



Validation of employability
skills
“I never thought I had so
much”

- Steinunn Björk Jónatansdóttir
- Career counsellor at MSS
Lifelong learning center

The study

- This study was 30 ECTS credits for a master's degree in Career counselling at the University of Iceland.
- Qualitative research method
- The research questions are:
 - Is validation in employability skills study or job incentive?
 - Does the validation affect the professional development of individuals?
 - Does the validation affect the identity of those who go to the validation?
 - Does the validation affects the belief in one's abilities?
 - Does validation in employability skills have a powerful effect on the individual?
- How do participants experience the role of the Career counsellor in the assessment process?

Employability skills.

- Employability skills are transversal and can be transferred between jobs.
- Validation of employability skills makes it more concrete and visible, makes it easier for participants to realize their own skills, how to develop in their work and take on more demanding jobs and tasks.
- The goal of the validation is to develop learning outcomes where the individual matches his or her personal skills with learning outcomes on the labor market.
- This is therefore not based on the curriculum as in many other validation programmes, but on the requirements of the business community.
- The assessment lists are structured in line with the level of competence, and the higher the participant's assessment, the greater the competence in that field is expected.

Participants

- Participants were selected based on the purpose of the study, Purposive sampling.
- An interview framework was used for semi-open-ended questions related to research questions and the aim of the study.
- Initially, there were supposed to be seven participants, but one dropped out after the meeting was called. So six interviews were conducted.
 - All interviews were electronic, partly due to the pandemic and partly due to the fact that participants lived all over the country.

Participants

- The education and training service center (Fræðslumiðstöð atvinnulífsins) was my contact with other lifelong learning centers.
 - Two lifelong learning centers were selected, who had performed validation of employability skills more than once.
- All participants underwent vocational rehabilitation in parallel with the validation.
 - Four participants out of six had started education and two were still in rehabilitation.
 - One of them studies at a university and three in other study programs at the upper secondary level.

Results

- prominent themes were:
 - Personal and social difficulties
 - Self-reinforcing results
 - New vision
 - Self image
 - Support
 - Motivation
 - Demanding
 - Flexibility

- The results were divided into four sections
 - School history
 - Validation of employability skills and future plans
 - Self-image and belief in one's own abilities
 - Support, role of career counsellor

School history

- It was noticeable that all participants had at some point struggled with **personal and / or social difficulties** that caused them to drop out of school.
 - Family illness, bullying, anxiety, depression, lack of concentration for example.
- The data shows they all wanted to be in education and even made a few attempts to start learning again.
 - It is important to create a society where people have equal access to education and enable them to have their knowledge valued.
- All but one of the interviewees suspect they have learning difficulties.
 - ADHD or dyslexia was most often mentioned in that context.

Future plans

- Previous research indicates that whether we trust ourselves to start learning again is based on many synergistic factors.
- **Self-empowering results and new perspectives** were the themes that stood out.
- All the interviewees talk about how their view of themselves, studies and often work has changed after receiving the results of the validation, then everything started to click together.
- Rannveig: **“But exactly, seeing the results, they told me that this is who I am, just a better person than I thought I really was ... I had more experience than I wanted to admit, I had a lot to offer and I had not seen it at that point in my life, so this just kind of opened up a lot for me that way”**
- The results that the participants relate to, based on their experience and person, begin to gain weight.
 - In this way, participants, with the help of a career counsellors, can adjust to specific jobs or studies and assess their strengths.

Future plans

- After the assessment, participants seemed to find it easier to connect their transferable skills and adapt them to a new platform - strengths began to emerge.
 - This way you often get a new perspective on yourself.
 - Also get an idea of where you can do better
- Atli says that he had begun to feel interested in entering the labor market, but “**the validation in Employability skills, showed me where I would like to work or what I would like to work on**”, but today Atli works part-time while studying. He adds that the validation in employability skills has changed the way he views learning.
- Sigríður says that it is important to
„**evaluate your story, what you've been working on and such** ”, it has given her the strength to keep going.

