

ADULT EDUCATION IN ARMENIA STUDY OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Review of the State of Affairs and Developing
Recommendations for Integration in Policy Framework
and Practice

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The study is conducted by DVV International Armenia Country Office and funded by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AE	Adult Education
AEC	Adult Education Center(s)
ALE	Adult Learning and Education
BFA	Belém Framework for Action
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CONFINTEA	International Conferences on Adult Education, UNESCO
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DOSAAF	Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy
DVV International	Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association
EC	European Commission
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
GRALE	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LO	Learning Outcome
MOES	Ministry of Education and Science (before 2019)
MESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (as of 2019)
NCVETD	National Center for Vocational Education and Training Development
NCoVETD	National Council for Vocational Education and Training Development
NQF	National Qualifications Framework

NCET	National Center of Educational Technologies
NTF	National Training Fund
NTR	National Training Registry
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIAAC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PSEMIS	Preschool education management information system
QFs	Qualifications Frameworks
QA	Quality Assurance
QF	Qualifications Framework
RA	Republic of Armenia
RALE	Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, UNESCO
SCA	Statistical Committee of Armenia
SCE	Supplementary and Continuous Education
SQF	Sectoral Qualifications Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VEMIS	Vocational education management information system
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WBL	Work-Based Learning

TERMINOLOGY EXPLAINED

A number of different terms and concepts related to adult education (AE) have been used in Armenian policy documents within the last 20 years. The terms in question include “lifelong education”, “continuing education”, “supplementary education”, “supplementary and continuing education”, “adult education”, “non-formal and informal education”. This variety of AE related terminology used in different governmental decrees and legal documents is a cause of confusion not only for the learners but for the policymakers themselves as there is no harmonized understanding of their ultimate ramifications for the actual implementation of lifelong learning. There were some attempts to clear the confusion in 2014, following the introduction of amendments in the main law “On Education”¹ where the terms nearest by meaning to AE were defined as follows:

“Lifelong education”

“Lifelong² education – the results of learning, gained in the course of a person’s life through formal, non-formal and informal education, that help an individual to form or enhance their knowledge, skills, capacities and value system”.

This definition became a relative equivalent to the concepts of lifelong learning (LLL) and “continuing education”, wordings more commonly used in everyday language.

“Supplementary Education”

The same law has provided a definition of the term “supplementary education”:

“Supplementary education– non-formal learning implemented by a supplementary educational program with a maximum duration of up to five months”.

The term explains that supplementary educational programs can be organized through training, group or individual vocational learning, and short-term learning courses. The outcomes of the learning process are evaluated and recognized as prescribed by law.

“Supplementary and Continuing Education (SCE)”

In the context of the law “On Education” the term “supplementary and continuing education” remains unclear. It is not defined in any citations of the law notwithstanding the facts that there is a department of “Supplementary and Continuing Education” within the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MOESCS) of RA and the existence of “The Strategy for Supplementary and Continuing Education” adopted by the Ministry in 2012.

¹ RA Law “On Education”, <https://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=150066>

² This term reference in Armenian legal documents is closer in meaning to “permanent, everlasting” and it misses the conceptual accuracy of the newly introduced term «ղլյւմ», which has a closer relevance to the English term “lifelong”.

This Strategy defines *four forms of supplementary and continuing education in Armenia*:

- 1) Trainings, prescribed by law, are funded from the state budget to support the retraining/upskilling of employees and their relevant re-qualification/certification. This primarily refers to public and civil servant jobs.
- 2) Trainings or short-term courses that provide a certificate, enabling the participants to occupy a certain position or qualify for a job. It mainly refers to the cases of employment where certification is mandatory by the law.
- 3) Trainings or short-term courses implemented within the framework of social assistance programs predominantly funded by the state. Such trainings are targeted at the unemployed or individuals seeking employment, as well as the members of vulnerable groups or people with disabilities.
- 4) Trainings or short-term courses initiated by employers in the scope of their own needs and priorities.

Adult Education (AE)

The term “adult education” was first circulated in 2005, finding its definition in the “Concept and Strategy of the Adult Education”³ .

“Adult education is the learning process implemented for learners above the age of general (secondary) education through basic and supplementary as well as vocational supplementary education programs. It is the learning process that is carried out through educational programs, teaching and learning methods, technical means, the daily activities as well as pedagogical and social services necessary for organizing the education of the citizens”.

This formulation of AE partly reflects the internationally recognized definition found in the **UNESCO’s Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education (RALE)**, quoted below:

“It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations, and societies.”

This definition, therefore, includes all activities related to the learning process, education, and training of people in the age of adulthood as sub-components of the overall education system and constituent part of lifelong learning defined in Armenian legal documents as “supplementary and continuing education”. Nevertheless, these two definitions are not referenced in respective laws or by-laws.

This constantly changing use of terms and lack of cross-references in supporting documents and legal papers makes the field of AE in Armenia somewhat incomprehensible and hard to regulate. Therefore, this research will make attempts to analyze the state of affairs of AE in Armenia and make targeted recommendations considering both the terminology used in the context of national legislation as well as the internationally recognized definitions of UNESCO. In policy documents

³ “Concept and strategy of the adult education” <https://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=34606>

referring to “supplementary and continuous education” (SCE), the latter is targeted at all age groups, adults being one of them. As a result, it creates limitations for this study due to the lack of guidelines on how the state sees and plans SCE specifically for adults. This leaves room for interpretation; hence, the research team has chosen a comprehensive approach to the interchangeable use of terms circulated in Armenian legislation (especially SCE) and the internationally accepted ones such as “adult learning and education” (ALE). However, SCE is used more often in reference to the Armenian situation, while ALE is used for international context and specifically in those cases when the Armenian documents include AE or ALE as terms.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The formation of the field of adult education (AE) and its practice in Armenia date back to the years of the Soviet rule, when the main target of education of adults was the patriotic upbringing of the population and indoctrination of communist ideology. After the collapse of the USSR and independence of the Republic of Armenia (RA), the first legislative document that included some provisions on AE was the 1999 RA law “On Education”. Over the last 20 years, numerous concepts and terms related to AE have been coined and circulated in policy documents, giving rise to various misinterpretations. The inaccuracies were partially overcome in 2014 when a novel term "supplementary and continuing education" (SCE) and its objectives were introduced as part of amendments to the RA law “On Education”.

Another milestone in the further development of the national AE agenda was the establishment of “Supplementary and continuing education” department within the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in 2012. The department was authorized to suggest and draft new SCE targeted strategies and concepts. Some important results were achieved through the adoption of the "Concept of Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Armenia" (2009) and the SCE Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2017. It is noteworthy that for the first time the abovementioned Concept Paper used the word "learning" instead of "education", which emphasized the central role of the learner. However, a new challenge was faced as neither the “State Program for Education Development 2011-2015”, nor its successor Program for 2016-2025 (extended until 2030) mentioned SCE or AE. In the post-2017 period, the SCE Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2017 was not reauthorized either. All these developments imply repeated omissions in cross-referencing, as well as little consistency, and complementarity between the majority of RA education policy documents and laws.

In the period following the Velvet Revolution in 2018 and in light of high public expectations of a well-functioning system of education, the new Government of RA revised and adopted several programs targeted at boosting the employability of Armenian citizens. At least two such initiatives - "Work for Armenia" strategic program and the “Employment Strategy of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2019-2023”- focus on the upskilling of adults, albeit not mentioning the key terms such as SCE or AE. Being currently drafted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports (MESCS), the new "Education Strategy" is expected to include a separate subsection with regulatory prescriptions on SCE.

Since 2011, Armenia has an established education quality assurance (QA) system with internal (IQA) and external QA (EQA) procedures and accreditation practices. On the macro level, QA in Armenia is regulated by the “Procedures for State Accreditation of Educational Institutions Carrying Out Professional Educational Programs in RA and Professions thereof” and “Criteria for Accreditation of RA Professional Education”. On the mezzo level, QA is implemented following the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) which steer the reforms in Armenian higher education (HE). The system, however, lacks national standards, mechanisms, and procedures for QA of SCE/AE. The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) is the only official QA body in RA. However, it does not conduct the QA and accreditation of other forms of education other than those leading to a formal professional qualification on the levels of vocational education (VET) and HE.

Armenian National Qualifications Framework (ANQF) was adopted by the Government of RA in 2011. Unlike the European qualification frameworks (QFs) developed to facilitate ALE through

the recognition of learning outcomes (LOs) for common labor market, as a meta-framework, ANQF lacks seamless integration of validation and recognition frameworks beyond the formal qualification and therefore leaves out of the equation the accreditation of SCE/AE programs and non-formal ALE qualifications. On the other hand, the National Sectorial Qualifications Framework (NSQF, still in the pilot phase in RA) enables the promotion of labor mobility and possible assessment of prior skills as its integral part. Due to lack of national QA standards and mechanisms for ALE and LLL, a lion's share of ALE programs offered by various providers use internal QA procedures, such as pre/posttests, follow up and participant satisfaction surveys.

SCE/ALE policy developments in Armenia should be also viewed through the lens of international commitments of the RA Government. Being a UNESCO member country since 1992, in 2009 Armenia has participated in the latest International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), where the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) was adopted. National Reports of Armenia were provided to UNESCO in 2008, 2012, and 2015, base on which UNESCO has published the "Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education" (GRALE). These reports have information gaps, specifically regarding the statistical indicators on the participation of adults, systems of governance, and quality assurance of AE/ALE.

Armenia also has commitment under UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG4 designed to drive the progress in "education for all" and achieve sustainable life-changing results. The information on Armenian SDGs is nationally monitored and indicators are collected by the Statistical Committee of Armenia (SCA). Unfortunately, the SDGs with AE/LLL related indices are not reinforced by any systematic national data inputs.

Governance structure responsible for institutionalization and professionalizing of ALE also face challenges . One example is the National Training Fund (NTF) created by the Government in 2011 and authorized on behalf of the social partners to coordinate and organize the implementation of the SCE/AE, develop systems for validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), and well as for monitoring, recognition, and accreditation/certification of short programs. Incomplete policy solutions and rigid legal mechanisms, absence of state funding and subsidies, restricted human and financial resources are some of the main reasons why NTF has not implemented its duties and obligations yet.

Funding wise, the state is the most active (in terms of funding and program diversity) of the four major public sector stakeholders of ALE in Armenia. Other potential actors are civil society organizations (CSOs), universities, and employment agencies (including employers). Most SCE/ALE programs are mandatory for government employees and civil servants. The expenditures for their training come from the state budget for the field of education, under the heading "Education unclassified by levels". The biggest share of this heading is channeled to "Extracurricular education" that prioritizes children and teenagers, not adults. Despite the funding, the state does not have institutional mechanisms for assessing its training needs (self-assessment), therefore these courses are largely formal and short of innovative content.

With the support of donor organizations, CSOs (mainly NGOs) offer ALE courses with flexible teaching methodology and content, but their subject areas (mainly aimed at strengthening democratic values and civic activism) are often narrow and exclusive in terms of wider target groups. There are two regional Adult Education Community Centers, supported by DVV international Armenia Office that are targeted directly at ALE.

Universities are autonomous and free to provide continuing education and LLL through their subject-specific departments or centers/units mostly target the professional development of their staff and alumni. The only exception is the American University of Armenia, offering non-degree certified courses through its Open Education. There is no unified model for the organization of university LLL in Armenia.

The system of professional development of employees is also not fully established in Armenia. Due to employers' mistrust in the relevance of university qualifications to labor market needs, some of them (e.g. IT sector) are already investing in continuous upskilling of their staff. However, many consider these investments as secondary, thus restricting adults' participation and access to ALE and LLL in general.

The State Employment Agency implements state-subsidized short programs for the jobseekers and economically inactive population, the interest in this offer is low because of unemployment benefit cuts, complex and bureaucratic application procedures, and low public awareness.

There are no institutional mechanisms for collecting comprehensive statistical and qualitative data on ALE in Armenia. The Education management information system (EMIS) managed by the National Center of Educational Technologies (NCET) is comprised of 3 subsystems of electronic management of educational infrastructure for pre-school, school, vocational and higher education. The system excludes the collection and processing of data on SCE and AE. Within the framework of the Labor Force Survey, the Statistical Committee also holds an anonymous database of microdata collected from household surveys.

The review of the field suggests that the need for ALE is poorly valorized by the Armenian society including its professional circles. The offer of SCE/ALE programs on behalf of the providers (including the Government) is limited to meeting professional needs only. Almost all state budget funding for SCE is being channeled to the training of public servants. Despite the international community's recommendations, advocacy effort, and contributions directed to the promotion of the concept that the opportunity to learn is a value throughout life, there is little reinforcement of ALE by the policymakers.

