

Individual perspective and access to VPL

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Research

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the experience of the individual and to answer the following research question:

What benefits does validation of prior learning (VPL) bring to the individual in life, work and study?

Qualitative research

- Interviews
- Semi-structured

Participants - interviewees

- 25 years and older (8 women – 11 men)
- Minimum five years work experience in the labour market
- Validation of prior learning in vocational education during the years 2007-2013
- The capital Region and North of Iceland (Akureyri and Dalvík).
- Completed studies after validation of prior learning in Life Learning Centres or secondary school

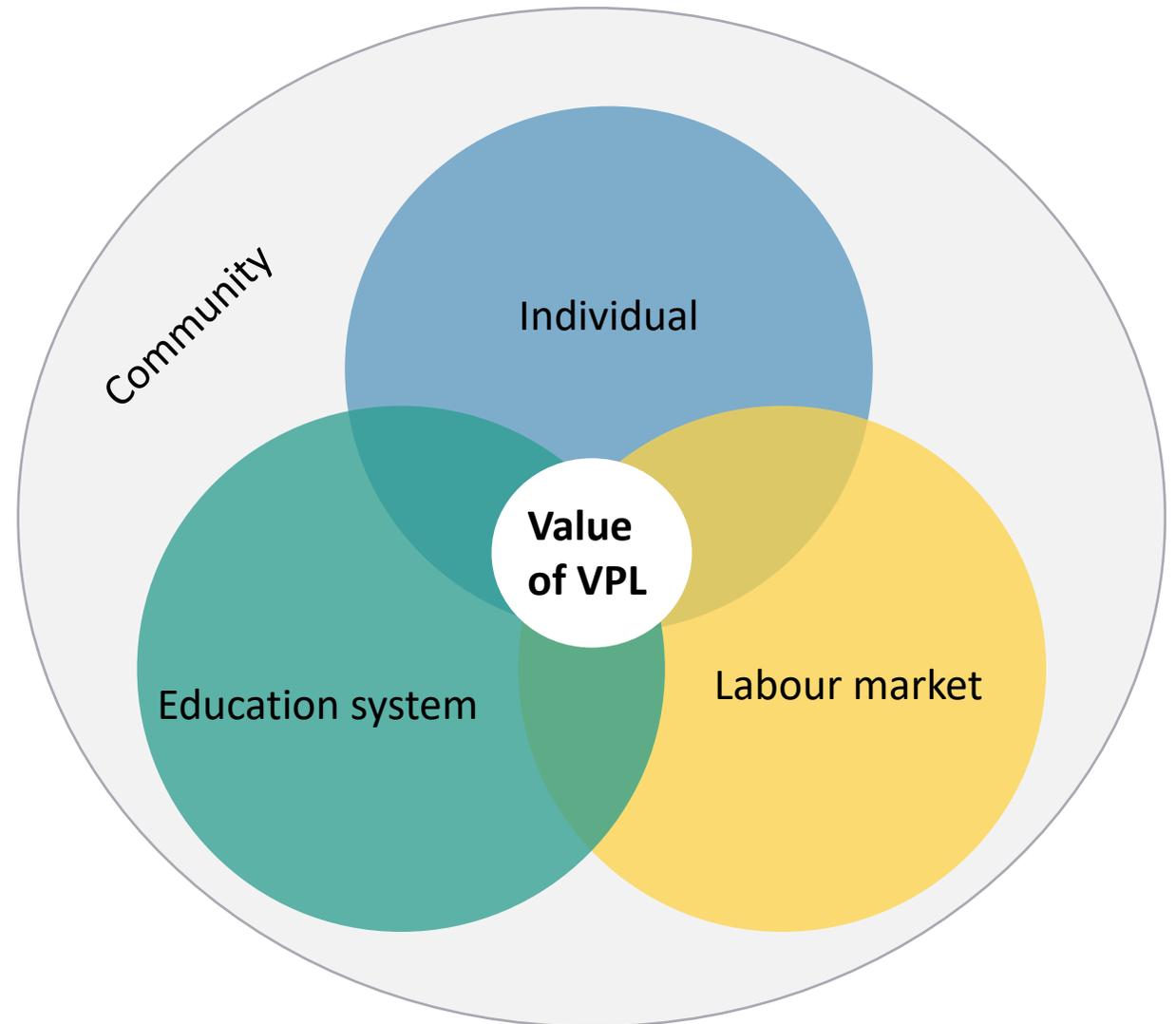
Theory

There are many theories about learning, and the most common definition is that learning has a beginning and an end and takes place within educational institutions.

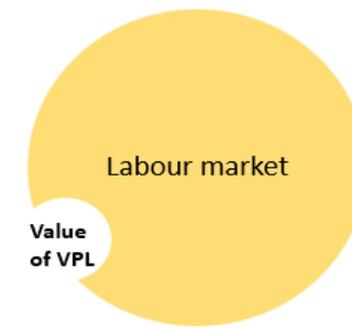
- Situated learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991).
- Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).
- Three dimensions of learning (Illeris, 2009).
- Biographical learning (Alheit, 2009).
- Bourdieu's Field of Theory

The influence and importance of VPL

- I) The interaction between the labour market and VPL
- II) The interaction between the education system and VPL
- III) The interaction between the individual and VPL



The interaction between the labour market and VPL



Quotes

Studying at work

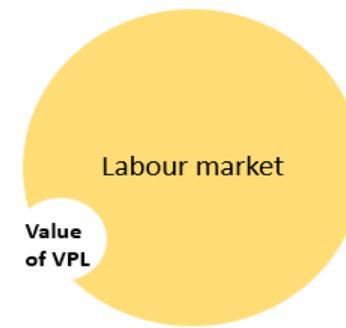
You never get fully taught because you always learn from some individuals who are working next to you.

I ask if I want to know something, no one was born knowing everything. I'm the kind of person that asks once how to do something, then I know how to do it.

Validation

