CASE STUDY

Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland

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The case study, the story	*Case study: Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland* *Country: the Netherlands* *Case started in 2004, still developing. This description concerns the period 2004-2006.*
The context In which sector is it taking place? In which organisation is it taking place? The background to the case study/ *a landscape* of the case study	**Initiator or organisation in charge** Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland is one of the regional offices for the support of Scouting and Guiding in the Netherlands, based in the province of Gelderland. They support scouting groups by offering information, training and tools which they can use to ease and better their practice. Overall, 30 000 volunteers work for the Scouting in the Netherlands. Target group: - group description (e.g. workers, teachers/trainers, unemployed, etc.); qualitative & quantitative - paid or unpaid work The target group consists of leaders, team leaders and group leaders. A leader at Scouting is a member of a team. Every age category of a Scouting group has an own team, who are responsible for organizing activities and to guide members of that particular team. There are diverse tasks to be divided between leaders in a team, for example

finance, take care of materials and contact to parents. Yet the team leader has the end responsibility.

The group leader is a member of the management of a scouting group. The management monitors the daily routine in a group. Together with all the leaders of the Scouting group the policy of a group is prescribed and matters are geared to one another. The group coach has the responsibility to monitor the quality of the (team) leader(s) and the program of a certain group.

Leader: responsible for the children

Team leader: responsible for leaders

Group leader: responsible for leaders and team leaders

Aims for the organisation

Adequate recognition for the experiences and expertise gained during voluntary work (scouting work).

Aims for the target group

Many Scouting Volunteers experience difficulties in achieving acknowledgement for the experience they acquire during their volunteer work. Scouting Gelderland therefore wanted to recognise competences acquired by their volunteers in order to acknowledge their efforts.

There was a desire within the organisation to properly establish and document the skills expected from group leaders, taking into account the needs of their team members. This documentation can be used to make clear what an individual volunteer has learnt to educational institutes and future employers.

What is the problem that has/had to be solved?

In 1998, the Scouting organisation in Gelderland decided to address the issue that their many volunteers were not given adequate recognition for the experience and expertise they gained while volunteering.

What is the opportunity that opened up to solve the problem?

Scouting Gelderland approached CITO (the Institute responsible for setting up exam procedures in professional/vocational education) to establish how to use 'educational terminology' in the setting up of the competence profile. The aim was to achieve a degree of objectivity when describing skills in order to escape 'scouting jargon' and ensure the transferability of competency profiles to other organisations and sectors. Funding for this cooperation was provided by the Knowledge centre for the Acknowledgement of acquired competences (Kenniscentrum EVC). Each year they subsidise programs after a selection procedure. Scouting Gelderland delivers competence documentation to CITO who in cooperation with volunteers through response groups translate the language into educational terminology. Scouting Gelderlands work with CITO has been funded by the Kenniscentrum EVC, the Dutch Knowledge Centre on the Valuation of Prior Learning.

Where and how did VPL become an option? Who initiated VPL?

In 1998, the Scouting organisation in Gelderland decided to address the issue that their many volunteers were not given adequate recognition for the experience and expertise they gained while volunteering. Consequently, Scouting Gelderland worked together with SVM (Stichting Vrijwilligers Management), a national organisation for the support of volunteer work, to identify appropriate validation mechanisms. Due to a lack of time and resources, the project developed relatively slowly until 2003 when the project received funding from the province of Gelderland to develop a set of validation instruments. The aim was to develop instruments which could be easily transferred to other volunteer organisations and recognized in other sectors. At the same time the Civiq (Instituut vrijwillige inzet, which used to be SVM) received a subsidy from the Ministry of Health and Sports to set up a parallel project examining general competency profiles together with NIZW (Innovation partner in care en welfare). The two organisations now regularly have contact with Scouting Gelderland through feedback meetings, workshops and other meetings.

Why is non-formal and informal learning accepted?

The OVDB (Knowledge Centre for learning in practise in health, welfare, sports and service and professional education institute) recognises scouting groups involved. Because of this recognition the experiences and expertise gained during the informal and non-formal scouting work are accepted by Regional Training Institutes. Besides that, the more formal way of assessing the competence learned within scouting and the grow in status caused by the collaboration with CITO and Knowledge centre EVC plays an important role within this acceptance.

Which other parties or stakeholders are involved?

Finance: Province of Gelderland,

Content expertise: Civiq (used to be SVM), Knowledge Centre EVC, CITO (educational), CINOP

Political**:** OVDB (educational), European Youth Programme, Institutions for vocational education, Other volunteer organisations like the Red Cross, LAVA and Spectrum

Which laws & legal texts (e.g. collective agreements) are involved?

