

“Find What You Are Looking For”

Lifelong Learning Concept for Armenia

Preface

The aim of this policy analysis is to summarise the state of education and learning in Armenia from the point of view of supporting further reforms to identify the strategic issues of educational development, which serve the increase of quality of vocational education and training (VET), as well as non-VET adult learning to meet the demand of society, the labour market, and are able to contribute more effectively to the social- economic and cultural development of the country. This development will enhance competitiveness and represent an adequate approach to international standards.

The research and analytical work that has been conducted was merely simple desk research due to the limited timeframe. In essence it is an overview of the available research, policy documents and project results. This resulted in relying mostly on European Training Foundation (ETF) materials; the project outcomes of TACIS, UNDP, ILO, the European Commission, EBRD, DVV International and World Bank materials as well as OECD, UNESCO, USAID and Eurasia Partnership Foundation records. The paper also relied on studies carried out by Armenian experts, which were done as a result of international cooperation, such as the VET in the South Caucasus study (2008) and the UNESCO Armenian national report (2008). The policy analysis summary does not make reference to every single source, although an index of literature used is provided in the appendix.

Another method for carrying out the research was a personal visit to Armenia to meet the concerned stakeholders and considering with them policy, participants, aims and the content of lifelong learning and education (LLE) funding and structure of adult education (AE), co-operation between concerned ministries and agencies, recruitment and training of adult educators, co-operation between adult education and other subsystems of education, learning and training.

The third important element was, taking into consideration the period since the 90s, to take into account international educational and learning policy development efforts, especially in Europe, and the related outcomes and practices with the tendencies of Armenian development primarily in the context of CIS countries. The aim was also to raise the fundamental issues of integration, and advancing progress whilst keeping stability and gradualism. Another goal was for the policy concept to exceed the limited HRD and VET approaches due to a conviction that one of the reasons for the failure, or limited success, of the reforms so far is that parts of the system cannot be changed permanently, since they ought to be in line with a number of conditions and components at the same time. On the other hand the key points enabling authentic and sustainable change in part or as a whole should be approached from the complexity of the entire social, economic, cultural and political systems as well as education, learning and training.

The policy paper has five main chapters:

1. Background of the socio-economic and cultural situation, specialities and trends – interpretation of the general context
2. Description and assessment of the lifelong learning practices and the institutional system of the country – which aim at summarising educational, training and learning institutional systems.
3. The prospects and contradictions chapter attempts to take the most important results and issues into account completed to their conclusions in strategic approach, the steps to be taken and contribution of the draft law.
4. Recommendations – makes suggestions that focus on ideas and procedures and the path leading up to conceptual rules in lawmaking. Each recommendation completed the consequences of the recommendation, the proposed steps to be taken towards the implementation and its confirmation in the draft law. This section finished by the list of the core tasks derived from the previous chapters.

5. Appendix: reference literature, index of key concepts.

1. Background to the socio-economic and cultural situation, specialities and trends – interpretation of the general context.

Change in the way of thinking - to shift of paradigm

Disadvantages have to be turned into advantages in culture and thinking, planning and execution. This is a long term process. Human resources and culture are Armenia's major assets and policy needs to consider the development of education and training as one of its highest priorities. This country, with its lack of natural resources, should utilise and develop its human resources and flaunt its cultural advances. During the changes of the last two decades, the negative inheritance of the Soviet era is still the strongest influence from both economic and cultural perspectives. This inheritance is mostly embodied in the social attitudes and mechanisms of the institutes that operate there, which are very hard to change.

Reconciliation and to overstep on the past

The negative inheritance of the past can only be changed gradually by small and practical successes. Historically, subordination to the 'crossroads' of the surrounding powers was a heavy burden to carry even before the Soviet era. These powers include the Persian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and historical Russia. The country is relatively isolated, which is a partly a result of geographic and historical conflicts, and stands in the way of its development. As by the beginning of the Perestroika the, other countries of the South Caucasus region were ruled by powerful "ethnic mafia" or economic oligarchy groups, who supported local nationalism as well as the maintenance of informal and secondary economy and corruption. These are the factors that mostly stand in the way of development and generate a series of conflicts. Processing this mutual history of the countries of the South Caucasus by mutual effort can bring an important regeneration of culture. Mutual success is also needed in Armenia even though it has been one of the fastest reforming countries.

Strengthening the civil society and elimination of the bureaucracy

It needs to refer in brief to the Monitoring of Democratic Reforms in Armenia Report (2006), which says among others things that the Armenian legislation on civic rights is broadly in line with international standards. Though with some difficulty, NGOs have managed to propose legislative improvements to the Parliament and to lobby for civil society interests. However, the interviewees of the report believe that the real situation in terms of respect for human rights is far from positive. Moreover, a persisting serious problem is that activities of Armenian NGOs are financed mainly by foreign grants, which poses the risk of such activities weakening in the case of foreign support diminishing or ceasing altogether.

In decision-making and policy-making, within the system of public administration, the centralization remains unjustifiably high, transparency is lacking, the system for maintaining accountability is ineffective, and fully fledged participation in civil society is not ensured. The public continues, as in the Soviet era, to overestimate the state's role and to underestimate the role of society, and the police and prosecution systems continue to serve as agencies for subjugating the public to the powers that be by means of creating a punitive atmosphere of fear.

An ETF study in 2004 showed that the training services market had considerably increased and diversified with the entry of non-public providers, while organisations with NGO status represented around 50% of the approximately 380 training organisations. ITC courses predominated, followed by foreign languages and crafts (e.g. jewellery, carpet weaving).

Facing with specific social and economic conditions

Armenia's resource-poor and landlocked economy has a low income level despite the stock of human capital so has to find its short term and long term role in the economic cooperation of the region as well as the entirety of broader and global economic development. The agriculture remains the group with smallest number of graduates while the sector is by far the largest in terms of labour employment. The economic growth needs to undergo a qualitative change towards the reduction of poverty and inequity, improve living standards, to change the weakness of the Armenian growth patterns to gain a sustainable, growing employment and a flourishing economic activity.

Poverty reduction remains a top priority as does reducing the disparities between different regions of the country. Although the government has made good progress in implementing its Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) and the overall poverty ratios have been falling, poverty remains a critical issue, particularly in rural areas and among socially vulnerable groups. Coexisting in Armenian economy is a large subsistence economy operating mainly informally and marked by low productivity and high self-employment rates. The informal economy represented around 49% of the GDP in the 2002-03 period. Direct cooperation with its neighbours is crucial from the viewpoint of the economy and the market, as is the enhancement of broader national, European and global economic cooperation. Armenia's future social and economic development is likely to benefit from an improved cross-border relationship with Turkey.

As the EBRD Strategy for Armenia (2006) states: Against this background, Armenia's main transition challenges are: (i) to improve the business environment *inter alia* by reducing corruption and arbitrariness, and emphasising the rule of law; (ii) to continue strengthening the financial sector by raising the level of financial intermediation through institutional development and increased competition, (iii) to accelerate post-privatisation restructuring and to improve transparency and corporate governance in the enterprise sector; (iv) to promote commercialisation of public infrastructure and utilities, with an emphasis on transparency and governance, (v) to establish competition in the market, and (vi) to improve tax and customs administration and ensure debt sustainability.

Migration and demographic trends

Beyond the considerable waves of migration from the country in the past Armenia is faced with a demographic challenge, it has a declining birth rate and decreasing working population. More active policy is needed to stimulate demographic growth and reverse migration, both of which are long term processes. The latest available figures on health care expenditure (as a % of GDP) show Armenia, like other trans-Caucasian countries, to be among the lowest spenders in Europe. It is proven that adult education can contribute to prevention and saving in healthcare costs.