Future plans

- Rannveig describes how daring to try to return to school has had a knock-on effect.
- When she had completed the first phase, she thought:
“Ok, I can possibly finish menntastöðir (educational support for levels 1 and 2 at upper secondary school) ... I never looked further than that, then I finished it and went to Keilir (upper secondary school level 3) and I never intended anything further than that, when I finished the validation I did not imagine that I would be in university after three years.”
- Helgi says: **“It is good to be able to remind yourself that this is what you could and can do, because sometimes, you just need to get a little reminder, to remind yourself on what you can do.”**

Self-image and belief in one's abilities.

- Weak self-image was a prominent factor among the participants.
 - They all felt that the validation increased self-confidence and influenced their next steps.
 - It encouraged them to start learning again and to see themselves in a different way, broadening their view of themselves.
 - **Themes of new vision and self-image where prominent.**
- Participants said that it is difficult to see things when people have struggled with depression and are even stuck in their negative self.
- Atli: „**to see that I was good there, I think I knew it but I did not necessarily have faith in myself.**“
- Rannveig: **“But just looking at the strengths I discovered ... I was at that point focusing a lot on my weaknesses, looking a lot at what I could not, what I did not know versus the vision I got of what I could and what I knew and how to use it.”**

Self – image and belief in one’s abilities.

- They all talked about having underestimated themselves and their strengths.
 - With the validation they were **“forced”** to look inward.
 - Sigrún: **“Yes ... many things somehow surprised me or ... when you have been depressed and somehow just, just sick, just have a negative vision ... it surprised me how much I could, I did not think I could do anything ... at least I'm not quite as closed in that way ... I never thought I had so much, I do not see all the things I do but they are quite bigger, and I am not as stuck there.”**
- Helgi: **“,you are stuck in your own, idea and self-image ... you had underestimated yourself or, yes, the strengths.“**
- With the validation they managed to map their strengths, they had been given something that gave them a certain basis for discussion and an opportunity to adjust to their studies and jobs with their new identity mind.

Career counselling in validation

- It can be concluded from the study that without support, some would have stopped participating in the validation.
- The goal of the career counselling is to support those who go through the validation programme, during the process and after the validation.
- Here **challenging** was a prominent theme as well as **support and encouragement**.
- According to the results, the presence of the counsellor is extremely important to the participants.
 - They felt that the counsellors were flexible and solution-oriented
 - Always with the benefit of the participants in mind
 - Everyone gets to go at their own pace
 - Got good guidance after the validation
- They found the process difficult, the lists were long, and it's hard to look at oneself like that.
- In general, participants agreed to have been „**insecure**“
- Sigríður: „**it was just hard but still quite just ... just, yeah, it was hard but still good**“.

Career counselling in validation

- They considered it important to have met the counselor before.
 - Through teaching and counseling.
 - They had formed a connection.
 - The counselor "just came running" if they needed her.
- Participants were in different places when the process began.
 - The consultant had a good understanding of that.
- The counselor needs to be sensitive and understand his group.
- Rannveig claims she had received the support she needed to **“get back on her feet”**
- When asked if she thinks it is important to have formed a relationship with the counselor, she says

„yes in my case it did”

Career counselling in validation

- Regarding what is the most important role of the counselor in this process, there was an unanimous opinion

