

CEDEFOP AGORA on  
Continuity, Consolidation and Change towards a European Era of VET

# *Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Emerging Issues, Cost and Benefits*

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*(\* The opinions expressed in this power point presentation are those of the author alone)*



Patrick Werquin, *Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Emerging Issues*, Thessaloniki, 16 March 2009

# Agenda for Today

- Context
- Definitions
- Rationale
- Country Practice
- Potential Barriers
- Cost and Benefits
- A Country Overview
- Suggestions for Ways forward

*All this in summary from ☹*

*And still a bit provisional ☹*

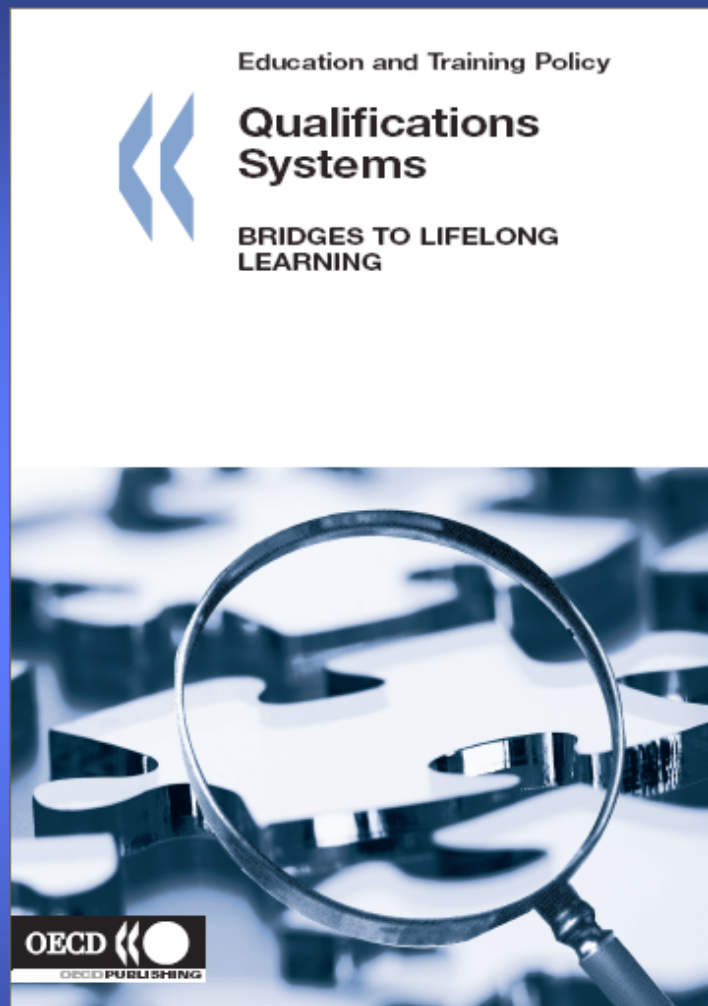


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Published in 2007 ☺☺☺



With Mike Coles (QCA)

For a summary see:

[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf)



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# Starting Point

-RNFIL = mechanism to create more and better lifelong learning

-as well as:

.Credit transfer [system]

.Qualifications framework

.Stakeholders involvement

.Information and guidance

...



# Participating Countries

23 countries on the 5 continents  
(16 review visits)

Australia, Austria, **Belgium-Flanders**, Canada,  
Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, **Germany**, **Greece**,  
Hungary, Iceland, **Ireland**, **Italy**, Korea, Malta,  
Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, **Slovenia**, South  
Africa, Spain, Switzerland and the **United Kingdom**

[www.oecd.org/edu/recognition](http://www.oecd.org/edu/recognition)



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# Definition: The Process

## Many terms even in English only:

- **RPL** (Australia), **PLAR** (Canada), **APL** or **APEL** (UK), Ireland uses them all...
- **RAS** (Recognition of Acquired Skills)
- (Recognition of previous knowledge ☹)
- Recognition of Learning Outcomes

...

## Other languages:

- **EVC** (Belgium Flanders, Netherlands), **VAE** (France), Italia (many terms)...





