



**Annual National Review (ANaR) on the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (VNF-IFL)
on the national context**

ANaR Report Year 2 - 2009-2010

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I. The general situation regarding VNF-IFL

Points to consider	Your text
<p>1. National strategy: is there one? What is in place re the VNF-IFL, at which level? If not, are there regional, local or institutional strategies? <i>Any reference or URL links to official documents, Websites?</i></p>	<p>During the years 2004 to 2007, Sweden had an authority for validation, The National Commission on Validation . The main task of the delegation was to support and contribute to the development of the processes of validation according to legitimacy, quality and working methods. In the final report from The National Commission on Validation (May 2008) we can read: “Validation means that the knowledge and competencies of the individual systematically is being assessed, evaluated and documented, no matter where it has been acquired.” In the same report is also described the importance of developing forms for validation in order to increase the employability for individuals, because of the “changing” labour market. Another proceeding is to increase the possibilities of joining higher education, and make it possible to shorten the study time by avoiding unnecessary education, if the individual already has the corresponding knowledge.</p> <p>On 1 July 2009 the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (HVEC) was established to develop and oversee a new form of publicly funded vocational education at post upper secondary level. The role of the HVEC is to set up a common framework agreed upon and followed by vocational education and training providers. Content is based on the knowledge and experience of what is needed in working life. Among several principal missions, HVEC shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse and assess needs for skilled competence and the development of the labour market • Coordinate and support a national framework for validation • Serve as the national coordinator for EQF – the European Qualifications Framework in Lifelong Learning. <p>Read more at the HVEC website http://www.yhmyndigheten.se/english</p>
<p>2. main responsibility for VNF-IFL, regulations, monitoring and evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has the main responsibility for VNF-IFL? Which ministry (ies), which institution (s), organisation or body (ies)? Who gives the main impetus and direction? • Who regulates, monitors and assesses practices and pilots new initiatives? • Or are they local, regional, sectoral, institutional initiatives? 	<p>From 01.07. 2009, The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (HVEC) has the main responsibility for VNF-IFL, in order to coordinate and support a national framework for validation and serve as the national coordinator for EQF – The European Qualification Framework in Lifelong Learning. The HVEC shall also, according to the budget document from the Swedish Government (http://www.yhmyndigheten.se/hem/sa-styrs-yh-myndigheten/regleringsbrev), cooperate with the Swedish National Agency for Education, The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, The Swedish Public Employment Services, The Swedish National Council of Adult Education, and representatives from industries and professionals and parties on the labour market.</p>

3. Sectors: where, which sectors:

- Does VNF-IFL apply to all educational sectors?
Or to specific ones (vocational education & training, Further Educ. Colleges, universities, adult education etc....)
- Or/ and does it apply to other sectors: 3rd sector, private sector

Name some examples or references to examples (websites, documents etc....?)

VNF-IFL applies to all educational sectors, but in a various way and with different interpretations of the meaning of validation.

In the *adult secondary education*, it is most common with validation related to the national curriculum with educational targets. The purpose of validation in this sector is mostly related to grades – a kind of formalizing the non-formal and informal knowledge of the individual.

The National Board of Health and Welfare (<http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/en/Licensing/>) “has specific responsibility for examining whether persons with medical training in another country satisfy the conditions for pursuing their profession in Sweden and being granted Swedish authorisation”.

The responsibility of assessing education from other countries is shared between four different authorities;

- The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education
- The Swedish Agency for Higher Education Services .
- The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education
- The Swedish National Agency for Education.

The purpose of the assessment, whether the individual is looking for employment or access to education, as well as the educational level of the document, decides which authority to turn to. More information can be found at the website: <http://www.valideringsinfo.se/bedomning-av-utlandsk-utbildning/>

For those looking for employment, The Swedish Public Employment Services is central in assessing competences according to the labour market requirements. People with unfinished education are guided to guidance services within municipal adult education.

Those who have a vocational education from other countries, but have no document, can turn to the Swedish Public Employment Services in order to be given credit for “real competence”. (read more at the website <http://www.yhmyndigheten.se/hem/bedomning-av-utlandsk-utbildning/>)

There is also ongoing work with the validation concept in the field of *Liberal adult education*, such as folk high school. As well as in the other educational sectors the development of VNF-IFL in this sector, has started a debate about the importance of validation being legitimate, equivalent and quality-safe.