According to research data referred to in the USAID/Armenia Strategic Plan for 2004-2008, in 2003 the money transferred to the country by representatives of the old Armenian Diaspora and recent Armenian migrants was estimated to be within US \$110 million, i.e. 4.6% of the GDP. A qualitative change is needed for the Armenian Diaspora and country, exceeding the economic significance of family remittance. Besides the strongly rooted historical and collective negative memories of the creation of the Diaspora, they have to realise that "the virtual Armenian nation is a reality" in this world that reminds us of a global village. A proactive re-interpretation is necessary in order to assign a much more dynamic role to the Diaspora in not just the transfer of knowledge but the successful integration of the country into global economy.

The country's unique Christianity goes beyond being merely a cultural tradition and forms intellectual capital that can be exploited in the globalized world. Daily pragmatism and thinking in the long run in every direction are both necessary.

Introducing the concept of lifelong learning and development of the whole educational and training system among other with a new law on adult education and learning can essentially contribute to these changes and development. The adequate system of adult education and learning (AEL) is able to support the changes in several ways. In the following chapters this paper shows various evidence related to the results, problems, obstacles and contradictions to make progress faster, more authentic and more sustainable.

2. Description of the institutional system of the country – which aims at summarising educational, training and learning institutional systems.

2.1 The legislative framework that identifies key principles of the Armenian education policy includes the following instruments:

- The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia (1995);
- The Law On Education (1999);

- Law of the Republic of Armenia on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education 2004.
- The Law On Primary Vocational (Artisan) and Secondary Vocational Education (2005);
- The Strategy for Primary Vocational (Artisan) and Secondary Vocational Education (2004);
- The Strategic Program for Poverty Reduction (2003)

Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, in particular, says: “Everyone has a right to education. Basic general education is mandatory. Secondary education in public education institutions is free of charge... Every citizen has the right to free higher education and studies at other vocational public education institutions on competitive basis in line with the procedure stipulated by law¹.”

The Law on Education identifies key principles of the state policy in the field of education, including:

- The humanitarian nature of education, priority of all-human values, free and comprehensive personal development, and promotion of civics, national pride, patriotism, lawfulness and environmental vision.
- Provision of democratic principles in the area of education;
- Integration into the international education network;
- Reasonable autonomy of education institutions;
- Provision of equal status for public and accredited non-governmental education institutions and the graduation certificates they issue;

In 2005 Armenia adopted the Law on Primary Vocational (Artisan) and Secondary Vocational Education, stipulating the principles of state policy in the area of VET, its organizational, legal and economic framework, and the rights and responsibilities of legal entities and individuals.

The free primary vocational education, transfer of all public education institutions to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Science, etc., were not reflected in the final version of the Law and are still a subject of political discussions. The Law on Licensing (2001) introduces a requirement for mandatory licensing of secondary vocational education. The same requirement is set to elementary vocational education. The Law on Social Benefits adopted 2005, sets out the tenets of a social protection system in Armenia, the new Employment Law was adopted in 2006.

After the Law on State Non commercial Organizations was adopted, all state vocational education institutions were reorganized as state non commercial organizations, their statutes were revised in compliance with that Law, and they were authorized for some kinds of entrepreneurial activities, including provision of additional education services (short-term training courses, retraining, advanced training, etc.). The Law on Social Protection of Children Left without Parental Care (2002) changed the upper age limits for preferential entrance to education institutions (free of charge, without competition) for orphans from the ages of 18 to 23. The Law on Education for People with Special Education Needs (2005) regulates the legal, organizational, and financial framework for people who need particular conditions for education meeting their abilities and skills.

2.2 The educational programmes:

The following types of educational programs have been implemented:

1. General educational programs (basic and supplementary);
2. Vocational educational programs (basic and supplementary).

The vocational educational programs target the highly qualified training specialists, enhancing their skills and knowledge through continuity of general and vocational education.

The basic vocational educational programs are:

1. Primary vocational program (artisan);
2. Secondary vocational program;

¹ Article 38, RA Constitution, 2005

3. Higher vocational program; and
4. Postgraduate program.

The Law of Armenia on Primary (Artisan) and Secondary Vocational Education and the Law on Higher and Postgraduate Vocational Education determines the following VE qualifications:

- a) Primary vocational education: artisan – primary technical training, specialist – secondary technical training;
- b) Higher vocational education: bachelor– bachelor’s studies, master (resident) – master’s studies, certified specialist– certified specialist’s training;
- c) Postgraduate education: research worker – researcher’s studies.

2.3 Development strategies, programmes

The political course for integration with the international educational space is reflected in the Strategy for Primary and Secondary Vocational Education and Training, Higher Education Strategy, Adult Education Concept, and the National Education Development Program embracing the period until 2015. To ensure more democratic management of the educational institutions, collective managerial bodies, Councils, planned to be established in educational institutions in 2008. The Commission for Vocational Education and Training was established in Armenia in 2007. To establish a National Board for the Development of Vocational Education (NBDVET) and Training and National Centre for VET Development has been an objective too.

The NBDVET acts at the political level and will comprise high-ranking officials. It will participate in strategic decision-making on VET system. The Centre will focus on developing VET methods, expertise and consulting. The National Institute of Education (NIE) under the Ministry of Education and Science was founded through the merger of different institutions and centres. The Department of Vocational Education at the NIE is engaged in the following activities:

- Development and testing of national programs;
- Development and implementation of the system reform;
- Scientific, methodological and experimental activities;
- Expertise.

The department’s activity is basically focused on general education.

The notion of “accreditation” was introduced in Armenia in 1999 in the Law on Education, which reads: “State accreditation is the recognition by the State of compliance of quality of training of specialists with the national education standards.” (see the collection of useful terms) Licensing and accreditation of educational institutions is the competence of the Licensing and Accreditation Service (LAS) at the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia. The LAS is authorized to make decisions on licensing and accreditation of educational institutions and assess quality of education. In fact, licensing and education quality assessment functions are the prerogative of one state agency. Armenian experts say quality assessment procedures are ineffective. Other shortcomings are: insufficient transparency, non-participation of beneficiaries and social partners in quality control and licensing processes. Accreditation criteria and indicators as well as their verifications are also questionable as they are universal for primary, secondary and higher vocational education regardless of their specifics. Revision of the standards and criteria would not be quite effective at present as educational institutions have no clear vision on strategic development plans, self-analysis, self-estimation, and certification, which are necessary conditions for effective and transparent accreditation.

At the same time, the Law on Vocational Education envisages the possibility of public accreditation, which can be defined as recognition of compliance of quality of educational institution’s work with the criteria and requirements of the accrediting organization.

In 2001, the Government of Armenia approved General National Standards for Secondary Vocational Education that determined the mandatory minimum content for secondary VE programs and the time of training. In 2003, the Government passed the Resolution on the Establishment and Validation of National Educational Standards for VE Specialities, according to which:

2007 when the ministry adopted Model of State Educational (Qualification) Standard developed within the framework of a UNDP-funded project.

Important innovations were introduced in 2005 when teaching modules were developed in partnership with employers within the framework of TACIS' program. Teaching modules allow assigning "partial qualifications". They were introduced in the academic years 2006-07 and 2007-08.

The Law on Vocational Education and Training of 2005 introduced the notion of Social Partners into the VET sphere. The law defines this notion as follows:

"Organizations or associations interested in support, cooperation and development of the primary and secondary vocational education and training, including all types of educational institutions" (Article 3). The law defines one of the principles of the state policy on VET as follows:

"Guarantee of education for citizens with modern thinking, reproduction and development of intellectual potential and manpower, competitiveness in the labour market and social partnership sphere" (article 4).

Armenia's employment policy is based on the Law on Employment and Protection of the Unemployed of 2005. Standard Regulations of Coordination Committees was approved by order of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of August 2006. The regulations ensure participation of social partners in development and implementation of employment programs at national and local levels. The Ministry of Education and Science has recently developed Strategic Overview of Education for 2015. The basis for the National Education Development Programs for 2008-2015. The Ministry, in association with the ILO, has founded the Social Partnership Centre under the National Institute of Labour and Social Research.

