

§3 Procedures and instruments

*Bodil Husted NVR, VIA University College &
Antra Carlsen, NVL, Nordic Network for Adult Learning*

Procedures include structured pathways for validation of learning outcomes, training for assessors and guides, as well as mechanisms for quality assurance of validation processes. Instruments are tools that make learning outcomes visible or help to assess them.

3.1 Quality assurance mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that assessment tools and instruments are valid, reliable, fair and economic.

Why is it important?

To ensure individuals benefit and best use is made of validation results, stakeholders' confidence in the validity and the legitimacy of results is of crucial importance to secure a consistent, accessible VPL arrangement, which is widely recognised across sectors.

Where is it working well?

In Denmark, the national regulation for validation of prior learning (the concept is RKV) has been in place since June 2007. In Denmark, RKV is regarded a key instrument to promote lifelong learning. Within this framework, it is a legal right for individuals to request an assessment of their prior learning in relation to the standards of a given education and training programme no matter where and how competences have been acquired.

The branch committees define assessment criteria. This is in order to secure confidence and trust in the assessment results. The education providers are obliged to ensure quality assurance, which implies that tools and instruments are recognised as valid, reliable and fair across sectors. VPL is free of charge for applicants with an educational background up to - and including level 4 in the NQF. <http://eng.uvm.dk/>

The project, Branchvalidering – Operational and strategic cooperation (BOSS) has been granted funding from ESF for assuring quality of the branches' national validation-models. The project aim is to increase legitimacy and transferability of validation results.

For reading more: <https://www.myh.se/Verksamhetsomraden/Validering1/ESF-projektet-BOSS/>

3.2 *Trusted and known instruments should enable individualised pathways and accommodate the diversity of candidates and learning pathways.*

Why is it important?

To ensure the post-validation pathways for the individual, either in work or further learning, stakeholders' confidence in the VPL results are of crucial importance. This counts for the acknowledgement of VPL results as well as for the importance of stakeholders' advocacy for VPL. Alongside this, it is important that instruments are flexible enough to allow customization by the individual, regardless of their working or education background.

Where is it working well?

Nordic countries are cooperating in order to improve systematic quality work during the whole validation process. The countries follow up on and implement the results from a research project about a Nordic quality model for validation. The model helps to identify and set focus on strategically import elements and phases in the validation process.

<https://nvl.org/Content/Quality-in-Validation-of-Prior-Learning>

3.3 *There needs to be a link between formative, summative and reflective approaches.*

Why is it important?

To increase an individual's recognition and empowerment through VPL, a triangulation of methods and tools should be used to accommodate a summative perspective, controlling assessment of competences as well as a more reflective development oriented perspective. The strength of the formative approach lies in making learning outcomes visible and empowering candidates both in terms of self-esteem, orientation and learning self-efficacy, as well as in terms of being motivated to continue the validation journey to more summative approaches. These, in turn, are focused on measuring learning outcomes against given standards and are needed for giving value to the learning outcomes in education and on the labour market. To make the system efficient and motivating requires a linkage between these two.

Where is it working well?

In Iceland, systematic guidance from the beginning of VPL and follow up after VPL provides the link between summative, formative and reflective approaches.

<http://frae.is/um-fa/about-us/>

3.4 *Individuals need to have access to self-led, user-friendly tools, which allow them to map their prior learning.*

Why is it important?

Mapping prior learning makes visible the competences of the individual. To draw an exact and exhaustive picture of the competences, the individual clearly profits from supportive instruments and methods, which allow for a self-led exploration of the prior learning. Making available a variety of methods for the mapping of prior learning, increases the potential of practising mapping as a development process for the individual.

Where is it working well?

In Denmark a web-tool for self-evaluation of key competences has been developed in the third sector. There are three versions for use in non-formal adult education, voluntary activities and associations (e.g. sports). The tool helps to identify and describe an individual's key competences gained in third sector.

<http://www.folkeoplysningskompetencer.dk/>

'My Competence Portfolio' is the Danish Ministry of Education's tool for clarification, giving an overview and documentation of education and prior learning.