With this state of affairs in mind, the research team has a number of recommendations for policy enhancements and effective governance of SCE/AE that provided in line with BFA guidelines. Summary of key recommendations is included below (all recommendations are included in the relevant Section of this document):

- The main educational laws and by-laws in RA offer mostly inconsistent terminology for the field of ALE. Thus, the lawmakers are recommended to cross-reference and use cohesive, commonly-agreed ALE terms in all legal documents that mention a variety of terms (SCE, AE, and LLL) including education strategies,
- The field-specific part of the "Strategy on Education" currently drafted by the Ministry, should reinforce ALE as a sub-sector of the education system. Then, to reinforce the implementation of this strategy it is advised to design a roadmap to ALE. A separate program dedicated to ALE should be envisaged both in the state budget and in the Medium-Term Expenditure Programs.
- Active citizenship skills should become a strategic priority.

- It is necessary to ensure the proper state funding of the National Training Fund so that the latter fully implements its monitoring, recognition, validation, and accreditation functions stipulated by the relevant legal decisions and procedures.
- The National Sectorial Qualifications Framework (still in the pilot phase in Armenia) can be used to achieve recognition of learning by employers, as this framework enables the promotion of labor mobility and possible assessment of prior skills as its integral part. The state should introduce institutionally credible systems for assessing the professional needs of employees. Orders for training by the government agencies should be based on such needs assessment that would result in clear and measurable learning outcomes expected from the training.
- It is necessary to develop legal tools and implement them to enable employee right and access to vocational (including supplementary) education and protect the latter from employer-imposed obstacles. ALE programs for government employees should be concluded with such an assessment that will give both the employees and public employers a clear understanding of the nature and quality of their working skills.
- Best ALE practices should be studied, and where possible replicated to ensure access of different groups of adults (including vulnerable groups) to relevant ALE services. In addition, there is a need to develop and implement institutional, credible mechanisms for collecting both statistical and qualitative data on ALE in Armenia that will also feed into GRALE and SDGS.
- “Andragogy” should be made available as a specialization on other levels of education (NQF) system as well.

INTRODUCTION

Continuous education or LLL is one of the most important qualities of modern life since the pace of changes happening in Armenia and worldwide requires constant upskilling and training. The priority given to learning is anchored on an array of social, economic, political, and cultural factors. For instance, in different economic sectors of Armenia and worldwide, job cuts regularly, result in the emergence of new vacancies and sectors. Technological advances also greatly affect and reshape the labor markets. In 2020 the world also suffered from the economic slow-downs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which showcased the importance of ICT skills for a sustainable economy and access to digital learning sources.

If previously the volume of knowledge grew slowly, nowadays this growth is far more rapid. The need for knowledge and skills has also expanded. Education is no longer considered as the mere act of transmitting knowledge from the teacher to the learner. Along with specialization and technological knowledge, learners are required to master “soft skills” such as communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and problem-solving, resilience, and so forth. Hence, modern realities require adults to possess lifelong learning skills that are crucial for both meeting the challenges of employment in emerging sectors and boosting professional and personal development. The common Armenian stereotype “I have already received my share of knowledge as a student”, is no longer viable today.

The education of adults cannot only focus on the development of professional qualities for economic benefit. The development of Armenian society depends also on its active, responsible citizens with a moral compass and acute legal awareness. In this regard, Armenia has observed an increase in educational projects on human rights, democracy, equal rights, and gender issues. During the last decade adult education (AE) has gained increased attention detrimental to the promotion of democratic practices: facilitated cooperation, government accountability, and institution-building. In general, the Armenian society has always valorized children’s education. However, the desire for learning among the youngest greatly depends on the intensity and extent to which the adults learn. Understanding the benefits of lifelong learning as an integral part of the adult lifestyle is the prerequisite of high quality, functioning education system. Moreover, continuous education of adults contributes to efficient inter-generational communication and social solidarity. Numerous studies⁴ have illustrated that lifelong learning increases the quality of life, promotes well-being and longevity. Research shows that lifelong learners are more resilient against diseases, especially those affecting the brain⁵. Regular learning activities enable individuals to review their ideas and overcome stereotypical thinking. As the renowned sociologist Alvin Toffler confirms, “By instructing students how to learn, unlearn and relearn, a powerful new dimension can be added to education... Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn⁶”.

Due to Armenia’s social-economic conditions, the adults often lack spare time for further education and learning. Unless employers with international experience offer job-related training to their employees, continuous AE and training are generally considered non-essential. Multiple employment and overtime work are the two key economic factors that cause adults to spend little time on adult learning and education (ALE), thus setting a bad example for the younger generations. At the same time, the requirement for certification and retraining of civil servants and other public sector employees is regulated by law which makes AE mandatory for the selected groups. However, AE is not legally stipulated for all citizens of Armenia. Just like in children’s

⁴ Escuder-Mollon P. et al. (2014), Diaz-Lopez P. et al. (2016)

⁵ Vemuri P. et al (2014); Gidicsin C.M., Maye J.M, Locascio J.J et al. (2015)

⁶ Toffler, A., (1970), p 271

education the field of continuing education and lifelong learning faces barriers to social justice affordability and access to AE. A complex approach is therefore required for efficiently addressing ALE needs, policies, and practices. To contribute to this inquiry, *this research attempts to address the situation of policy and legislative regulation, management, financing, and implementation of adult education in Armenia, analyzing it and making suggestions for further development of the field.*

SECTION 1: ANALYSIS OF POLICIES REGULATING ADULT EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

1.1 Adult Education Policies before 2018

Education and training have always been a cornerstone value, interwoven into the social fabric of the Armenian society. Institutions working on AE have been functioning in Armenia since the mid-20th century i.e., from the Soviet period. In 1947, the “Gitelik”⁷ (“Knowledge”) society was founded and tasked with the dissemination of political and scientific knowledge. Notwithstanding the strongly ideological activity of the association, it also addressed the professional and leisure needs of citizens through a series of organized lectures. Another famous institution, known as DOSAAF (Russian abbreviation for Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and Navy) was founded in 1951 with a stated goal of the patriotic upbringing of the population and its preparation for the defense of the motherland. It also played a vital role in the preparation of junior level technical staff.

In 1958, the Union of Inventors and Rationalizers was established which was meant to offer professional support to the factory workers following the technological advancements of the time. Retraining and requalification structures offering AE appeared later when extracurricular departments specialized in humanities/social sciences were first launched in the universities, providing learners with an opportunity to obtain a second degree. Finally, in 1989, the Soviet government adopted the “Concept of Continuing Education” and corresponding legislative acts. Due to the collapse of the USSR, the concept was not implemented.

It is worth mentioning, that during the Soviet times there was an age threshold for obtaining formal education as individuals over 35 were not accepted into the system of formal education. It can be also concluded from the above that a strong focus on ideology and propaganda created a different limitation for AE policy developments in Soviet Armenia.

The first legislative provision of AE in the independent Republic of Armenia was introduced in 1999 within the RA law “On Education”, Article 26 of which provided references to the supplementary education. The article contained some general statements on the importance of “supplementary education” and its implementation. Supplementary education goals were thus defined to fulfill the educational needs of the citizens and society. In 2014, the law underwent serious amendments and introduced such terms and concepts as “lifelong education”, “formal, non-formal and informal education”, “an extern”, “learning center”, “social partners”. Consequently, the purpose of supplementary education was reformulated as follows: “Supplementary educational programs are implemented throughout a person’s life to fulfill the professional/vocational and personal education needs”⁸. Revisions were also made to Article 26 of the RA law “On Education”. A new section was added about evaluation and recognition of the learning outcomes in supplementary education, as prescribed by the law. Procedures on organization and implementation of supplementary educational programs as well as on

⁷ Corley, F., (1996), “The Armenian Church Under the Soviet Regime, Part 1: The Leadership of Kevork”, Religion, State & Society, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp 9-47

⁸ RA Law “On Education” (amended on 21.06.2014), <http://parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=5007&lang=arm>

evaluation and recognition of non-formal and informal education outcomes were defined and added to the list of functional responsibilities of the Armenian government.

The field of ecology had the most progressive influence on AE policy in the legislative framework. Adopted in 2001, the RA law on “Ecological Education of the Population”⁹ was the first document in the history of post-Soviet Armenia that referred to the “continuing education of the population” in a standalone section. This law set out procedures for qualification, evaluation, and certification of civil servants and experts engaged in activities dangerous for the ecology and health. However, these provisions were largely left unenforced. The “Strategy for Enhancing Ecological Education and Upbringing”¹⁰ adopted in 2018 by the government of RA is a positive development capitalizing on the previous legislation. It contains a separate section on continuing and supplementary education, non-formal and informal education. The adoption of this document has enabled the implementation of trainings on ecological education for public servants.

In 2004 the Government of Armenia endorsed the “Strategy of Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Professional Education and Training” which became exceptional among other legislative documents regulating the wider field of education. Paragraph 12 of the Strategy is devoted to lifelong learning. This document is an important step forward in AE policy-making as it highlights the importance of continuing education in Armenia and provides a roadmap with specific steps. Its major guidelines: continuity of pathways, skills provision according to personal capacities and economy and labor market needs, quality of educational services, the efficiency of expenditures, involvement of social partners, transparency and accreditation, lifelong learning¹¹.

In 2005, the Government also approved the “Concept Paper on Adult Education and its Strategy where AE is was defined for the first time. Simultaneously, these policy developments boosted the shaping of a new segment of civil society supporting AE incentives on a grassroots level. To illustrate, the “Adult Education and Lifelong Learning” non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 2005 with the support of DVV International Armenia Country Office (Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association), assumed an active role in shaping the AE agenda and advocating for AE policy. The organization publicly organized annual “Adult education weeks”, published the “Adult Education and Lifelong Learning” periodical journal, and partnered with the Ministry of Education and Science supporting the development of AE strategy.

The “Concept of Lifelong Learning in the Republic of Armenia”¹², adopted in 2009 is to be highlighted among other strategic documents as it uses the word “learning” instead of “education” for the first time and features the central role of the learner. The concept also defines the principles of LLL one of which - individual’s self-expression - is of particular importance. This principle

⁹ RA Law “Ecological education of the population” law of RA.

<http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1741&lang=arm>

¹⁰ “The strategy for development of ecological education and upbringing”

<https://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=93900>

¹¹ The Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education (ALE), National Report of the Republic of Armenia, 2008

¹² The Concept of lifelong learning in the Republic of Armenia (2009)

<https://www.gov.am/files/meetings/2009/3912.pdf>

implies that the person is in charge of their learning process. Outlining the existing problems of LLL, the document also lists the following challenges:

1. Poor management of the sector, insufficient funding, and inadequate infrastructure for LLL;
2. Lack of national qualifications framework (NQF) for LLL;
3. Lack of statistical data;
4. Centralized governance of the overall education system;
5. Insufficient level of international cooperation.

To tackle the identified challenges, in 2010 a new department was established within the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). Having limited human capacities (staff of 3 employees) the Department of Supplementary and Continuing Education (SCE) has a general objective to ensure the development of supplementary and continuing education and to introduce the latter into the system of vocational education and training (VET). It is also assigned to coordinate and organize SCE related functions and activities.

The latest version of the Department's Charter was approved by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia in 2019. According to this Charter, the department is responsible, inter alia, for the monitoring of the activities of supplementary education provider organizations, for providing input into policymaking also through elaboration on the State Education Development Programs. Although the SCE department was set up in 2010, supplementary education, including AE, has not been incorporated into the State Education Development Program 2011-2015, neither was it included in the drafting of the Program for 2016-2025 to 2030. There is no mention of AE in the Government's programs or Medium-term Expenditure Frameworks either.

Despite the lack of official AE policy in Armenia, several key documents reflecting AE needs were adopted in the years following the establishment of the Department of Supplementary and Continuing Education within the Ministry. In 2012, the Government of Armenia adopted the "Program of Expansion of the Process of Integration of the Vocational Education System of the Republic of Armenia into the European Higher Education Area and its Implementation Timetable"¹³. Article 11 of this document refers to SCE and proposes, among other things, to draft a law "On Supplementary and Continuing Education in RA" or make amendments in the existing key legislation with an aim to regulate the field of AE. With the 2014 amendments to the law "On Education" (1999), instead of drafting a separate law dedicated to AE, the Ministry opted to modify the existing legislature and stipulate the establishment of a National Training Fund /see section 1.5/.

In 2012, the MoES adopted the SCE Strategy and Action Plan for 2013-2017. The Strategy introduces 9 goals of the SCE and prioritizes comprehensive human development, a guarantee of

¹³ "Program of expansion of the process of integration of the vocational education system of the Republic of Armenia into the European Higher Education Area, and its implementation timetable"
<https://www.irtek.am/views/error.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/%20views/act.aspx>

human rights protection, appreciation of a person as an independent entity. Based on these goals, the document defines the following key strategic directions:

1. Promotion and dissemination of the idea of SCE;
2. Revision of policy regulating SCE;
3. Operationalization and coordination of SCE;
4. Adaptation of SCE (adult education) to the modern needs of the public and the labor market;
5. Promotion of SCE through short-term educational programs and training;
6. Evaluation and recognition of the results of non-formal and informal education;
7. Creation of a national database of resources and outcomes of SCE

The integral Action Plan includes a reference to the European Commission's (EC)¹⁴ "Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, 05.09.2012" which stipulates the development of a national system of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) based on 4 pillars:

1. Recognition of learning outcomes (LOs);
2. Documentation of the recognized outcomes;
3. Adaptation of the LOs to the existing standards;
4. Validation/certification of LOs.

