

## Chapter 5

# Coordination and Stakeholder Interests and Motives

The successful implementation of RVA is dependent on the extent to which various partnerships drive the coordination of the RVA process. Information gathered from numerous countries on their policies and practices indicates that partnerships with various stakeholders differ significantly. Four models of implementation and coordination emerge from these country cases:

- Shared responsibility
- NQFs coordinating RVA
- The industry model of shared responsibility
- Stakeholders in the Adult and Community Learning Sector

### 5.1 Shared Responsibility

#### 5.1.1 *The Growing Role of National Bodies, Agencies and Knowledge Centres*

In a number of countries, multiple social partners and stakeholders treat recognition as a shared responsibility, coordinating their work in accordance with laws, regulations and guidelines. This ensures legitimacy within a decentralised education system.

In Australia and New Zealand, a legislative basis establishes new *bodies or agencies* at different levels, sometimes according to the subsectors of the education and training system. These bodies operate within the context of a vision for the recognition of all learning, often in line with the broad national and regional policies for promoting lifelong learning. These agencies are fully or partly funded by governments, but are given considerable independence in the way they operate.

In South Africa, key players in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning include the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), Department of Basic Education (DBE), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the three Quality Councils responsible for the sub-frameworks for higher education, further and general and training, and occupations; professional bodies and councils, and the National Skills Authority. While all Quality Councils (QCs) have developed recognition of prior learning (RPL) policies in order to comply with SAQA requirements, implementation plans and projects have been developed in only a few sectors.

In France legislation has been helpful in defining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (Werquin 2012) in a shared system that entrenches the role of stakeholders in processes of validation.

- Information and orientation services are the responsibility of all regions.
- The Ministry of Education, which has jurisdiction over secondary vocational education, organises the implementation of VAE in secondary vocational schools, defines processes and trains staff.
- In higher education and continuing training, individual institutions, organisations and bodies are responsible for defining the process and methodology.
- Where institutions award state qualifications, the procedures are defined by the relevant ministries, which develop a validation action plan, introducing validation regulations, assessment procedures and application forms and tools, and procedures for training professionals. However, it is the individual education and training providers and education and training institutions that are responsible for the validation procedures, and have to learn how to implement VAE for the qualifications of the certifying ministries.
- Researchers and experts help with the development of quality processes.
- An inter-ministerial committee, created by the government, is responsible for harmonising policy and practice.
- At the level of adult learning, it is the national or state bodies that are responsible for quality control and procedures (Feutrie 2008).

In Norway, the Ministry of Education and Research has regulatory responsibility for all levels of education. Employers' bodies and trade unions are important stakeholders nationally and regionally, with both setting policy goals and realising practice (e.g. supporting adults in VET schemes by offering apprenticeships and other training schemes in enterprises locally). It is the responsibility of county authorities to realise the individual right to validation of prior learning and assure quality of the process. Funding is delegated to the 19 counties, and regional centres provide information and guidance. They are also responsible for the quality of the validation process and for training assessors. At the upper secondary level, the practice of RVA is usually carried out within the regional education system. Often, upper secondary schools also function as assessment centres. In order to give the same opportunity to job-seekers who want their competence validated, projects are initiated to improve co-operation between the education system and the Labour and Welfare Administration.

*National institutes* such as Vox in Norway, NILE in the Republic of Korea, or the Knowledge Centre in the Netherlands, are established under their respective ministries of education, which in turn co-operate with trade unions, enterprises, national labour agencies, national educational associations, organisations, universities and colleges, public and private educators, and social partners. Vox, the National Institute for Lifelong Learning, has a particular responsibility for non-formal education and for improving the participation rate in adult learning, specifically with programmes focused on basic skills training. Vox is active in the recognition of immigrant competences, and works in co-operation with other relevant stakeholders. Vox also has special competence within the fields of adults' legal rights and validation of prior learning (VPL). In addition to activities and responsibilities governed by the formal education system, Vox works in close cooperation with NGOs and social partners to further adult learning in working life. In the case of NILE, the institute provides an accreditation system for non-formal and informal learning that accommodates the full range of legitimate stakeholders.

