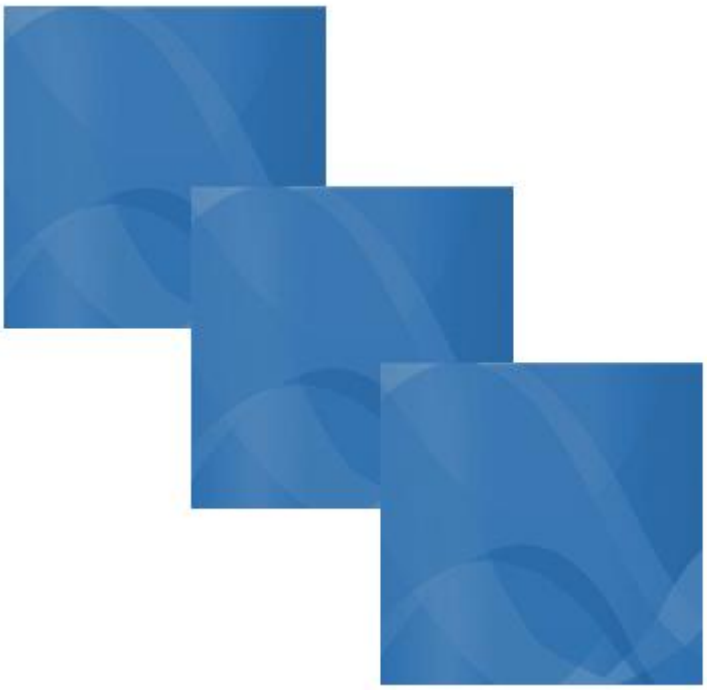


Study on Analysis of Adult Learning Policies and their Effectiveness in Europe - Consultation Document

European Commission, DG EAC

16 June 2014

Contents

List of questions: 1

1 Introduction 2
1.1 Aims and objectives 2
1.2 Purpose of this consultation 2
1.3 Structure of the consultation 3
1.4 Responding to the consultation 3

2 The purpose of the conceptual framework 4
2.1 Why do we need a conceptual framework? 4
2.2 What should this conceptual framework do? 4
2.3 What does a conceptual framework need to look like to achieve this? 5

3 Developing the conceptual framework 6
3.1 What are the different types of conceptual framework? 6
3.2 Defining an effective adult learning system 6
3.3 Identifying success factors in adult learning 7

4 Possible options for a conceptual framework 9
4.1 Types of framework 9
4.2 Criteria for assessing each model 14
4.3 Strengths and limitations of each model 14

5 Conceptual framework 16
5.1 The proposed conceptual framework 16
5.2 Converting the framework to a scoreboard 19

List of questions:

Q1: What are the high-level principles we should take account of when designing and setting out a conceptual framework? Are those in 2.2 the right ones?

Q2: Are there characteristics of a high level conceptual framework that we have omitted from the description in 2.2? If so, why are these important?

Q3: Are there any other dimensions or levels that should be included in a conceptual framework which have not been mentioned in Section 2?

Q4: Are there other types of framework used to assess the effectiveness of adult learning that you think might be useful to take account of?

Q5: Are the definitions we provide for “effectiveness” and “efficiency” in adult learning satisfactory?

Q6: Looking at the initial success factors we have identified, have you come across other success factors that could be added to that list? Are they supported by research evidence? Which of these success factors do you believe to be weak? Is this supported by research evidence?

Q7: Which of the models presented in section 4.1 do you believe is the most appropriate one for use in a study to analyse the effectiveness of adult learning? Why?

Q8: On a scale of 1 to ten, where 1 is completely against and 10 is completely in favour, how would you rate each of them as appropriate models?

Q9: Have we omitted any criteria in our assessment of a model for the high level conceptual framework?

Q10: Is there another type of model which we have omitted here which you think might be appropriate to study the effectiveness of adult learning policies, drawing on experience of national frameworks from your own country?

Q11: What are your thoughts on the proposed model? How well does it meet the objectives set in section 2.2? How would you improve it?

Q12: Are there elements/features from the other models (A, B, C and D) which we should incorporate into this proposed model?

Q13: How do you think this model ranks on the following dimensions (scale of 1-10 where 1=not well and 10=very well):

- conceptual insightfulness
- usability
- transferability
- practicality and usefulness
- ease of understanding

Q14: How similar is it to other frameworks you have come across? Do you think it could be used in your country to monitor the effectiveness of adult learning policies?

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims and objectives

Effective adult learning policies can lead to a number of positive outcomes including:

- Improving the economic competitiveness of countries, by providing citizens with relevant and useful labour market skills;
- Developing social cohesion, by reducing inequalities through targeting disadvantaged groups; and
- Increasing the overall wellbeing of citizens, by promoting active, social and democratic engagement as well as people's ability to live a happy and rewarding life.

As part of this role, the European Commission has launched a study to develop an **analytical framework for the analysis of adult learning policies**. The aim of this particular study is to create an analytical tool, which would support Member States to formulate and implement effective adult learning policies, while making better use of the already existing evidence base. Importantly, the final product should demonstrate evidence of how outputs and outcomes of adult learning are achieved effectively.

This analytical framework for adult learning is expected to help **national policy makers implement and improve their policies**. It will also provide a model for guiding the collection of quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the comparative performance of countries and the basis for an interactive tool that can be used to monitor progress and relative performance in the area of adult learning by the Commission and Member States.

1.2 Purpose of this consultation

The study consists of several phases to develop a tool which **reflects effective practice**. The purpose of this consultation paper is to contribute to the initial phase of developing a **high level conceptual framework** for the tool.

This consultation paper has been developed following consultation with the Adult Learning Working Group. It has taken account of comments and suggestions received during the meetings of the Working Group.

The purpose of this consultation paper is therefore to:

- Explain the purpose of a conceptual framework, what it might look like and what it is designed to do;
- Present an overview of possible models of a conceptual framework;
- Present our preferred design of the conceptual framework and outline the reasons for choosing it;
- Invite opinions and feedback from members of the Adult Learning Working Group, experts and national co-ordinators to inform the overall design of the conceptual framework and the further development of the tool.