Within the framework of the above Action Plan, in 2015 the Government of Armenia adopted two policy documents: "Procedure for Organization and Implementation of Supplementary Education Programs" and "Procedure for Evaluation and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes"¹⁵. These Procedures introduced a sample certificate and its supplement to be used for the validation of attainment of a certain vocational/professional qualification as a result of successful completion of a non-formal and/or informal educational course.

In support of these procedures, the MoES also created a National Training Registry¹⁶ (more on this is included in section 1.5) to execute the following four functions:

- 1) Register potential service providers (candidates);
- 2) Register of programs and courses of supplementary education;
- 3) Register participants who were evaluated and certified;
- 4) Register persons whose non-formal and informal LOs were evaluated and recognized.

The National Training Fund (NTF) was selected by the Ministry to run the National Training Registry (NTR). The functionalities and certification procedures established by NTF are presented below in section 1.3.

In essence, the Supplementary and Continuing Education Strategy 2013-2017 is considered completed. The Action Plan, as an integral part of the Strategy, has also reached its end, yet there are no publicly available documented results on monitoring its implementation. There is neither a

¹⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52012PC0485>

¹⁵ Decree № 1062N of the Government of Armenia from September 10, 2015
<https://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=82058>

¹⁶ The operating procedure of the Registry was confirmed by the RA minister of Education and Science by the 486-N decree in 2016, <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=85666>

new SCE Strategy endorsed by the state, and the functional status of the Department of SCE at the MOESCS is still ambiguous.

As to the professionalization of AE, the 2006 list of Middle Vocational Education Professions approved by the Government of RA includes “Andragogy”. Up till now, this profession has not been offered as an independent study program. It is also rather confusing why “Andragogy” has not been added to the list of higher education professions to be taught as a sub-discipline of Pedagogy or other Social Science discipline. In practice, the capacity building of AE educators/providers is often achieved through the Training of Trainers (ToT) format, usually offered through internationally supported training programs. For instance, in 2018, based on DVV’s Curriculum globALE (CG) framework DVV International’s Office in Armenia launched a ToT for adult educators, which was offered in 2019 as well. In 2020, efforts are directed to developing an online and localized (Armenian) version of the ToT. Once completed, the program will be piloted among a group of academic staff from Universities, VET institutions, and others, and afterward will be available to wider groups of AE providers.

1.2 Developments in Adult Education after 2018

As the previous chapter concludes since 2017 no specific strategic or legislative measures have been taken to ensure the continuity of the developments of SCE. However, in the aftermath of the Velvet Revolution in 2018, a number of documents were drafted and circulated by the new government, suggesting that the field remains in the spotlight to some extent. Although the terms “supplementary and continuing education” and “adult education” are not included in these documents, certain provisions, if implemented, are bound to contribute significantly to the advancement of AE in Armenia.

For example, the 5-year Action Plan¹⁷ adopted by the Government of Armenia in February 2019 sets forth several provisions which highlight the importance of enhancing the professional skills of the citizens, the availability of qualified personnel, soft skills, etc. Interestingly, these requirements are found in the section related to the economic competitiveness and creative potential of the country and not the education section of the document. The document stipulates that “citizens of Armenia shall have access to such educational programs which will contribute to the adaptation of their knowledge and business skills to the requirements of the time.”¹⁸ Obviously, taking specific steps in this direction would imply various investments and initiatives in the field of AE

One of such steps, the “Work Armenia” Program initiated by the Government of Armenia in 2018-2019 demonstrated the Government’s commitment to introduce a package of institutional and legal amendments for the better future of the Armenian people. One of the primary goals of the Program is to strengthen the connection between education and the labor market. This strategic document emphasizes the importance of “implementation of the ideas of non-formal and especially continuous education providing a person with an opportunity to develop their human capital in order not to fall behind the demands of the labor market.” Employability and employment are the focal points of “Work Armenia”. At the same time, the document states that currently “the culture of continuous education has not taken root in Armenia, whereas the regular changes in the economy require an increase in training programs.” The document recommends identifying and filling in the gaps between formal and non-formal education. Although Points 2.8 of the Program activities suggest the expansion of the training capacity through cooperation between the private sector and the state, including a large number of other activities that imply non-formal education initiatives. The Government has also adopted other documents which, have no direct connection to the field of education and training, but can lead to prospective positive developments in the field of AE. Firstly, the *Employment Strategy of the Government of Armenia 2019-2023*¹⁹ is one of the very few documents which mentions middle-aged and elderly people. Among other measures for the abovementioned target group, the strategy stipulates:

¹⁷ Action plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia 2019-2023 (2019), <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3347.pdf>.

¹⁸ Action plan of the government of the Republic of Armenia 2019-2023 (2019), <https://www.gov.am/files/docs/3347.pdf>

¹⁹ 2019-2023 Employment Strategy of the Republic of Armenia (2019), <http://www.mlsa.am/?p=24273>

- 1) Teaching new vocational/ professional skills in case of job cuts/layoffs or long-term unemployment;
- 2) Transfer of professional/vocational competences and skills to the youth;
- 3) Ensuring employment for elderly people at risk of losing their jobs through retraining;

Facilitation of intergenerational transfer of work experience and professional skills from the elderly to youth, which aims to contribute to the greater social inclusion of golden-agers. *Secondly, the Concept of Development of Work-based Learning (WBL)*²⁰ developed with the support of the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the National Center for Vocational Education and Training Development (NCVETD) was adopted and included into the “Concept of Development of Work-Based Learning in Armenia and 2019-2025 Action Plan”. The goal of this document is to set up a policy framework for the development of WBL in the field of VET, as well as to identify actions required for the gradual implementation of new forms of WBL.

The Concept states that work-based non-formal learning can be implemented as a private initiative, without mandatory involvement of the unions of enterprises/employers or systematic participation of the state. In Armenia, the lack of procedures that would lead to certification (validation) of skills acquired through non-formal education and recognition of work-based informal and non-formal learning outcomes prevents the learners from further education. The document suggests recognition of LOs acquired through on the job non-formal educational programs and/or training courses by relevant professional unions and competent organizations. A system for WBL certification and recognition of qualifications acquired through non-formal WBL is in its planning phase for 2021. It also considers creating structures and procedures supporting a training system for teachers involved in WBL programs. Apart from the above-mentioned documents, ALE is scarcely mentioned in other documents pertaining to the field of education. The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework allocations of certain funding for training are not applied systematically. The 2020 state budget for education is channeled to 7 programs, none of which is related to ALE. There are two references to SCE in the 2019-2023 Action plan adopted by the Government in 2019. The first reference pertains to the training and certification of teachers. The second reference occurs with regards to the development of a non-formal system of ecological education. There is no mention of ALE in the 2020 Annual Report of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MESCS).²¹

²⁰ Work-based learning development concept (2019), <http://escs.am/files/files/2019-12-01/901c360398db65cd035997d9e41ae789.pdf>

²¹ In August 2020 the deputy Minister of MoESCS present at a workshop during which the national ALE report was compiled mentioned the new Education Strategy that assumedly will contain a separate section on SCE, but not ALE.

1.3 Adult Education Qualifications Frameworks and Recognition of Learning Outcomes/Results

Qualifications Frameworks (QFs) are the key instruments for educational reforms and recognized drivers of Quality Assurance (QA) systems. According to UNESCO’s most recent “Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks”,²² over 100 countries all over the world have already developed and adopted QFs to modernize their education systems. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)²³ claims that 36 countries offer comprehensive NQFs covering all types and levels of qualification from formal education and training to non-regulated or private qualifications that may serve for ALE purposes (e.g., Austria, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, and UK-Scotland). Most European countries employ QFs based on learning-outcome levels that tend to cover a wide array of qualifications, classified according to the abiding regulations in each country. These qualifications can be clustered into 3 groups:

<i>Educational Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are attained through formal education and training system (general education, VET and HE); • Represent attainment of an education level.
<i>Occupational Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are oriented towards labor market, attained through assessment of the ability to perform sets of tasks linked to an occupation; • Demonstrated knowledge, skills, and competences can be acquired through formal or non-formal education programs.
<i>Additional qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attained by acquiring knowledge, skills, and competences that supplement those of an existing qualification and enable the holder to perform specific tasks in the labor market; • Additional qualifications do not increase the learners’ qualification level but supplement it.

Armenia is among those countries that have a functioning QA system with internal (IQA) and external QA (EQA) procedures and accreditation practices and procedures. On the macro level, QA in Armenia is regulated by the following bylaws: “Procedures for State Accreditation of Educational Institutions Carrying Out Professional Educational Programs in RA and Professions thereof” and “Criteria for Accreditation of RA Professional Education”²⁴. On the mezzo

²² UNESCO, Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks, Volume II: National and Regional Cases, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260922>

²³ [https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/fi/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf#:~:text=38%20countries%20have%20officially%20established,national%20qualifications%20frameworks%20\(NQFs\)%3B](https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/fi/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf#:~:text=38%20countries%20have%20officially%20established,national%20qualifications%20frameworks%20(NQFs)%3B)

²⁴ TEMPUS ARMENQA project, <http://armenqa.am/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/NOFA-Self-Certification-Report.pdf>

(institutional) level, QA is implemented following the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) which steer the reforms in Armenian HE. The country also has its national qualifications framework (ANQF) adopted by the Government Decree in 2011. The National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA) is the only national body established by the Government of RA (yet autonomous) in 2011, that is responsible for the overall quality system of Armenian professional education. ANQA carries out accreditation of professional educational institutions according to the state accreditation criteria and standards. The Foundation covers both VET and HE; however, due to limited human capacities, it faces difficulties in equally prioritizing both. As a result, QA has an established tradition in HE, where institutions (some of which are private or transnational) have a stronger tradition of autonomy. With respect to their practices VET institutions tend to be more reliant on the MESCS, and the National Center of Vocational Education and Training Development (NCVETD) which carries out the development of educational standards for VET. ANQA and NCVETD cooperate in the field of VET.

ANQA's mission, objectives, and strategic plan have no indications for QA and accreditation of other forms of education other than those leading to a formal qualification. However, the system is based on three common approaches for education and training:

1. quality of learning outcomes (developing knowledge, skills, competences leading toward a professional qualification).
2. quality of educational programs (processes that assure the expected quality outcomes are at a level of professional qualification and its further development needs.)
3. institutional quality (or quality of institutional governance/management system) of the organization which is realizing educational programs meeting the set quality standards achievement of which is assessed through expected learning outcomes.

ANQA's Charter²⁵ defines its beneficiaries as the state authorized bodies in the sphere of education, educational institutions, and organizations providing professional education in Armenia, thus leaving non-state actors and providers of education, and training out of its scope of services. However, according to the same document, the Foundation's financial assets can be formed not only through allocations from the RA state budget, but also through donations and contributions by individuals and legal entities, grants from international organizations, entrepreneurial activities carried out by the Foundation, and so forth.

To summarize, with the above-described elements of the qualification framework in mind, ANQA's learning-outcome based methodology and financial autonomy from the Government could allow for an extended national QA system accommodating LOs from non-formal and informal ALE. Armenian NFQ is positioned as a generally comparable framework for standardized formal qualifications and is principally compatible with the European Qualifications

²⁵ ANQA Charter, <http://www.anqa.am/en/about-us/mission/anqa-charter/>

Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). It aims at giving more transparency to the qualifications provided by the education and training system, assisting employers in assessing the skill levels of the workforce, and allowing the Government to take decisions for skills matching adjustments. However, in its current form and state, it is not supportive of all learners' progress and does not address their often-changing employment and/or occupational needs. The main challenge is that learning and its diversity of pathways, modes, level of intentionality, recognition practices, etc. necessitate a more flexible paradigm of QA, which is not reflected in ANQF.

In this respect, adult learners are the outliers of this qualification framework which is not fit for their lifelong learning and/or advancement between professions.

The National Sectoral Qualifications Framework (still in the pilot phase in Armenia), on the other hand, has the subject-specific product or service lifecycle²⁶ around which the rationale of its conceptual model is being built. It considers the emergence of new, more flexible, and dynamic labor relationships and the categories of demand and supply bringing education closer to business logic. NSQF can be used to achieve recognition of learning outcomes by employers, as this framework enables the promotion of labor mobility and possible assessment of prior skills as its integral part. It could be used for orientation of field-specific ALE service providers, but as a point of reference for the employment policies as well.