# Definition: Recognition of What?

- Not consensual ☹️
- Proposed definitions (in short 😊)
- Formal learning: learning that is structured in terms of content, scheduling, organisation and financing
- Informal learning: unintentional, none of the above
- Non-formal learning: in between, for local specificities
- Recognition: outcomes have value and are used in the society (Social Recognition)
- Key issue: recognition does not necessarily mean a high level of formalisation, but it needs some



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# Rationale: Different Levels

- Rationale given by the context:
  - Demography, distribution of qualifications
  - Many individuals are skilled but their skills are not visible and, therefore, not recognised
- Rationale given by the objectives:
  - Labour market
  - Formal education and training
- Cost
- Strong motivator (OECD, 2007)
  - VET everywhere



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# Frequently Used Practice

- Rhetoric
- Information, advice and counselling
- Legal framework
- Piloting/Evaluation (data... ☹)
- “Physical” support: [e-]portfolio and the like (ProfilPASS, Competence passport/card...), certification
- Assessment methods: exam, simulation, observation, interview (standards...)



# Frequently Used Practice

- Financing and fees
- Quality assurance
- Dedicated assessment centre(s)
- Aims and outcomes: exemptions, credits, full qualification



# Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible



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# Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible
	<p>South Africa, Australia, Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Canada (Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan), Denmark, Italia (Emilia Romagna), Mexico, Norway, Pays-Bas, UK (Scotland and England), Slovenia, Switzerland</p>	<p>Germany, Canada (other provinces and territories), Korea, Chile, Spain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italia (Val d'Aosta, Macerata), Czech Republic</p>



# Countries Offering Full Qualification on the Basis of RNFIL Only

Full Qualification for all Qualifications	Full Qualification in Some Instances	Not Possible
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# Applications of RNFIL

Type of Application	Exemplar Countries	Typical Examples
Second chance school certificate	Canada, Mexico, Norway, Chile, Spain	GED, <i>Bachillerato</i> , adult education referenced to school system



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Exemptions from formal programmes	Hungary, Chile, UK, Belgium (Flanders)	Modular higher education programmes, with exemptions available, specific credits. University discretion over exemptions



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Discrete applications	Belgium (Flanders), Hungary, Canada, Greece, Germany	ECDL, language certificates, professional bodies





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# Barriers in Short

- Psychological (stiffness, legitimacy of NFIL)
- Cost (yes yes yes)
- Input process unknown (and therefore not quality assured)
- Understanding what it is about (“*you will give degrees to everybody*”)



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## Findings (related to cost)

- Information, Advice and Guidance is necessary... and it comes with a cost
- Getting people to describe and analyse their learning is time consuming, and it is correlated with initial level of education and training... and it comes with a cost
- RNFIL does not create skills, or barely (key element because this means that the skills, knowledge and competences must be already there)



# Cost/Benefit Issue about Certification

-Real question:

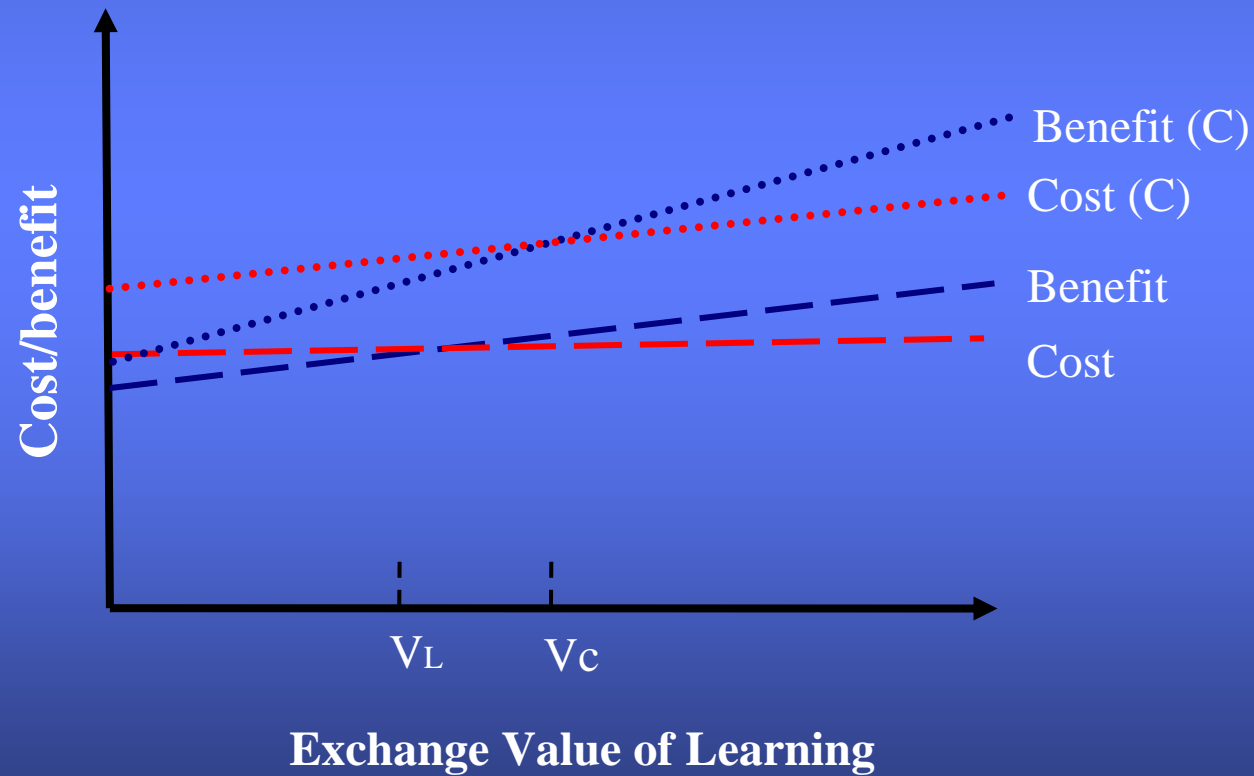
**Additional cost of formalisation (certification)**  
(assessment, quality assurance, issuing certificates...)

vs.