No laws of legal texts can be linked with this case. In the Netherlands, there is a substantial amount of best practice in the area of the validation of informal and non-formal learning, but no 'common practice'. The validation of informal learning is being more rapidly developed for people with high skills (university entry systems) and with very low skills (disadvantaged groups) and less developed for individuals with middle range skill levels. It was suggested that this policy area could benefit from greater support from the Dutch government, particularly as it was felt that the Netherlands had fallen behind in comparison to other European countries with respect to government initiatives

	in the field of validation of informal and non-formal learning.

Any special agreements or measures involved (on national, sectoral, organisational levels)?

The project was managed by Scouting Gelderland, with various theme groups being set up for the daily management of activities, supervised by the staff of Scouting Gelderland. Volunteers are also highly involved in the design and implementation of the activities. The monitoring committee consists of members of the Civiq, Knowledge Centre, Province of Gelderland, Colleague volunteer organisations, and two people from the education sector (OVDB). |
| **People**

VNFL-IFL candidate (s): who is s/he? His/her history (personal/ professional/ educational)? Aims and professional/ personal project? Why the VNFL-IFL?

AND/OR

VNFL-IFL advisers/ staff: tutors: their experience, training, willingness, involvement, their place in the organisation? How do they interact with the VNFL-IFL candidate (s)? With the evaluators/ assessors/jurys?

AND/OR | **Focus on individuals**

The outcomes are at the end all focussed on the individual within scouting, to help him or her with naming their competences. In that sense, Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland focussed on the first two fases, namely:
- "raising awareness" by giving training and sending briefcases with information about competences and recognition methods
- "recognition" by involving education and national bodies in the development of the competence profiles and getting the status of formal learning area

The formal validation of competences of the individual was not the primary focus of scouting.

Value of the process and outcomes

For the initiator:
The Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland has embedde VPl as a HRM-tool into thier personal- and training ploicy.
Above all there is an increase in know-how about setting up VPL in voluntary work. As a result, they are asked to offer training and workshops to inform other organisations. This creates esteem and extra income.

For the targetgroup:
There are many short term benefits for individuals who have done competence-based assessments while they are volunteering for Scouting Gelderland. For example, volunteers who have had their prior learning validated can be exempted from following certain formal training courses on VET-levels 1-4. (formal training is required, in particular in relation to working with children, dealing with disabilities). This is timesaving and thus more efficient. It was also |

	pointed out that having their skills validated had substantially increased the personal confidence of volunteers.
The assessors/ evaluators: their experience in VNFL-IFL, willingness, role/ responsibilities in the organisation/ institution? Their relationship with the advisers?	For the organisation: The establishment of scouting groups as 'learning firms' has given these groups a higher profile and greater recognition by educational institutions. When educational institutes make use of Scouting as a 'learning firm' and recognise competences learned at scouting, learning made to measure for practicing leaders and team leaders is better possible. By offering VPL-procedures, Scouting gets an image, whereby there is an opportunity for more recruitment of new members. On sectoral or national level: The general profile of Scouting in the Netherlands has been raised, with wider recognition of the efforts made, and skills and knowledge of volunteers. The scouting case has been a good practice example for other voluntary organisations. The VPL concept developed is used within the general competence profiles by NIZW, IVIO and CIVIQ.
The relationships/ interactions What does the case study show about the interactions between all the actors? Any external actors showing up in the case study?	**Process and procedures** **Describe the elements of learning that will be valuated? (example: knowledge, skills, ambitions, attitude, generic & specific competences, know-how, performance, experience, etc.)** *In this case the concept 'competence' is described as: The ability to use knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal qualities in an integrated manner within a certain context, whereby relevant tasks are carried out responsibly and aware according to a recognised quality standard.* *Scouting experiences gained by practising their function as leader, team leader and group leader. The competence profiles describe three competence areas: the target group, the organisation and external. Competences measured, aimed at the target group, are divided in 'planning and organising', 'contact with parents/guardians', 'Stimulating children', 'Attitude and independence', 'leading a group', 'flexibility and communication', 'responsibility' and 'budget and control'. Aimed at the organisation, the competences are divided between 'attitude', 'cooperation and participation', 'budget and control' and 'practising civil responsibility'. In the competence area 'external'*
To sum up: the process How, what, when, how often? What happens, who sets the scene, who does the talking, what	*competences are asked to represent scouting to third parties. Competences about leading adults can be found in de profiles of team leaders and group leaders. For the leaders, guiding adults is not an issue.* **Which learning environments are involved?** e.g. school, workplace, private life, others

