



Results and effects of validation in the Nordic region

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Development and validation of tests and assessments

- SWE-SAT, an early attempt to widening access to higher education, since late 1970:s
- National tests, for example maths and chemistry
- The Swedish driving licence test (my area before I started my PhD-education)



Validation

or Recognition of prior learning or Assessment of prior learning (APL) etc.

- Refers to the process of giving officially acknowledgment to formal, informal, and non-formal prior learning.



Purpose!

”To analyse cases of validation practice in the Nordic countries in relation to a number of central concepts; inclusion, mobility, flexibility, empowerment and employability.”



Procedure!

- Members of NVL, the Nordic countries, collected cases (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Åland Islands)
- Criteria for description
 - Target group, content, competence in focus, purpose, method, context and results.
 - Possibilities and problems/barriers.



Analysis of the cases!

Two overall questions:

- What possibilities and difficulties can be found in validation practice involving specific target groups in the Nordic countries?
- What possibilities and difficulties can be found in validation practice with a view to increasing flexibility in working life in the Nordic countries?



More specific questions were needed:

1. What kind of skills and competencies are made visible through validation?
2. What methods for validation are used to include specific target groups and to increase flexibility in the working life?
3. In what ways contributes validation to inclusion and to increase mobility and flexibility?
4. In what ways contributes validation to empower the individual and/or to enhance employability?



5. To what extent does validation aim to increasing inclusion, mobility, flexibility, empowerment and/or employability?
6. To what extent is validation based on the individuals circumstances and needs and to the societies, working life and employers
7. What problems and barriers stand in validation related to inclusion, mobility, flexibility, empowerment and/or employability.



The cases!

Specific target groups:

- Four groups were identified
 - Interns
 - Dyslectics
 - Individuals with a low level of formal education
 - Immigrants



The cases!

Flexibility in working life:

- Three groups of validation practice
 - Public sector, for example, paramedics, mail staff and staff at rail administration
 - Private sector, for example, banking and finance, and industry
 - Practice that promotes flexibility in a specific group, for example, immigrants and individuals with office skills



What kind of skills and competencies are made visible through validation?

Specific target groups:

- Specific skills and competence related to a vocational area
- Formal criteria related to vocational education and training
- Specific criteria for a vocational area
- Focus on practical knowledge
- Immigrants – occasionally focus on more general skills, such as verbal and personality skills



What kind of skills and competencies are made visible through validation?

Flexibility in working life:

- All three area of practice
 - Specific skills and competence related to a vocational area
 - Formal criteria related to education, or criteria/standards developed in a vocational area by experts
- Privet sector
 - employees tacit knowledge need to be recognised, increase formal competence in areas that are exposed to competition and rapid technical development



What kinds of skills and competencies are “not” made visible through the validation?

- Informal competence, for example, gained by voluntary activities
- Universal/general skills, such as leadership and communication skills
- Focus on skills and competence that support flexibility and inclusion in a vocational area rather than skills and competence that are transferable between different vocational areas



What methods for validation are used to include specific target groups and to increase flexibility in the working life?

A rather explicit structure are used in most cases

1. Information/guidance
2. Mapping/portfolio
3. Tests, authentic and/or theoretical
4. Judgement/scoring
5. Documentation/individual plan for further education/training
6. A new test
7. Feedback/follow up



What methods for validation are used to include specific target groups and to increase flexibility in the working life?

Specific target groups:

- Interns and individuals with a low level of formal education
 - Level 5, further education/training (in some cases a new practical test)
- Immigrants and dyslectics –Level 7, follow up, to a somewhat higher degree compared to the other groups



What methods for validation are used to include specific target groups and to increase flexibility in the working life?