**Additional benefits**  
(signalling, visibility, regulated occupations...)



# Cost-Benefit Model

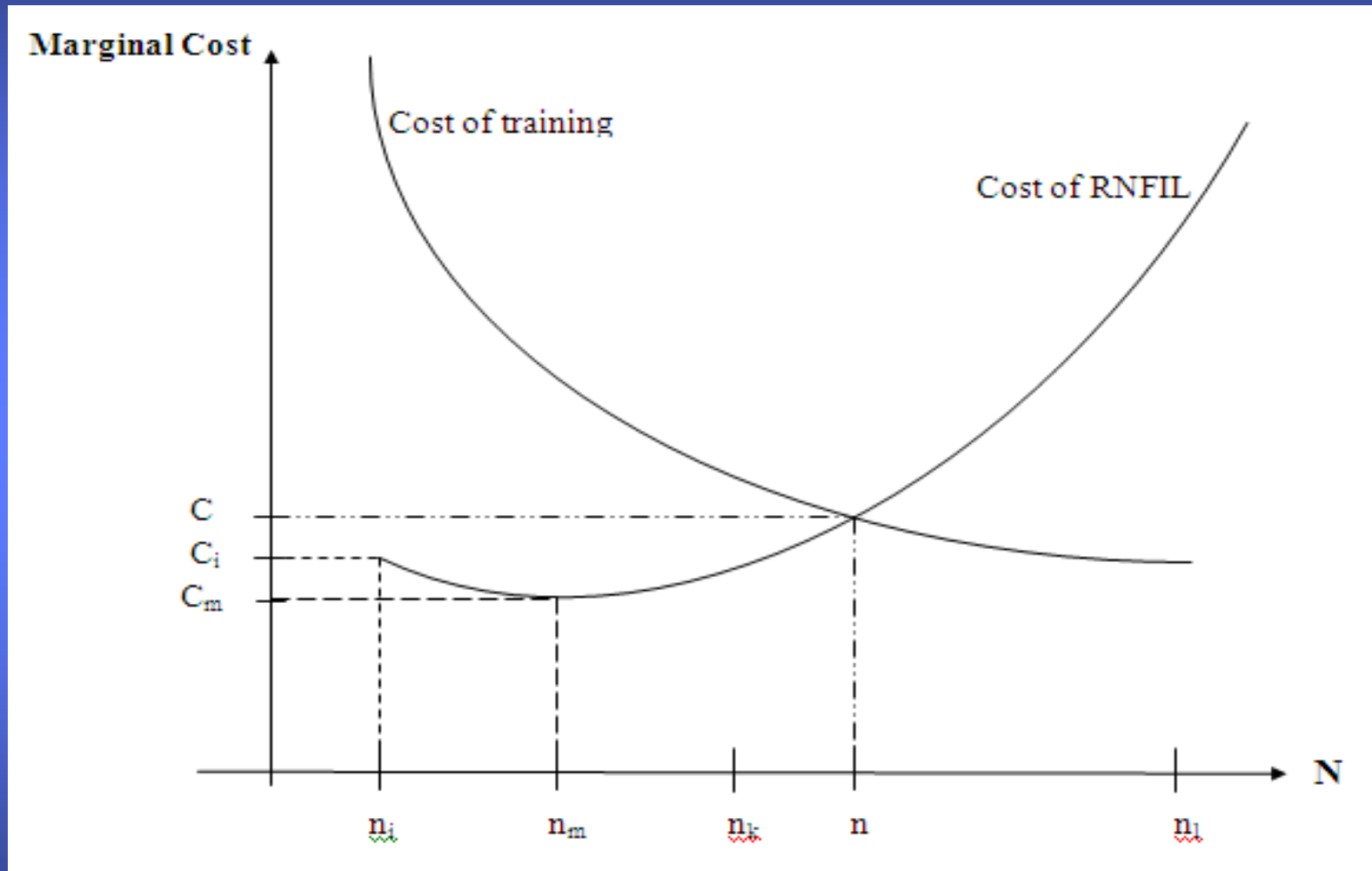


# Marginal vs. Average Cost

Training as an alternative to RNFIL

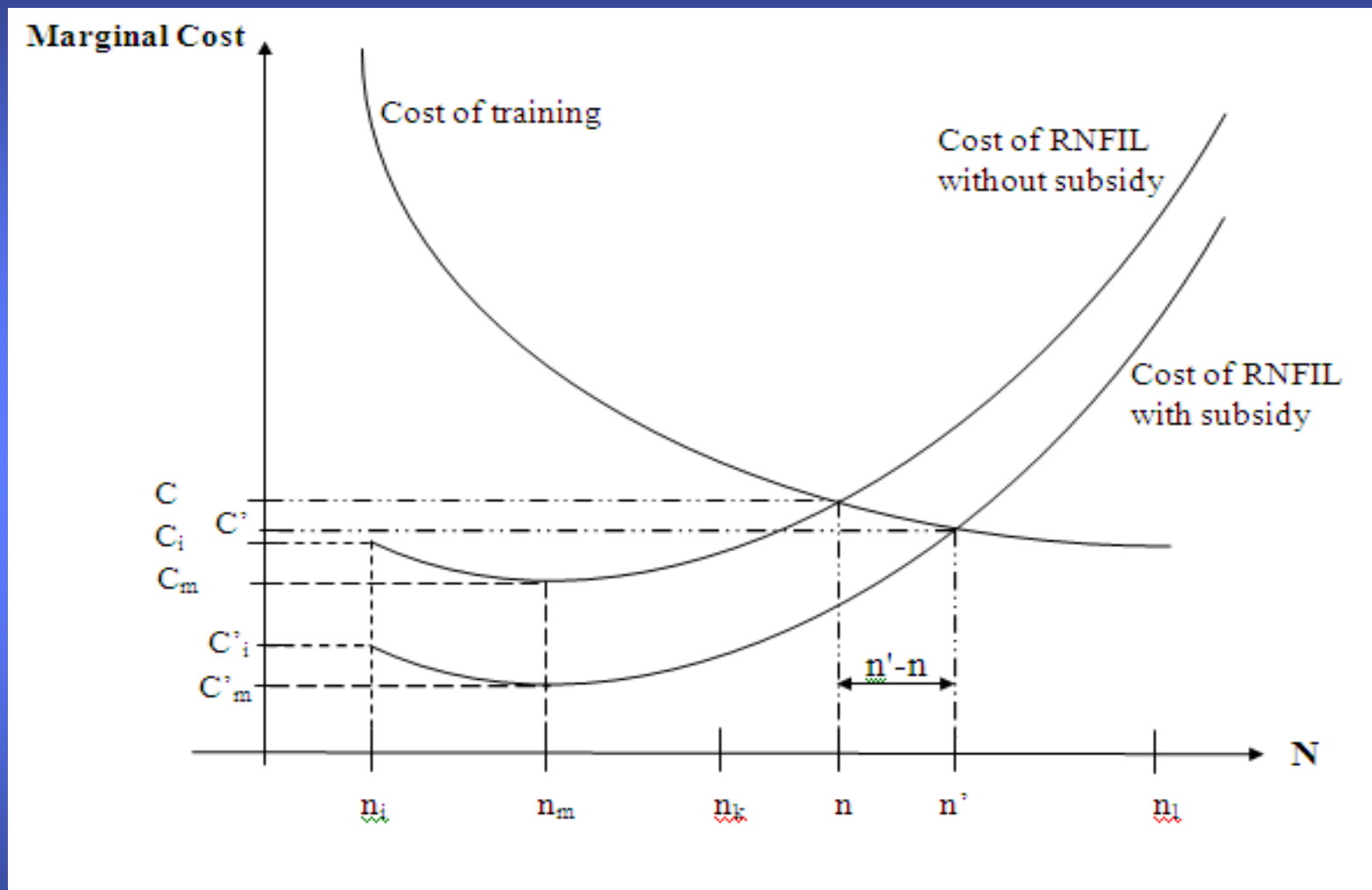


# Recognition vs. Training





# Recognition vs. Training (cont'd)



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# Countries with a RNFIL System

Model	Characteristics	Countries
System	<p>Inclusive policy, a vision, a <u>culture</u> of RNFIL and a global system.</p> <p>In detail: legal framework or political consensus, practice, all groups or individuals, financial provision, quality assurance, all levels and sectors of education and training, significant <u>participation</u>, high level of acceptance by the society, evaluation of the system (data, research...)</p>	
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Model	Characteristics	Pays
Consistent set of practices	Vision. In detail: many practices, access for most individual profiles, some financing available. Not all levels or educational sectors.	
Fragmented set of practices	Clear objectives. In detail: practices, target groups, some financing. Few levels or educational sectors.	



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Fragmented set of practices	Clear objectives. In detail: practices, target groups, some financing. Few levels or educational sectors.	Germany, Spain, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Iceland, Switzerland



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Model	Characteristics	Pays
Some practices	Some convincing attempts in very specific fields, sectors or institutions.	
Initial stage	Some actors show some interest in the RNFIL concept. Some attempts in very narrow fields, sectors or institutions on a small scale. Some rhetoric in the context of lifelong learning. Some broad documents. A lot of inertia.	
Nothing	No practice, no policy orientation documents, no rhetoric, no interest whatsoever for the concept of RNFIL	



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# Food for Thoughts

- Why is it most people believe RNFIL is free/cheap?
  - .Because there are hidden subsidies
  - .Because they may have the wrong variable for cost
- Cost/Benefit analysis will prove very difficult because, as always, we do NOT observe all the positive externalities (well known issue in the field of adult Learning for instance)
- Recotillet and Werquin (forthcoming, CEDEFOP, EJVT): an attempt at evaluating VAE, with French Data



# [My] Short Conclusion

- All learning should be recognised
- There are cases where the recognition of non-formal and informal learning process may not need to be highly formalised
- Some countries are close to having a system.
- A lot of work – cultural shift... – needs to be done.



**m e r c i**

Please visit:

[www.oecd.org/edu/recognition](http://www.oecd.org/edu/recognition)

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