We will take account of this feedback in developing the design of the analytical tool and the scoreboard. This will also inform the framework for the collection of data for monitoring and the comparative analysis which is to be undertaken.

In order to arrive at such a framework and to ensure that it is robust and reflects the evidence that exists, we need to approach its development over a number of stages. Using such an iterative process is the most reliable and systematic way to achieve this.

To start off this process and develop a high level conceptual framework, we have used the results of an initial analysis of the literature on models of adult learning systems, frameworks for evaluating policy actions that improve adult participation in learning and learning outcomes for adults, and research into what policy actions work to achieve effective adult learning. **The research is not yet exhaustive or final** and is intended to spur responses to

the consultation questions that are set out in each section while we continue the research and analysis.

1.3 Structure of the consultation

The structure of the document is as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the purpose of a conceptual framework and explains what it should do for the purposes of this study. It also describes a number of desirable features that such a framework might have;
- Section 3 presents our thinking in terms of developing a conceptual framework, drawing on our initial analysis of the literature. This included the exploration of other frameworks that have been used for explaining adult learning systems and also identifying those inputs and activities that have been shown to be effective in raising adult participation in learning and increasing adults' competences;
- Section 4 presents a number of possible models that could be used as frameworks for this study, as well as a description of their strengths and limitations and criteria by which they could be assessed;
- Section 5 presents a model which is the preferred option for use in this study as the conceptual framework for the analytical tool.

1.4 Responding to the consultation

To respond to this consultation document, please submit your responses to each of the questions as well as your contact details at http://www.ghkint.eu/AdultLearning or send a copy of your responses to sein.omuineachain@icfi.com.

2 The purpose of the conceptual framework

In this section, we set out the purpose of a conceptual framework for the analytical tool and explain what it should do, for the purposes of this study. We also describe a number of desirable features that such a framework might have.

2.1 Why do we need a conceptual framework?

Adult learning policies, like any other policies, need to be effective in reaching their objectives and having their desired impacts; for example increasing the participation rates of adults in learning and improving adults' competences which are used in volunteering or work. To make sure that they are successful in achieving this, we need to understand the performance of adult learning policies as well as the capacity to manage and to monitor them. Like other policies, adult learning policies can be understood as a cycle of activities and, as a first step to understanding them, we need to determine the relationships between those different policy actions and their outputs and outcomes.

A conceptual framework is best thought of as something that explains the main things to be studied – key factors, concepts or variables, and the presumed relationship among them. The purpose of a conceptual framework is to demonstrate those high level relationships in a sequenced, interlinked manner, which simplifies but still represents how adult learning policies function effectively.

The conceptual framework being designed for this study has a number of objectives:

- It will provide a high level design structure for the analytical tool and "scoreboard";
- It will provide a framework for the collection of data for monitoring as well as enabling extensive comparative analysis; and
- It will demonstrate understanding of how outputs and outcomes of adult learning are achieved effectively and which inputs and activities deliver them.

2.2 What should this conceptual framework do?

In order to be useful in informing the design of an analytical tool to assess the effectiveness of adult learning policies, the conceptual framework needs to:

- Define "effectiveness in adult learning", in terms of outputs and economic and social outcomes to beneficiaries, such as learners, employers and the community;
- Capture most of the key elements and policy actions (inputs and activities) which evidence suggests are critical to the achievement of key outputs and outcomes around adult learning;
- Clearly relate inputs and activities (policy actions) to outputs and outcomes and describe these linkages with logical and evidence-based explanations;
- Broadly relate policy actions to stages in the process of adult learners participating in learning and then achieving improved competences and outcomes for both the learner and other parts of society; and
- Clearly show the linkages between policy actions and outputs and outcomes.

It is important to note that the purpose of the conceptual framework is not to be a theoretical reflection on those elements that have been thought to contribute to effectiveness in adult learning. Rather, the basis of the conceptual framework needs to be rooted in evidence which clearly identifies certain policy actions and activities as success factors in achieving an effective adult learning system.

Equally, we cannot expect it to capture everything such as all adult learning pathways and all sub-groups of learners though we must expect it to provide the superstructure for disaggregating policies, adult learners and types of learning in the analytical tool.

2.3 What does a conceptual framework need to look like to achieve this?

Having set out the purpose of a conceptual framework in analysing effectiveness in adult learning, the next step is to give some thought to what the shape of a framework might look like. Considering the purposes of a conceptual framework discussed in section 2.2 above, a model framework of an adult learning system must show the **linkages** between:

- Policy actions;
- The learning undertaken by adults, including informal and non-formal learning;
- The outputs, such as participation in adult learning and achievement of competences;
- The outcomes, such as the use of competences gained in obtaining employment, raising productivity or enhancing active civic engagement; and
- The different parts of society that benefit from these outcomes.

The framework should draw on evidence about which policy actions have an impact on these outputs and outcomes.

Questions for consideration

Q1: What are the high-level principles we should take account of when designing and setting out a conceptual framework? Are those in 2.2 the right ones?

Q2: Are there characteristics of a high level conceptual framework that we have omitted from the description in 2.2? If so, why are these important?

Q3: Are there any other dimensions or levels that should be included in a conceptual framework which have not been mentioned in Section 2?

3 Developing the conceptual framework

In this section, we look in more detail at what shape such a conceptual framework might take, what elements it might include and how we might define "effectiveness" of adult learning policies in an adult learning system.

3.1 What are the different types of conceptual framework?

There are a number of different forms which a conceptual framework can take. Generally, these follow the form of a logic model or theory of change model – a depiction of the logical relationships between the resources used, activities undertaken, outputs delivered and outcomes achieved.