According to the UNDP National Human Development Report (2006), Armenia has high education indicators: literacy among adults is 99,4%. At the same time the country has not carried out any new type of surveys comparable to the OECD surveys on the pupil's skills in public schooling, and similar research on adult skills which have identified problematic gaps even the most developed economies. The high literacy rate in Armenia means a comparative advantage in terms of foundations for further education, training, and lifelong learning.

In terms of the skills and qualification of workers, the UNDP business environment study in 2005 showed that most of the workforce in Armenia is employed in the labour-intensive sectors of economy where low skills are required. However, employers are concerned with low qualifications of VET and university graduates, in particular, with their analytical and problem solving skills, communication skills, ICT skills and others.

The State Employment Service, founded in 1992, plays an important role as a link between educational institutions and employers. It has 51 regional branches (employment centres) throughout Armenia.

The main stakeholders involved in social dialogue include the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Employment Service Agency, the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen, the Chamber of Commerce, the Industry Builder's Union, and the Confederation of Trade Unions.

This short overview shows that a number of new initiatives have been started. These are partly in the different areas of the sector of education and training that are not organised institutionally into a coherent unity. Also there is no a measurable implementation and there is no a clear, transparent co-ordination between the activities.

3. Prospects and contradictions.

This chapter attempts to take the most important results and issues into account

A contradiction exists as lifelong learning covers not only adult vocational adult education and labour market training but also non-vocational, liberal and basic adult education too. In the search for data and information on the subject it is common not only in many of the European countries but also in relation to Armenia that data that provides an overall picture of the state of art in non-vocational adult education of the given country is very hard to come by. The author of this paper has a conviction that Armenia must put to the fore a number of key areas in non-vocational adult education. Firstly in mapping the field and secondly in the development that aims to advance adult basic skills, key competencies training, active citizenship training and all forms of so called 'popular' adult education activities. This might include community education work and boosting youth community activities, the

creation of local societies, educational circles etc. which can contribute to social cohesion and social integration. It is clear that the international agencies have focused mostly on labour market training and human resource development recently and the picture of non-vocational sector of adult learning is missing almost completely. Within the framework of this project activity it is strongly emphasised to develop a new approach and focus much more on the integrated approach of lifelong learning which embraces the activities serving social inclusion, personal fulfilment and active citizenship training, as these are preconditions for more successful labour market training. It is especially important to explore the state of art in key competencies of different adult groups within society. The author cannot tackle with this imbalanced situation only underline these in the recommendations.

3.1 Funding, including public funding is the most obvious challenge, the public resources allocated to education having plunged from 7–9% of GDP in the 1980s to 2–3% of (a much smaller) GDP in the 1990s. During the years of transition the reduction in public spending on education was significant. In 1991 state expenditure on education amounted to 7.2% of GDP, while in 2002 it was only 2.2% of GDP. During the period 2001–02 some 65% of public funds were channelled to elementary, basic, secondary and special education, and around 16% was allocated to financing professional education.

In 2002 over three-quarters of all VET students were paying tuition fees. Despite the strong motivation of Armenian families to invest in education, the reduction in the number of free places in education has increased the financial burden on families and increases the risk of economically vulnerable young people being excluded from education. Armenia needs to maintain a strong focus on the development of human capital, since this is the most vital asset of its economy.

Conclusion from the point of view of a strategic approach:

Useful public checks are largely lacking, as is adequate representation of interest, which would allocate and efficiently utilise resources for lifelong learning activities. The facts show that the reduction in public funding of education during the 80s and 90s was dramatic, a trend, which if it were to continue would harm the position of the country. The strategic point is to control or limit this trend.

Steps to be taken:

An overview should be made regarding public funding in different sectors of education and the efficiency of the variety approaches. This should be done in order to maximise the possible contribution towards reforming the overall educational system, including financing that services the implementation of the lifelong learning.

What contributions the act makes:

The law creates (see Article 5) a Council (NAELC) to support the formulation of strategic priority decisions. The law creates (Article 21 and 22) the specific rules dealing with financing in which the creation of a Labour Market Fund is of primary importance. There are also a number of other options that could possibly be introduced such as the normative subsidy and the tax allowance.

3.2 Problematic governance of education training and VET

There are gaps in the description and allocation of functions and responsibilities to ministries and to local government bodies in relation of VET. Although 13 primary VET schools are administered by Marzperatans, the existing legislative framework deals only very briefly with the responsibilities of these local bodies in the area of VET. The management of general education establishments is decentralised to regional bodies, and the Department of Education of Marzpetaran is responsible for the direct administration of general secondary schools. In fact the VET Law adopted in 2005 was unable to pass the initial draft proposal regarding administration of the whole VET system by one ministry alone – the MoES.

As a result of these facts it appears that the VET system management in Armenia is centralized in terms of decision-making and fragmented in terms of distribution of authorities. The fragmentation and unjustified dispersal of the educational institutions network results in inefficient management, bureaucratic decision-making, ineffective use of resources, irrational distribution of specialties in institutions under the jurisdiction

of different governmental agencies and the impossibility to develop and implement a comprehensive education policy at the national level.

Conclusions from the point of view of a strategic approach:

The centralisation, fragmentation and the ineffective use of resources (as well as other factors) make further future steps difficult and contradictory. An improvement in the overall governance of education and training institutes is inevitable.

Steps to be taken:

The strategic method for formulating rules includes defining the operation of the activities, less direct state intervention, more local, regional, institutional autonomy and the involvement of the social partners, NGOs and citizens themselves.

What contributions the act makes:

Part II of the draft law offers a number of measures that would create a better structure of governance in the sector. It is crucial that the proposed Council (article 5) and its composition involve all relevant stakeholders. The registration of providers (see article 8), the rules of supervising institutes (see article 10), and the further development of regional decentralisation (see article 11) all serve the improvement of governance without centralised, direct intervention.

3.3 Reform strategy findings:

In 2004 the MoES officially adopted the VET Reform Strategy drafted in the framework of TACIS Co-operation in 2003–04. The project identified the key problem areas in the VET system, which were summarised as follows:

1. Inadequate opportunities for young people and adults in terms of lifelong professional education and training;
2. Low quality of VET provision;
3. Weak organisational structures and partnerships;
4. Inefficient resource mobilisation, distribution and utilisation.

Conclusions from the point of view of a strategic approach:

The strategic finding claims that it is too expensive to use resources on further on studies without action plans and without producing suitable conditions for their implementation, without strict monitoring of their progress and without results dealing with the identified key problems.

Steps to be taken:

A concrete action plan identifying the different high risk groups in society has to be decided upon. This should be made market enterprises on their skill needs of these groups of their employees. This should be followed by building up a functioning partnership in practice and producing a set of indicators for checking the efficiency of resource mobilisation.

What contributions the act makes:

Article 11, which proposes building up a system and network of adult learning and education centres – which can provide non-vocational, non-formal and community adult learning activities and programmes – and connecting and further strengthening relationships with regional and local branches of the State Employment Agency in order to complete the necessary network, and to coordinate the diverse services that they supply to individuals and communities.

3.4 Activity rate, employment, unemployment:

The National Statistical Service (NSS) for 2004 identified :

1. The activity rate is less than 60%
2. The employment rate is approximately 41%
3. The unemployment rate remains high at 32%.

4. Imbalances in regional development

Specific elements of unemployment

1. Registered unemployed are highly skilled professionals (34% of total),
2. Against 20% of individuals without professional qualifications.
3. In the first group engineers of various types are the largest category, followed by technicians, teachers, accountants and nurses.
4. A substantial proportion of people in long-term unemployment (more than 80% have been unemployed for over a year)
5. This shows that there is a serious mismatch between employers' requirements (and conditions/wages) and job seekers' skills (and expectations/wages)
6. Many skilled professionals lack the core skills (ITC, English, communication)

Conclusions from the point of view of a strategic approach:

It is a European objective to reach a 70% employment rate for those of working age and to postpone the retirement age by 2010. This rate is now around 40% in Armenia. The especially problematic groups within those defined as unemployed are young people, the long-term unemployed and unemployed highly skilled professionals. These factors project a dramatic view in light of key factors of the country's healthy functioning labour market.