One distinctive feature of stakeholder participation in the Netherlands is the voluntary character of engagement on the part of employers, employees and educational institutions. This reflects the choice of the Dutch government to favour a bottom-up method for the stimulation and implementation of RVA, putting the initiative in the hands of sectors, regions and individuals. This system relies almost entirely on local initiatives and decentralised policies. Within this approach, stakeholders have an active role in supporting individual learning process; ensuring the relevance of the system of recognition to the individual; and raising awareness of its importance nationwide. In addition to this, stakeholders are responsible for activities such as planning, administration, management and evaluation at different levels of the educational system.

In the Netherlands, the EVC (Erkenning van Verworven Competenties) Knowledge Centre and its partners aim for a "common understanding" among all stakeholders, and promote transparent and ethical practice. The Knowledge Centre works in cooperation with a network of RPL regional offices. These regional offices serve as one-stop offices where individuals can walk in and access multiple services appropriate to their specific needs. This bottom-up approach is facilitated through a history and tradition of dialogue and cooperation between the government, the private sector and civil society. The Dutch government has provided a substantive amount of monetary support for RPL. The current infrastructure was developed with the help of 40 million Euros between 2005 and 2007 alone, and RPL continues to have the support from the Ministries of Education, Culture and Science and of Social Affairs and Employment (Maes 2008, p. 3). In 2006, stakeholders agreed to a quality framework for RPL that while voluntary, promotes transparency and articulates minimum standards (Maes 2008). The quality code is voluntary (Maes 2008). Individuals working through the available RPL structures are granted a Certificate of Experience to submit to educational institutions. The certificate has the status of an advisory document and the "autonomous institutions decide for themselves how to use the results of EVC procedures" (Duvekot 2010).

In the USA (Travers 2011), Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is not governed by legislation. However, some of the six regional accreditation commissions located across the country have issued policies on PLA. These commissions are responsible for monitoring the quality of higher education in the USA through a formal accreditation process. PLA is driven by several stakeholders. RVA is conducted by many colleges and universities as well as employers. Development has been facilitated by the *American Council on Education (ACE)* and the *Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)*. ACE is the national body responsible for coordinating higher education institutions across the country. CAEL is a national, non-profit organisation that works with educational institutions, employers, labour organisations and other stakeholders to promote creative, effective adult learning strategies. Networks and structures like CAEL aim to bring greater coherence to RVA at the level of higher education.

In the majority of the developing countries, ministries of education and, in particular, departments of non-formal education are assuming a new role, evolving from mere providers of services into bodies that supervise the coordination of stakeholders. Where this is happening, as is the case in the Philippines and Thailand, public authorities are the main initiators in promoting the issue of recognition. The role of social partnerships with civil society organisations is increasingly being recognised, although governments have approached the topic of decentralisation with caution thus far. This is because many of these countries lack a formal legislative or policy framework for RVA. Skills are assessed and certified on an individual basis by education providers. While this way of conducting validation appears to be quite flexible, it actually exposes the learner to the arbitrariness of the assessing institution. In such cases, we argue, it is important to ensure that individual education and training providers have access to the right tools, content and funding to develop RVA at their level.

### ***5.1.2 Dividing the Recognition Procedures Between Levels of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Authority and Other Stakeholders***

In Canada, PLAR is a highly decentralised process with the responsibility for assessment and validation distributed across the various provincial/territorial governments, educational institutions and professional bodies. Both policy development and the way that PLAR is used in practice vary in different parts of Canada. This is because the ten Canadian provinces have full responsibility for educational matters, while education and training providers and other local agencies at the provincial and territorial levels have a strong measure of operational autonomy. While a bottom-up decentralised and provincial approach has served well in Canada to date, strategic direction at the country level could help to facilitate cooperation and comparisons across provinces and territories (Singh and Barot 2012). Although Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and Citizenship and

Immigration Canada (CIC) are undertaking several supportive activities alongside CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada: the mechanism whereby provinces and territories liaise with each other on education policies) they have no regular arrangement on PLAR.