The list below is not exhaustive, but these types have been chosen to capture the most commonly used ones in research and evaluation. These are:

- **'Input-output' models:** These are straightforward models which represent, generally, a simple linear model which depicts the relationships between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. In such a model, the system begins with a set of inputs, policy actions are applied and then it is expected that these can be systematically linked to the outputs and outcomes that result.
- **Customer journeys:** In such a model, the path from initial inputs to final outputs and outcomes is modelled as a "journey". One feature of this model is that there are a number of different stages on the "journey". In such models, policy actions broadly relate to different stages of a customer journey (in this case, an adult learner proceeding from taking information and advice about learning to starting and completing learning and then using the learning gained) which have outputs and outcomes for the learner and different parts of society. Where some policy actions have limited effects on later stages of that journey their relationship with steps on the journey can be measured more easily than to outputs and outcomes.
- **Policy progress models**: One of the purposes of these models is to systematically assess whether policy actions are taken in the right direction to achieve their outputs and outcomes. These broadly reflect the 'policy cycle'. A progress model sets out the stages and broad descriptions of the expected steps to be followed as well as the results to be achieved in terms of outputs and outcomes.
- **Outcome strand models**: These models follow an input-output approach but show how all policy actions are linked to all the outputs and outcomes for learners and other parts of society: employers, social partners, the community and the economy.
- **Policy performance cycle**: In such models, public policy performance can be understood as a cycle of activities beginning with setting out clear objectives, then defining effective strategies to achieve those objectives, aligning management systems to implement those strategies, and putting performance measurement and reporting mechanisms in place that lead to outputs and outcomes.

These are not the only types of framework that can be used, but they do represent the common types in the analysis of policy effectiveness.

3.2 Defining an effective adult learning system

An important part of any framework relates to the outcomes it is assessing, effectiveness in adult learning in this case. Effectiveness can only be judged in relation to achieving a set of defined outputs and outcomes; while efficiency can only be judged in relation to achieving the same defined outputs and outcomes with the least resources. For this study, the **effectiveness** of adult learning systems could be assessed by measuring:

- **Outputs**, such as participation levels and the competences gained by the adult population;

- **Longer-term educational outcomes/ impacts** achieved. These fall into two categories that are not mutually exclusive:
  - Those "social" outcomes/impacts which are related to the generation of 'democratic equality' - the use of knowledge, skills and competences in citizenship and social life; and; and
  - Those "economic" outcomes related to labour market integration and the use of knowledge, skills and competences in employment. It is important to note, however, that these two sets of outcomes are not mutually exclusive;
- **Policy actions** which contribute to these outputs and outcomes. This requires evidence of attribution (a causal link between them).

On the other hand, the **efficiency** of adult learning systems can be studied by measuring the costs of policy actions (inputs to activities), the unit costs of defined outputs and outcomes where the costs can be calculated, and the returns on investment achieved where outputs and outcomes can be monetised.

3.3 Identifying success factors in adult learning

We have provisionally identified some success factors from the literature. The list that follows is not intended to be an exhaustive or final list of all those policy actions which can be said to lead to effective adult learning – identifying such a list is a core aim of this study. The success factors we have set out below are intended to represent those most common elements that have emerged from an initial review. We hope that it will stimulate further discussion around success factors, especially drawing on respondents' experience nationally and at a European level.

We have grouped the success factors we have identified from the literature into seven categories. These are:

- Raising awareness among adult learners and the social partners about the benefits from adult learning – creating a "learning culture". Policy actions would include:
  - Improve the visibility of rewards to learning as a way to motivate adults to learn;
  - Raise awareness of adult learning through provision of information, guidance and counselling, e.g. "one-stop" centres providing integrated information on adult education opportunities;
  - Provide evidence of the benefits of adult learning to social partners;
  - Provide information on needs to individuals and social partners;
  - Engage social partners in the development of programmes;
- Co-ordinating adult learning policies with other public policies. To do this, policy actions would include:
  - Design adult learning policies to align them with other national policies, e.g. labour market policy or national education policy;
  - Establish adult learning institutions to meet learning needs and complement/support learning provided by social partners;
  - Develop regional, local and sectoral learning networks;
- Using a learner-centred approach to improve delivery. Policy actions would include:
  - Design appropriate and flexible delivery arrangements, e.g. distance learning, online learning, workplace delivery, part-time courses;
  - Ensure that teachers are adequately trained and qualified;
  - Ensure teachers develop their practices and skills through CPD;
- Ensuring high quality and cost effective adult learning. Policy actions would include:

  - Establish a quality control framework for adult education programmes using programme and institutional assessment and evaluation;
  - Increase the knowledge base concerning adult learning through national programmes to promote evidence-based policy;
  - Engage social partners in the design of training and qualifications;
- Using financial incentives to promote participation are a useful mechanism for policymakers. Policy actions would include:
  - Co-finance training with employers to deliver work-based learning/training;
  - Promote vertical training networks between firms;
  - Provide individual learning accounts (ILAs) and subsidies (vouchers and allowances)
- Overseeing effective governance and certification. Policy actions would include:
  - Design schemes to recognise prior learning done through informal and non-formal means;
  - Establish and maintain a qualifications framework;
  - Quality assure qualifications and their assessment;
- Promoting equality of access. This is a key pillar of ensuring that harder-to-reach groups have access to adult learning. Policy actions would include:
  - Promote basic skills and literacy programmes for the low skilled to enable participation
  - Design incentive programmes for employers to provide workplace learning for the low-skilled
  - Target learning and incentives on specific groups

Questions for consideration

Q4: Are there other types of framework used to assess the effectiveness of adult learning that you think might be useful to take account of?

Q5: Are the definitions we provide for “effectiveness” and “efficiency” in adult learning satisfactory?

Q6: Looking at the initial success factors we have identified, have you come across other success factors that could be added to that list? Are they supported by research evidence? Which of these success factors do you believe to be weak? Is this supported by research evidence?

4 Possible options for a conceptual framework

In this section, we take the discussion in Section 3 and apply it to present how different types of conceptual frameworks might be designed to analyse the effectiveness of adult learning systems, the criteria by which we should assess any model and consideration of some of the strengths and limitations of each type.

4.1 Types of framework

The figures that follow are only indicative examples of how different types of framework might present the relationships and linkages between elements in an effective adult learning system. They are only examples of how the different types of framework might look when applied to adult learning. They are not intended to be "finished products" but rather a high-level overview of what a conceptual framework for adult learning would look like in each case.