Steps to be taken:

A large number of new employment initiatives and programmes must be launched so as to make it easier to be covered by the labour market and to create a tight connection with different kinds of community education and training programmes. It has to focus firstly on the most problematic target groups such as the young unemployed, the unemployed living in rural areas and the long term unemployed and well educated people of professionals who are unemployed.

What contributions the act makes:

Article 3 paragraph 2 describes the different objectives of the AEL services which have to be balanced to fulfilling all aims. (Personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion, employability) Article 5 proposes the construction of the Council and the involvement of key actors in the labour market, the Ministry of Economic Development, the State Employment Agency and employer's organisations and the social partners. Article 22 may introduce the normative subsidy which provides an opportunity to annually identify the priority groups among the unemployed, while articles 23 and 24 specify employment facilitating programmes and those that support businesses that carry out their own training programmes.

3.5 The VET strategy in Armenia identified a number of tasks that should result in:

1. Open and democratic system;
2. Continuity of education;
3. Quality of education services;
4. Development of skills in view of one's individual abilities;
5. Development of skills in view of the needs of economy and labour market;
6. Cost effectiveness;
7. Involvement of different VET forms in a single legal framework;
8. Organization, methods and management of vocational education institutions;
9. Social partnership;
10. Transparency and accreditation;
11. Integration into international processes in the field of education;
12. Lifelong education.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia submits the list of occupations (specialties) to be taught in primary and secondary vocational institutions to the Government of Armenia for approval. The list is compiled with participation of competent authorities of relevant industries. The list can be extended only if a new profession standard comes into service and is once in 1-2 or 5 years. The current list of primary

vocational education specialties involves 102 occupations united in 21 groups, while the list of secondary vocational education specialties consists of 307 professions making up 28 groups. Vocational educational institutions of Armenia currently provide training in 140 specialities.

The working qualification framework of Armenia fails to meet international and, especially, European requirements. It certainly cannot enable mutual recognition of qualifications, because knowledge and skills requirements within these qualifications are not defined by any law or methodological document and are not conditioned by labour market demand. Individual standards of specialties and qualifications can be used, to a certain degree, as a basis for elaboration of an all-embracing qualification framework. Qualification assignment mechanisms and procedures are non-transparent and inaccessible. This situation leads to uncertainty surrounding professional training requirements, low quality of education failing to meet labour market demands and hinders growth of employment rates and economic development in general.

Armenia's course for integration with international, and first of all European educational space, necessitates development and introduction of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) meeting international standards and targeting a higher quality of VET through modernization of qualification system.

ETF's project on the National Qualification Framework has been operating in Armenia since 2006. The project, aimed at fostering co-operation between all stakeholders by following the example of development of qualification standards in the field of tourism, is being implemented with active participation of social partners.

Conclusions from the point of view of a strategic approach:

The country itself needs to define its own priority areas in the VET strategy in which one of the most crucial is the renewal of the NQF. The NQF serves as a compass and observations conclude that it is somewhat old fashioned, which can prove very costly for the public budget, for the economy. The costs are ultimately charged to society as a whole including families that finance their childrens' studies. The renewal of the NQF has to be strategically balanced in terms of it corresponding to the expectations of society as well as to the mid-term and long term economic development strategy. It is recommended that the NQF is connected to or based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) too as it may facilitate both the incoming and outgoing labour force mobility of the country.

Steps to be taken:

Initiatives must be to intensify co-operation within the framework of the European Training Fund and within the EU in general in order to speed up screening of the current NQF. Initiating more Tempus projects to launch multilateral co-operation that would develop higher education and through the medium of higher education to accumulate the knowledge base for the reform capacity dealing with the NQF. To extend initiatives in the co-operation with the EU on more programme fields such as Grundtvig, Leonardo and others is necessary.

What contributions the act makes:

Article 1 paragraph 2 recommends uniting the different legal rules so as to avoid duplication, parallelism and contradictions between different ministries and institutes. Article 6 involves the different sub sectors, article 7 talks about the task of NAELI, the institute that could play a major role in the development of the NQF. Article 12 deals with accreditation. It can be said that of whole Part III of the draft Act serves to set up tools and rules for more modernised training and learning in both content and method.

3.6 Poor infrastructure:

Infrastructure and learning materials have not been upgraded for last 15-20 years, which was largely due to limited financial resources. The majority of educational facilities have one or two computers and internet is available in only very few of them.

For students, as well as for majority of teachers, the main source of information is the library, even though libraries are not available in all educational facilities, and the available literature is quite outdated.

Internet resources are used by 10-15% of educational institutions. At 30% of institutes students are provided with learning materials, in 20% of institutes teachers are themselves responsible for provision of literature, in 5% of institutes students themselves have to obtain all necessary materials and in 10% of institutes lectures are the only source of obtaining of professional information.

Computer classes are available only in the institutes, located in the capital and in very few regions. According to their own evaluation only 50% of the heads of educational institutions and 65% of teachers have computer skills, though there is substantial basis to consider such evaluation as exaggerated. This is supported by the fact, that only 35% of teachers (who think they have relevant computer skills) state, that they use computers during their lessons. According to teachers only 65% of students have relevant computer skills.

Other educational facilities have not had such an opportunity as they were not receiving only donated funds, but not from the state budget. Consequently they have to use extremely outdated equipment which is sometimes up to half a century old.

Conclusions from the point of view of a strategic approach:

The aims and content of any kind of lifelong learning activity must be in consonance with the facilities where the activities are carried out. In neglected buildings, with old furniture and equipment it is not appropriate to teach about the future of the knowledge society. Lagging ICT infrastructure, including lack of internet access and a lack of digital literacy competences in educational staff are the strategically critical questions.

Steps to be taken:

In parallel to the co-financed (state, business, individual, foreign contributions) renovation of all kinds of facilities in lifelong learning there is an urgent need to develop, in joint co-operation with the respective ministries, an action plan for the improvement of the information society. This should involve research institutes forecasting the future trends and ICT capacity defining the overall societal and economic development.

What contributions the act makes:

Article 21 provides options for subsidising AEL and lifelong learning and the draft text presents a number of mechanisms for the financing of lifelong learning.

3.7 Outdated tutor and teacher training

In the past teachers of vocational education institutions were undergoing mandatory courses of professional development in a centralized manner as a minimum once in every five years. But from 1991 such professional development courses were closed down due to a lack of resources and now responsibility for professional development is the responsibility of educational institutions and teachers themselves.

The age of teachers causes concern as well. Thus, average age of teachers exceeds 55 years and around 17% of them have already reached pension age. Apart from this more than 80% of teachers are women, which is largely caused by low salaries.

Conclusions from the point of view of a strategic approach:

Faced with demanding tasks recommended in the policy development paper and the different tasks included in the implementation the act, the sector needs well trained experts, teachers, course organisers, managers, advisers, evaluators and a range of different experts at different levels. (From the point of view of qualifications these people should have ISCED 3- 4 level and ISCED 5 and 6 levels – which means secondary, postsecondary and higher education qualification levels) The strategic emphasis is not on the level of qualification but rather on profiles and the correspondence dealing with future demands.

Steps to be taken:

A treasury of the different training and further training courses and forums carried out by different adult education and learning organisations regardless of their main orientation (VET, non-VET, formal, non-formal, NGO) should be compiled. Making an analysis of the stock of courses that have been realised and their results is necessary in order to plan and to perform the variety of training services for lifelong learning experts. (For the public administration officers, for full and part time adult learning experts, teachers, to volunteers, other contributors, administrators providing different sub sectors of lifelong learning. It is also necessary to introduce accredited higher education training (see recommendation point 4.6) for adult learning staff.

What contributions the act makes:

In part III of the draft Act it is necessary to add an article formulating the following:

“Faced with the demanding tasks of the development and implementation of lifelong learning policy and practice in the country it is necessary to take into consideration the preparation of highly qualified professionals, experts and staff in the sector. The Ministry of Education will provide a separate government decree on instruction, initial training and continuing further training of public administration staff and the field workers of adult learning and education. After a preparatory phase the duty of taking part in specific training will become a precondition of accreditation and quality insurance.”