However, at the national level, it is important to highlight that the CMEC has responsibility for the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials which provides information on formal credentials assessment services, provincial/territorial education systems, post-secondary institutions, regulated and unregulated occupations and how to connect with provincial/territorial regulatory bodies that have responsibility for issuing licences to practice in each jurisdiction. In addition, stakeholder engagement at the national level includes CAPLA's yearly conference that attracts a wide range of RPL stakeholders from across Canada and abroad. A Strategic Advisory Panel on RPL involving representatives from Canada's provinces and territories, has been hosted by CAPLA since 2009 for purpose of sharing innovative ideas and initiatives. The Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators hosts events for regulatory authorities that have responsibility for protection of the public, and competency assessment is discussed frequently.

Across Europe the tendency is to divide recognition procedures between levels of state authority, private stakeholders, community organisations and agencies of civil society. In 2005, Switzerland launched its RVA system (Validation des Acquis), which is overseen by the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs. The system is based on close cooperation between the federal government, cantonal governments and social partners and voluntary associations. In this way, Swiss recognition is founded on a model of shared responsibility. These partners are engaged in the process of developing a common framework revolving around the inclusion of different levels of recognition, the roles of the different agents, the inclusion of quality assurance and the training of experts (Switzerland. Office fédéral de la formation professionnelle et de la technologie (OFFT) 2008). Like Switzerland, Austria is well equipped to operate a system of shared responsibility in recognition policy (Schneeberger et al. 2008). It divides its recognition procedures between levels of state authority, private stakeholders and agencies of civil society. The responsibilities for the regulation, provision, financing and support of learning activities are divided between the national and provincial levels.

In Germany, there is neither a central institution nor a standardised institutional framework in place for validation. Instead, a variety of approaches exist. The chambers of crafts, industry, commerce and agriculture regulate admission to the external students' examination. With respect to access to higher education, the German Rectors' Conference has defined a framework for recognition, but specific regulations and procedures are established by the respective university. The ProfilPASS system is managed by a national service centre which supports 55 local dialogue centres (Otero et al. 2010). The responsibility for continuing education falls across a number of areas. Continuing education in Germany experiences less regulation at the national level than other areas of education and as a result it

features a high degree of pluralism and competition among providers. Voluntary participation in continuing education is one of the guiding principles (Germany. Federal Ministry of Education and Science (BMBF) 2008).

## 5.2 NQFs Coordinating RVA

In Finland, arriving at a broad consensus on RVA at the level of policy development has been critical, particularly with respect to the incorporation of RVA within the NQF. Several working groups for different qualification levels have worked to promote this approach. Today, the stakeholders have reached a broad consensus on RVA at policy level. This has led to the inclusion of RVA within national legislation for all levels of education.

Steps towards the implementation of RVA have also been taken by further specifying the policies for each educational sector. National working groups for upper secondary and higher education are currently preparing policies and procedures for RPL for the respective levels of education. The national working group on RVA in higher education institutions has issued recommendations concerning, for example, the devising of subsector-specific recognition systems and the involvement of the Ministry of Education in this process (Blomqvist and Louko 2013). Finland has a clear division of responsibilities at different levels. The responsibilities for competence-based qualifications relevant here, such as the development of the qualifications, quality assurance, and the actual provision of examinations and training are divided among various actors:

- The Ministry of Education and Culture decides which qualifications are admitted to the national qualification structure.
- The Finnish National Board of Education draws up qualification requirements for each competence-based qualification.
- Sector-specific Qualification Committees supervise the organisation of competence tests and issue the qualification certificates.
- Education providers that have signed agreements with the respective sector-specific Qualification Committees arrange competence tests and provide preparatory training for candidates.
- A Qualification Committee is appointed for each qualification. The Qualification Committees consist of representatives of employers and employees, teachers and sometimes also entrepreneurs. The committees oversee the implementation of competence-based qualifications, ensure the consistent quality of qualifications, and issue the certificates to successful candidates. If necessary, certificates can also be awarded for individual modules, for instance if the candidate does not intend to complete the whole qualification (Blomqvist and Louko 2013).

In Norway too, consensus building around RVA has been important. Political parties recognise the benefits of validation, as can be seen in the wide range of policy documents. Here too, social partners are important stakeholders in policy-making in this field.