In all four types of model presented below, there are a number of basic design features:

- They all present an explicit theory of change (a logic chain) showing how progress is made in the adult learning system towards outputs and outcomes which can assess effectiveness;
- They all present our current understanding of success features (policy actions) and linkages (relationships) based on our initial analysis of the research evidence;
- They demonstrate the linkages that exist between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, based on what we have learned so far from the research evidence.

Figure 4.1 shows an example of how a "learner journey" model would look. In this type of model, we see those policy actions that affect different stages of the adult learner journey from understanding needs and identifying learning available to applying for and participating in, and then completing learning, recognising the knowledge, skills and competences gained, identifying uses and then applying them. Some stages relate to outputs and outcomes for individual learners and society (which can be differentiated). It shows that policy actions often relate to specific stages in that journey.

Figure 4.2 shows an example of how a "policy progress" model might be represented. Here, each policy action we have identified (in Section 3) is presented as well as each stage in its implementation and then the resultant output and outcome. As such, each group of policy actions in the model can then be monitored to determine progress in achieving that particular action, as well as monitoring progress towards the outcome.

Figure 4.3 shows an example of what an outcomes strand model might look like. In this type of model, there is the usual logic chain between inputs, activities and outputs. However, the outcomes presented are categorised according to the various beneficiaries, e.g. learners, employers, the community and educational providers. Additionally, this framework also takes account of the different relationships and linkages between inputs and activities.

Figure 4.4 shows an example of how an input-output model might look. In this type of model, there is a logical sequence of actions leading from inputs to activities to outputs and outcomes. Like other models, the individual learner's context as well as the overall economic context is taken account of. In addition, it sets out how barriers to participation in adult learning can be overcome, such as the importance of guidance for learners.