4. Recommendations – makes recommendations that focus on ideas and procedures, the path that leads to lawmaking

4.1 Reviewing the framework and consolidating new approaches.

In order to make a proper review it is of primary importance to remember that the terminology surrounding adult education (AEL) and learning, lifelong learning (LLL) is not only a magic word game. There is a real need to re-interpret and to adopt the key terms and meanings such as VET, non-VET, adult learning, lifelong learning and integrate these into the national educational and cultural context. It provides base for using the language not only internationally, but firstly within the country and allows an understanding the same problems, while also maintaining the diversity of opinions and the interests of stakeholders. This could help the real convergence of the different actions by the relevant actors as the specific feature of the field is its diversity.

The major points are the perception of lifelong learning as overarching concept consisting of elements including:

- Primary and secondary education (public education)
- Vocational training and further training (VET)
- Higher education
- Adult education and learning²

The system has to be balanced between non-VET and VET, formal and non-formal learning in terms of priority and financing too. All forms of learning must be considered as equally important including formal, non-formal and informal learning and education. It must be recognised that non-formal and informal adult learning activities are crucial in order to involve disadvantaged groups and to motivate those with little or no formal education.

Lifelong learning, therefore, can be achieved at schools, at universities, at home, at work and in any other place in society. It is unrestricted in terms of age, socio-economic status and the individual's level of education. In this way, lifelong learning should be viewed as a continuous and planned activity that supports the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and in consequence the occupational and broader social success of individuals, their communities and the whole of society.

Implementing an integrated approach:

² Trends and Issues in Adult Education in Europe, 2006

What is the force of an *integrated approach for lifelong learning*?

- Putting the learner at the centre.
- Consonance between mutually supporting objectives such as personal fulfilment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability.
- A coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy.
- Inter- linked development programmes.

Within the EU an overall consensus can be expressed using the following four broad and mutually supporting objectives:

- Personal fulfilment,
- Active citizenship,
- Social inclusion and
- Employability/adaptability³

The government has to treat all types of providers in a same way based on the quality and real measurable output of their activities regardless of their being state owned, non-governmental, non-profit or for-profit providers. It has to develop a well balanced co-financing mechanism. The public authorities must maintain their responsibility for supporting the poorly educated and unemployed groups. Meanwhile the state tends to support institutions or providers more than those individuals, the target groups, namely poorly educated or unemployed people. The state needs to introduce new mechanisms of financing adult learning and lifelong learning as a whole. Public bodies, the corporations, as well as individuals and families may take part in the co-financing mechanisms.

Consequences of the recommendations from the point of view of a strategic approach:

The 4.1 Recommendation summarises all the basic principles of lifelong learning (LLL) from point of view of the professional aspect. It is often the case that certain principles are announced in the preamble or in number of paragraphs in other documents but are never implemented in practice.

The steps to be taken towards implementation of the recommendation:

Transparency and publicity can guarantee to create a more balanced situation as the market forces and certain interest groups in the hierarchy of society always have incomparable weight to enforce their interests with than others. The ministry needs to annually issue a national level lifelong learning plan and ensure its public evaluation. This could balance the gap between principle and practice and may contribute towards regular necessary corrections.

Confirmation in the Act:

The constitution of the country, the preamble of this draft act and the listed associated acts legally guarantee the enforcement of citizen's right to lifelong learning. See also in recommendation 4.6 the footnote N0.6 to harmonize laws.

4.2 International standard in data collection and monitoring

³European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html

European Commission and member state's lifelong learning

Directorate General for Education and Culture http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.html

Education and Training 2010

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html

National Reports 2003:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/ill_en.html

Biannual Joint Reports - 2005

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/nationalreport_en.html

One of the main priorities is the collection and use of data for monitoring and decision-making in line with the common terms and methodology. The common educational, training, analysis, research and survey methods used by the EU, ETF, OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank should be gradually and consistently applied. Ministries should harmonise for lifelong learning the data-collecting activities and methods carried out by the National Statistical Office. It is recommended that those involved become familiar the methodology of Eurostat data collection and to the methods of the EU Education and Training 2010 programme (indicators, benchmarks) in the field of lifelong learning. Planning cannot be effective, nor benchmarking compatible without these, and no previous data service can give an adequate answer to what progress has been made, what further things to concentrate on, and what the most critical elements are. Following the elimination of deficiencies occurring in the data service methodology and in the data itself, benchmarks must be set in the fields of education and training if it wants to keep to a proportionate and adequately paced rate of catch-up. If the country wants to consider the EU system as its main point of reference it is the right time through the ETF activities and through other possibilities to introduce the EU indicator and benchmark system into daily practice at the national and regional, as well as institutional level. One proposal is to use the monitoring and evaluation system and methods in all sub-sectors, as well as at national, regional and local levels. Beyond research and training activities it needs a strong public campaign activity too such as Learning Festivals. ⁴

Consequences of the recommendations from the point of view of a strategic approach:

Armenia has to adapt to international standard data collection, monitoring and analysis systems. It needs to have a clear view on the state of the art and progress therein according its own research results. International transparency which creates a positive image and opens more opportunities is also of critical importance.

The steps to be taken towards implementation of the recommendation:

Starting with TACIS programmes and followed in the activities of the framework of the European Training Foundation and other the global programmes such as the World Bank activities dealing with training, Armenia needs to gradually introduce the European statistical, monitoring, assessment standards in the practice of the sector too. The policy making body could be the NAELC, and the responsible executing body the NAELI. It would be advisable to set up small working groups in co-ordination with the National Statistical Office.

Confirmation in the Act:

See the function of the NAELC in article 5 and 6 and the function of the NAELC in article 7.

4.3 System, infrastructure and funding of adult learning

The country needs to increase the investment significantly in the field of education in general and in adult education especially. However, the field has many facets and is not the kind of sector that is covered by one ministry. The leading role could be delegated to the Ministry of Education in close co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Meanwhile it is important to be aware the fact that LLL is an issue for the whole government and an agenda of the whole of society. A wide range of partners have to be involved ⁵ and developing and reforming the institutional system and infrastructure

⁴-ETF: How to carry out qualitative local labour market assessments A handbook for professional schools and institutions

- EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS AND POLICIES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

APRIL 2003, ETF

- EU policy documents dealing with indicators and benchmarks

⁵ Key institutions:

Ministry of Education and Science (MeS)

means changes at the horizontal level: better cooperation and integration between governmental sectors, as well as better collaboration with social partners. It requires an integrated institutional framework and its continuing and co-ordinated operation, based on further development of the current institutional systems as and when is necessary. All of this should take place against the background of a cycle of continuous improvement.

This means an institutional system that holds together a wide circle of partners including formal and non-formal providers, the labour market and civil and cultural areas at the same time. The number and role of non-governmental institutions should grow within this system, with special regard to the number and participation of private and non-profit education providers in an environment of growing educational and training supply. Essentially the government has to increase its responsibility but in a different way than it used to in the past. The role of the ministries and state authorities should be redefined away from direct operation of and relationships towards increased emphasis on establishing national standards, policy frameworks and creating clear regulations and incentives to all stakeholders. Many laws in the country have never been enforced and applied consistently. Instead of just making more rules that are ignored, it is better to reconsider and reassess laws and rules promoting adult learning and LLL, along with new simple framing of the all too numerous and all too complicated educational sub-regulations. Creating a new law could have the aim of creating a more comprehensive framework, emancipating the sector instead of operating by a number existing acts which fragment the field. It has its consequences in changing or skipping paragraphs of a number of laws concerning adult learning. It is not possible to change everything in one day but at the same time it is crucial to launch the widest possible public consultation process. This should involve employment organisations, employees, social partners, professional institutes and civil society and will result in a wider and deeper understanding of the high stakes of success in the field. It should also mobilise the actors to be motivated in implementation.