I was pleased to receive 59 units out of 90 rated. I managed to shorten my studies and now I could see the Journeyman examination in Carpentry around the corner, nothing could stop me. Being able to lessen ones school attendance is incredibly important when you've got a job, family and a home.

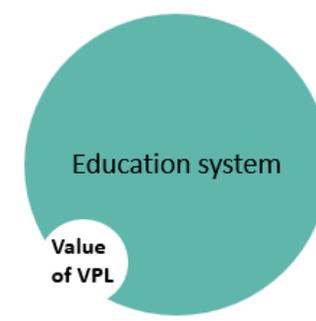
The interaction between the labour market and VPL



Conclusions

- According to the study the participants learned many of their skills in the workplace and from co-workers and not in the school system, as has been well established by VPL generally.
- The interviewees talk about how their skills increased as they learned from their co-workers who had more job experience and knowledge in the field. They were grateful that they had the opportunity to challenge themselves.
- Their job security was often fragile, because there were times when educated individuals were hired instead of them. Then the work experience didn't have the same value as having a formal education. They gained secondary school credits after they went through VPL process.
- The VPL led the interviewees to make the decision to re-enter the school system after they had their work experience validated. With the VPL appeared a recognized capital which had not been documented/confirmed. Important experience of the interviewees in the labour market had been validated against the curriculum in secondary school and gave them access to education system again.

The interaction between the Education system and VPL



Quotes

Previous schooling in younger years

When Guðmundur had finished one semester in secondary school at the age of 18, his mother died, and he left school and went to work:

I had started my own family, there was no dear mum anymore, it was just life itself that took over.

When Haukur was 14, he dropped out of primary school and went to work. He didn't feel comfortable in school, he experienced that the teacher bullied him.

