

§5 Post-validation pathways

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The value of VPL results on the job market and to education providers determines the success of a VPL system. VPL results must facilitate an individual's mobility, opening up previously closed off pathways.

5.1 VPL should facilitate an individual's mobility horizontally, vertically and diagonally within and between sectors and countries.

Why is it important?

Improved empowerment and deployment of individual talent is the most important motivation underlying VPL. It increases the opportunities for the individual in one's private life and on the labour market by highlighting the competences he or she already has. It also provides orientation on how these competences can be deployed and strengthened within the present context of the individual, or for accessing another labour market sector, other function-level or qualification structure, and moreover also for moving in geographical terms to another region or country. This can apply both to those VPL-candidates already in employment as well as to job seekers. The emphasis of VPL from the viewpoint of employers, trade unions, as well as education and training lies on improving the employability of individuals within their social context.

Where is it working well?

Examples of enhanced individual mobility by means of VPL-processes can be found across the globe in many countries such as Chile, United States, India, Switzerland and the Netherlands. All these countries cover a wide variety of experiences with facilitating people's mobility either for employability (intersectoral mobility of employees), social inclusion (newcomers in a new region or country) or creating career-perspectives (qualification upgrade).

5.2 VPL results should be transparent and meaningful to employers and providers of education and training.

Why is it important?

To have the greatest impact, validation results must be transparent and meaningful to employers and providers of education and training. This understanding and appreciation facilitates opportunities for the individual.

Where is it working well?

In Hong Kong and South Africa VPL options are co-managed by employers and trade unions within the national qualification systems.

5.3 *Validation certificates need to be the same as formal learning certificates so that they hold the same value on the job market and ensure that they form solid building blocks of a further learning career.*

Why is it important?

If validation certificates hold the same value as formal learning certificates, they are more readily usable on the job market or in further education. Equivalence of the results of non-formal and informal learning with formal qualification standards and normative human resources frameworks in learning and working can be established if all standards are expressed in terms of competences and learning outcomes.

Where is it working well?

In South Africa, VPL is in general offered by schools and universities and focuses on linking prior learning outcomes with unit standards that hold equivalence within the national qualification framework. In Malaysia and the Republic of Korea the national qualification framework is also accessible by means of the outcome of a VPL-process. The Academic Credit Bank System in the Republic of Korea is an example of this. This 'Bank' allows citizens to get accreditation of all their learning outcomes be it from formal, non-formal and informal learning experience. In other countries like India and Mexico, learning outcomes that are captured in certificates and qualifications may relate to skills and occupational standards in specific economic sectors. This is not to say that they do not have systems of VPL in the general education and training system, but in these countries emphasis is laid on the validation of competences within labour settings, given the large labour force and informal sectors in their economies.

5.4 *Further learning options need to be offered based on the results of the VPL process. They need to be adaptive to the individual's learning preferences.*

Why is it important?

For strengthening personalised learning, the full spectrum of available learning environments and forms of learning need to be formulated and utilised more effectively. This could include (combinations of) on the job training, mentoring/tutoring, independent learning, distance learning, and so on. Thus, not only the content but also the form in which learning will take place is important. This includes (1) blended learning for the form and (2) flexible, individualised learning programmes for the content. Form and content should be based on learning outcomes.

Where is it working well?

Countries in which tailored and personalised learning options are offered as a post-validation pathway are the Netherlands and the United States of America. In these countries, linking a learner's (retrospective) value to a (prospective) personalised learning strategy fits in well with the demand for competences and skills in society. Such learning strategies may take many forms but are always flexible and tailored. The concept of VPL identifies the potential value of a person's learning experiences and empowers the learner, whereas the concept of personalised learning presupposes that a learner's contribution to the dialogue with the other main actors (teacher, employer) on the meaning, form and content of learning is based on this potential value. Therewith, VPL can be regarded as a precondition for truly activating personalised learning processes in which the learner has a 'voice' of her own. As a result, added value of integrating both concepts arises when linking the learner's autonomy with the roles of the other actors in learning processes.

5.5 *Alongside the responsibility of the education system and the employers, the individual learner is also responsible for the creation of a functional learning and working path.*

Why is it important?

VPL can be regarded as an effective instrument for linking competences and learning outcomes that appeal to individual learners and the other stakeholders in learning and working contexts. VPL covers the roles and responsibilities of these stakeholders in achieving their goals in the modern learning society, where the learning needs of the individual, the facilities from the learning system and the demand for competent people from the prevailing socio-economic system are negotiated. After all, learning – therewith VPL as well - is supposed to be established in general in an open dialogue between representatives of the three main stakeholders in VPL-processes: teachers, employers and learners. Such an open dialogue entails above all that the individual learner acknowledges the personal responsibility to self-manage and document his/her learning history and be able to reflect on these personal learning experiences for the sake of reaching out to a truly personalised VPL-process and the further learning options based on the outcomes of VPL. When learners begin to own their learning, they gain a prized possession that they can protect, build and maintain for a lifetime. In other words, they create their 'learning independence' (Rickabaugh, 2012).

Where is it working well?

In France, the legal basis for VPL gives individuals the right to have their formally, informally and non-formally acquired experiences assessed. Such a right also exists in Canada, Iceland and Norway, where individuals can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed. In the Netherlands, jobseekers can gain access to VPL once their application has been approved by the national job agency. In all these cases, individuals

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need to take ownership of their prior learning experiences for utilising the right also entails receiving guidance on compiling a portfolio of evidence for the assessment, as well as counselling on the outcomes of the assessment.

Rickabaugh, J.R. (2012). *Learning Independence Continuum*. Pewaukee, CESA. https://mainecla.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/8710_Learning-Independence-Continuum_2012_08_02.pdf