It should be emphasized, however, that currently, both National and Sectoral QFs in Armenia do not provide descriptors and access to qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning pathways. Since its adoption, the ANQF has not been systematically revised to increase access, progression, and flexibility of qualifications. Nevertheless, in the context of ALE the LO-based approach of ANQF, can serve as a methodological blueprint to the development and recognition of competencies for ALE. With the support of well-developed structures facilitating its implementation, both NQFA and NSQFs can provide grounds for the formal introduction of ALE qualifications on the levels of VET (level 5) and HE (level 6-8) equally.

The “Procedure for Organization and Implementation of Supplementary Educational Programs” and the “Procedure for Evaluation and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Outcomes” (see Annex 1) already mentioned in section 1.1, yields two important observations directly affecting the course of development of ALE qualifications:

- The maximum 5-month duration limit on supplementary educational programs implemented through training, short-term group, and individual vocational learning courses does not result in a qualification. Through the introduction of the National Registry, NTF's main objective is to develop and implement a system of certification of the abovementioned programs in compliance with international quality standards. However, due to poor institutional resources, the results (e.g., over 200 certificates issued by the

²⁶ Manual on Sectoral Qualification Framework Operationalization, EU TEMPUS ARARAT project, p 55

NTF²⁷) are yet to be strengthened through greater involvement of industry partners and sectoral expert communities.

The National Training Fund (NTF) created upon the Government 1550-N decision²⁸ in 2011, is authorized on behalf of the social partners (the state, employers, and trade unions) to coordinate and organize the implementation of the SCE, support the launch of systems for evaluation and recognition of SCE results. The Fund has the following main objectives:

- To support the organization of training, development of qualification enhancement and requalification courses targeted at upskilling the employed, the unemployed and job seekers,
- To organize training, and retraining courses leading to qualification enhancement and fitting the requirements of the labor market,
- To endorse the implementation of an independent certification system,
- To assist in facing the challenges of ALE,
- To contribute to the formation of an efficient network of VET providers.

To assess and recognize the results of non-formal and informal learning, the Foundation forms a professional group (team of assessors), which are selected from the representatives of the given profession and occupation (education - industry) registered in the National Register of Education. The assessors may be the specialists from professional training organizations, product or service providers, as well as employers' representatives, independent specialists, and experts.

Evaluation and recognition is a voluntary process and anyone can participate in it. The candidate submits an application to the Foundation to have his /her skills and abilities recognized. The Foundation then organizes the procedure as follows:

- Application evaluation and recognition, which includes determining an individual's experience through self-assessment and counseling,
- Verification of an individual's skills and abilities through testing and interview,
- A formal assessment of skills and abilities, which includes written and oral inquiries, observation, and the review of work performance,
- Recognition of evaluation results and certification.

The candidate who has passed the process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning results is awarded a certificate that testified possession of a certain professional ability, and an appendix. The results assessed and recognized by the system for recognition of non-formal and informal learning results can be a sufficient precondition for entering the labor market and occupying a specific job position.

Based on this and other data, the following are formed in the National Register of Education:

- Register of trainers (candidates),
- Register of supplementary educational programs and courses,
- Register of individuals who participated in the courses and were assessed and certified,

²⁷ Numbers are provided by the Director of NTF Marine Hakobyan (see the list of key interviewed informants)

²⁸ <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=62533>

- Register of non-formal and informal learning outcomes assessed and recognized.

Under its mandate, the Fund may also engage in a wide range of commercial business activities, such as expertise and analytical consulting; publishing; organization of exhibitions and fairs; business support and business plan development, and so forth. Nevertheless, the Center has only 6 staff members. It indicates an inadequate institutional capacity for the implementation of such a wide scope of activities. Though initially NTF was assigned to implement the system of validation (assessment and recognition) of non-formal and informal learning outcomes by drawing resources mainly from international donor organizations, and the private sector also on a fee for service basis, which did not happen as planned. Consequently, certification, accreditation, and validation of non-formal learning (VNFIL) processes as most acknowledged quality assurance arrangements of ALE are offered by NTF on a case by case basis, limiting the development of a strong institutional practice. According to expert interviews, there are neither publicly accessible rulebooks prescribing the format of validation, nor procedures for issuing and revoking validation assessors' licenses. NTF's involvement in VNFIL has not been particularly helpful in setting up the network of licensed adult education trainers either.

Thus, due to a shortage of funding, the Foundation does not fully carry out its multiple functions that are of utmost importance to the sector, from monitoring the implementation of supplementary educational programs and recognizing the results to maintaining the Register. Due to lack of funding, the electronic database of the Registry has not been formed so far. The data on training organizations are simply registered and kept with the Foundation without any public disclosure. Meanwhile, the whole point of the Register is its transparency, so that it becomes a link between those who offer training and those who need it.

Besides, under unclear sectoral policies, legal solutions and procedures have remained incomplete. For example, the 2016 Order 83-N issued by the Minister of Education and Science of RA has established the list of professions subject to evaluation and recognition of non-formal, informal learning results, and it includes only 6 professions. To illustrate, the field of hospitality is introduced in this list by only two specializations - "Catering" and "Culinary work". Since its approval, the list has not been revised and updated. While it is obvious that the introduction of a larger number of professions and occupations from the wider service sector into this list could contribute to the development of supplementary professional education.

As detailed in the next section of this document, AE programs in Armenia are also implemented under the international donor funding by local CSOs and other providers. Due to the lack of national QA procedures for ALE, a lion's share of ALE programs offered by these organizations use internal quality assessment procedures, such as pre/posttests, follow up and participant satisfaction surveys. This is yet another approach to QA which, however, does not have a systemic nature and as such it does not help to institutionalize or regulate the field of ALE. However, it contributes to grassroots professionalization through enhanced visibility, reputation, and trust in ALE on one hand and the introduction of impact-oriented and evidence-based practices on the other.

1.4 International ALE Agenda and the Republic Armenia

Belem Framework for Action (UNESCO) AE has always been in the spotlight of international organizations. UNESCO has been organizing International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA) since 1949. The series of conferences (overall 6 so far) is being held once in 12 years. The latest event took place in 2009 in Belem, Brazil (with the participation of delegates from 144 delegations of UNESCO Member States including Armenia), where one of the pillars of international ALE policymaking - the Belem Framework for Action (BFA)²⁹ was adopted. BFM provides key recommendations for actions with 5 areas and 3 fields of learning:

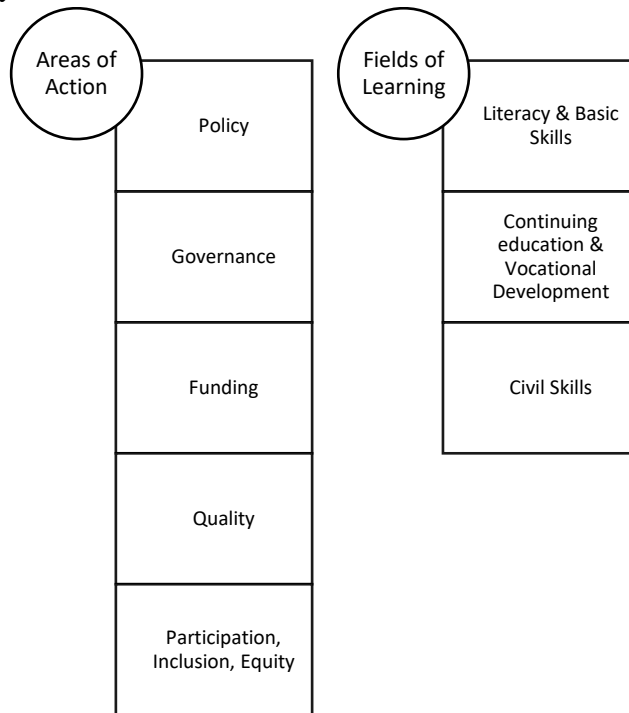


Figure 1. Key areas of action and fields of learning as defined in BFA

Only fractional references to the above-mentioned BFA areas and fields of learning are found in the policy documents on ALE in Armenia. Since 2009 UNESCO has been publishing Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) which are drafted based on National Reports submitted by the participant countries' Ministries of Education. National Reports of Armenia were presented in 2008, 2012, and 2015. The first Report of 2008 written in a narrative format, rather comprehensively communicated the state of ALE in Armenia.

The document reported about the gap in legislative regulation, stating that "Under the conditions of absence of the Law on Adult Education in the Republic of Armenia, at present, a certain system of state regulation of that field is also missing. However, a number of Ministries (RoA Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministries of Justice, Health Care, Culture, etc.) and agencies (RoA Police, Custom's, Tax and other services) organize training and quality raising courses for the

²⁹ Belem Framework for Action, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187789_mul

specialists, working in their respective fields as well as for unemployed and job seekers organized by the RoA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs”³⁰.

In 2012 and 2015 the countries merely filled in the required survey forms that underlie the national reports. To a question reflected in the 2012 survey whether there was a definition of the term “literacy” in Armenia, the answer was positive. However, the selected option referred to public education which cannot be considered a definition³¹. Another question for the National Report³² of 2015 touched upon Armenia’s steps undertaken with regards to BFA. According to the Ministry, these steps were undertaken in the field of policymaking only. This report indicated the lack of data on the percentage of the adults who participated in AE programs. Despite missing information, the level of participation of men and women was somehow reported as equal. National Reports of 2009 and 2012 mention state expenditures on ALE, yet in 2015 there is no indication of the percentage of the state education budget spent on ALE. The Report briefly notes that in 2015 the share of funding for AE is approximately the same as in 2009 and it is expected to remain within the same margin for the upcoming years.

The latest Report of 2019 has been compiled in August 2020 through a participatory discussion with the key stakeholders of AE, initiated by MESCS and DVV International Armenia Office. Around 20 experts attended a blended face-to-face and Zoom session to jointly review the new survey and provide the Ministry with feedback for the next National Report for GRALE. One of the key takeaways from this meeting was that the expert community agreed on the lack of significant progress in ALE policy. The Ministry completed the Report and submitted to UNESCO for official publication in a few months.

Sustainable Development Goals (UN)

Adult education is also incorporated (through LLL) in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), adopted in 2015 as the successor of Millennium Development Goals. The 4th SDG refers to education and particularly to LLL. Its Goal 4 promulgates to “*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*”.

Three indicators from Goal 4, namely 4.3, 4.4 4,6, and their sub-indicators directly refer to adults and their role in LLL.

The information on Armenian SDG indicators is being collected by the Statistical Committee of Armenia (SCA) in an official webpage dedicated to the compilation and analysis of the national metadata on SDGs³³. The website is still in the initial stage of development and requires systematic data input. Unfortunately, the SDGs with ALE related indices are not reinforced by any national statistical data. The SCA has only reported on the training of teachers (4. c.1.)³⁴.

³⁰ GRALE National Report of the Republic of Armenia, point 1.1.3

³¹ <https://uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/download/en/national-reports/europe-and-north-america/Armenia.pdf>

³² <https://uil.unesco.org/i/doc/adult-education/grale-3/national-reports/armenia.pdf>

³³ <https://sdg.armstat.am/>

³⁴ https://armstat.github.io/sdg-site-armenia/?fbclid=IwAR3Gf-VUyPi-wz0U8qAnaqapGPuSeCAB0aMh1ZQHWpvK_GoBnWRwE-naoGQ

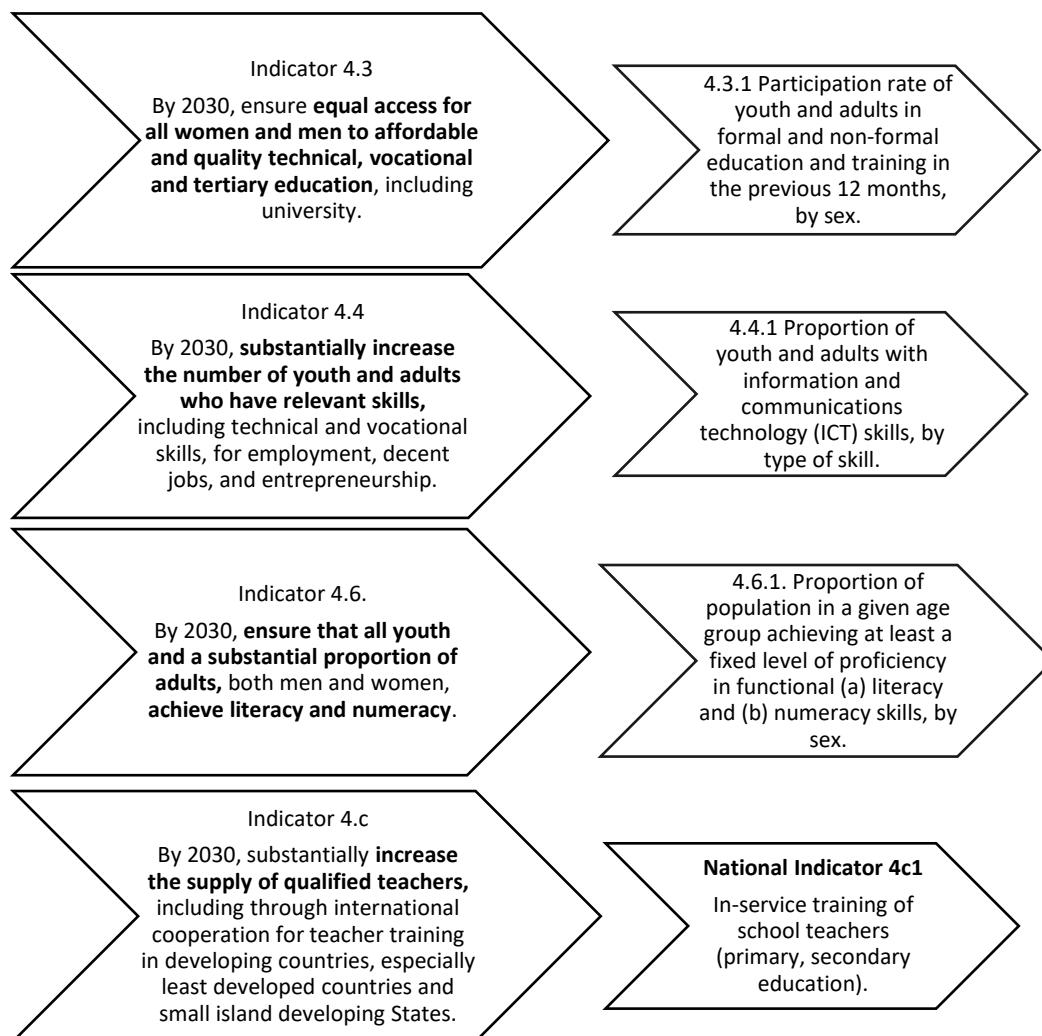


Figure 2. SDG 4 indicators and sub-indicators related to the education of adults and LLL