In South Africa, a Ministerial Task Team on RPL established at the end of 2011 has proposed that the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) be tasked to set up a national coordinating mechanism for RPL. This possibility is explored in a discussion paper prepared within the SAQA RPL Project Team (Keevy 2012). The discussion paper puts forth several factors that would make it possible for SAQA to take up the responsibility of coordinating RPL, not only in the narrow sense of linking RVA to formal learning and qualifications, but also in the sense of addressing broader objectives of RPL such as access, career guidance and labour markets, and professional development. Firstly, the NQF Act of 2008 assigns very specific RPL-related responsibilities to SAQA, notably to develop RPL policy and criteria for assessment and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT). Secondly, SAQA has over the past few years been able to successfully take up complex projects, such as the national Career Advice Service (CAS), which falls within its mandate. Thirdly, SAQA's involvement with professional bodies also creates an opportunity for SAQA to support the professional development of RPL practitioners. There is thus a strong possibility that SAQA will be asked to perform the role of coordinating mechanism at least for an initial period (Keevy 2012). However, this consensus is not necessarily shared by a SAQA initiated research by prominent experts (SAQA 2012b).

Werquin (2012) for example, suggests an inter-ministerial agency as another option, enabling more focus on RPL outside NQF rather than on RPL which associated primarily with the "formalisation" of learning in an NQF (Keevy 2012).

### **5.3 The Industry Model of Shared Responsibility**

Although most countries have at least some aspects of shared responsibility in their recognition policies, in some cases it is industry which is the driving force in a shared system. In these cases, responsibility for validation is shared between the education system and the labour market. This model also involves the government at some point, frequently in an oversight and assessment capacity. An example of this model can be found in Trinidad and Tobago. There, the government involves local industry in the process of validation. Employers in the country's industrial sector define the standards for the assessment of individual learners' skills. The recognition and certification of vocational competences, however, is conducted by the National Training Agency Awarding Unit, which is also responsible for the distribution of information regarding APL and PLAR (Trinidad and Tobago. National Training Agency Trinidad and Tobago (NTATT), n.d).

In Japan, job training and the development of vocational skills through public sector training targets displaced workers. There, public sector job training is expected to compensate for the small number of private sector education and training organisations in the manufacturing sector. The Japanese government also supports skills recognition in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Under this programme, highly skilled workers and 1st Grade certified skilled workers are registered as personnel to support skills transmission and recognition at SMEs and to train young skilled workers by providing hands-on guidance.

### ***5.3.1 The Role of Industry Bodies and Training Organisations in Designing RVA Processes in the Workplace***

One key factor in the implementation of RVA in Australia and New Zealand is the role of industry bodies and registered training organisations (RTOs) in designing and driving the RVA process. In Australia, RVA is offered by registered training organisations (RTOs) and state training authorities in accordance with the standards laid out in the Australian Quality Training Framework (Bowman et al. 2003). The RTOs are also responsible for assessments that lead to qualifications (DEEWR 2008). RVA processes for workers are tailored to their needs and to the needs of the enterprises, and while partnerships with educational institutions are not excluded from these RVA processes, they are not central to it. Nevertheless, the Australian government takes the lead role in ensuring that the system of recognition functions reliably and transparently; the Australian system relies on the active participation of the state and territory governments and other stakeholders.

In South Africa, the industry Sector Education and Training Authorities have designed RVA processes for workers. In Canada, the certification bodies for regulated professions have developed RVA practices for their jurisdictions and the Canadian Sector Councils have sponsored a range of initiatives to promote RVA at the workplace.

### ***5.3.2 The Involvement of Social Partners (Employers, Employees and Trade Unions)***

The involvement of social partners, including trade unions and professional associations, is a key feature in RVA that gives genuine value to employers and employees. In Lithuania, the Ministry of Education and Science oversees the procedure for qualification examinations, including the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Vocational schools and labour market vocational training institutions are responsible for providing the necessary support to applicants who are seeking to validate the knowledge and skills they have acquired outside formal education through final qualification examinations. Social partners are responsible for the assessment of the qualification for those who decide to legitimate non-formal and informal learning achievements in vocational schools. Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Crafts and the Chamber of Agriculture are charged with the organisation of the final examinations, including the design of tasks, identification of relevant members of examination commissions and granting qualifications. Regional Chambers approve requests from those wishing to validate their knowledge in vocational schools.