Figure 4.1 Model A: Adult learner journey

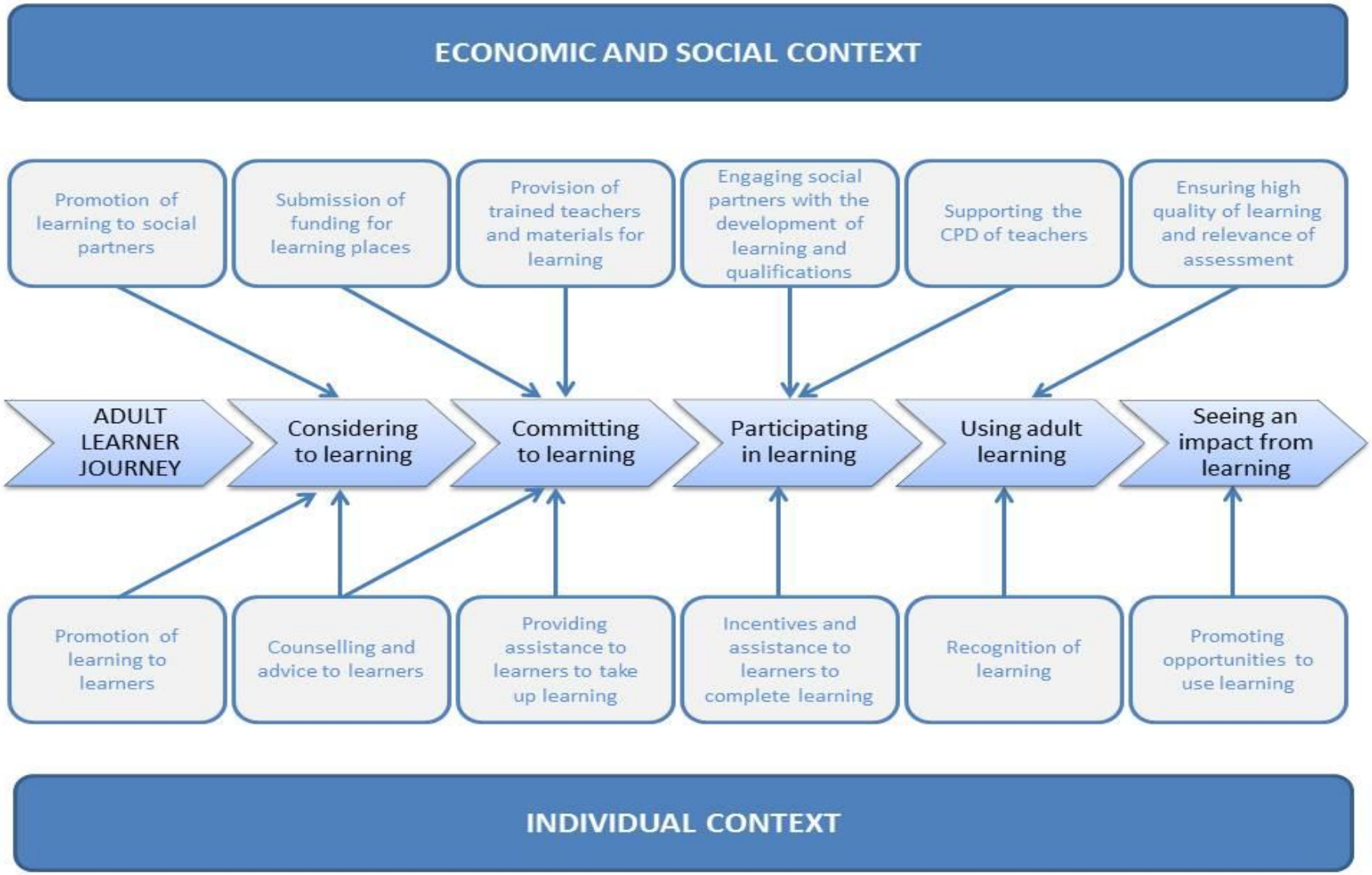


Figure 4.2 Model B: Policy progress model

KEY SUCCESS FACTOR	INITIAL DESIGN & PLANNING	DEVELOPMENT & TESTING	IMPLEMENTATION & REFINEMENT	DELIVERY & REVIEW	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Expand a "learning culture"	Use systems to forecast skills and competence needs	Engaging social partners in developing learning programmes to address those needs	Promote learning programmes to social partners and learners	Promote opportunities to use learning	Increased particiaption in adult learning	Better skilled workforce Increased levels of civic and social particpation
Co-ordinate adult learning policy with other public policies	Understand interaction between adult learning policy with welfare, schools, penal and labour market policies	Share best practice and learning from policy development processes	Establish mechanisms to ensure alignment between policies, e.g. regional learning networks	Co-ordinate labour market, welfare, schools, penal and adult learning policies	Improved skills and competences	Better skilled workforce Increased levels of civic and social participation
Deliver adult learning through a learner-centred approach	Understand needs and motivations of learners Identify staff training needs	Develop flexible learning options Develop/training/CPD programmes for teachers	Provide flexible learning routes to learners Provide training for teachers	Promote flexible learning options to learners Promote CPD to teachers	Increased particaptionin adult learning Higher quality of learning	Improved wellbeing High quality provision of education and training
Deliver high quality and effective adult learning	Build knowledge base concerning what works in adult learning	Establish quality control framework using programme evaluation	Monitor and evaluate adult learning programmes	Use programme evaluation to improve adult learning experience	Higher quality of learning	Better skilled workforce Higher quality provision of education and training
Use incentives to promote participation	Identify costs and funding needs for adult learning policies	Engage social partners in development of co-financing initiatives	Provide subsidies and funding for learning, e.g. co-financing, indiviudal learning accounts	Promote incentives & assistance to learners and employers	Increased participation in adult learning	Increased incorme Improved wellbeing
Oversee effective governance & certification	Engage social partners in design of relevant assessment and qualifications framework	Develop scheme to recognise prior learning	Establish qualifications and assessment processes	Quality assure qualifications and assessment process	Deliver relevant assessment and qualification standards	Better skilled worforce
Promote equality of access	Understand barriers to access to adult learning for harder-to-reach groups	Develop targeted learning programmes and assistance to overcome barriers	Provide counselling to learners in these groups and promote programmes	Review progress through monitoring and evaluation of programmes	Increased participation in adult learning by harder-to-reach groups	Improved levels of equality Improved wellbeing

Figure 4.3 Model C: Outcome strand model

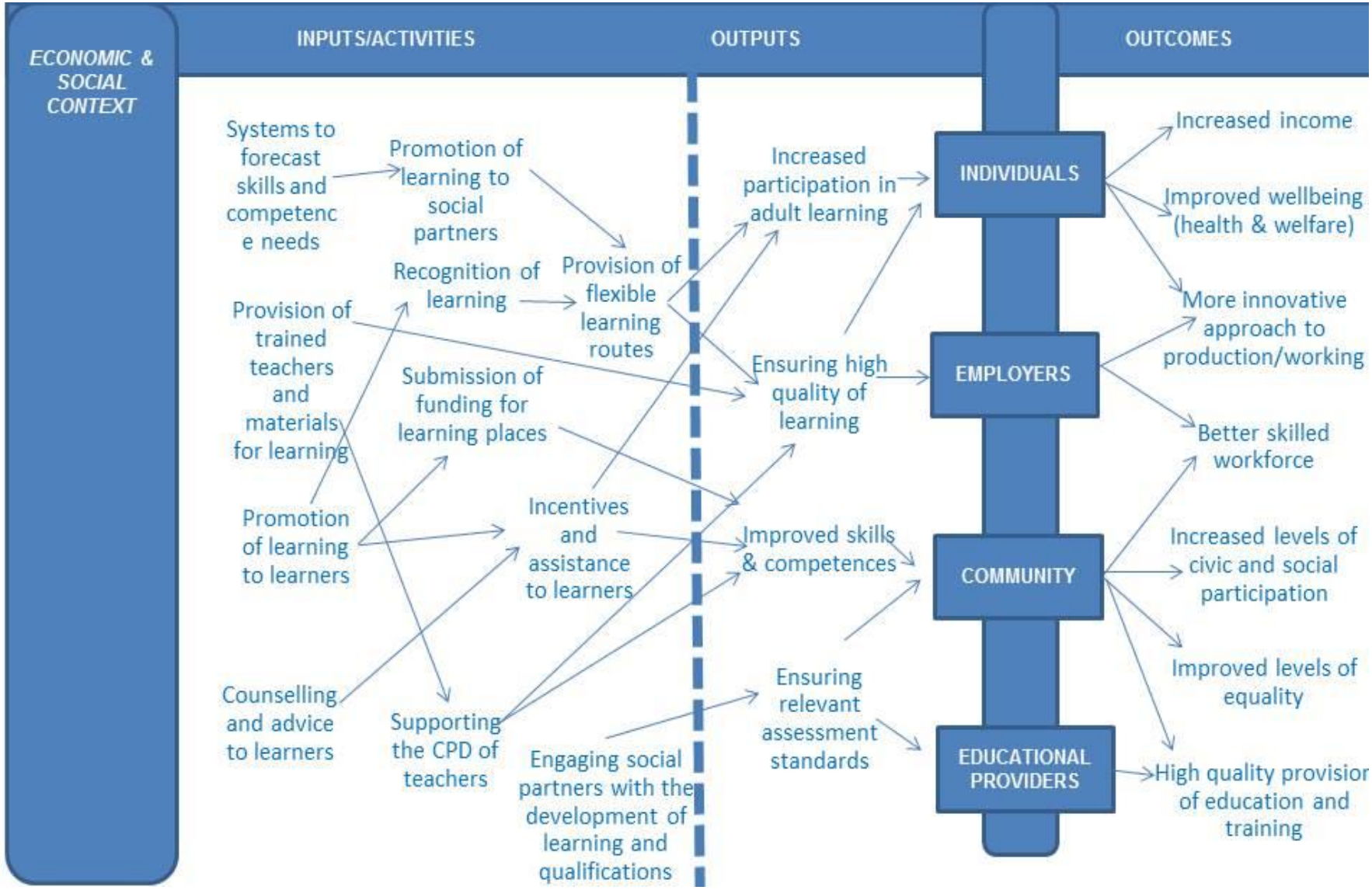
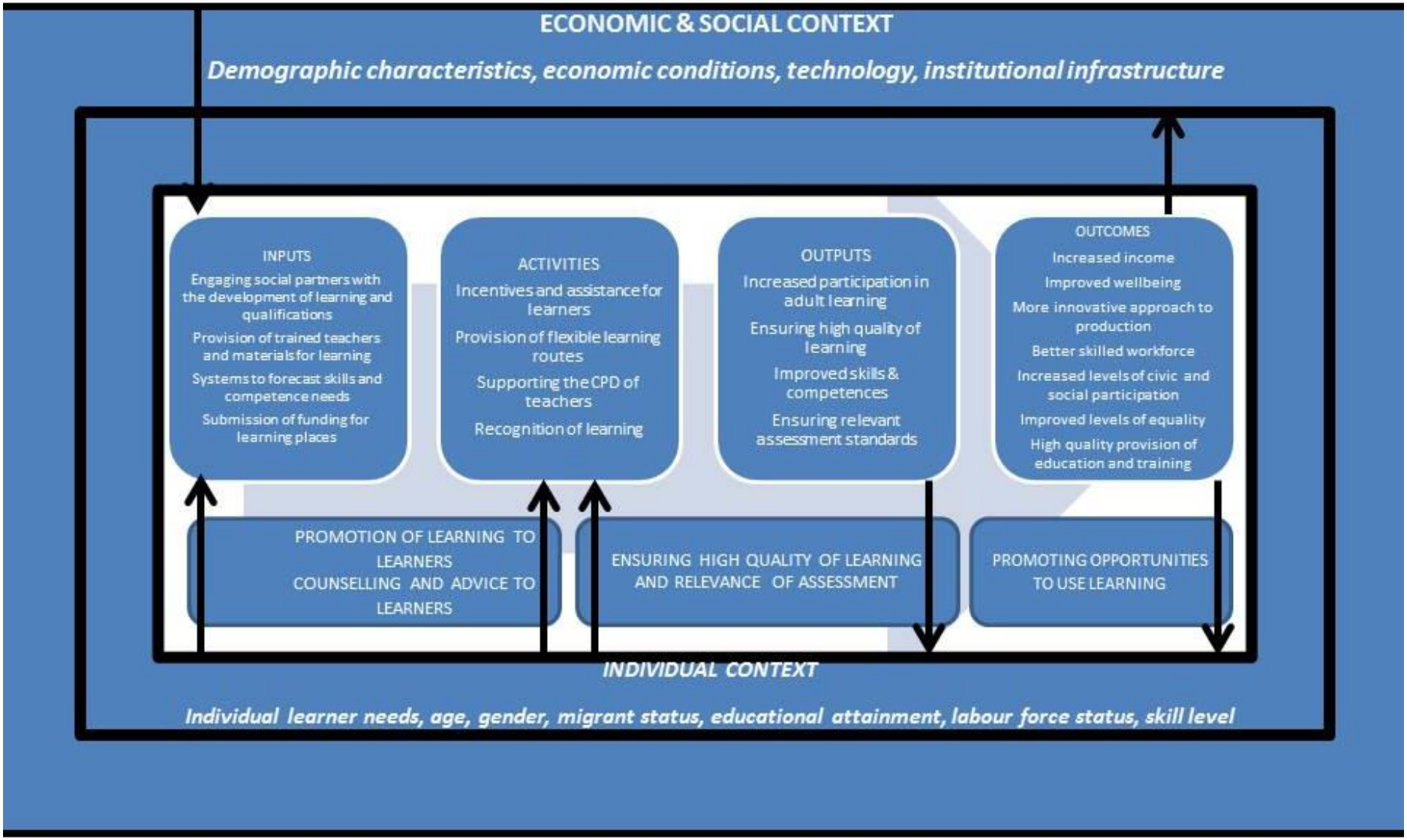