„The support was most important“

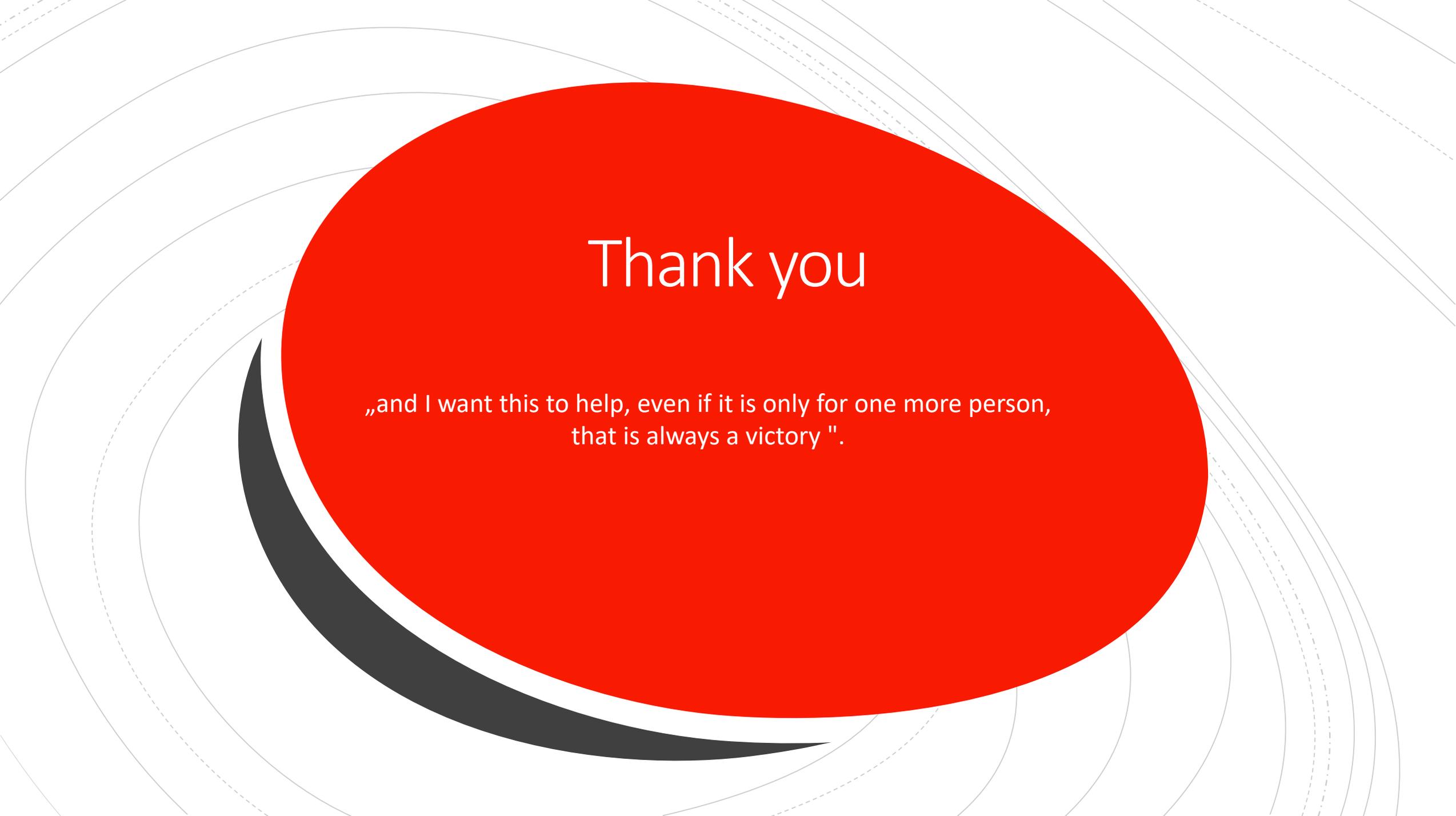
- Rannveig said:

“Really just being there ... letting you do it yourself but still trying to pull it out, oh, it's hard to explain it, but not putting your opinion on things but helping you get your own opinion on things.”

- All participants felt their needs were listened to and they have been well supported.
- The counsellors were resourceful about the needs of the group, which was of great importance.
- Everyone received good advice on the next steps and to look at the transferable skills that were strong in the person concerned and connect with their studies and work.

Ethical issues

- It can be assumed that those who agreed to participate had a positive experience of the validation of employability skills.
- So it is still unclear whether the experience of the majority of those who take the validation is the same as in this study.
 - This is one of the main shortcomings of the study.
- In qualitative research methods, interpretation is a big part and here the researcher had to be especially aware due to previous experience, not to mix his own experience with the results of the research.



Thank you

„and I want this to help, even if it is only for one more person,
that is always a victory “.