In France, while vocational diplomas developed in close cooperation with social partners are of genuine value to employers and employees in professional contexts (external efficiency), they also have an internal value in the education system for the individual. Although they were initially created to facilitate direct integration



into the workforce, vocational diplomas, like general diplomas, open the way to further studies. The respective proportion of the training programme that focuses on general, technological and vocational content is determined through compromise, and these compromises are regularly examined in order to take account of changing needs in both spheres where such diplomas are of value, whether in the productive or educational sector. In this sense, vocational qualifications in the French system are aligned to academic opportunities that further an individual's possibilities for further learning.

Although promoted and regulated by government, the National System of Competency Standards (NSCS) in Mexico is driven by *employers* and *workers*. The government has the role of evaluating, recognising and certifying students' competences for both vocational and professional education, and provides financial resources for the operation of CONOCER. The Secretariat of Public Education has identified 12 major sectors of Mexico's economy as targets, which are already being addressed by CONOCER. In the area of adult basic education, a national programme operates under the auspices of the National Institute for Adult Education (INEA), accredited by CONOCER, to evaluate and certificate the labour competences of adults. *Social partners* (employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector) participate in the design and development of competence standards through sectoral committees responsible for the evaluation and certification of workers in their sectors. CONOCER issues the certificates for the workers based on the competence standards agreed by employers and/or trade unions in the sector (García-Bullé 2013).

Trade unions and other workers' associations widely view the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes as offering their members the possibility to achieve a particular level of qualification and thus to claim the associated benefits, such as higher wages or promotions. At the same time, RVA is also able to satisfy the future needs of various industry and social sectors (like health and care services) more effectively. In South Africa employers and trade unions play an important role. They are active participants in the education sector and training authorities. Direct input is made regarding the legislation, policies and practices of RVA. Employers have also recently provided some funding for the RVA process, particularly with regard to RPL for their workers. The government is responsible for creating the legislative and policy environment and also provides funding.

## **5.4 Stakeholders in the Adult and Community Learning Sector**

### ***5.4.1 The Role of Communities of Practice***

A unique feature of the adult learning sector has been the role of community adult educators and umbrella organisations including adult education associations involved in RVA. In Canada, adult educators have been at the forefront of RVA.

It was the community of Canadian adult educators who became acquainted with the work of CAEL in the USA and began to promote RVA in Canadian post-secondary education, as highlighted in an article by Joy Van Kleef (2011). Their reasons for promoting RVA lay in the nature of adult education, which is that adult education is community-based and encourages the development of knowledge and skills within a framework of lifelong learning. Three groups of adult educators – institutional practitioners, community-based practitioners and academic researchers – have been the primary sources of PLAR research in Canada. Most prominent were the college-based adult education practitioners who developed training resources using the works of Knowles (1970), Brundage and Mackeracher (1980), Bloom (1984) and Kolb (1984) to introduce the principle of adult learning to the uninitiated. However, as Van Kleef (2011) points out, due to policy priorities being focused on economic rather than educational drivers, the emphasis has been on temporary limited funding and short-term projects. Notwithstanding the role of adult educators, progression through access to formal qualifications and opening up access and progress in skilled and professional occupations in the labour market still remains the key aspect of RVA.

The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) has been the national voice for prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) for many years. Beginning in Belleville, Ontario, CAPLA was nurtured by First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) and continues to benefit from the legacy of its founders. Since the early 1990s, those interested in the recognition of adult learning have come together to share practices connected to experiential learning and how it can be articulated against academic or industry standards. CAPLA has been operating since 1994 and was incorporated in 1997 as a non-profit organisation. Its members are comprised of adult learners, PLAR practitioners, researchers, unions, businesses, academic institutions, equity groups, occupational bodies, sectors and non-governmental organisations. CAPLA continues to host yearly conferences and workshops on a range of PLAR programmes, practices, policies, projects and research with local, provincial/territorial, national and international emphasis. It has provided the expertise, advocacy and support for the development of PLAR in Canada. The existence of PLAR, the communities understanding and use of it, and adult learners' awareness and access to it are key to removing barriers to recognition, regardless of the end uses of the recognition process. CAPLA's online community of practice ([www.recognitionforlearning.ca](http://www.recognitionforlearning.ca)) has become an important resource for online discussions, webcasting and information.