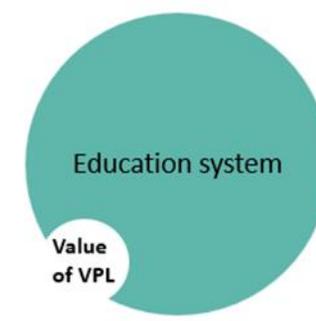
Schooling in adulthood

It was a lot of work, but it was amazing, I decided it was my time now. Someone else would have to take care of my kids (laughs).

While Helgi was studying he also had a full-time job. The school and the workplace gave him flexibility to do both: *Being the older person in school I was allowed some leeway. I went to school during the day and worked at night. It was one of the most fun winters of my life.*

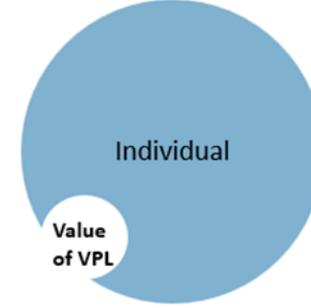
Few of the interviewees said that now they are older, more experienced and have more time to study, but the pressure was often very high and required planning, but it didn't occur to them to quit.

I would never have been happy if I had quit. I would never have forgiven myself for that. It was good for my self-confidence.



- The barriers to the interviewees' schooling did not mean that they could not learn, it was more the circumstances of their lives and often the opportunities were not available to them. Several reasons prevented them from completing their studies in their younger years, For example family circumstances, dyslexia, bullying, depression, etc.
- It can be concluded from the interviewees' stories that many of the them experienced the school system discouraging in their younger years but inspiring in adulthood because they could connect it with their own work experience.

The interaction between the individual and VPL



Quotes

Sveinn finds a big difference between being an educated or uneducated manager on the labour market, after he finished his studies, his confidence grew, and he experienced more respect from the environment and employees.

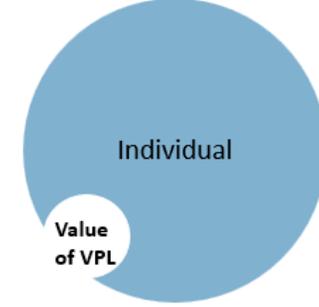
Being an unskilled manager in a job like this, there were always prejudices (moans).

What Bryndís learned in her studies was: *I was more self-critical of my mistakes before I studied.* The study made her feel safer, more open and less afraid to make mistakes.

Most interviewees continued in the same job after graduation, describing that now they had the voice of an educated person and felt that they had more value in the labour market than being uneducated. One interviewee put it well: *I have the same job, but there is more recognition of my value and better salary.*

The day I graduated from plumbing, I felt really good because at last I had finished something in my life.

The interaction between the individual and VPL



Conclusions

- The conclusions indicate that most of the participants had wondered about going to school again but did not find the motivation to do so.
- The interaction, flexibility and support of employees of the Lifelong Learning Centers involved in VPL had the impact on interviewees that they gained confidence in their own abilities and inspired them to seek validation of what they had learned in the labour market.
- The results demonstrate the importance of VPL for the individual in life, work and study. Interviewees took new steps that led to changes in their life.
- The interviewees started to see themselves as role models for their kids, for example, and felt more confident in helping them with their studies.
- Based on the results, it can be concluded that validation of prior learning results in societal benefits as the number of educated people in the labour market increases and the national education level increases as well as being a great benefit for the individual.

I can conclude from my study that VPL IS A GREAT VALUE FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