Consequences of the recommendations from the point of view of a strategic approach:

The recommendation summarises the necessary fundamental requirements of the new methods of co-operation between state bodies, government and the non-governmental sectors and between business institutes. This co-operation depends very much on the quality, in terms of operational issues, of the democratic institutes, mechanisms while their quality has an important impact on the achievement of the sector as a whole. It is especially important in such a sector in which the interest representation is not as strong as in some others. As in many other countries, governments and politicians are slowly beginning to recognise the importance of development of human capital and social capital of their country.

The steps to be taken towards implementation of the recommendation:

The Ministry of The Ministry of Labour and Social Issues (MoLS)
Ministry of Economic Development
Commission for Vocational Education and Training
Development of Vocational Education (NBDVET) and Training
National Centre for VET Development
State Employment Agency (SEA)
The State Labour Inspection of MoLS
National Statistical Office, National Statistical Service
Universities and research institutions
Social partners as Employer's organisation, and federation trade unions
Civil society organisations (NGO training organisations and others as youth, women, environmental and any other kind of civil organisations as well especially the Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Association (Metsahasakneri usucum ev usumnarutyun vogch kjanqi ynthacqum)
Training Enterprises on adult learning (ICT, language etc.)
Delegation of European Commission, Armenia
Donor organisations

The sector should work out a plan of action and use the results and processes of the national, regional and local level reform programmes within the public administration and public institutional systems. The sector has to apply this to its own organisational network.

Confirmation in the Act:

The Act (article 5) invites all key actors for preparatory talks regarding the decisions of the NAELC and invites all professionals to the national accreditation body (AELAB see article 13)

4.4 Creating working mechanisms as a dialogue between the main actors and focusing on the demand of society and the labour market.

TACIS assistance programme already proposed priorities as:

- Introduction of competence-based VET standards (see the European Qualification Framework)
- The modernisation of quality assurance mechanisms and certification,
- The creation of a state non-commercial technical support and quality assurance institute,
- Improvements in cost efficiency and educational outcomes
- Optimisation of VET financing.

According to the MoEA's request for technical assistance, some important areas will not be covered by the ongoing TACIS technical assistance and will require complementary contributions, including in the following spheres:

- Revision of the qualifications system and the adoption of a new conceptual basis in line with international developments;
- Elaboration of occupational and educational standards based on a sound methodology;
- Sector studies and links with occupational profiles;
- Improvement of curriculum development and assessment methods;
- Revision of the catalogue of occupations;
- Quality assurance policy and institutional building.

Employer's Organisations also propose:

Educational institutes need modern literature and databases, the practical work as a part of the learning can be organised in a better way and supported by entrepreneurs. More co-operation and more time spent on studying in enterprises needed. The enterprises need to create a network supporting the co-operation with the educational institutes.

The main requirement of the employers by the roundtable of the CIAPC has been to develop and focus more on the following competencies and skills as:

- Punctuality, responsibility and reliability of the employees
- To increase the professional experience of employees
- To grow in their knowledge about the sector
- More flexibility
- Working hard
- Ability to take decisions
- Improving communications skills and teamwork
- To acquire a more creative approach

The employer's would like to have pre-arrangements with students about future co-operation, they are proposing to use the results of the pilot colleges and they are eager to co-operate on student's fairs for students seeking job. Their recommendations on social dialogue:

- To initiate and implement a new culture of co-operation and trust which can only built by having broad national interests as the focal point.
- To form a framework and continually adjust to changing requirements on three main areas, namely:

- To form a high level working group with representation from relevant ministries and social partners with the task of addressing the key strategic issues.
- To negotiate a tripartite agreement between the government and the social partners to form a foundation for partnership education.

To empower the national VET Council to become the key policy and implementation driver and its representation to reflect the required shift in the governance model of VET, non-VET and education systems.

In their view modernisation of VET includes:

- Revision of qualifications system
- Adoption of new conceptual basis in line with international developments
- Elaboration of broad occupational and educational profiles
- Revision of the catalogue of occupations
- Improvement of the curriculum development and assessment methods
- Quality assurance policy and mechanisms
- Reliable and accessible information and guidance mechanisms supporting educations choices
- Observation, information, and analyses in support of policy and programming and governance

The law needs to revise the profile (functions and services number of existing institutes) and create new ones as:

1. Adult learning and VET Council (co-ordinated by the MoES and MoLs) and involving all actors mentioned above being a strategic planning and advisory body of the ministry.
2. Widening the profile and services or/and emergence of the Development of Vocational Education (NBDVET) and Training National Centre for VET Development, NIE and mandating it with the tasks in a wider field of adult education and lifelong learning, including those tasks specified under the activities of the modernisation of VET above.
3. Consultation body of the government authorities, corporations, employers' and employees' organisations
4. Specific bodies need to be set up dealing with registration and accreditation of providers, programmes and curriculum which would be the main measure for quality assurance. They need to clearly differentiate between diverse activities and methods of adult and lifelong learning. This is mostly a voluntary activity but at same time it also needs to be well co-ordinated.
5. It is proposed to develop in law a number of financial incentives to create a fund for the development of adult education (based on the tax reduction of the corporations paying an amount of money to the fund) to develop a co-financing mechanism in local government institutes and VET and non-VET providers. The NGOs must be involved as beneficiaries and decision makers as well. (government, corporations and civil society)
6. It is proposed to introduce the national annual plan of action for adult education and monitoring system. It can be further developed to draft midterm and long term action plans for priorities of development.
7. All these advanced and newly created mechanisms and institutes can be set up in a rational way at decentralised levels in order to reach all communities in both urban and rural areas.

After a wide range of consultation processes it will be necessary to make a review of the existing laws in order to change or remove number of paragraphs to create more transparency, visibility and coherence of the legal system.⁶

⁶ Harmonize the laws dealing with wide issues lifelong learning by reviewing the laws as:
 The Law On Education (1999)
 Primary Vocational (Artisan) and Secondary Vocational Education (2005)
 The Law On Licensing (2001)

Consequences of the recommendations from the point of view of a strategic approach:

The essence of the recommendation's strategic approach is to develop a learner centred line. To make efforts to realise a shift from the institution-based, exclusively employer based, exclusively professionals' interest based approach, or formal requirement's interest to more entire fulfilment of the interests of the clients, the individuals, the citizens, and their communities.

The steps to be taken towards implementation of the recommendation:

The recommendation describes a variety of necessary actions. From this variety it is of central importance to develop quality assurance and related mechanisms within the framework of accreditation, which insures learning interest of the individuals and their communities through the preliminary skill audit. It also ensures the duty of providers to make surveys at the request of communities and individuals and the prescription of the evaluation of the training activities by the adult learners themselves providing transparent feedback.

Confirmation in the Act:

Article 9 makes the services of providers transparent. There is a proposal that the annual plan makes the programme for the clients transparent too. Article 14 that addresses the professional body may facilitate an understanding of the concept of serving the citizens. Article 20 regarding the adult learning contract creates a mutually responsible engagement between the learner and the provider.

4.5 Decentralisation and a focus on disadvantaged areas and social groups

The empowerment of local and regional players is another major factor in the successful expansion of adult education and learning. Despite its small size, Armenia displays significant internal variations in terms of socio-economic indicators and prospects. Much needs to be initiated in terms of enhancing the practical responsibility and motivation of adult education organisations and VET and non-VET schools and their social partners at a local level. The balanced empowerment of local players will be another key challenge of development, but an important one for its success. The local NGOs the church and other community groups play a key role in this process. In the poverty reduction policy there needs to be an emphasis on:

- Integrated employment promotion measures (combining lifelong learning and social relief) beyond the social relief and consumption-smoothing have a short-term effect and that does not attack the roots of multidimensional poverty and vulnerability.
- The gigantic series of programmes on active citizenship, civic education and social inclusion by basic skills and key competence courses are needed.