In England, the development of RVA derives largely from the adult education movement of the 1980s, and from concerns about social justice and the need to widen adult participation, including the development of "Access to Higher Education", the developer of APEL. In response to widespread concern in the 1980s that traditional school-based qualifications used for higher education entry might be inappropriate for mature applicants, an access course movement emerged, led by adult educators. They developed special courses designed for adult learners, usually with an emphasis on using learners' life experience, and organised in more flexible ways than traditional programmes. These are now formally recognised as an

alternative route into higher education for mature learners. Courses are validated by local, authorised validating agencies (currently 24 in England and Wales in 2005) approved by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), and some of these are also Open College Networks (OCNs). In 2005, there were 1,200 access courses in England and Wales. Since 1983, OCNs have been leading the way in credit-based accreditation and qualifications.

The QAA has traditionally offered centres the flexibility they need, through a credit-based system, to develop learner-centred provision and recognise learner achievement in small steps. This approach has enabled thousands of learners to receive certificates for their achievements, often for the first time in their lives. OCN London Region offers approved National Open College Network qualifications, which are eligible for funding through the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency. These qualifications range from entry level to Level 3 (Level 4 qualifications are also available in teacher training) and cover a diverse range of curriculum and vocational areas. However, Pokorny (2011, p. 11) laments that APEL priorities and practices in England have changed from a broader access agenda to one that is suited to a global economic skills development agenda: "Although some adult educators originally saw potential in APEL to open up higher levels of learning beyond the traditional values and interest of academic institutions, governments, professions and employer organisations, this has largely been unrealised in English higher education." (Pokorny 2011, p. 11).

Closely related to adult education, is the increasing demand in the field of youth work, in which a number of national NGOs are taking the lead. As a result of this demand, there are growing efforts to establish routes for the professional recognition for youth workers. In England the major routes to a professional youth work qualification are by taking a higher education intermediate level qualification, a university degree or a postgraduate qualification. The National Youth Agency (NYJ) is the agency responsible for accrediting higher education programmes taking into account such elements as involvement of local employers in programme governance, fieldwork arrangements; and incorporation of principles, ethics and values of youth work, such as democracy, voluntary participation and active learning, in the course work (Morrey and Drowley 2005).

### ***5.4.2 Role of National Adult Education Associations***

Latvia also involves various levels of government in its predominantly public authority-oriented system of recognition policy. Although the system is decentralised, its quality requirements and accreditation procedures are undertaken by a central supervisory authority, the Ministry of Education and Science. However, in an attempt to create a monitoring system, the Latvian Adult Education Association was established in 1993 to function as a coordinating body in the system of adult education and learning. Adult learning extends across other policy sectors and is organised by regional local governments, covering broad fields that include

vocational and in-service training for business or sector-specific needs. This has had positive repercussions for non-formal and informal education in Latvia, particularly through the projects of the European Social Fund (Šiliņa 2008).

In Switzerland, the Swiss Federation for Adult Learning (SVEB) is the umbrella organisation of adult education and lifelong learning in Switzerland. This non-governmental organisation represents nationwide private and state institutions and associations responsible for adult education on a cantonal level as well as institutions, in-house training departments and personnel managers. It also extends its reach to individuals who are active in adult education (lifelong learning).

### ***5.4.3 The Role of Adult Learners***

Smith and Clayton (2011) provide insights into the importance of acknowledging adult learners as a stakeholder in the processes of recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning. Acting on the perspectives of adult learners is critically important for the validation of learning outcomes in the vocational education and training sector. Adult learners are in a powerful position to comment on the relevance and quality of content and pedagogy of programmes. Their insights and perspectives can play a critical role in determining the appropriateness of learning contents and processes. Adult learners are more likely to respond to “internal motivators” rather than “external motivators” (Laird 2007; Knowles 1990, p. 63). Thus, Smith and Clayton argue, there would seem to be an imperative for those designing, developing adult learning programmes to identify, understand and incorporate the “internal” motivators for adult learners to learn, such as self-esteem, recognition, better quality of life, increased job-satisfaction and greater self-confidence, more than external motivators include job-security, better jobs, promotion and higher salaries.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter aimed to highlight the various partnerships between stakeholders which drive the coordination and implementation of RVA as these are essential to the success or failure of recognition policies and practice. While most systems aim to operate with shared responsibility, often the balance is tipped towards either the business sector or public authorities. There are pitfalls with any system that relies too heavily on one sector or another, but stakeholders are integral to the functioning of any framework of recognition of non-formal and informal education, so they must be included constructively in the process of policy-making.