In July, 2020 Armenia’s Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review Report has been developed and submitted to the United Nations. The report covers progress on SDGs. Although, ALE is considered as one of the key components of Goal 4, in the report there is no any information on ALE. On a level of support to SDG actions, in 2017 the UN Office in Armenia and the RA Government agreed to establish the Armenia National SDG Innovation Lab³⁵ with a mission to support policy-making with evidence collected through the implementation of national

³⁵ <https://www.sdglab.am/en>

innovative solutions for attaining SDG goals. The Lab’s projects are targeted at the creation of several tools, including AI-powered ones within the Data Analytics output. To illustrate, the “Edu2Work” project³⁶, which kicked off in 2019, aims to bridge the gap between the labor market and education through mapping employment tendencies and making forecasts with the use of AI. Potentially it is expected to contribute to the policy development in the field of education; however, AE and ALE do not seem to be in the limelight as independent sub-sectors.

Finally, the third international ALE monitoring platform, run by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) - the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) - assesses the literacy, numeracy, problem-solving skills of the adults in OECD member countries³⁷. Not being a member of OECD, Armenia does not participate in PIAAC.

Although the abovementioned initiatives and attempts by the RA state and international organizations are valuable in terms of addressing ALE-related needs, nevertheless, without systematic data collection, monitoring, and coordination on the country level they risk to deliver limited results for the shaping of an independent ALE policy.

Section 1: Summary of Key Findings

1. During the Soviet regime in Armenia, the institutional dimensions (“Gitelik”, “DOSAAF” societies) for AE programs included science, engineering, leisure. In general, AE programs were predominantly serving the needs of political propaganda and communist ideology. The first legislative provisions on AE in the independent Republic of Armenia were introduced in 1999 with the main RA law “On Education”. Through the last 20 years many terms on AE have been used in various policy documents (e.g., lifelong learning, constant education, continuing education, supplementary education, supplementary and continuing education, adult education, non-formal and informal education) causing some confusion and misinterpretation. With the 2014 amendments to the law “On Education” MoES opted to adjust in the existing legislation rather than draft a new law on AE. As a consequence, definitions of the terms “lifelong education” and “supplementary education” were legally introduced and circulated.
2. In 2010 Department of “Supplementary and Continuing Education” was created under the MoES of RA. In 2012, the Ministry adopted the “Supplementary and Continuing Education Strategy and Action Plan” for 2013-2017, followed by the “Procedure for Organization and Implementation of Supplementary Educational Programs” and “Procedure for Evaluation and Recognition of the Results of Non-Formal and Informal Learning”. Though the Strategy expired in 2018, to this day it has not been followed through and replaced by an up to date policy documents. As to the Department, its place and role within the structure of the MESCS are not clear.

³⁶ <https://www.sdglab.am/en/news/news/edu2work-to-bridge-the-gap-between-labor-market-and-education>

³⁷ <https://www.oecd.org/about/document/list-oecd-member-countries.htm>

3. Since 2017 the state made little effort to ensure the continuity of ALE developments on strategic and legislative levels. However, in the aftermath of the 2018 Velvet Revolution, the new Government put into circulation a number of documents, which indicated that the field of AE remains in the spotlight of policymaking to some extent. The 5-year Action Plan adopted by the Government of Armenia in February 2019 sets forth several provisions which highlight the importance of enhancing the professional skills of the citizens of Armenia, the availability of qualified personnel, soft skills, etc.
4. Armenia is among those countries that have a functioning Quality Assurance (QA) system with internal (IQA) and external QA (EQA) procedures and accreditation procedures. The country also has its national qualifications framework (ANQF). However, the integration of functional frameworks for non-formal or additional ALE qualifications is not part of the framework. Although the Government has passed some decrees outlining both the certification of supplementary educational programs and recognition of thereof, so far, they have not been fully implemented. One of the identified barriers is that ANQF has not been systematically updated to increase the access, progression, and flexibility of qualifications and address the adults' needs for the transition between professions. Another challenge is that the National Training Fund, the agency responsible for the implementation of recognition and validation practices lacks institutional funding and adequate staff to take on more responsibility.
5. As a member of UNESCO, Armenia is involved in the UNESCO's International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA) and Belem Framework for Action (BFA), yet not an affiliate in OECD's Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). There is still limited data and reporting on the national implementation of SDGs. Indicators and sub-indicators of SDG4 that mention LLL and capacity building of adults are not referenced by any statistics.

SECTION 2: STAKEHOLDERS/ACTORS AND FUNDING OF ADULT EDUCATION

2.1 General Overview: Main Stakeholders/Actors of Adult Education

In Armenia, the public sector is the leading actor/stakeholder in the field of ALE followed by CSOs, as well as higher education institutions and organizations promoting employment.

The bulk of AE programs is being implemented for the professional development of civil servants employed by such state bodies as the Ministries, the Government, and state agencies. In this regard, the state is both the client and the donor of supplementary education. Moreover, its participation in AE has a dual nature: it assumes the role of the recipient and partial provider of supplementary educational services.

Universities are also key actors/stakeholders providing ALE that are also largely funded by the state. Due to the lack of up-to-date national strategy for ALE, most of the supplementary educational programs offered by Armenian universities are for limited internal target groups: their employees and alumni.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs in particular, are the third driving force in the field of AE. The educational process here is rather flexible and less formal in comparison with international organizations funding most of their ALE activities.

Last but not the least, the *employers* also offer ALE programs for their staff, aiming to boost the qualifications of their employees or support them in acquiring completely new specializations. Employers are also flexible in assessing the needs of their employees, deciding the content/curricula of AE courses and their form of delivery.

2.2 AE Services Provided by Public Administration Bodies of RA or by the Organizations Created by Them for Educational Purposes

Article 19 of the RA law “On Civil Service”³⁸ of the Republic of Armenia stipulates that the civil servants have the right and are obliged to improve their professional knowledge and competencies through participation in training courses which should be based on the principle of continuous professional development. The relevant authorities must take all necessary measures to organize the training and to ensure the participation of the civil servants. Job-related competency training is organized by the Civil Service Office, and the training on professional knowledge is organized by a relevant body. The training of each civil servant is carried out according to an individual program, which is designed (modified) based on the assessment of training needs in parallel with the evaluation of civil servants’ annual performance. Training is also provided in case new requirements are introduced in a civil servant’s passport regarding their professional knowledge

³⁸ RA Law “On Civil Service”

and competence.³⁹ After summarizing the results of the training needs assessment, the Secretary-General of the relevant public body (for example, the Ministry) draws up a training program for the civil servants of that body, which includes training needs, training methods, allocated credits, time allocation, potential training organizations, and candidates for training specialists. The program is then submitted to the Civil Service Office for approval. The Civil Service Office reviews the plan and agrees to approve it. After completion of the training, the civil servant receives credits. The trainee must accumulate credits approved by an individual program to be considered retrained.

Training costs and expenditures are covered by the state budget, as well as other financial means not prohibited by the RA legislation. To illustrate, in 2020, the RA Government has allocated around 158 billion Armenian drams (AMD) (equals to 276 million Euros) to the field of education, out of which about 5.418 billion AMD (9,472 million EUR) - 3.4% of this dedicated heading- has been directed to the “Education unclassified by levels”. Almost 50% of this budget line (4.212 billion AMD) (7,363 million Euros) supports “Extracurricular education” programs for children and teenagers. These funds are directed towards the implementation of aesthetic programs for young offenders, development of professional skills of talented young musician-performers, supporting the activities of music and art schools, and so forth.

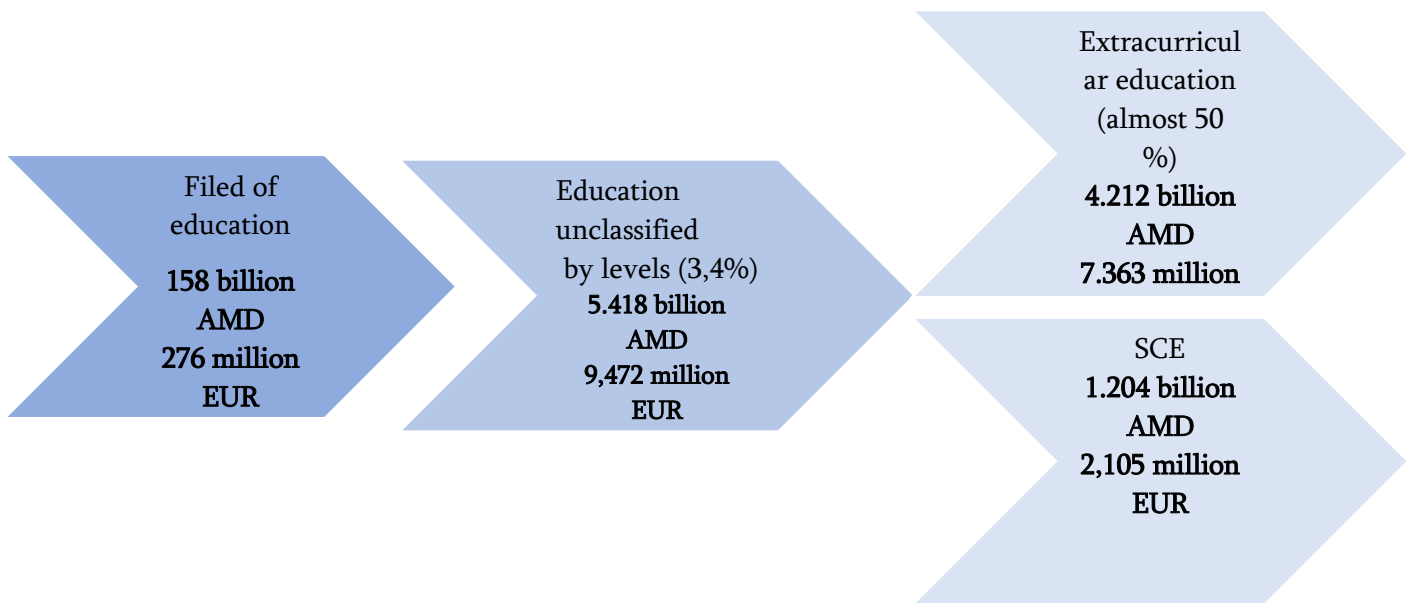


Figure 3. The training expenditures in the 2020 budget of RA Government

³⁹ When new civil service tasks are set, for example, in case of legislative changes or adoption of new policies or strategies).

Whereas SCE is provided with an overall 1.204 billion budgets (2,105 million Euros) to offer “Training services” (374 million drams) for a segment of adult beneficiaries - employees of different state institutions (RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RA Investigative bodies, RA Ministry of Justice and other state agencies) and

Other specific groups or state bodies. For instance, a significant amount (around 313 million AMD, (547 thousand Euros)) is allocated for the training of special staff of the RA Ministry of Justice. The third significantly sized budget sub-heading (around 135 million AMD) (236 thousand Euros) is directed to the training needs of employees working in the field of tax and customs services, and so on⁴⁰.

If looking chronologically into systematic allocations of the state budget headings for SCE in 2019, 2018 (gap year due to Velvet Revolution), 2017, and 2016, the following numbers suggest that there is a slight decrease in public funding for supplementary education and training.