Flexibility in working life:

- Described more generally, however consistent with the structure presented earlier
- Feedback and follow up are not mentioned
- Education of experts and counsellors in focus
- Sustainable structures important, transferable to other vocational areas



Purpose and base (or set out) of the validation (question 5 and 6)

Specific target groups:

- An overall purpose to increase the formal education level in the different groups, through shortening of an education programme or a customized training/education.
 - Immigrants – recognise their vocational skills in order to enabling them to get a job, increase their self-esteem, more effectively use of vocational competence, and to develop good validation practice for this group
- Individual needs in focus, practice initiated by government or public establishments



Purpose and base (or set out) of the validation (question 5 and 6)

Flexibility in working life:

- To develop good practice seems to be an overall purpose or set out for all three areas of practice
- Mainly initiated by vocational areas/employers, based on their current needs
 - Public sector
 - To have employees with formal education
 - Support mobility between sectors
 - To support development and efficiency in the vocational area
 - Improve the employees ability to recognise and highlight their skills and competence



Flexibility in working life:

- Private sector
 - Update and ensure competence in the company
- Flexibility in specific groups
 - To endorse the possibility for employers to work in a multicultural environment by, for example, employ immigrants



Results and possibilities (question 3 and 4)

Specific target groups:

- Results, if possible to present, fairly positive
 - Interns
 - Reach their goals earlier
 - More of them complete their education, and enter working life
 - Individuals with low formal education level
 - Many of them begin and complete their education
 - Dyslectics
 - No detailed results yet, but many seems to proceed to education
 - Immigrants
 - No results to show, some projects are still in progress, or no documentation (i.e. no follow up)



Results and possibilities (question 3 and 4)

Specific target groups:

- Possibilities

- Cooperation between education and working life, beneficial for validation procedures
- Good practice, development and improvement of methods

Individual level

- Increased employability
- Possibility to complete their education (upper secondary school)
- Increased motivation and self-esteem



Results and possibilities (question 3 and 4)

Flexibility in working life:

- Mainly positive results,
 - The purpose to developed good practice seems to have been realized
 - Those who participated have reached a higher level of formal competence



Results and possibilities (question 3 and 4)

Flexibility in working life:

- Possibilities
 - Successful cooperation
 - Possibility to meet demands of qualified staff
 - More rapidly process to recognise skills and competence amongst the staff
 - More rapidly recruitment process

Individual level

- Possibility for the employees to keep their jobs, higher salaries, and/or promotion
- Increased motivation, and opportunity to control their own situation



Problems and barriers (final question)

Specific target groups:

- Costs, in time and money

Immigrants

- No demand for validation, or need of labour
- Language barriers
- Difficult to recruit participants
- High skill requirements in the vocational area



Problems and barriers (final question)

Specific target groups:

Interns, dyslectics and individuals with a low level of formal education

- Negative attitude about returning to school/formal education
- Bad experiences and distrust of formal education

Interns

- Difficult to get vocational training and education programmes to prisons



Problems and barriers (final question)

Flexibility in working life:

(No focus on problems or barriers in these cases)

- Need of resources
- To avoid problems it is important to firmly establish the project
- Formal education can not recognise/value informal learning (could result in that almost all must go through the entire education programme in question)
- Abstract criteria, difficult to understand



Conclusions!

What possibilities and difficulties can be found in validation practice involving specific target groups in the Nordic countries?

- Two ways to include and empower vulnerable groups, validation in order to increase their education level, and validation for employment
- The validation practices are in most cases related to training/education
 - Negative experiences of formal education, low self-esteem



- A unified view of how validation should be executed, i.e. good practice
- Development and evaluation of methods
- Skills and competence are related to specific criteria
 - Difficult to understand, to high demands, arbitrary/subjective
- Results, seems to be satisfying
 - Lack of “follow up” procedures
- Increased motivation and self-esteem
 - More research needed



Conclusions;

What possibilities and difficulties can be found in validation practice with a view to increasing flexibility in working life in the Nordic countries?

- Validation practice in private and public sectors to increase flexibility, possibility to compete
 - Flexibility within a vocational area, not between



- Development of good practice, training of assessors and counsellors
 - Important to have resources, sustainable structures
- Cooperation, employers, education institutions and unions
 - Important with good relations



Thank You!

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