<https://www.minkompetencemappe.dk/>

[My-professional-experience.org](http://my-professional-experience.org) is a free and multilingual online tool for a fast (5 min.) picture-based self-assessment of vocational skills in 30 German VET professions.

3.5 *Validation procedures need to refer to agreed standards expressed in terms of learning outcomes*

Why is it important?

To contribute to increased flexibility, efficiency and mobility within the sectors of education and working life, validation results must be available as learning outcomes in terms of the agreed standards: knowledge, skills and competences to match the similar terms of learning outcomes in the National and the European Qualification Frameworks for lifelong learning (NQF and EQF).

Where is it working well?

In Norway, Virke, a branch organisation on the employers' side for trade and service, has led a development project for creating methods linked into a model that allows one to describe the competences acquired in working life clearly linked to the functions at workplace - and which can lead to qualifications. The first three steps in this method can be used at individual's level, the fourth step – professional standards, only at the branch

level. The Project has been rolled out in IKEA, MENY and KIWI (food store chains) in cooperation with trade unions. The project is financed by the Ministry of Education and is a lead in the national competence strategy in Norway. The model seeks to promote mobility and cooperation between education and working life. The model includes guidance.

https://www.virke.no/globalassets/var-politikk/andre-dokumenter/18-9923-179146-a-balancing-act-summary-pages-1008227_1_1.pdf

3.6 *Learning outcomes should indicate the competence level and type of learning*

Why is it important?

In order to ensure that individuals are able to use VPL results for further education, training and in their working life, a clear indication of learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competences allows for a valid comparison with the relevant qualification framework level. This correspondence supports the access to further education and training.

Where is it working well?

In Sweden, the authority for Yrkeshögskolan (VET) in cooperation with various branch organisations is currently carrying out a project aimed at establishing a standard for different validation-models to business certification linked to EQF (SeQF).

3.7 *Validation pathways need to be modular, transparent, and comprehensible at all stages of the process in order to allow for flexible work and education careers.*

Why is it important?

To ensure the individual's inclusion in the entire validation process and hence also to increase the potential of the individual's empowerment as well as employability based on the VPL results, transparency in the process is of major importance.

The relationship between the prior learning and the formal qualification must be clear and unambiguous. The principle of modular validation pathways ensures flexibility as the recognised results of prior learning provides a direct access to education, training and working life.

Where is it working well?

In 2018, Studieförbunden concluded a three-year project on validation of generic competences for the labour market. During the three-year project about 2 500 people

have had their skills and competences validated. The target group is youth 16-24 year old, young asylum seekers is a special priority. The project gives possibility to validate competences in 60 different learning modules. Generic competences or soft skills – competences that persons develop throughout different life and work situations and are not directly subject related, e.g., managing information, problem solving and cooperation.

<https://studieforbunden.se/validering-inom-studieforbunden/>

3.8 Certification should either grant credits, which allow for exemptions to shorten study time, lead to a full or partial qualification, or open up new routes to education and work.

Why is it important?

VPL provides for the individual learner a broad variety of potentials for post-validation activities. In some instances, the individual's acknowledgement of prior learning competences obviously lead to empowerment and might open up for learning and self-development. In other situations certification leads directly to upskilling.

Where is it working well?

See p.13-17. in the report <https://nvl.org/Content/Liberal-adult-education-certificate-as-a-tool-for-validation>

Non-formal adult education in Finland is looking at the ways of improving the documentation of learning outcomes in order to support the individual's further learning path.

News item: <https://nvl.org/Content/Fria-bildningen-i-Finland-valideras>

In Denmark, VPL (RKV) is provided with the opportunities for individuals:

- to be granted access to formal education and training programmes if they do not meet the formal entry requirements
- to get exemptions for parts of a formal education and training programme and/or
- to have an individual tailored education and training programme
- to acquire a 'certificate of competence' leading to access/ exemptions in adult education & training programmes, including CVET
- to obtain 'education certificates' for parts of/or a whole education programme on the basis of validation of prior learning.