Figure 4.4 Model D: Input-output model



4.2 Criteria for assessing each model

In deciding which model could provide the basis for a conceptual framework, we need to consider the features of each against what the framework is expected to do.

These are the criteria we believe should be applied:

- **The conceptual insightfulness of the framework to policy makers and experts –**
  - The chosen model should depict the activities that lead to effective adult learning
  - It should demonstrate a clear understanding of outputs, outcomes and effectiveness
  - It should be able to show the relationships/linkages between inputs and activities and outputs and outcomes which reflect evidence of successful policy actions which deliver successful learning outcomes for adults
- **Usability**
  - It should be easy to use the chosen model to develop a set of indicators that can measure effectiveness, as well as the achievement of outputs and outcomes and progress towards these
- **Transferability**
  - It should be possible to use the framework to analyse the effectiveness of adult learning policies at different levels of geographical analysis (e.g. Member State, region)
  - It should also be possible to use the framework as the starting point to analyse different levels of detail in the linkages in the framework
- **Practicality and usefulness**
  - The chosen framework should be a useful tool which policy makers can use to improve policy and implementation
  - While the chosen framework may not capture everything, such as all adult learning pathways and all sub-groups of learners, it should provide the superstructure for disaggregating policies, adult learners and types of learning in an analytical tool.
  - It should help with understanding the challenges to be addressed
- **Ease of understanding**
  - It should be easy to understand, in terms of representing the elements of the adult learning system which contribute to effective adult learning
  - It should show the relationships and linkages between policy actions which need to be successful to produce the desired outputs and outcomes of adult learning

4.3 Strengths and limitations of each model

Taking the criteria described in section 4.2 as a starting point, we can see that each of the models has a number of strengths and weaknesses. However, the discussion that follows is only an overview of possible advantages and disadvantages of the types of model.

The “learner journey” (Model A) is attractive because of the clear link it makes between activities and milestones for adult learners towards outputs and outcomes. However, this approach may also be limiting, given the different actors that have a stake in adult learning. Employers and the community can also benefit from adult learning and a framework should take account of the positive outcomes for them from adult learning.

The “policy progress model” (Model B) allows for detailed insight into the development and implementation of successful policy actions. Additionally, given the specific elements that it could include, it lends itself quite easily to the development of a sub-structure of indicators. One shortcoming, however, is that the relationships between the different policy actions are not demonstrated by such a model. The model is linear in nature and does not show inter-relationships between different policy actions.

