's work in enhancing access to lifelong learning, and in providing the environment and quality of learning for all in all regions of the world.

UIL's activities revolve around five major clusters:

- Cluster 1: Lifelong learning;
- Cluster 2: Literacy;
- Cluster 3: Adult education and the implementation of the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI);
- Cluster 4: Priority Africa;
- Cluster 5: Publication, Documentation and Information Dissemination



Background

UIL has played an important role in the international Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (RVA) agenda since 2004, when UNESCO's General Conference entrusted UIL with conducting and disseminating research and practice on RVA, on an international scale.

The Synthesis Report on Recognition, Validation and Accreditation is a collation of the UIL (formerly UIE) survey of recognition, validation and certification policy, practice and challenges in 36 countries, conducted in 2004. The analysis of data produced an important typology for comprehending diverse RVA practices that takes into account the reference points for recognition in different countries.

The 2005 International Seminar on the Recognition of Experiential Learning organised and hosted by the French National Commission for UNESCO provided an opportunity for experts from different regions of the world to exchange views on related practices and experiences.





The International Observatory

To enable countries and regions to learn from one another and share examples of good practice, UIL has launched the International Observatory on country approaches to the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of informal and non-formal learning and experiences.

The observatory does not presume to offer an exhaustive account of RVA practices; instead, it is designed to act as a strategic platform that provides guidance on integrating RVA into education reforms.

By collating information on country initiatives and experiences, the Observatory sheds light on the connections between

- lifelong learning policy;
- qualification reference points; and
- recognition and assessment practices.

It also:

- identifies progression pathways between sub-sectors of the education and training system; and
- looks into the support structures that assist in the implementation of RVA in lifelong learning.

Material for each of the countries included in the study has been widely sourced and draws on:

- reports prepared for the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI);
- national government websites;
- relevant journals, publications and conference papers; and
- the UIL Synthesis Report, OECD, French National Commission for UNESCO, ILO, CEDEFOP and Background Country Reports.

The UIL International Observatory on RVA is currently under development and will be published on the UIL website in 2009.

Purpose of RVA

The overall purpose of the UIL RVA programme is to promote a society offering lifelong learning for all by emphasising the importance of both formal and non-formal learning in achieving Education for All goals, and building bridges between formal, non-formal and informal learning. More specifically, the aim is to build capacities in Member States by:

- suggesting normative and ethical principles of RVA;
- ensuring that RVA is relevant for both developed and developing countries;
- emphasising that RVA is linked to social recognition and the empowerment of all;
- encouraging all actors involved to promote recognition in a spirit of partnership;
- suggesting clear and comprehensive standards, frameworks and reference points;
- considering benefits and results in terms of how RVA is impacting on issues of motivation and flexible access, and how it is viewed in the labour market and by society as a whole; and
- creating awareness of the economic sustainability of RVA.

The Interagency Group

Amidst the great deal of variety in interest, agendas and directions of RVA, UIL seeks to strengthen the discussion among lead agencies on recognition issues, and create knowledge partnerships and synergies between experts from various international organisations and different parts of UNESCO. UIL has formed an interagency group of experts, which includes the following organisations:

- Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA);
- European Union (EU);
- European Training Foundation (ETF);
- French National Commission for UNESCO;
- International Labour Organization (ILO);
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD);
- Norwegian Institute for Adult Learning (VOX).

Sharing learning across the North-South divide

In order to ensure that RVA is relevant for both developed and developing countries, UIL plays a key role in facilitating the exchange of information across different contexts. It is well positioned to play a unique role in the exchange of ideas on RVA in developing country contexts because of its specialist function that includes:

- strategically linking education issues within a lifelong learning perspective;
- expertise in the literacy and adult basic education sectors;
- promoting inclusiveness in education and training with respect to disadvantaged groups;
- a focus on the educational experiences and needs of developing and transition countries where access to formal education has been limited and where the informal sectors are huge;
- capability in South-South and North-South dialogues and networks that enable genuine sharing and mutual benefit across country borders and systems; and
- a focus on going beyond the promotion of lifelong learning for market-related skills in the knowledge economy to create learning and literate societies.





The Africa Network

The Africa Network seeks to strengthen partnerships and networks through South-South and North-South collaboration and exchanges, as well as provide access to key stakeholders and the general public to cutting-edge research, latest orientations and innovations in RVA. The Africa network is made up of specialist institutions, educational ministries, industry representatives and academics with a core interest in furthering the RVA agenda across Africa.

In June 2007, delegates from a number of African countries met in Sèvres, France for the “International Seminar on the Recognition of Experiential Learning: Prospects for Development in African Countries” to share experiences, practices and processes for the recognition of informal and experiential learning in Africa.

UIL collaborates closely with ADEA in providing support to African countries in developing their qualification and recognition systems, especially in the context of post-primary education and training in Africa.

UIL is undertaking a number of pilot projects to assist countries in the development of policy frameworks and systems to support better recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning. Sharing the outcomes of the pilot projects will assist other Member States with their own implementation of RVA.

Research and future activities

UIL contributes to the general body of research into RVA and lifelong learning by actively disseminating research on policy, practice and institutional issues surrounding the recognition, validation and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning.

At the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) to be held in Belém, Brazil from 19 to 22 May 2009, a thematic workshop is planned on RVA Policy, Practice and Challenges. This will provide a unique opportunity for further sharing and learning across all Member States. Furthermore, the CONFINTEA VI international conference is seen as an appropriate platform and occasion for the collaborative drafting of an international text, which, although not binding, will commit Member States to discussing and agreeing on a set of recommendations and guiding principles on RVA.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



**UNESCO Institute
for Lifelong Learning**

Feldbrunnenstr. 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany

Contact: Madhu Singh
Tel: +49 (0)40 44 80 41-26
Fax: +49 (0)40 41 07 723
www.unesco.org/uil
m.singh@unesco.org

UIL/2009/PI/H/7