Cooperation with industrial organisations and the private sector can be advantageous, partly because this enables employers harmonise labour market needs with those of the adult learners. However, there are issues associated with this, most

notably that the capacities promoted by a heavily industry-influenced recognition system will often be narrowly focused around market sector skills. These skills will not always correlate with the broader set of valuable capabilities that ought to be covered by recognition (see also the example of Australia in Chap. 6). Government involvement, even in predominantly industry-based recognition systems, is therefore desirable if this is to be avoided.

Public authorities have an important role to play through a broad range of activities including: the development of goal-oriented public policies on RVA; the identification of key sectors requiring sustained efforts to build human capital; collaborative work among different ministries; managing the accreditation of official providers for assessment and certification services for productive, voluntary, education and government activities; adjusting educational curricula to the productive sector's needs, through the use of standards of competence and learning outcomes; and establishing a national system of equivalences for formal educational programmes (adult, vocational and professional levels).

Examples show that the shared responsibility or "social partnership" model based on close cooperation between the government, social partners and other societal stakeholders is becoming an inevitable feature of the development and implementation of RVA policies and practice. While the term "social partners" includes employee and employer organisations, Seddon and Billet (2004) define "social partnerships" more broadly to include partnerships enacted by the government, by the community, or negotiated through a broker system that provides advice and structured programmes for pathways to further education or employment and social inclusion. Social partnerships operate as "learning networks" because they provide opportunities for active, collaborative learning at the local level and link communities with networks of external educational and employer bodies. Only active engagement by a wide group of stakeholders can result in the development and implementation of RVA.

A unique feature of stakeholder involvement in the adult learning sector has been the engagement of adult educators. They have promoted RVA as a social movement for social justice and adult participation, including the development of access to higher education, most notably in the UK, USA and Canada. A lot of advocacy for RVA has been undertaken by organisations and networks like CAPLA in Canada, CAEL in the USA, and the Open University network for access to adults in the UK.

In developing countries, RVA is still in the process of being implemented. In most countries it exists mostly as policies on public documents. Nevertheless, these are countries with vast decentralised systems of non-formal and adult education with the aim to create lifelong learning opportunities for all. NGOs and voluntary agencies, as well as local and district governments are active in imparting non-formal education to socio-economically weaker sections, disadvantaged groups, the unskilled and unemployed, while a number of government ministries are also involved in skills development. Given the vastness of many of these countries, it will be important to highlight the role of regional local authorities in RVA implementation. Other, equally important factors in the implementation of RVA in developing countries include the establishment of resources for the training of RVA

practitioners, the development of regulatory frameworks to ensure quality in non-formal and private educational sectors as well as strategies at the macro-level to provide solutions for the complex problems of groups that experience disadvantage (Singh and Duvekot 2013).

With a broad range of interests at stake, many objectives formulated in RVA policy respond to economic goals, such as driving labour market integration, improving the utilisation of competences within enterprises, and enhancing labour mobility in the informal and formal sectors. Other objectives relate more closely to education and training system reforms, the efficiency of learning systems, and the transparency of qualifications and certifications. In all countries, however, promoting and facilitating the integration and empowerment of marginalised social groups and individuals (uneducated and unemployed) and strengthening the motivation for lifelong learning are highly important policy objectives.

While lifelong learning presupposes a diversity of recognition forms and options according to the interests at stake, linking the efforts of all stakeholders and national authorities is essential for delivering access to education and recognition of all competences. All actors must be responsible for rendering competences visible and documenting them and enabling the process towards a qualification, diploma or certificate in cooperation with national authorities, and without neglecting coherence, transparency and quality. Recognition policies therefore need to reflect directly the level of cooperation between education, employment, economic and civil society actors.

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