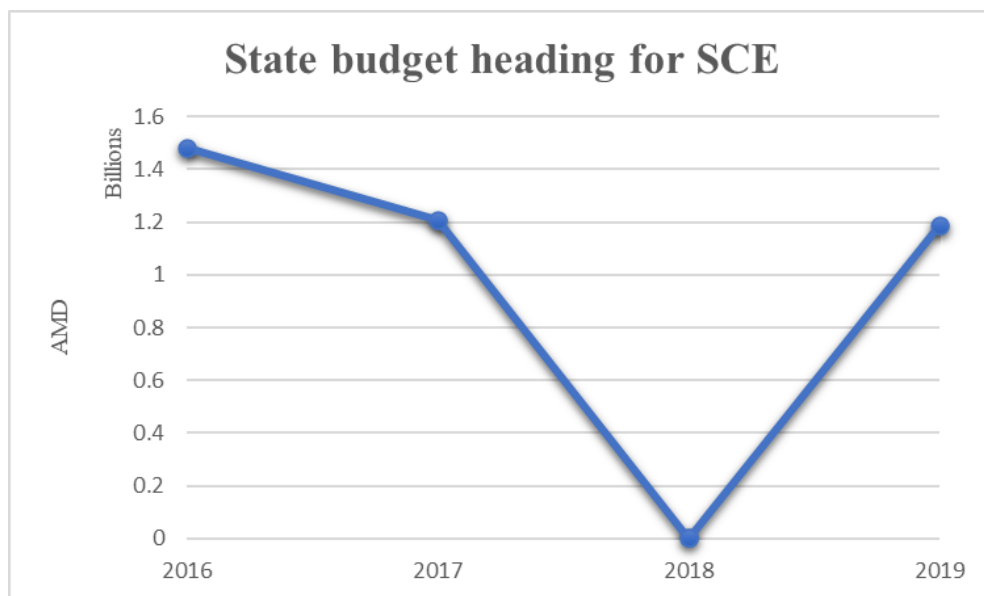


Figure 4. Allocation of state budget headings for SCE (source: Interactive Budgets 2019, 2017, 2016)

Educational programs for civil servants and other employees of state structures are executed both by public administration bodies of RA and by state organizations created for that purpose. A brief description of an indicative (not comprehensive) list of these agencies available in Annex 2 Despite the shortcomings presented above, there are also best practices to be shared. One of them is the " Legal education and rehabilitation programs implementation Center" SNCO of the RA Ministry of Justice and its activities and achievements are briefly presented below as best practice.

⁴⁰ Interactive Budget 2020, <https://www.e-gov.am/interactive-budget/>

“Legal education and rehabilitation programs implementation Center” SNCO ⁴¹ is a state non-commercial organization aimed at organizing training courses and special education courses for officers of the Penitentiary Service and the Judicial Acts Compulsory Enforcement Service of RA, implementing *social rehabilitation (including educational) programs for people kept in confinement at penitentiary institutions or serving non-custodial sentences or persons under supervision*, as well as those released from punishment, etc.

According to the report on educational programs carried out by the Center in 2018, the Centre implemented:

- Training of 540 officers of the Penitentiary Service, 60 officers of the Compulsory Enforcement Service, 32 people responsible for the implementation of anti-corruption programs, 102 medics of Penitentiary Service
- Special education courses for 1823 officers of the Penitentiary Service and 30 officers of the Compulsory Enforcement Service
- Program courses of aesthetic education for 121 detained and/or convicted people.

Since 2019 the Center has also started organizing State-funded general education for persons under 19 who carry punishment through a prison sentence and/or are detained. It actively cooperates with international organizations (UNICEF Armenia, British Embassy in Armenia, PH international Armenia, etc.) implementing numerous other supplementary educational programs for adults at risk and in vulnerable groups, and professionals (investigators, community policemen, community social workers, psychologists, probation officers) working with the abovementioned target groups.

⁴¹ <https://lawinstitute.am/2018/> , <http://www.moj.am/en/structures/view/structure/24>

2.3 AE Services by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and CSOs

The RA law “On Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education (HE) (2004) does not impose mandatory requirements for the HEIs to execute supplementary educational programs. In particular, clause 5 of the Article 6 (autonomy, competence and academic freedom of higher education institutions) establishes that “the structural subdivisions of higher education institutions can execute general education, middle vocational, as well as *supplementary education programs* under the current legislation of the Republic of Armenia”⁴². The above-mentioned definition suggests supplementary educational programs can be offered by the universities on a voluntary basis.

The new draft law “On Higher Education and Science”⁴³ was published for public review in December 2019, on the Unified website for publication of Legal Act's drafts⁴⁴. It has already been presented to the RA Government in September 2020. The cornerstone of this major legal document is that it stipulates “the continuity of higher education” (Article 4, clause 1, sub-clause 6). Moreover, according to Article 5, clause 1, sub-clause 4, ensuring the continuity of the educational process is of paramount importance among the main functions of the university. However, the draft law does not include direct references to LLL or SCE programs.

Thus, there is no uniform model for HEIs to follow when organizing supplementary education programs. Some universities, for instance, organize SCE through their faculties of humanities, where, on top of their major qualification, the students can study for two years and obtain a second degree with a different specialization. In other universities, structural subdivisions take an active role in offering supplementary education. Among such units are the Department of Postgraduate and/or Supplementary education in Yerevan State University (YSU), or the Research Center of Armenian State Pedagogical University. Finally, university supplementary education can be also implemented by a specially created learning center (e.g. American University of Armenia, Yerevan Brusov State University, etc.). Similar to state structures, the Armenian universities also offer SCE programs to civil servants, academic staff, and other public personnel seeking opportunities for retraining and the development of their professional skills. The tentative list of universities providing SCE is included in Annex 2.

The sources of funding for SCE programs offered by universities differ by client and service recipient groups. If the client is RA Government (like in cases when it orders YSU or Public Administration Academy of RA to implement training courses for civil servants) funds are allocated from the state budget. In other cases, the issues of funding are subject to specific and situational solutions. For instance, the mandatory retraining of university academic staff is carried out from the university budget free of charge. Here the university is concerned about the enhancement of its staff capacities and skills acts as an employer and covers the retraining expenses from its budget.

⁴² The RA law on “Higher and post-graduate vocational education”, <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=103999>

⁴³ <https://www.e-draft.am/projects/2164>

⁴⁴ <https://www.e-draft.am/>, The joint website of Legal Acts projects.

The American University of Armenia has exemplary educational practices that let the university stand out in the higher education institutional landscape. AUA Open Education is presented below as a best practice.

American University of Armenia Open Education (AUA Open Education) ⁴⁵. AUA is a transnational university with American accreditation and quality standards. The AUA Open Education serves as the University's principal interface with the community. Through its Open Education, the university follows the western model of LLL, providing both paid and non-paid training services, and using the talent available to AUA for reaching out to the vulnerable regions and groups. As stated on the university's website: "Our Vision is to become the Training Organization of choice to meet the changing needs of those seeking the best in Continuing Education, Adult Training and Lifelong Learning". AUA Open Education plans, designs, develops, and delivers a number of courses to meet the needs of most public and private sector organizations, as well as individuals at large. The focus is on helping them fulfill professional and/or career goals through flexible and innovative adult and continuing education programs, including training, workshops, and seminars.

AUA Open Education offers comprehensive English Language Training, a multitude of Computer Literacy and Information Technology training, and a variety of Leadership, Business Management, and Entrepreneurship courses. Certification upon completion of these courses is a common practice. Apart from the main campus in Yerevan, five offices operating in Gyumri, Dilijan, Yeghegnadzor, Vanadzor, and Stepanakert (Nagorno Karabakh Republic) offer LLL courses also regionally⁴⁶.

Among *CSOs working with ALE/LLL*, the most active ones are the NGOs that regularly offer civic education opportunities in formats of small conferences, workshops, and training courses. Topics suggested to the trainees typically cover human rights, the fight against corruption, democracy, civic activism, and its toolkit, investigative journalism, media literacy, and others. This type of AE mostly targets individuals and groups interested in civic and public activism which to some extent narrows down the scope of its influence. This way CSOs ensure their sustainability, and the inflow of new professionals to the existing public structures. They also promote opportunities for the development of new initiatives and organizations.

Within the multitude of training opportunities ALE courses promoting employability (e.g. through enhancing soft skills of jobseekers) or (social) entrepreneurship are often free for the participants. Moreover, quite often the participants receive small grants from the organizers to plan and implement projects that put into practice their newly acquired knowledge and skills. The funding for this type of SCE is provided mostly by the international donor organizations as the state budget does not foresee the allocation of funds for such programs.

⁴⁵ <https://openeducation.aua.am/>

⁴⁶ <https://openeducation.aua.am/regional-offices/>

The most active international institutions that fund or support the implementation of ALE programs in Armenia are the EU, the UN structures, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank, and others. Almost all programs funded by these institutions incorporate capacity building through training and awareness-raising on various topics and areas. There are also CSO and/or foundations supported by private donors that implement training courses (for children, youth, and adults), on media literacy, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, etc. See Annex 2 for the incomplete list of these institutions..

Among the international organizations supporting ALE in Armenia, the country Office of **DVV International - Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association**⁴⁷ has a special mission. DVV International has globally supported ALE and LLL for over 50 years through the establishment of sustainable structures for Youth and Adult Education. Established in 2002 DVV International Armenia has provided many opportunities for the development of ALE and LLL policy and practice in Armenia. Its scope of activities includes advocacy, lobbying, and capacity building of ALE professionals, support to ALE associations, as well as the provision of ALE services to vulnerable groups through specialized community centers. With DVV's support, three Adult Education Centers (AEC) were founded in three regions of RA (the third one was added in 2019⁴⁸). Their mission is to provide local vulnerable groups with vocational and soft skills to enhance their competitiveness in the labor market. These Centers annually train a minimum of 300 beneficiaries, offering over 20 courses relevant to the needs of the labor market. One of them, *DVV-supported Sisian Educational Center is presented below as the best practice.*

Sisian Adult Education Center

In 2012, DVV International Armenia announced an open call for southern region municipalities of Armenia to establish a new adult education center. The program presented by the municipality of Sisian city was recognized as the best among other proposals submitted by Ararat, Vayots Dzor, and Syunik regions. The memorandum signed in 2013 between DVV International and Sisian Municipality became the first step of successful cooperation which developed into a strong partnership during the next 7 years. In 2013 Sisian AEC facility provided by Sisian municipality was renovated and equipped by DVV international financial support thereafter Sisian AEC was registered as a foundation was provided with structural funding to improve its infrastructure and facilities and function as a foundation. Since 2014, the Center provides services aimed at the development of people's knowledge, skills, and abilities. It has become the liaison between employers and job seekers along with being the guarantor of effective labor market communication and cooperation. The AEC's course selection is based on the demand for specializations identified through needs assessment (survey) of beneficiaries and employers. In 2014-2019, Sisian AEC provided more than 20 different types of courses for 115 groups. In total 905 beneficiaries took part in these courses, of which only 20.1% were men and 79.9% women. For the given period, 39% of participants were unemployed, 42% employed and 19% were students. Computer literacy and English language courses are the most demanded. The

⁴⁷ <https://www.dvv-international.de/en/worldwide/europe/caucasus-and-turkey/armenia>

⁴⁸ These include the Khachmeruk AEC Center in Shirak (cooperation since 2007), Sisian AEC (2014) and COAF SMART Center (2019)

courses are very affordable for the community collecting an annual membership fee of 8000 AMD (less than 20 Euros). This policy helps the Center to facilitate the regional population's access to ALE and to sustain the participation rates during the whole year. To enlarge its scope of AEC's activities, the Center also cooperates with different partners working towards the improvement of the relevance of VET to labor market demand in Sisian. The Sisian AEC is a member of the "Social Partnership and Education: Community-Based Opportunities for Young People" project consortium funded by the EU. The center also implements local democracy, good governance, public administration, and community development projects, one of which Sponsored by the US Embassy in Yerevan is aimed to introduce the Sisian community to the new tool of participatory budgeting and governance.

The private sector in Armenia is also involved in the field of ALE/LLL through the provision of mostly short-term learning and training programs with no age restrictions. They are based on market demands and increasingly consider employers' requirements for vocational re-qualification and development of job-related skills. Fee-based courses in the domains of foreign languages, IT and programming, accountancy, hospitality, and financial literacy are the most in-demand. The quality of services offered by private providers ranges from mediocre to high quality and is reflected in their price lists. Yeremyan Projects through its Yeremyan Academy is one of the most popular providers of quality specialized training offered by its Academy.

Yeremyan Academy of Culinary Arts and Hospitality⁴⁹ is a training center established in 2019 by one of the most prominent restaurant business owners in Armenia. The Academy provides chef training professional courses and intends to ensure the inflow of chefs, waiters, restaurant managers for the industry. The Academy organizes masterclasses for the larger public as well. During its 1st intake in 2019 around 300 applications were submitted by those interested in specializing as trainee chefs or other hospitality professionals. Yeremyan Academy's courses are accredited by a UK based City of Oxford College and carry a seal of excellence. The graduates are being awarded joint diplomas by the City of Oxford College and the Academy. The QA and accreditation processes are fully outsourced to the College since the Academy has the ambition to become a regional leader in this field. As of October 2020, the Academy also offers to study Culinary Arts program in English only.