One of the greatest strengths of the “outcome strand model” (Model C) approach is that it shows the relationships between the range of outcomes (as well as inputs) from effective adult learning for all the relevant beneficiaries. However, while the outcomes-focused nature

of the model is certainly an advantage of the model, it can be difficult to follow the links between policy actions and outcomes – attribution may not always be clear.

The input-output approach (Model D) is the most simple of the four and represents a relatively straightforward logic chain. However, this simplicity means that the framework is incapable of capturing the relationships between different elements of the framework and between specific policy actions, outputs outcomes. For example, it does not adequately capture the breadth of the linkages between inputs, activities and outcomes, as is done in Model B, say.

Questions for consideration

Q7: Which of the models presented in section 4.1 do you believe is the most appropriate one for use in a study to analyse the effectiveness of adult learning? Why?

Q8: On a scale of 1 to ten, where 1 is completely against and 10 is completely in favour, how would you rate each of them as appropriate models?

Q9: Have we omitted any criteria in our assessment of a model for the high level conceptual framework?

Q10: Is there another type of model which we have omitted here which you think might be appropriate to study the effectiveness of adult learning policies, drawing on experience of national frameworks from your own country?

5 Conceptual framework

In this section, we present a proposed conceptual framework drawing on the discussion of framework types in the previous section. We also provide an overview of how the development of a conceptual framework will lead to the development of a set of indicators for the scoreboard.

5.1 The proposed conceptual framework

The model that we are proposing for the conceptual framework for the study is presented in Figure 5.1.

It draws on features of the policy progress model (model B) mentioned in section 4 as well as features of the outcome strand model (model C). Like the other model types in section 4, it presents an explicit theory of change (a logic chain) showing how progress is made from policy actions in the adult learning system towards outputs and outcomes which can assess effectiveness. It presents our current understanding of success features (policy actions) and linkages (relationships) based on our initial analysis of the research evidence. It also demonstrates the linkages that exist between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, based on what we have learned so far.

The framework begins in a similar fashion to the policy progress models. Each of the types of policy action we have identified (in Section 3) is presented as well as each stage in their implementation and then the resultant output. As such, each policy action in the model can then be monitored to determine progress in achieving particular groups of actions, as well as monitoring progress towards the output. Given that there are some outputs which are a result of more than one policy action, the outputs are identified and brought together and linked to the set of outcomes.

Like the outcome strand model, the outcomes presented are categorised according to the various beneficiaries, e.g. learners, employers, the community and educational providers. Each of the identified outcomes cannot be categorised to just one beneficiary and where an outcome is shared over more than one category, the model indicates this.

In designing this framework, we have recognised that to maintain ease of understanding that it cannot capture everything (all policy actions, all linkages between policy actions, all pathways for adult learning, all types of adult learner) and that that there are some advantages and disadvantages with each model.

Considering the principles and objectives we set out for a conceptual framework in section 2:

- The framework we have designed reflects our definition for effectiveness in adult learning, as set out in section 3.2, in terms of the outcomes it identifies and the beneficiaries who benefit from these outcomes;
- The framework itself is comprehensive in nature and captures most of the different policy actions (inputs and activities) which we have identified as being critical to the achievement of the key outcomes and outputs around adult learning. These will be tested from the literature review and the analysis of data on adult learning we are currently undertaking;
- The linkages between policy actions, outputs and outcomes are clear and the logic chain is explicitly presented for each group of policy actions, as well as the relationship between outputs and outcomes. Moreover, by categorising the outcomes according to beneficiary, the framework is able to relate policy actions to the improved competences and outcomes for different stakeholders, besides the learner.

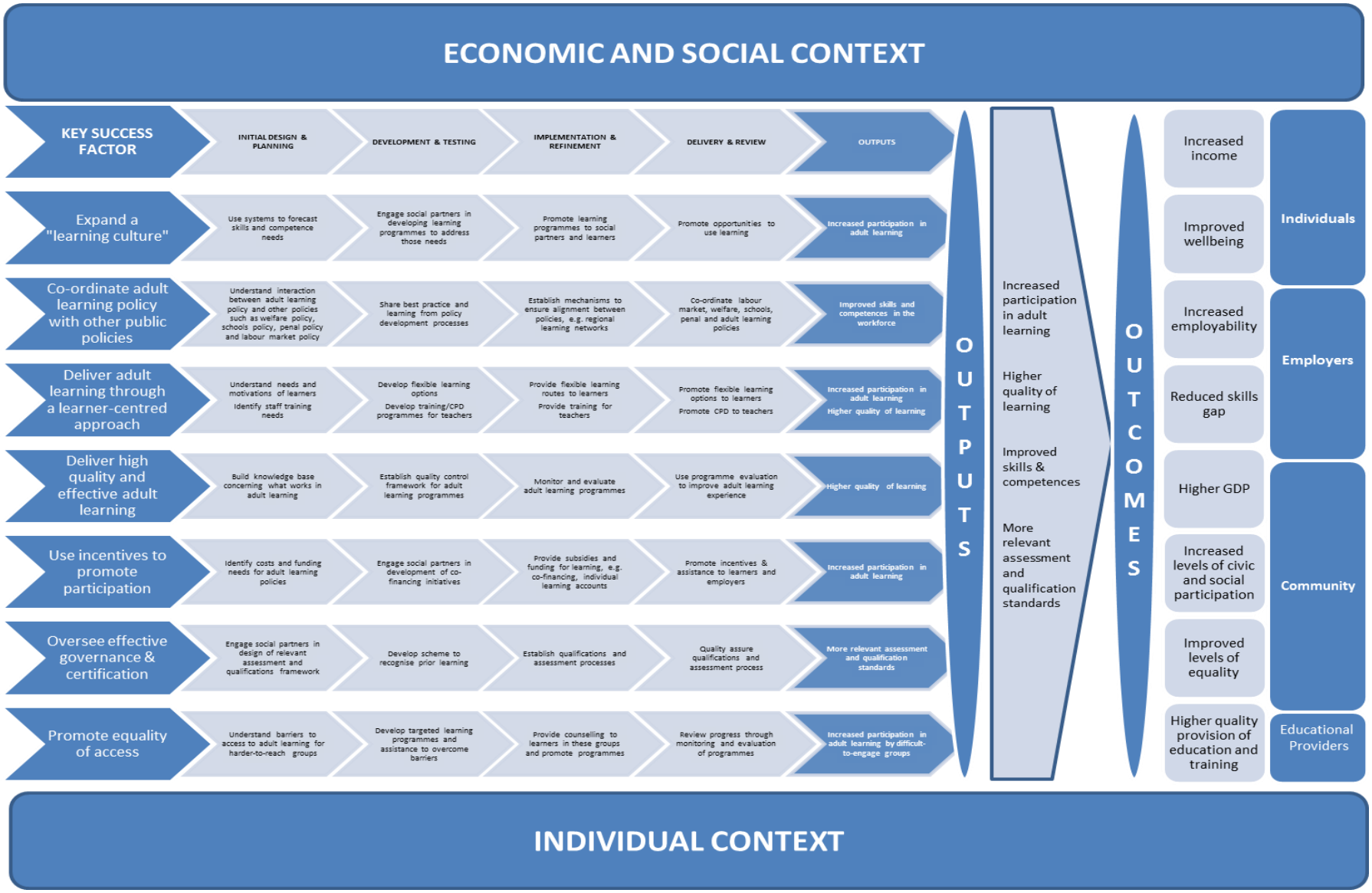
In terms of judging the framework against the criteria for assessment which we set out in section 4, Table 5.1 below sets out our thoughts.