Within *the Labour market* sector VNF-IFL is mostly discussed in forms of assessment of vocational competences related to certification and professional qualification.

At the website of The Swedish Public Employment Services, information about validation related to specific vocations is given at several cities in Sweden. The Swedish Public

	<p>Employment has contracted a custom-made model of validation, based upon the model suggested by the former National Commission on Validation , which the Swedish Public Employment Services has decided to work with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth mapping process of competencies, calculated length 1-3 days. • Assessment of competences where the individual receives a certificate, calculated length 0,5 – 2 weeks • Assessment of competences, where the individual receives grades, licence/ certificate, calculated length 0,5 – 2 weeks.
<p>4. Terminology: Is there a common definition of VNF-IFL, or are there specific terms used by different institutions implementing VNF-IFL? What would be the best way to translate it / them into English?</p>	<p>Give the definition (s) and terms used in your own language, and your translation in English</p> <p>The official definition of validation in Sweden, from The Ministry of Education and Research, that still is valid, is to be found in The Letter of Ministry of Education and Research (DS 2003:23).</p> <p>The official definition in Swedish: “Validering är en process som innebär en strukturerad bedömning, värdering, dokumentation och ett erkännande av kunskaper och kompetens som en person besitter oberoende av hur de förvärvats”. (Ds 2003:23, s 19).</p> <p>The definition translated to English: “Validation is a process that means a structured assessment, estimation, documentation and acceptance of knowledge and competences that a person has, independently of how it has been acquired.” (Ds 2003:23, p 19).</p> <p>From 2009-07-01, The Swedish Agency for Higher Vocational Education (HVEC) has the main responsibility for VNF-IFL and the usage of specific terms concerning validation. This work is in progress. There are several terms figuring in separate institutions, which hopefully will find a common framework with the work of the new authority.</p> <p>The Association of Swedish Higher Education, SUHF (http://www.suhf.se/web/Om_SUHF.aspx), has written several documents in order to find a meaning in common towards the term “real competence” (in Swedish: “Validering av reell kompetens”) between the Swedish universities.</p>

In the Catalogue for Application to Higher Education, the concept of “reell kompetens” is described as a possibility of becoming qualified, eligible to higher education even though formal qualifications are missing. In such an assessment the universities take into consideration knowledge acquired from e.g. work-life experiences, staff training, and work in non-profit associations.

(<https://www.studera.nu/download/18.39900e2f11b3553922b800012011/VHS-sista+versionvt09.pdf>)

More and more, the concept of “real competence” (in Swedish “reell kompetens”) is translated into the concept of “prior learning” , when describing the Swedish concept “reell kompetens”

In the budget document of 2008, The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, was given the commission by the Swedish government, to support and follow up the work with prior learning within higher education. The result of the commission was published in a report 2009:21 R “Reell kompetens vid bedömning av behörighet och tillgodoräkningen” our translation: “Prior learning in assessment of qualifications and credit transfer”. The report describes that there is a confusion among staff working with assessment of prior learning, because of unclear regulations and usage of concepts. Furthermore, prior learning in assessment of qualifications and credit transfer has been given low priority among universities and higher education. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education aims to clarify the following concepts in their report (pp. 25-28):

Reell kompetens vid behörighetsbedömningar = **Prior learning in assessment of qualifications** related to higher education:

An individual is in position of prior learning when having a Swedish education, foreign education, practical experience or other circumstances (not specified). The precondition is that the individual is able to profit from the education.

Motsvarandebedömningar = Equivalence assessment. The distinction between assessment, concerning equivalent knowledge and assessment of prior learning, is still unclear. Equivalence assessment is related to different educational documents, while assessment of prior learning has to be described in a more nuanced way.