Aside from the vocational or so-called "hard" courses, there are also training courses aimed at the development of "soft" skills for professional and personal growth. These programs help to enhance learners' communication and self-presentation skills, foster personal growth, and self-education, develop multicultural, cross-sectoral competences.

⁴⁹ <http://www.yeremyan.academy/>, <https://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/news/2019/june/culinary-arts-and-hospitality-academy-in-yeremyan>

2.4 Supplementary Education of Employees and Job Seekers

The RA Labor Code “On Composition of Worktime” specifies the time required for the enhancement of qualification at the workplace or educational institutions is s. Employees are given educational leave to prepare for their examinations, tests, graduation thesis, and laboratory works. Moreover, an employee can ask for paid leave in case the training is required by the employer. If an employee takes SCE/ALE courses on their initiative, the issue of payment is decided by the agreement between the parties. Employers have the right to organize professional training of student interns or potential candidates, for the duration of up to 6 months. During this time, they are obliged to pay at least the minimum monthly salary as established by law. In case of layoffs due to liquidation of an employer organization, or reduction of production volume, or incompatibility with the position held, the staff may be allowed to acquire a new profession that meets the demands of the labor market or to enhance their existing qualifications. In the Armenian legislature on labor relations, professional vocational education is viewed as a human right. According to the 2013 law “On Employment”⁵⁰, an unemployed person has the right to professional/vocational orientation and education. During the professional/vocational training, they receive a stipend.

The State Employment Agency of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia⁵¹ (hereafter, Agency) is a separate division that supports job seekers in finding jobs. The employers, on the other hand, are assisted in finding specialists with corresponding qualifications. The Agency has 51 local offices throughout the entire country, of which 10 are in Yerevan, and 41 in the regions of Armenia. All services provided by the Agency are free of charge. Anyone above the age of 16 can apply to the Agency’s local office, register as a jobseeker, and use these services. The assessment of applicants’ training needs is conducted according to the Agency’s guidelines “On State Employment Support Opportunities for Jobseekers” based on which an expert at the local office matches the candidate’s profile to the field and position they qualify for. Existing vacancies and fitness for labor market demands are also taken into consideration. completed Jobseeker's individual training program is finalized based on their personal details, employment history, assessed needs, proposed and implemented measures.

Vocational training (retraining, improvement of vocational qualifications, primary vocational and craftsmanship education) is organized for the duration of up to 5 months for the unemployed jobseekers in prison who expect to be released in 6 months and for the individuals at risk of redundancy. Their goal is to enable entrepreneurship and support the participants in developing new skills and competences that correspond to the labor market demands thus reducing future risks of job loss and. Vocational training programs are organized when:

- There is no suitable job in the labor market that corresponds to the vocational/professional qualification of the trainee,
- The vocational qualification of the trainee does not meet the demands of the labor market,

⁵⁰ RA law “On Employment”, <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=87734>

⁵¹ <http://employment.am/am/index.html>

- The trainee has no vocational education or qualification⁵².

Vocational learning is funded from the state budget in accordance with the procedures set out in the RA law “On Procurement”.

The Agency’s monthly reports⁵³ provide the number of participants in the “Vocational Learning for Unemployed Jobseekers and Jobseekers at Risk of Redundancy” program.

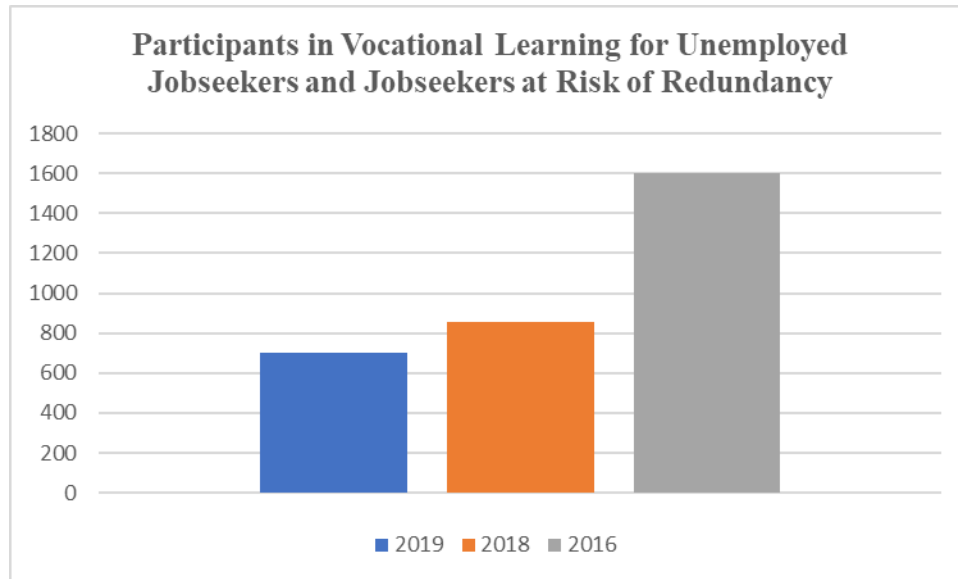


Figure 5. Number of trainees that took part in “Vocational Learning for Unemployed Jobseekers and Jobseekers at Risk of Redundancy”

Figure 5 illustrates a tendency towards a decrease in the number of participants, however, the lack of publicly available data on the 2017 report distorts the overall picture. In addition, the format of the reports does not allow us to understand whether the planned yearly number of participants was fulfilled or not.

ALE is also commonly represented in vocational training courses offered by the employers to improve their trainees’ (actual or potential employees) professional skills. Due to employers’ mistrust in the relevance of university qualifications to labor market needs, some of them (e.g. IT sector) are already investing in continuous upskilling of their staff. They value the general literacy and politeness of their staff but also claim that today’s HE does not train qualified specialists for labor. Moreover, many large and medium-sized companies provide on the job training to their job candidates. Companies such as “Synopsys Armenia”, “Veon Armenia” (Beeline trademark), “Yeremyan Projects” and others are among the employers who increasingly offer supplementary educational programs to their current or potential employees. Others consider investments in training as secondary, thus restricting adults’ participation and access to ALE.

⁵² <http://employment.am/am/28/free.html>

⁵³ Reports, <http://employment.am/am/report.html>

Some of the above-presented training programs, especially those offered by the state are perceived by vulnerable social groups as largely ineffective, unnecessarily complicated, and beaurocratic. To illustrate, those registered for a vocational training course may need to wait for a year to become enrolled. During this entire period the people on the waiting list should continue being also registered at territorial employment centers as unemployed. If their unemployed status is canceled they automatically become non-eligible for the training courses.

Last but not the least, due to lack of national QA standards and mechanisms for ALE, the lion's share of ALE programs offered by the main providers (the state, universities, CSOs/NGOs, international donors, etc.) use IQA procedures, such as pre/posttests, follow up and participant satisfaction surveys. This is yet another unsystematic approach to QA that slows down the process of institutionalization and regulation of ALE in RA. However, it contributes to its grassroots professionalization through enhanced visibility, reputation, and trust in ALE on one hand and the introduction of impact-oriented and evidence-based practices on the other.

2.5 Available data and statistics of the ALE

In general, there are no institutional mechanisms for collecting comprehensive statistical and qualitative data on AE in Armenia. Even though the Supplementary and Continuing Education Strategic Action Plan 2013-2017 mentioned the introduction of an SCE reporting system (in particular, monitoring and collection of statistical data), this system was never implemented. Instead, there is an Education management information system (EMIS)⁵⁴ managed by the National Center of Educational Technologies (NCET) and comprised of 3 subsystems of electronic management of educational infrastructure for pre-school, school, vocational and higher education. Unfortunately, this meta-system excludes the collection and processing of data on SCE and AE. Within the framework of the Labor Force Survey, the Statistical Committee also holds an anonymous database of microdata collected from household surveys. One of the questions of the questionnaire refers to any training, internship, private lessons, vocational/training course on a regular or one-time basis, even for the duration of several hours or days.

Despite the lack of data at a sectoral level, some statistical data collected by the SCA has certain implications for the field of AE. First, the population census conducted every 10 years includes data on education and literacy among adults. The last population census in Armenia was conducted in 2011, nevertheless, its complete results were published in 2013. One of the sections of the census refers to the education level of the Armenian population.

According to 2011 data, 5656 people among Armenia's population above the age of 20 are illiterate. 3336 of them (58,9%) are above the age of 65, 3898 (68,9%) of them are women: 68,6% of illiterate female adults live in the villages. 13160 adults don't have primary education. 9595 of them are above the age of 50, 8448 are women, 7844 live in the village⁵⁵.

By the 2005 decision, the State Council of Statistics of RA approved the state sample of the statistical report "On Vocational Training of Employees". According to this document, the employers are required to submit an annual report to the Statistical Committee on the number of employees who have undergone vocational training, including information on the location where their training is to be provided (for example, directly in the organization, in an educational institution, etc.) and the costs of training paid by the organization. This report is completed only for those employees who have undergone professional training at the expense of their employer organization. It means that the Statistical Committee doesn't collect any data on the participation of employees in professional training courses at their own expense or through other financial means.

As a result of SCA monitoring, a summary of data⁵⁶ retrieved from the above reports submitted by large and medium-sized companies and enterprises contains numbers of trainees who underwent professional/vocational training, retraining, and improved their qualification during the observed

⁵⁴ <https://emis.am>

⁵⁵ RA population census 2011, https://armstat.am/file/article/3_bajin_3_329-364.pdf

⁵⁶ Labour Market in the Republic of Armenia, 2017-2018, Statistical Committee of Armenia.

period. According to this publication, the annual number of employees in Armenia who participated in the training in 2014-2018 ranges from 19000 to 22000. For example, in 2014 that number was 20565, and in 2018 - 21559.

The number of employees who have participated in various training courses during the mentioned 5-year period (2014-2018) makes up 5.6% of the total number of registered employees in RA. This percentage varies per year from 6.5%, in 2018, to 5.2%. in 2017.

In 2017, employers’ average monthly expenditures on employee retraining mounted to 5618 AMD (while in 2018 the costs raised to 7245 AMD. It is noteworthy that the average monthly expenditure in the field of “public administration, education, healthcare, and social services” is higher than the above-mentioned average numbers both in 2017 and 2018.

There is also statistical data available on locations where the vocational training of 81750 individuals took place in 2015-2018, of which:

- 25151 or about 31% at educational institutions,
- 53074 or 65% - directly in the companies, organizations
- 3466 or 4% - abroad.

Finally, Within the framework of the Labor Force Survey, the Statistical Committee also holds an anonymous database of microdata collected from household surveys. One of the questions of the questionnaire refers to participation in any training, internship, private lessons, vocational/training courses on a regular or one-time basis, even for the duration of several hours or days

The multiple-choice options regarding the types and fields of the training are summarized below:

- regular professional education with relevant qualifications (for example, school, college, vocational school, higher education institution, postgraduate study, etc.)	- short-term training without qualification (for example, nail art, hairdressing, flower design, etc.)
- internship as a student	- foreign language class
- IT training (program), computer training	- grant startup program
- Training related to the current job/training for newly hired employees	- driving course
- seminar, conference, lecture	- training related to hobbies (singing, dancing, sports, chess, fine arts, etc.)
- online/remote learning, webinar	- other (specify), (for example, self-learning, self-education)

Section 2: Summary of Key Findings

- 1.**The public sector is the most active and extensive (in terms of funding and diversity of programs) of the four main AE providers in Armenia. Other key stakeholders are CSOs/NGOs, HEIs, and employers that provide courses to their employment (including employers). However, despite its advantageous situation, there are still issues related to the content and quality of the training for civil servants, their relevance, role in the professional advancement of skills, performance assessment, etc.
- 2.**Armenia does not have a unified model according to which SCE or ALE are organized by HEIs. Such programs offer a range of state-commissioned courses for civil servants, requalification opportunities for university academic staff to a chance for a second degree, and more standard LLL approaches.
- 3.**Non-governmental organizations consistently offer supplementary education opportunities to the public mostly in the field of human rights, democratic and civic values. These interventions are predominantly funded by international donor organizations and focus on individuals/groups that illustrate the high interest in civic and social activism.
- 4.**The supplementary vocational/professional training system for employers and their employees is also not fully established. Many large and medium-sized organizations provide training to job candidates with no previous work experience. There is also skepticism concerning the outcomes of HE (relevance of HE qualifications to the labor market needs) and there is a growing segment of employers making their investment in the development of knowledge and skills of their staff. However, the majority of Armenian employers still regards supplementary education as not important and abstains from offering opportunities for employees to receive supplementary education.
- 5.** While the SEA implements programs targeted at economically inactive population. Still, the interest in their offering is rather low both among employers and job seekers. Participation in these courses results in annulation of unemployment benefits, which in its turn affects jobseekers' motivation to participate in the offered capacity building courses. At the same time, the state training programs implemented by the Agency are marked by complex and bureaucratic applications and a low level of public awareness about them.
- 6.**Since there is no centralized and unified system of QA of education and training the key ALE providers in Armenia follow their own internal QA procedures and standards for AE programs. There are no institutionally trustworthy mechanisms for collecting both statistically valid quantitative and qualitative data on adult education in Armenia. The mechanism of a mandatory annual report on "Professional/Vocational Trainings of Employees" submitted by employers to SCA is an insufficient and unreliable picture of adult education in Armenia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of key findings summarized in the previous two sections, the below list of recommendations aims to provide support and advice to decision-makers at all levels, including policymakers, public administrators, ALE providers, and other relevant bodies. The recommendations included in this review are grouped by the five key areas of the BFA, i.e. policy, governance, funding, quality, and participation.