Table 5.1 Performance of proposed model against criteria for assessment

Criterion	Model performance
Conceptual insightfulness	■ The model follows a clear and evidence-based logic chain ■ Comprehensive reflection of inputs and activities that evidence has shown to be critical to the achievement of the key outcomes and outputs around adult learning
Transferability	■ Model can be used for analysis of effectiveness of adult learning at different geographical levels
Usability	■ The staged nature of the progress model is useful for developing a set of indicators to monitor progress
Practicality & usefulness	■ Measures progress in the implementation of each policy lever, as well as achievement of overall outputs and outcomes
Ease of understanding	■ The use of the logic chain and progress path for each success factor is easy to follow ■ Clear illustration of the linkages of policy actions with outputs and outcomes

It will be necessary to revise this model so that we can take account of feedback from respondents as well as incorporating features from other models and additional findings from the literature review and data analysis we are concurrently completing.

Figure 5.1 Proposed conceptual framework



5.2 Converting the framework to a scoreboard

The proposed conceptual framework presented in section 5.1 is two-dimensional in nature. In order to develop the high-level conceptual framework and then develop the analytical tool and "scoreboard" that is required, we need to create a further dimension to this framework that will then inform the choice of indicators that we will use.

The steps that must be taken to do this are to:

- Verify the extent that the success factors in the model reflect the relationship between policy actions taken and outputs and outcomes. We are continuing to do this through the literature review, a data analysis which will look for relationships between policy actions and outputs and outcomes, and case studies in 10 countries;
- Develop the underlying understanding of how each of the elements that comprise the framework impact on each other and relate to different groups of learners and learning pathways in order to create a further dimension to the framework;
- Use this understanding to inform the choices about a set of indicators that could be used to measure progress towards the achievement of effectiveness in adult learning.

In choosing the indicators for use in the scoreboard, there are a number of different types of criteria that indicators would need to meet to ensure that they were related to the high-level conceptual framework. These criteria would be developed as part of the process outlined above.

The types of indicators we would choose would be drawn from the following groups:

- **Progress and output indicators**: These indicators would be used to measure progress towards the outcomes and outputs of the adult learning system. These would be linked to the policy actions in the framework and could include the:
  - Extent that adults' "needs" for learning are satisfied or not (including needs that are not expressed) and the extent that barriers to learning exist;
  - Degree of differentiation in take up by different groups of adults by purpose of learning;
  - Extent that learning (content and method) taken up is tailored to adults' needs;
  - Degree of completion (when relevant)
  - Degree to which competences (such as knowledge, skills, values) are improved by learning undertaken (in relation to amount and method);
  - Extent that new competences are recognised and used in different contexts (employment, social life, volunteering);
  - Extent that competences used have a social and economic benefit.
- **Outcome indicators**: In order to examine the effectiveness of adult learning policies and the policy actions that are included in the framework, we would need to identify indicators that would measure outcomes for an effective and efficient adult learning systems. Such indicators would include:
  - The supply of learning matches the needs for learning across the adult population (including needs that are not expressed);
  - Adults take up learning in response to their needs (both employment and non-employment related) such that there is no differentiation in take up between people with similar needs;
  - The learning (content and method) is tailored to needs and uses appropriate effective pedagogies;
  - Learners complete training and achieve the expected learning outcomes;
  - Achievements are recognised (for example, by employers);

  - Learning outcomes are used in employment, social life, volunteering etc;
  - Learning outcomes have the intended benefits for the learners as well as employers, and society and these provide positive social returns on investment.

- **Other indicators:** Indicators would also need to take account of other features that describe the breadth of the adult learning system. These indicators would include the following:
  - Sub-groups – indicators need to take account of the difference in outcomes, if any, between different sub-groups, e.g. migrants, older adults, those with low skills;
  - The different pathways that adult learners can follow in accessing adult learning, e.g. the place in which the adult learning is delivered or whether or not the learning is delivered by their employer; and
  - The nature of different outcomes for different beneficiary groups – e.g. measuring the different outcomes for employers from adult learning as opposed to the outcomes for individual learners

Questions for consideration

Q11: What are your thoughts on the proposed model? How well does it meet the objectives set in section 2.2? How would you improve it?

Q12: Are there elements/features from the other models (A, B, C and D) which we should incorporate into this proposed model?

Q13: How do you think this model ranks on the following dimensions (scale of 1-10 where 1=not well and 10=very well):

- conceptual insightfulness
- usability
- transferability
- practicality and usefulness
- ease of understanding

Q14: How similar is it to other frameworks you have come across? Do you think it could be used in your country to monitor the effectiveness of adult learning policies?