

VALLA

Validation of All Lifelong Learning in Aquaculture

The Challenge

European aquaculture's success relies very much on a joint practical and theoretical knowledge base, and people working in the sector often require specialized training. Much of the training provided in the aquaculture sector, such as work placements, on-the-job training, short courses (unaccredited learning) however falls outside current formal qualification systems. Learning taking place outside formal education and training bodies is crucially important for individuals, companies and society at large. However, learning that occurs outside the formal learning system is often not well understood, made visible or, probably as a consequence, appropriately valued. Therefore it is a challenge to prove that any individual worker has indeed gained the requisite knowledge, skills and competences acquired through specialized training that has slipped through national qualifications structures. To improve this situation was the basis of the VALLA project (Validation of Lifelong Learning in Aquaculture).

Project Objective

A major aim of the VALLA project was to develop, test and evaluate tools and methods that make it possible to describe and evaluate unaccredited sectoral training/competency acquisition using the recommended Learning Outcome format (description of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do), which is a requirement for the European Qualification Framework (EQF) system.

Key Points

- VALLA created an occupational and functional map for the aquaculture sector mapping out all the skills and competences relevant to the sector;
- VALLA showed how unaccredited learning activities in the aquaculture sector can be described as Learning Outcomes, according to best practice format;
- VALLA developed an "online tool" which allows any individual who wants to design training to go through a step-by-step process to design their training course to a high best practice standard. Each step provides guidelines and examples for the user.

EATiP Thematic Area of Relevance

- TA1:** Product Quality, Consumer Safety and Health
TA2: Technology and Systems
TA3: Managing the Biological Lifecycle
TA4: Sustainable Feed Production
TA5: Integration with the Environment
TA6: Knowledge Management
TA7: Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare
TA8: Socio-Economics and Management

Key Words

Education, teaching, aquaculture, lifelong learning, mobility, learning outcomes, tool, validation, accreditation, innovation, EQF, NQF, EHEA, VALLA, competency, occupational map, functional map, training course, sectoral training, unaccredited learning, professional training, CPD

Project Information

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Life Long Learning Programmes
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26 Months (February 2008 – March 2010)
Coordinator:
AQUATT
PO Box 8989, Dublin2, IRELAND
Tel:
+353 1 4758 713
E-mail:
news@aquatt.ie
Project website:
<http://www.vallaproject.com/>

Output Highlights

VALLA built upon outputs from the WAVE (Working in Aquaculture Validation of Experience) project - <http://www.waveproject.com/> - that developed a “**Master List of European Competencies**” for Aquaculture production”. The Master list is a catalogue of technical competencies, which can be used to identify the competencies companies need (business planning), identify the competencies required for each job (selection), identify training needs (staff development), to assess work experience and many more.

Functional and Occupational maps of the European Aquaculture Sector

- The European Aquaculture occupational map is a report about the sector, providing information on the numbers employed, industry trends, job titles, progression routes and National Occupational Standards. Functional Analysis, which underpins the Functional Map which identifies and defines the industry, is crucial to identifying the essential job roles and functions within an industry. A comprehensive Functional Map facilitates the identification of skills needs and gaps within the workforce, the identification and development of occupational standards and the potential to develop Outcome-based vocational training and qualifications. The key purpose of functional analysis is to underpin the development of skills needed by the workforce to improve the Industry.
- Functional and occupational mapping of a sector is a tried and tested methodology used by National Accrediting Bodies to develop, accredit and validate qualifications. 3) End users: European Aquaculture sector, industry, research and training providers at all levels

VALLA online tool

- An original and innovative online dedicated software tool based on existing European Best Practice which enables trainers to define non-formal training units (short courses/workshops/placements, etc) in terms of competences and learning outcomes as well as describing level, assessment, evidence requirements, delivery and credit value.
- The tool was developed as a method of helping users/trainers to present courses/units in a format suitable for submission to an awarding body, in this way contributing to making acquired skills and competences more transparent across Europe.
- End users: Trainers / teaching staff / Educational programme developers

The Full Report

For a description of the project, visit <http://www.vallaproject.com/>

Next Steps – Suggested Actions/Follow On



Knowledge Transfer

- Other - The results of VALLA need to be disseminated further to the aquaculture education sector so that they use the tools (occupational map & online tool) to design best practice high quality training courses that meet the needs of industry.
- Other - The results need to be disseminated to industry in order to identify future training requirements for the sector and communicate them to training providers so that the future workforce is fit for purpose.

Other

- Other – The online tool is the first of its kind in the world and still needs further development to increase its user friendliness, e.g. availability in more languages than English, more examples to illustrate its use, and improved user friendliness.
- Other – The occupational and functional map for the European Aquaculture sector needs renewal at fixed intervals as it only gives a snapshot of the industry at the point of time when developed.

Related Publications/Projects

<http://www.vallaproject.com/>