Policy

1. The main educational laws and by-laws in RA offer mostly inconsistent terminology for the field of ALE. The variety of terms in use is especially confusing when there is a need to bridge the local and international contexts. The international policy vocabulary has long moved from AE to ALE (these changes are documented in Belem Framework for Action as well as UNESCO's other key documents) and the government of Armenia, being a UN and UNESCO member state, needs to keep the relevance of its national documents choosing the definition that best explains the aims of ALE in Armenia. UNESCO's Recommendations on ALE (RALE) offer such a helpful explanatory framework (para. 8) vocabulary.
2. The lawmakers are recommended to cross-reference and use cohesive, commonly-agreed ALE terms in all legal documents that mention a variety of terms (SCE, AE, and LLL) including education strategies, Medium-term Expenditure Programs, annual reports of the MESCS, and most importantly, the new draft law "On Higher Education and Science".
3. Two recommendations could be applied to the improvement of ALE policies and regulation of the field in general. First, the field-specific part of the "Strategy on Education" currently drafted by the Ministry, should reinforce ALE as a sub-sector of the education system. Then, to reinforce the implementation of this strategy it is advised to design a roadmap to ALE. It is also important that these documents provide room to ALE as a profession and as an academic discipline.
4. Active citizenship skills should become a strategic priority for the Ministry, focusing also on the citizenship education and training of adults. This field should not be self-regulated by the CSOs, NGOs, and international donor community actors only, but rather grounded in institutional practices. AECs and community ALE provider NGOs should be provided with an opportunity to apply for program-based state funding. In addition, all ALE providers should capitalize on the currently favorable conditions for the promotion of civic education on the level of policy and practice.
5. It is necessary to introduce tools that guarantee the right of employees for continuous professional training which will limit employer-imposed barriers and interference. On the other hand, to avoid demotivating practices, it is necessary to introduce mechanisms that encourage employers to organize additional and continuing education for their employees. These may include, for example, certain tax benefits, as well as moral incentives and public promotion of good practices.

Governance

1. Advocacy and outreach should be regarded as guarantors of smooth governance of the ALE system. The state needs to popularize and promote ALE (and the related terminology) through public dissemination campaigns and other advocacy measures.
2. Education and Science was expanded to include the domains of Culture and Sport (MESCS). In the light of these developments the status and the role of the Department of Supplementary and Continuing Education of the Ministry should be reevaluated⁵⁷. It is highly recommended that the Ministry sustains an autonomous department of ALE with a strategic objective to gradually increase the number of its key personnel and continuously expand its governance functions
3. It is necessary to ensure the proper state funding of the National Training Fund so that the latter fully implements its monitoring, recognition, validation, and accreditation functions stipulated by the relevant legal decisions and procedures such as the 2015 “Organization and Implementation of the Supplementary Education Programs” and “Evaluation and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Results” and runs the national Registry’s electronic database. Consistent efforts should be made to develop and adopt primary and secondary legislative acts ensuring the full operationalization of the recognition and validation procedures.
4. There is a need to develop and implement institutional, credible mechanisms for collecting both statistical and qualitative data on ALE in Armenia. Inter-agency shared data collection and a unified database for the exchange of statistical information by all state stakeholders should be developed (which can be coordinated by EMIS).
5. Effective governance of ALE should be based on a sound mechanism of coordination. As this review illustrates, interagency coordination of ALE is rather weak in RA. In international practice, National Councils for ALE are important participatory platforms uniting the state, public, private, and civil sector stakeholders. Such a coordination mechanism facilitates comprehensive national planning and coordination. The model could be used as a guide to developing a similar mechanism to be adjusted to the national context and needs.

Funding

1. A separate program dedicated to ALE should be envisaged both in the state budget and in the Medium-Term Expenditure Programs. The use of the term ALE in the financial documents is important for indicating the state priorities for the development of the field.

⁵⁷ Closer to the end of this review some development about the status of the SCE unit at the Ministry were being discussed. It seems it became part of the Youth department and this fact is confirmed by the structure of the ministry available at its website at www.escs.am. The name of the new department is Department for Youth Policy, Supplementary and Continuing Education.

The financial support to ALE should be increased to serve the number of adults and increase participation continuously.

2. To succeed in the implementation of SDG4 and develop an inclusive system of ALE, national data collection should be highly prioritized. The state budget should be directed not only to cater to the needs of the civil servants and vulnerable groups but the wider society as well. It could serve as an incentive for sustainable participation of adults in ALE.
3. The capacity enhancement of key personnel of the structures involved in the design of RVA system, the standard development, maintenance of national registry, evaluation, guidance, etc. should be reinforced by state and private funding.

Quality

1. Some of the challenges related to the QA system for ALE are posed by a lack of awareness and understanding of how the learning outcome-based assessment could be applied to recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning results. Having NTF as the main QA body for non-formal and non-degree programs, the Government should consider involving advisory bodies and other key stakeholders experienced in QA.
2. The National Sectorial Qualifications Framework (still in the pilot phase in Armenia) can be used to achieve recognition of learning by employers, as this framework enables the promotion of labor mobility and possible assessment of prior skills as its integral part. It could be used for orientation of field-specific ALE service providers, but as a point of reference for the employment policies as well. ANQA's learning-outcome based methodology and financial autonomy from the Government allows extension of the national QA system accommodating the learning outcomes from non-formal and informal ALE. As a result of a new ANQF inventory, policymakers need to revise the legal barriers (e.g. maximum duration of SCE programs) for the introduction of level 5 qualifications, that are most fitted for the QA of shorter ALE programs.
3. The state should introduce institutionally credible systems for assessing the professional needs of employees. Orders for training by the government agencies should be based on such needs assessment that would result in clear and measurable learning outcomes expected from the training.
4. Developing innovative and regularly updated quality content should help ALE training providers in updating their outdated syllabi and curricula for the training of government employees and offer learning beyond memorization for further development of their job skills and competences.
5. The profession of "Andragogy" included in the "List of Professions of Secondary Vocational Education" approved by the Government of RA in 2006, doesn't provide significant opportunities for wider professionalization of ALE discipline. The shortage of professionally qualified adult educators/trainers/instructors is especially visible on the community level. "Andragogy" should be made available as a specialization on other levels of education (NQF) system as well.

Participation, inclusion, and justice

1. Low valorization of ALE as an independent field and high level of state bureaucracy are serious barriers to the participation of adults in state-funded training programs. Complex application processes need to be simplified and the “waiting lists” removed. Digital solutions such as information management systems could greatly assist this process.
2. ALE programs for government employees should be concluded with such an assessment that will give both the employees and public employers a clear understanding of the nature and quality of their working skills. To stimulate maximum participation in these training programs, the assessment of skills should result in professional and official promotion of ALE programs. The development and popularization of job passports should help to address this issue.
3. International organizations that fund ALE programs offered by the NGOs should engage in a closer dialogue with the state, the private sector, and the wider society to better understand their educational needs. One of the suggested formats is the organization of regular donor meetings.
4. It is necessary to develop legal tools and implement them to enable employee right and access to vocational (including supplementary) education and protect the latter from employer-imposed obstacles.
5. CSOs need to pay more attention to the inclusiveness of their educational activities, not limiting access to participation to only young people or to socially active individuals and/or groups with civic competences.
6. The recognition of the learning results of the trainees, commended by the 2015 procedure on “Evaluation and Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Results” document, should be made as easy and flexible as possible, meanwhile, evaluation and recognition mechanisms should be transparent, inclusive and attractive for the general public.
7. Best ALE practices should be studied, and where possible replicated to ensure access of different groups of adults (including vulnerable groups) to relevant ALE services.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Additional information on two policy documents adopted in 2015

“Procedure for Organization and Implementation of Supplementary Education Programs”
“Procedure for Evaluation and Recognition of the Results of Non-Formal and Informal Learning”(available in Armenian).

Under the above procedure, training can be provided by organizations or individuals pre-registered in the National Training Registry. Within the scope of their accredited professions, vocational educational institutions can be included in the Registry without preconditions. Individuals or organizations providing supplementary education must submit a modular training program to NTF, which will be reviewed by the Foundation's Professional Committee. Then, based on the professional conclusion provided by the Foundation, the program can be guaranteed by the authorized body of state structure (RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports) responsible for the management of the education system.

At the end of the training program, the participant is awarded a corresponding certificate and its supplement, where a mandatory note is made about the learning outcomes achieved by the learner. Samples of the certificate and its supplement are registered in the National Training Registry. Besides, each training provider provides the Foundation with a range of information about its course participants.

- Full name and patronym
- Personal code
- Date of birth
- Gender:
- Citizenship
- The name of the course to be taken and its length
- Deadline for participation in the course
- Learning outcomes achieved
- The number of the certificate (or certificates) issued

Annex 2: List of Key AE Providers per Sector⁵⁸

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Public administration bodies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ National Institute of Labor and Social Research⁵⁹➤ Academy of Justice of the Ministry of Justice of the RA⁶⁰➤ Diplomatic School of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RA⁶¹➤ Training center state revenue committee o of the RA⁶²➤ National Institute of Health⁶³➤ National Institute of Education/dissolved/➤ National Center for VET Development⁶⁴ (NCVETD)➤ Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation (under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)➤ National Center for Educational Technology⁶⁵ |
| 2. Universities providing supplementary educational programs/LLL | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Yerevan State University⁶⁶, Postgraduate Additional Education Department➤ Brusov State University⁶⁷, “SMART Caffé” Entrepreneurship Center➤ Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatur Abovyan⁶⁸, Research Centres➤ Armenian State University of Economics⁶⁹, Change Lab |
| 3. CSOs and/or foundations | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Eurasia Partnership Foundation⁷⁰ (Creative games, Conflict transformation school, Critical Thinking School, CSO School)➤ Children of Armenia Fund⁷¹(COAF) (English Language, Training Teachers and Administrators, After-School and Summer Programs, Democracy and Civic Activism at Schools, Professional Orientation and Internship Opportunities for Youth)➤ Media Initiatives Center⁷² (Media literacy training)➤ Institute of Public Policy⁷³ (Summer School of Public Policy, Training on human right monitoring and advocacy, Professors’ training, etc)➤ Armenian Civitas⁷⁴ (civic education)➤ AGBU Armenian Virtual College⁷⁵ |

⁵⁸ More information available in Armenian

⁵⁹ http://www.mlsa.am/?page_id=4372

⁶⁰ <http://www.justiceacademy.am/#8>

⁶¹ <http://www.diplomaticacademy.am/en/>

⁶² <http://www.mftc.am/en>

⁶³ <https://nih.am/am>

⁶⁴ <http://www.mkuzak.am/?lang=en>

⁶⁵ <http://ktak.am/index.php/en>

⁶⁶ <http://www.yso.am/main/en>

⁶⁷ https://brusov.am/en/page_list/smart_caffe_entrepreneurship_center/#sthash.rnKL5zaE.dpbs

⁶⁸ https://aspu.am/en/page/about_aspu/

⁶⁹ <https://asue.am/en/asue/about>

Annex 3: List of Key Informants

Name of the Key Informant	Stakeholder Represented
Aram Avagyan	Global Developments Fund
Arevik Sargsyan	Adult Education and Lifelong Learning Association
Gayane Hovakimyan	“Centre for the implementation of legal education and rehabilitation programmes” SNCO, RA Ministry of Justice
Hayk Daveyan	Beyond Learning Hub
Hovhannes Hovhannisyan	Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport of the RA National Assembly
Kristina Tsaturyan	Brusov State University
Lilit Beglaryan	Global Development Fund
Lusine Kalantaryan	Statistical Committee of Armenia
Lusine Kharatyan	Civic Initiative for Education
Marina Galstyan	“Center for Educational Research and Consultancy” NGO
Marine Hakobyan	National Training Fund / RA National Assembly
Samvel Pipoyan	Armenian State Pedagogical University
Shahane Beglaryan	Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation
Yulia Stakyan	GIZ Armenia

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