
A European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning:

Examples of Good Practice - E.E.D.E., Greece

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1.0 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE - E.E.D.E., GREECE

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1.1 Introduction

E.E.D.E. is a major Greek not-for-profit organisation. Organisation offers a number of different post-graduate programmes, among other shorter courses and seminars. The Association itself is partly funded by the Government and partly by the private sector partners and looks after education and training needs of the Greek business sector.

E.E.D.E. developed a self-standing validation method to validate informal and non-formal learning of those with extensive commercial work experience (mainly in management or marketing).

1.2 Description of the initiative

Rationale and funding

The organisation developed the system because there was a clear market demand for it. At the end 1980s the Greek private sector complained that there was a lack of high quality training for highly positioned business executives and entrepreneurs. Many held years of managerial experience but did not have any relevant qualifications. They were keen to develop theoretical understanding of management practices as well as improving competitiveness in an increasingly competitive and changing market place.

The initiative is mainly funded by tuition fees. Development work of the programmes was co-financed by partner / member organisations of E.E.D.E.

E.E.D.E.

E.E.D.E. offers four different post-graduate certificates:

- Post-Graduate Programme on Business Administration
- Executive MBA with Bath University, UK
- Post-Graduate Certificate on Marketing from Chartered Institute of Marketing
- Quality Management

These programmes recognise prior learning, both informal and non-formal, since they are open to individuals who have a university degree *or* possess relevant work experience.

Organisation of learning

Relevant university qualifications offer an automatic access to these courses. However, those with relevant work experience can also apply. Their informal and non-formal learning is assessed mainly through face-to-face interviews with programme managers from E.E.D.A.

Assessment of prior learning

All the promotional material clearly states who are able to apply on the courses. The assessment process is not strictly regulated, decisions are case-by-case decisions based on interviews. All applicants need to carry out an interview with two members of E.E.D.A staff who are normally either directors of studies, programme co-ordinators and/or academic advisors.

Interview is based on finding the following:

- Current job description: position and role
- Possible previous work experience
- Career aspirations
- Age (young persons can not access Executive MBA course as it is aimed at those with considerable work experience)
- Reasons for wanting to do the course
- Personal capability and motivation to complete the course
- Personal qualities
- Hobbies

Interview language depends on the language of studies. If the course will be in English, the interview will be carried out in English too. This is done to assess the language capability of applicants.

Training

Programmes last for one year and there are 4 thematic cycles which all end in examinations. Every student also needs to submit a dissertation at the end of the course.

Students may obtain some exemptions if they hold relevant qualifications. In these cases students need to provide E.E.D.A with relevant transcripts. Those who accessed the course on the basis of their work experience can not be exempted from any further courses.

Certificates

Certificates are granted for those who successfully pass all exams and dissertation. They are recognised as individuals ‘possessing extraordinary management knowledge and ability’. These post-graduate diplomas are compatible with university master’s degrees. But the certificates themselves do not form a part of Greek national education system but enjoy recognition from employers in Greece. E.E.D.A itself is well known institute among the private sector in Greece who have a long history providing high-quality non-formal training for the Greek business life.

Some of the certificates also enjoy social recognition internationally as the qualification frameworks of the MBA programme and marketing diploma were originally developed in the UK.

Validity

The certification system is not part of any formal validation system, but E.E.D.A. have developed their independent method to assess applicants’ prior learning. Their validity is widely recognised by employers.

Students are constantly consulted about the validation process. Every student on the course is encouraged to fill in evaluation sheets and give feedback to the programme management.

1.3 Outcomes and benefits

Approximately 2000 individuals have obtained one of the E.E.D.E. certificates since 1989.

Benefits for individuals

Those with work experience can immediately access high quality education, rather than having to spend years going through basic training.

Benefits for companies

Most participants are paid by their employers. For employers this validation methodology offers quick and cost-efficient method to up-skill their employees. In the long term it improves effectiveness, motivation and capability of their key employees.

1.4 Barriers met and future support needs

Our interviews highlighted as barriers and future support needs the following:

Barriers

- Greece is a small country where only a few institutes have resources to set up similar initiatives.
- Qualifications from abroad are increasingly popular.

Supportive policy frameworks

- More joint, European wide programmes on validation of informal and non-formal learning.
- More direct funding from the national level for development of validation schemes.

1.5 Best practice and conclusions

This methodology offers a non-bureaucratic process to validate informal and non-formal learning of business managers and in essence provide them with an access to master's level education on the basis of their work experience. The method was developed to take into consideration needs and demands of the private sector. It is cost-effective method for both businesses who sponsor their employee to undertake this training and for participant themselves who want to expand their knowledge on management or marketing.