5th VPL Biennale

People, validation, and power: democracy in action?

Call for Contributions

Frequently Asked Questions

Colleagues have raised a range of questions about their participation in the 5th VPL Biennale and about the connections between their work and the themes of the conference. In the spirit of wishing to respond to questions and to encourage submissions and rich discussion in May, we offer these Questions and Answers that we hope will be clarifying.

Q.1 Who is welcome to the conference? To what sectors is the 5th VPL Biennale open?

The Biennale is open to **all those involved in** many different facets of the **validation of prior learning**: education and training, vocational education, competency-based and qualification systems, community education, higher education, the youth sector, public and private sectors, unions and social partners, human resources and public/private employment services, including continual professional development, career guidance, lifelong learning, professional and international organizations, as well as those involved in the voluntary sector.

We recognize and want to acknowledge the wide range of contexts in which people work; we know how important it is to hear from those who represent different sectors and who are involved as practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and theorists.

Q.2 I do not fully understand what is meant by the connections between "democracy" and "validation"

Validation or recognition of prior learning (VPL/RPL/PLA) is a process that provides a space for individuals or groups to reflect on their learning and map it to awards, standards, and other criteria for evaluation. This reflective process allows "learnings and skills" to be identified in a way that:

- supports the individual to grow and develop

- provides a mechanism to recognise and enhance skills
- supports transferability of learning (skills, knowledge, and competencies) and the mobility of the learner to new environments
- demonstrates that learning happens in a wide range of environments and settings and considers different learning styles
- provides an additional route into education (FET/VET and HE)

If your validation policies, processes, and experiences have enhanced the civic, social, community, education or economic engagement of the participants, the 5th VPL Biennale would welcome hearing about your work.

Q.3   I am not sure that I understand what is meant by valid knowledge.

This relates to the question often asked about knowledge gained through experience and if it is effective and should be considered "legitimate" learning. If your experiences in the world of VPL/RPL/PLA have supported converting this type of knowledge into an award, credit or standing or status, the 5th VPL Biennale is an opportunity to share your work.

Q.4. I am not a formal researcher, but work with small groups and individuals to support them as they seek to validate their learning. Can I record and submit my experience?

The conference welcomes examples and learning gained from practice. Examples of this can include (but are not limited to):

- Case studies for individuals or groups who have gained awards through validation of prior learning
- Training provided for staff
- Partnerships or collaborative projects between education providers (either FET/VET or HE) and industry and employers
- Assessment instruments that have been developed to identify readiness for validation
- Assessment instruments used to support building an RPL/VPL portfolio of evidence
- Creative and flexible methods to assessing learning
- Learning outcomes or standards used in the validation process
- Quality assuring assessment.

Q.5   What do you mean by "evidence" of my practice and research?

Evidence is the material that supports and affirms your project. You can include: project background, statistical data; duration; process; costs; publication, presentation to learners, how learners were recruited. It is the inputs, outputs and outcomes that will help us better understand your work.

Q.6   I am at the starting point with validation, and I have prepared a policy for my organization. It was hard work as I had to gain the confidence of staff and build it around other policies and procedures. Do you think this is too small a step to share at the conference?

Policy is very important and ensures that validation meets the strategic aims of your organization while opening up the scope of your activities to include validation of prior learning. Have a look at the third sub-theme: *Validation and inclusion: democracy in action?* There are a number of areas under this theme that your policy creation could address.

Q.7   I work with a small group of people to validate their learning. I am not sure if this work fits under any of your themes. It is not related to economic development, but I feel that what we do places the individual at the centre.

It sounds as if your work will fit under the third sub-theme, *Validation and Inclusion*. This theme is about how validation enhances social inclusion. A good way to look at this is to ask if the process of owning their own learning has empowered them. Do they recognise themselves as active in their community? Do they recognise that how they learned (their learning style) is recognised and valued?

Q.8   I am working to develop the capacity of staff in my institution by developing procedures to support policy and, eventually, the implementation of validation of prior learning. I am not sure under which question this fits.

It surely seems that your work is building the foundation that will help your organisation widen access to education. While this is about inclusion, it might be more suitable under the second theme, '*Validation and Skills.'* This

theme is about preparatory work that education providers are doing to enhance their understanding and knowledge about the validation process before offering it as part of provision.

Q.9 Under the theme '*Validation and the Individual*,' what do you mean by changing the balance of power.

Validation or recognition of prior learning acknowledges the breadth and width of the learning environment. This can lead to revaluing the gap between how these environments are viewed in relation to more formal education institutions. Are the awards that learners receive through the validation process comparable to the awards they receive from formal education institutions? Might this be changing the balance of power?

Q.10 Is the theme '*Validation and Mobility'* only about mobility of people?

Under this theme, mobility means: the movement of people to other jurisdictions; for example, if you have experience using validation to support integration and provide opportunities for migrants, refugees, and displaced persons, we would like to hear about it. Mobility might also mean career and education mobility within jurisdictions; for example, if your project has supported career or education mobility for individuals or groups, we would like to hear from you.