The solution of interlinking the adult learning and different kinds of social employment (e.g. creating social co-operatives, initiating public employment action such as keeping streets and the natural environment clean, etc. seems to be crucial)

Consequences of the recommendations from the point of view of a strategic approach:

There can't be real competitiveness without social cohesion within society and the government's responsibility is to be mindful of disadvantaged groups, for those who need special attention and support. The foundation of special institutional, financing and methodological care is necessary.

Law On Vocational Education

Law On Employment and Protection of the Unemployed of 2005

Law on Social Benefits adopted 2005

The Law On State Non commercial Organizations

The Law On Social Protection of Children Left without Parental Care (2002)

The Law On Education for People with Special Education Needs (2005)

The list can be extended. These are only those mentioned in English language resources.

Strategically it is important that the state involves civil society organisations as they can contribute a great deal.

The steps to be taken towards implementation of the recommendation:

A programme of action to develop basic skills in adult learning must be developed in order to create many small community non-formal learning groups that might attract people to formulate local NGOs and to develop their social competencies as well as to fund large-scale active citizenship training programmes for different target groups. It is crucial to link a social employment, job generation and employment programme with non-formal community learning and other training programmes.

Confirmation in the Act:

Article 3 confirms the importance of social inclusion and active citizenship training and the non-profit and civil society organisations as important providers as well.

4.6 Reviewing the implemented programmes to exploit the results already gained and introduce the training of experts in adult education and training

Review the results of different programmes to gain the maximum from them and avoid any repetition. Rationalise the consequent further development and a systematic dissemination and training programmes. Organise a more systematic dissemination and implementation⁷
There is a need to develop research and training activities in co-operation with universities, colleges and adult education associations for developing BA and MA training for adult education experts, to carry out research and publishing relevant findings of surveys and available international literature.

Consequences of the recommendations from the point of view of a strategic approach:

Because of the lack of co-ordination many separate programmes and development activities are isolated and comprehensive strategic progress is not possible. Also harmonising missing actions and accumulated knowledge and skills makes development for the whole of society difficult and costly.

The steps to be taken towards implementation of the recommendation:

The Ministry of Education among others has to announce a public tender or delegate the task to NAELI (see article 7) to collect and systematically screen all the development programmes which have a direct or indirect connection to the development of lifelong learning. The output should be a stock of knowledge, skilful people and institutions which could play a key role in realising an all-embracing decentralised (down to village level) dissemination programme. It is important to involve local government representatives and officers too. In parallel to this there is a need for the assignment of a mixed expert group representing all sub sectors whose task would be to define the priority fields for most urgent further development programmes including their co-ordinated investment and dissemination programmes. The first one has to be financed and the output of the second one should be settled by a wide ranging discussion supported by the ministry.

⁷ The list is exemplary only:

- The Strategy for Primary Vocational (Artisan) and Secondary Vocational Education (2004);
- The Strategic Program for Poverty Reduction (2003)
- Higher Education Strategy,
- Adult Education Concept
- Strategic Overview of Education for 2015
- National Education Development Program embracing the period until 2015
- General National Standards for Secondary Vocational Education
- Resolution on Establishment and Validation of National Educational Standards for VE Specialities
- Model of State Educational (Qualification) Standard
- Standard Regulations of Coordination
- Recommendations of Social Partnership Centre

Confirmation in the Act:

Article 11 confirms the decentralised co-operation and Part II of the act assists in formulating appropriate governance for the sector while the Part III offers convenient options for subsidising different activities

4.7 International co-operation:

Private secondary schools and social-education centres tend to be praised for a higher quality of their teaching mostly as their links to international programmes. This experience is not an accident. Maintaining the social equity and justice the public institutes needs to improve their services too. The government in co-operation with all stakeholders (mentioned above in this paper) must make much more efforts to use the opportunities of the European Neighbourhood Policy programmes, Bologna Process for advancing adult education and learning. Also they need to advocate the EU in several ways to open Armenian education and training organisations more, other development programmes. In training programmes for adult educators need to develop a much bigger amount of people as expertise which group can facilitate to take part more intensively in international co-operations. Include this programme a wide range of people from top to down the exchange programmes of leading governmental officers to the unemployed adult learners themselves.

Consequences of the recommendations from the point of view of a strategic approach:

No country in the world can make progress without an intensified international co-operation, which can safeguard mutual learning from each other. The driving force of internationalisation makes it strategically essential.

The steps to be taken towards implementation of the recommendation:

The openness to stimulate and maximize the diverse international co-operation made by any organisation or community in the country does not guarantee the usefulness of a well co-ordinated policy. A database of programmes should be set up to increase the exploitation for the benefit of the country. The public authorities have to set up an influential evaluation and reporting system to demonstrate the mutual advantage of all kinds of investment in the field of international co-operation. Within Inter-ministerial co-operation there is need to analyse the weaknesses and strengths of international co-operation in the field and to make concerted efforts to ensure that a variety of donors open up more investments and programmes dealing with the development of the field of lifelong learning in Armenia.

Confirmation in the Act:

The approval of the Act demonstrates the will in the country for having a substantiated framework for progress on the field of lifelong learning which itself will have a number of positive consequences and benefit Armenian society as a whole, including the economy, international investment and a higher level of co-operation in the field.

A brief list of actions

The ministry has to put together a core group of politicians, leading administrative officers, experts, representatives of the professionals and social partners to gain support to promote and improve the general understanding of the importance of the content of lifelong learning and of the policy paper and draft law. It is necessary to organise a series of consultations to achieve consensus and initiate a public campaign to widely promote the aims and the benefits of the lawmaking process as well as the whole agenda of the development of the lifelong learning programme and practice thereof.

Core tasks derived from the previous sections of the policy paper:

1. Formulation of new rules defining the operation of the activities; less direct state intervention, more local, regional, institutional autonomy, decentralisation and involvement of the social partners, NGOs and citizens themselves at all levels.
2. An overview has to be taken on the public funding of different sectors of education.
3. A concrete action plan identifying the different risk groups in society has to be settled on and the identification of market enterprises regarding their skill needs is also essential. This should be followed by building up a really functioning partnership.
4. New employment initiatives and programmes have to be launched and should be tightly connected with the different kinds of community education and training programmes.
5. Intensification of co-operation in the framework of the European Training Fund and the EU in general for speeding up the screening and renewing of the current NQF.
6. The beginning of a program of renovation of all kinds of facilities used for lifelong learning.
7. There is an urgent need to develop an action plan for the information society according to the lifelong learning programme, included the investment into the infrastructure of ICT.
8. A treasury of the different training and further training courses and forums should be created and based on this a plan and to perform a variety of training services for lifelong learning experts should be forged.
9. To issue a national level annual lifelong learning plan including a regular guaranteed public and professional evaluation.
10. Gradually to introduce the international and European statistical, monitoring, assessment standards in the practice of the sector.
11. To work out a plan of action to use the results and processes of the national, regional and local level reform programmes of the public administration and public institutional systems.
12. To develop the quality assurance activities and mechanisms using the framework of accreditation would insure the learning interest of individuals and their communities
13. To develop basic skills development (key competences development) for adults, to create lot of small community non-formal learning groups.
14. To fund a large-scale, continuing, active citizenship training programmes.
15. To link social employment, job generation and employment programmes with non-formal community learning and different training programmes included renovated NQF
16. To collect and systematically screen all international and national development programmes which have a direct or indirect connection to the development of lifelong learning.
17. To assign of a mixed expert group representing all sub-sectors to define the priority fields of the most urgent further development programmes including their co-ordinated investment and dissemination.
18. The public authorities have to set up an influential evaluation and reporting system to demonstrate the mutual advantage of all kinds of investment into international co-operation.

19. To make concerted efforts by the ministries to get all kinds of donors (included the EU) to open up more investments and programmes dealing with the development of the field of lifelong learning in Armenia.

20. To receive regular evaluation of the experiences dealing with the operation of the law and to decide on possible amendments and modification in line of the progress.