writing takes place etc… What part (active, passive?) takes the candidate in the process? **AND/OR**	*The scouting group* *- leading children or leading leaders* *- all the other domains. Parents, fellow leaders, finance etc. (See 3.1)* *- Scouting Training (two weekends a year)* **How is the applicant informed/contacted?** *All scouting groups in Gelderland received a briefcase with different sorts of material (See 3.5). In this briefcase also an explanation about the importance of VPL and valuation of competences is found.*
Tools What are they, what role do they have, who develop them? How are they used? How important are they?	**What are the steps in the procedure to be followed by the applicant?** *The portfolio is a tool to document scouting experience. The CD-ROM developed by the support group offers models and recommendations for making a portfolio, a list with translations of the scouting jargon and explanation of the competence profiles.* **What tools/instruments/methods are used for identification and valuation of competences?** *Competence game, work-shops, CD-rom with documentation for leaders, team leaders and group leaders, Guide for a STAR-conversation, Competence Profiles.* **What kinds of proof can be submitted?** *Documents, reflections, photos, movie, specific scouting training certificates.* **Which criteria are used to accept candidates for the procedure?** *Every leader (minimum age 16 years old), team leader (minimum of 18 years old) and group leader (over 21 years old) can attend the VPL procedure.* **How is informal learning measured and valuated ?** *The organisation has developed three different competency profiles for volunteers – one for 'leaders', one for 'team leaders' and one for 'group leaders'. Profiles were built up through looking at the competencies held by current leaders, and discussions with volunteers about what support they would ideally like from a leader.* *The portfolio is valuated by these competence profiles made by Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland in combination with CITO and Knowledge centre EVC.*

What kinds of advice/feedback may be made by assessors or mentors, guiders, peers, examinators, etc?

Split your answer up in:

- certification (summative)
- personal development (formative)
- other

For certification purposes:
When a pupil comes to Scouting as a 'learning firm' for a training period, then learning is assessed within Scouting Gelderland through a combination of self assessment and discussion with Group Counsellors on basis of the portfolio.

For development purposes:
Volunteers are not always aware of the extent of their skills and knowledge when building their profiles. Scouting Gelderland therefore uses training to raise awareness of these competencies. A Swiss model 'the CH-Q (http://www.ch-q.ch/)' has been used to develop this training. Scouting Gelderland found about this model through the Knowledge-centre, and adapted it to the Dutch context. The training consists of three steps:

- o *what am I good in?*
- o *how should I formulate my expertise?*
- o *Where can I actually use it?*

Beside CH-Q training, group leaders can observe the leaders, give feedback, write a recommendation letter for (team) leaders and practise job interviews with the STAR methodology. .

What is exempted on the basis of VPL?

(e.g. courses/ units/modules of study: specific tasks set within units: demonstration of competences)

The organisation set up the competence profiles to make third parties aware off which competences are developed during the time individuals spend on Scouting.

Consequently this could follow in exemptions of modules/units/courses of studies, but could also be used in an application.

which percentage of the certificate/diploma can be awarded through informal/non-formal learning? (on a scale from 1 - 100%)

This depends on the function within Scouting whether a VPL-participant practice, the time spend on scouting, the level of functioning within scouting and which educational route they attend. The degree of overlap correlates positively with the percentage of exemptions.

What are the subsequent steps in the valuation process?

1) *Finding out what the individual would like to do with their life: identifying goals and setting ambitions. This step is linked with the CH-Q training.*

2) *Offering competence descriptions for tasks the individual is already carrying out*

3) *Adding descriptions of competencies which are 'in the neighbourhood' of these tasks and which relate to the individuals future aspirations. This is the phase where teachers, trainers, career guiders come in to identify the potential for development of each individual. The aim is to empower people rather than exclude them from progressing further, and sensitive assessment mechanisms are used to keep people in the learning system*

Results 2004-2006

Which results were in effect reached?

- for the organisation in charge
- for the target group

1. All scouting groups in Gelderland received a briefcase with the VPL tools in it. Groups are more aware how they can use the competences developed on scouting.

2. There is relatively little quantitative information about take-up of these initiatives as yet, however:

Tests have been undertaken involving 10 to 20 volunteers;

50 of the 200 Scouting Groups in the Province of Gelderland are in the process of becoming acknowledged as 'learning firms';

Approximately 30 students are currently gaining experience through Scouting volunteer work in Gelderland. On a national level, many more students are making use of it and many more Scouting Groups are involved because the Scouting organisations in the provinces of Overijssel, Zuid-Holland en Limburg are also involved in similar activities.