I) The interaction between the individual and VPL

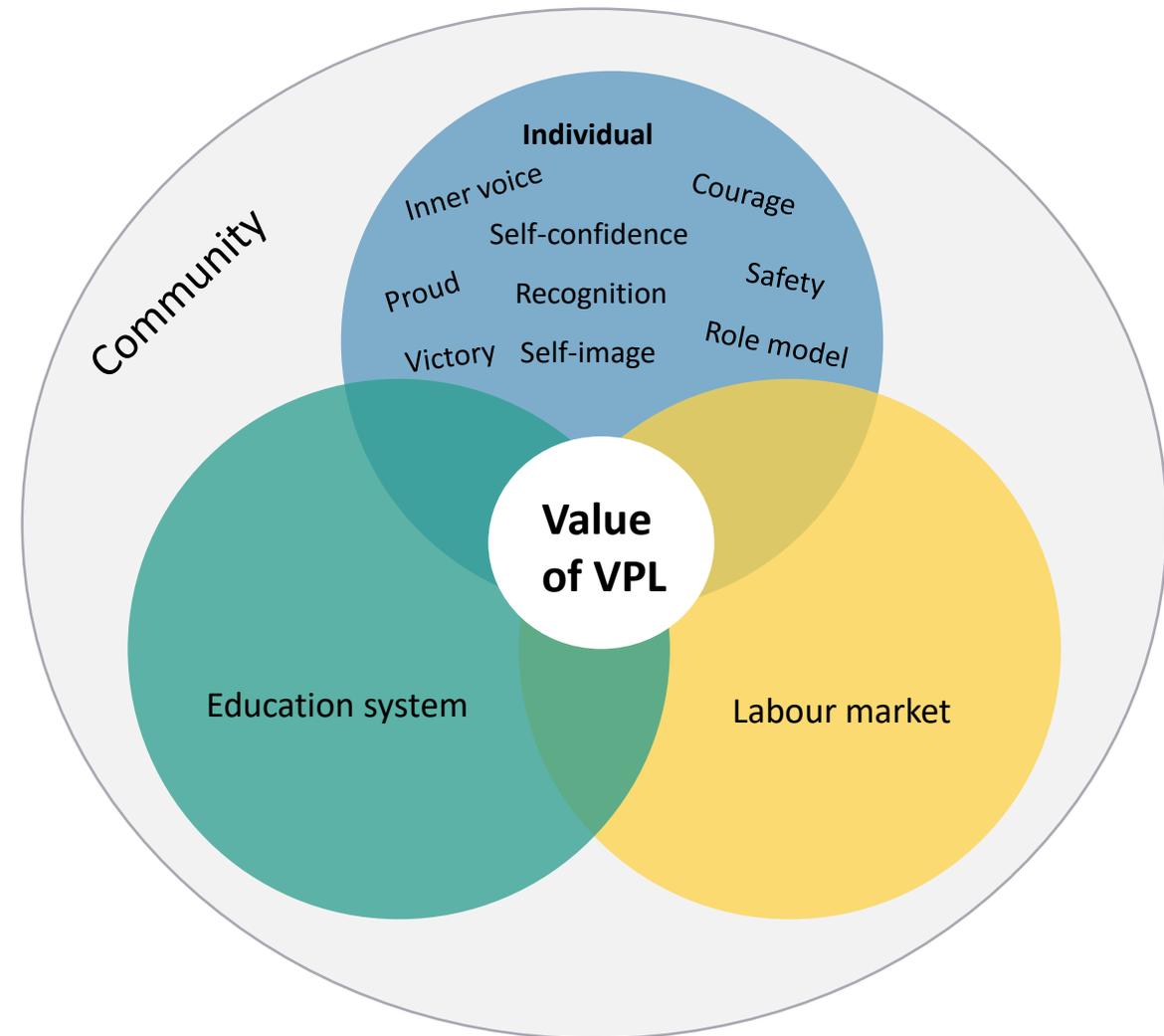
Interviewees self-confidence grew, it made them feel safer, and the job title gave them a certain value in the labour market. It is clear that studying and the work experience had an impact on their self-identity and confidence. Interviewees in the study have in common that they do not see themselves as a drop-outs when they talk about their previous schooling.

II) The interaction between the education system and VPL

The conclusions are that the interaction of VPL with the education system supports the interviewees to go back into the school system regardless of whether they had completed formal education or not. When they step into the school system again they also positively impact the other and younger students and the school environment as a whole.

III) The interaction between the labour market and VPL

It can be concluded that the labour market profits from the VPL because the interviewees graduated in vocational education and most of them stayed in the same job before they started the VPL journey.



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