July, 2008 Budapest

Dr. János Szigeti Tóth

Appendix

1. List of the reference documents

- 1.) Strategy of Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education and Training of the Republic of Armenia – Yerevan 2004
- 2.) Law of the Republic of Armenia - on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education
- 3.) Concept and strategy of Adult Education - (Approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia /RA/)
- 4.) “Adult Education and Life-Long Learning in Armenia” Perspectives of Development, First Conference Declaration
- 5.) National Observatory stocktaking report – Working Report- (Armenia2000) This report was produced in the context of the established by the European Training Foundation National Observatory Network
- 6.) A Review of International and National Developments in the Use of Qualifications Frameworks, ETF 2006
- 7.) ETF Comments on the European Qualifications Consultations Document
- 8.) Labour Market and Vocational Education and Training Challenges and Prospects for Countries Engaging in the European Neighbourhood Policy -- Southern Caucasus – Armenia (Eduarda Castel-Branco and Henrik Huitfeldt, European Training Foundation - November 2006)
- 9.) Stocktaking Report on Social Dialogue in Vocational Education and Training and Employment – Armenia
- 10.) Review of Vocational Education and Training and Employment in Armenia 2003
- 11.) Short Analysis of Training Provision in Armenia - National Observatory in Armenia, ETF Working paper- 2005
- 12.) Human Resources Development in the European Neighbourhood Region – Country by Country
- 13.) Armenia - ETF Country Plan 2007
- 14.) Country Analysis 2005 – Armenia
- 15.) Monitoring of Democracy Reforms in Armenia Report, 2006 Yerevan Press Club Partnership for Open Society Initiative, Open Society Institute Human Rights and Governance Grant Program, Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation Armenia
- 16.) The Development of the State of Art of Adult Learning and Education (ALR) National Report of Armenia by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia Draft manuscript in English , May 2008
- 17.) Document of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Strategy for Armenia As approved by the Board of Directors on 7 February 2006

- 18.) Labour market and vocational education and training: Challenges and prospects for countries engaging in the European Neighbourhood Policy: Southern Caucasus – Armenia by Eduarda Castel Branco and Henrik Huitfeldt. Working paper of ETF, 2007
- 19.) Vocational Education and Training in the South Caucasus: On the Road from Survival to Efficient Functioning of National Systems, 2008
- 20.) Towards a national strategic plan for youth employment in Armenia, 2008
- 21.) Enterprise – Educational Institution Co-operation – Report on Roundtable Institution/Enterprise Co-operation, Employer’s Organisation (CIAPC)
- 22.) Highlights on Health in Armenia, World Health Organization 2001

Glossary of useful terms

Active citizenship

The cultural, economic, political/democratic and/or social participation of citizens in society as a whole and in their community

Accreditation is a process in which certification of competency, authority, or credibility is presented.

Adaptability

The capacity to adapt to new technologies, new market conditions and new work patterns of both enterprises and of those employed in enterprises

Adult education includes everything described as basic and continuing education and assisted learning for youth (over 16) and adults, formal, non-formal or informal. This all-inclusive term therefore covers anything not counting as school or university education or initial vocation training for young people or adults. Delayed acquisition of school-leaving qualifications, postgraduate courses and vocational in-service training are therefore to be regarded as borderline areas.

Adult learning All learning activity by adults undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, and social and/or employment - related perspective.

Assessment

The sum of methods and processes used to evaluate the attainments (knowledge, know-how, skills and competences) of an individual, and typically leading to certification.

Certificate/diploma

An official document, which formally records the achievements of an individual

Certification

The process of issuing certificates or diplomas, which formally recognise the achievements of an individual, following an assessment procedure

Civil society

A ‘third sector’ of society alongside the state and the market, which embraces institutions, groups, and associations (either structured or informal), and which may act as mediator between the public authorities and citizens.

Statistical Classification for Learning Activities (CLA) learning activities are defined as: „any activities of an individual organised with the intention to improve his/her knowledge, skills, and competence”. Single learning activity: „, characterised by unity of method and subject” „,This means that each time there is a change in method of learning or subject of learning you have a different single learning activity”. (Eurostat, 2005)

Competence

Terms ‘competence’ and ‘key competence’ to ‘basic skills’ which was considered to restrictive as it was generally taken to refer to basic literacy and numeracy, and to what are known variously as ‘survival’ or life skills. ‘Competence’ was considered to refer to a combination of skills, knowledge, aptitudes and attitudes, and to include disposition to learn as well as know-how.

Credit system and transfer makes possible to divide a qualification into units or into partial objectives the objectives of a programme of VET. Each unit is defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) and can be characterised by the relative level of the learning outcomes involved, which may be defined by a reference level and by its volume which may be expressed in points or other factors. Each unit may or may not be awarded separately. The **transfer function means that** credit system makes it possible to establish the comparability and equivalence between learning which may be undertaken in different contexts and at different times.

The Copenhagen Declaration and process gives priority to investigating how transparency, comparability, transferability and recognition of competences and/or qualifications, between different countries and at different levels, could be promoted by developing reference levels, common principles for certification, and common measures, including a credit transfer system for vocational education and training (VET)

Corporate social responsibility

The commitment of a corporate organisation to operate in a socially, economically and environmentally sustainable manner, while acknowledging the interests of internal and external stakeholders

Digital divide

The gap between those who can access and use information and communication technologies (ICT) effectively, and those who cannot

Employability

The capacity for people to be employed: it relates not only to the adequacy of their knowledge and competences but also to the incentives and opportunities offered to individuals to seek employment.

Empowerment

The process of granting people the power to take responsible initiatives to shape their own life and that of their community or society in economic, social and political terms

European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a European Union initiative to create a translating facility for referencing academic degrees and other learning qualifications among EU member states.

Formal learning

Learning typically provided by an education or training institution, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective

Guidance

A range of activities designed to assist people to make decisions about their lives (educational, vocational, personal) and to implement those decisions

Key competencies represent a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, inclusion and employment. These should have been developed by the end of compulsory school or training, and should act as a foundation for further learning as part of lifelong learning

Informal learning

Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to

certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or “incidental”/random)

Learning community

A community that widely promotes a culture of learning by developing effective local partnerships between all sectors of the community and supports and motivates individuals and organisations to participate in learning

Learning facilitator

Anyone who facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and competences by establishing a favourable learning environment is a learning facilitator, including those exercising a teaching, training or guidance function. The facilitator orientates the learner by giving guidelines, feedback and advice throughout the learning process, in addition to assisting the development of knowledge and competences.

Learning organisation

An organisation that encourages learning at all levels (individually and collectively) and continually transforms itself as a result

Learning region

A region in which all stakeholders collaborate to meet specific local learning needs and implement joint solutions to common problems

Lifelong learning

LLL means all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. The notion of *lifelong learning* embraces all areas and regards school, vocational training, university and adult education as components of a comprehensive system that are of equal value.

Life wide learning

LWL means all learning activity whether formal, non-formal or informal. Life wide learning is expressing the dimension of lifelong learning as it is not only chronological but consist of many sites, settings, forms of learning.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets out the levels against which a qualification can be recognised

Non-formal learning

Learning that is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner’s perspective.

Qualification professional certification, trade certification, or professional designation, often called simply *certification* or *qualification*, is a designation earned by a person to assure that he/she is qualified to perform a job or task.

Quality assurance include: to ensure a high level of learning outcome relevant and appropriate to the needs of the learners, to ensure the efficiency of the learning process and its organisation, with targeted use of resources, to ensure transparency about educational provision for learners, to ensure transparency about learning outcomes for learners and other actors, facilitating the recognition of learning achievements and transition between different learning pathways to make learning more attractive and increase motivation, especially for disadvantaged groups, to enable equal access to learning for all.

Social inclusion

When people can participate fully in economic, social and civil life, when their access to income and other resources (personal, family, social and cultural) is sufficient to enable them to enjoy a standard of living and quality of life that is regarded as acceptable by the society in which they live and when they are able fully to access their fundamental rights.

Valuing learning

The process of recognising participation in and outcomes of (formal, non-formal or informal) learning, so as to raise awareness of its intrinsic worth and to reward learning