Validation: summative results

Number & types of certification

In the future, certification could be a possibility. At the moment there is no direct connection between the VPL procedure and formal certification. It is the responsibility of the VPL candidate to use the outcome of the VPL procedure to qualify for exemptions in their training course and for making competences clear application.

Valuation: formative results

Number and types of development plans or career opportunities

Development of self-esteem. Developing a portfolio to use as showcase for applications. By exposing competences gained at Scouting could be a basis to choose a direction in their further careers. The glass is already half-filled!

Effects on other stakeholders and/or knowledge infrastructure

By setting up VPL-procedures in the voluntary sector, more work and learning firms become available for trainees. This means more help within Scouting organisations. A better image for Scouting in general and more publicity.

Financial results (positive/negative).

Specify the type of this result, e.g. less/more absence of leave, less/more learning costs, less/more productivity, less spending on recruitment, outplacement, etc.

The process is aimed at developing self confidence and valuation of prior learning in two areas (future employers and formal education). It is difficult to state these things in financial terms.

On the long term is expected (in a way linked to finance):

Better allocation of employees within certain companies, who take into account the competences gained in scouting work.

Less learning costs for companies when certain things are not learned twice.

Results 2007-2008
- April 2007:
  - 455 scoutingleaders downloaded the competence-profiles
  - 118 of them filled in an online questionnaire on the actual use of the profiles
  - report available in Dutch
- Spring 2007:
  - 610 Scoutingleaders were invited for (1) an online-survey on the use of voluntary-competences in education- and work-settings and (2) the expected support for their efforts in this form their organisations,
  - 424 responded to the call
  - report available in Dutch
- 2007:
  - a random check of group leaders on their support for aspirations within their scouting leaders for formal accreditation of their competence development gave a response of 355 leaders and showed their actual support.
  - report available in Dutch
- dec 2008:
  - National Council of Scouting debates a proposal for a new training structure in which APL takes a prominent

role.
- Target groups are new leaders, and discharging leaders.
- Training structure is effective in 2009

- (Inter)national projects:
- National project "Your key to the future": cooperation of Scouting and National Youth Council: broad survey of the perspectives for youth-development in voluntary organisations
- Grundtvig-project VOTE (Voluntary Training and Education) started in okt 2007. Target is develop further the expertise and vision on APL and turn existing policy into a solid, integral approach

SWOT

Strengths of VPL in the case study
1. *The procedures are very flexible, as a result of which it is easier adaptable to specific organisations and individuals*
2. *It is voluntary or not obligatory.*
3. *The focus is especially on the process; aimed at development of the individual and the organisation,*
4. *Steunpunt Scouting Gelderland has made the VPL-tools attractive by the briefcase they developed with different options they can use.*
5. *Formal recognition on organisational level*
6. *Scouting is accepted as a real learning environment*
7. *Scouting is able to perform pro-active HRM: steering on their need for competences and the supply of competences available in their 'human resources'.*

Opportunities of VPL in the case study
1. *Dissemination of the tools developed. The briefcase is extremely portable. When in other regions catalysts can be found, the idea of recognising what is learned in scouting can be used in many other scouting groups.*
2. *More collaboration between employers, educational institutes and voluntary organisations. Both employers as educational institutes can profit from the experiences their employees or students have. By making these experiences more explicit in voluntary work and clear to employers and educational institutes, valuation of this learning is easier.*

Weaknesses of VPL in the case study
1. *In some cases, the procedure is too flexible and does not provide enough grip or certainty.*

	2. *The competence profiles are built and approved by scouting groups in Gelderland on a national level. Before it can be used in other scouting-regions, the profiles have to be adapted to fit the specific regional needs.*
	3. *There is relatively little quantitative data. Conclusions from this case study are based on qualitative data. More research is needed.*
	Threats of VPL in the case study
	1. *Using VPL within the organisation is very time consuming. Especially in the voluntary sector this could be a threat, because time is scarce.*
	2. *Organisations that choose to use VPL, and in that sense offer their volunteers more guidance, could eventually withdraw leaders from other groups that do not offer VPL tools. For organisations in other (paid) sectors, this is not a problem. For voluntary work, this is an unwanted side-effect.*
	3. *There is a reasonable threat that voluntary work gets more formalised by using these VPL tools and procedures. Is this desirable in Voluntary work. The most important aspect of voluntary work is the freedom to explore things and develop own ideas. Also in the area of human resource development. This freedom becomes less, when a group management decide to use the VPL methods described above. It is important that the procedure cannot be obliged within a group.*