<https://www.ug.dk/efteruddannelse/realkompetencer/brug-dine-kompetencer/faa-vurderet-dine-kompetencer>

3.9 *Specialist training and certification of practitioners is needed to ensure open-mindedness, competence and a non-discriminatory approach.*

Why is it important?

In many respects, VPL is a complex process for the individual. Guidance is a key instrument to ensure the individual's outcome and benefit of results, regardless the target group. Hence, VPL professionals must possess a wide set of competences for each of the VPL stages. A professional VPL competence profile should be regarded in terms of both mindset, approach and competences.

Where is it working well?

NVL Validation network has mapped the competences and competence development needed for those working with validation. The work has been carried out 2014-2015. All five Nordic countries are represented.

<https://nvl.org/Content/Nordic-competence-profiles-for-validation-staff>

3.10 *VPL should make use of the potential of digital, multilingual and innovative tools to deliver the best experience for the learner.*

Why is it important?

To reach the potential of each individual learner, a variety of validation tools must be available in order to reflect diversity among target groups. Hence, the key VPL principle of accessibility must be approached from various perspectives, for instance accessibility in terms of geography and long distance to VPL providers or accessibility to compensate for language barriers as well as reading and writing difficulties.

Where is it working well?

In a project, managed by Validering Väst, Sweden, models for validation in different industries have been developed. After finalization, a national model targeted migrants has established in terms of the so-called "fast track" (snabbspår). The validation model is established within a cooperation between Employment Agency and social partners. This industry's validation model was launched in 2015 and contained a lot of new thinking, for example validation in the cook's profession. The entire assessment is made by a certified professional assessor in a real environment through observation of candidates, who act for 10 days in a real-time meal business with real customers. The professional assessor takes into consideration opinions from the others working in the kitchen. As the assessment is done through real-life observations, the ability of the validated individual to work and take responsibility as a cook is demonstrated in a good way. Today many assessors are spread around the country. Many of them are able to carry out the VPL

process in other languages, which also allows newcomers to showcase their real skills without being able to speak Swedish properly.

Validering Väst; <http://www.valideringvast.se/>

Since November 2017, the German Federal Employment Agency offers MYSKILLS tests, a large-scale (maximum 100.000 candidates per year) ICT-based assessment of competences gained at work in 30 VET-professions. Tests include ca. 120 video and picture-based items per profession. Each test takes about 3-4 hours and is available for use in six languages within placement processes of job centres and employment agencies nationwide.

MYSKILLS: <https://www.myskills.de/en/>

3.11 VPL should be accessible without any pre-requisite level of formal qualification.

Why is it important?

VPL should be open to anyone, regardless of one's formal education level.

Where is it working well?

The Scandinavian EU Interreg project, Yggdrasil, supported by the OKS programme, 2015-2018 has developed a procedure for the systematic mapping of competences. The project targets different groups of citizens, who are, for various reasons, on the fringes of the labour market, either because of long-term unemployment or because of employment in jobs approaching extinction. The development work was carried out in cooperation with the sectors of education, employment service and labour market.

The target group was mixed in terms of basic qualification level, as some of them already had basic qualifications – others had left school without this qualification level. Several of the citizens were migrants with reading and writing difficulties as well.

The procedure for systematic mapping of competences is a three-phase procedure comprising: (1) mapping of work tasks with learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. (2) Transformation and translation to competences to be used in (3) other jobs and job tasks or education. The competences are documented in terms of a competence certificate.

The whole procedure with methods and instruments is described in a handbook for the professional staffs who support the individual's process. Project partners: Region, Central Denmark, VIA UC, Denmark, Validering Väst, Kunskapsförbundet Väst, Sweden and Larvik Kommune, Norway.

3RD VPL BIENNALE

Berlin, 7th and 8th of May 2019

<https://www.yggdrasil-oks.eu/siteassets/kompetenceattest/handbog-kompetencekortlagning-printbar.pdf>

<https://www.yggdrasil-oks.eu/kompetenceattest/>