Reell kompetens och undantag = Prior learning and exemption from entry requirements. Also the distinction between prior learning and exemption from entry requirements is unclear. In both cases, an assessment is to be done whether the individual is able to profit from education. When the case concerns exemption from entry requirements, the individual is not in possession of formal requirements, but the assessment shows that the individual is able to profit from education. When the individual is in possession of prior learning, the

	<p>individual also is in possession of the formal entry requirements because of certain circumstances and the result of the assessment shows that the individual is able to profit from education. A trial for exemption, will not occur until a trial related to the entry requirements as well as related to prior learning has been conducted.</p>
<p>5. National Qualification Framework: How do VNF-IFL practices or initiatives relate to NQF in place or in construction, if they do? If not, why not? <i>Brief description of the NQF (diagram etc)?</i> <i>Reference to docs or website?</i></p>	<p>The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has the main responsibility for the development of the National Qualification Framework in Sweden. This work is in progress and more information can be found at the website: www.eqfinfo.se In March, 2010, a proposal for a Swedish National Qualification Framework, was presented. This proposal has been further developed and revised and is available at the following link: http://www.eqfinfo.se/aktuellt/ngf-forslag.</p>

II. Impact of Validation

<p>6. Impact on individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact has VNF-IFL had on individuals? On whom, in your opinion, has it had the most impact: Validation candidates/ learners, practitioners, teachers/ academics/ tutors/facilitators in adult education, careers advisers, human resource managers...any more? • In what way has it had an impact: • in the actors/ stakeholders' attitudes, practices and methodologies, interaction with each others, understanding of different types of learning, better understanding of adult learners' needs, assessment practices, etc...? • Do you have evidence whether it is felt as a positive, negative, problematic impact? <i>Some evidence/ reference to examples of this impact?</i> 	<p>VNF-IFL has had great impact on candidates exposed to validation if the validation process has been clearly structured and described to the individuals. The individuals often are very satisfied when their knowledge acquired from the working life can be given credit for, either as higher education credits or in grades related to national curriculums within the adult education, or related to specific vocational requirements within certain professions/occupations They also are satisfied when their time spending on education can be shortened. The possibilities of "formalizing" their non-formal and informal knowledge acquired from the working life may end in a permanent employment.</p> <p>With an increasing possibility of combining validation processes with practical work, the individuals will be even more interested in joining a validation process. The process of validation in itself also can bring a consciousness about the own knowledge and competence. This consciousness may help them describe their competencies in a more distinct and varied way, e.g. in a forthcoming employment interview, and while reflecting on their work place experiences.</p> <p>The increasing use of validation has had impact on even the education providers. They have developed a more flexible way when planning and offering courses. Now courses often are offered more frequently and they also are open to different types of students at the same time, both those who are exposed to validation and the "ordinary" students following the whole program or parts of it</p>
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	<p>(see CASE 1, about Ulrika, sent in June 2008).</p> <p>The National Commission on Validation emphasizes, in its Final Report (p 83), the importance of showing respect to the choices and decisions made by the candidates concerning the validation process, referring to the authors Gustafsson and Mouwitz. This is expressed as follows: “Maybe the individual him/herself also has other projects with his/her life and identity development, than just being a part of building up the New Europe whose ambition is to be the world’s most competitive and knowledge-based economy”.</p> <p>As mentioned above there is an ongoing discussion about the costs especially concerning validation of practical work.</p>
<p>7. structural and institutional impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it had an impact on education and training (or lifelong learning) policies? • On other legislation, official/ governmental organisations, bodies, institutions? • On the negotiations between social partners (who are those anyway in your country?) • In the private sector, on staff qualification and training strategies within companies? • On civil society/ NGOs/ adult education sector? • On building bridges (of communication, working partnerships...) between different systems of certification, sectors etc? 	<p>The development of VNF-IFL has had impact on the debates of lifelong learning, work related learning, recognition and assessment of foreign education, and also the relation between theoretical and practical learning.</p> <p>The National Commission on Validation describes in their Final report (pp.109) an experimental work done together with the trade organizations aiming at developing both criterions for validation and models for how to work with validation in order to suggest how to apply validation of real competence together with the trade organizations. One conclusion from the experimental work was that a lot of competencies were identified and were supposed to be of great importance to the forthcoming work.</p> <p>Another conclusion was that the National Commission on Validation and the trade organizations had different ideological approaches, and did not have a common perspective on neither the concept of validation nor the phenomenon of validation. The trade organizations were more eager to identify specific competencies that were “useful”, and not general ones that were discussed in advance. Due to the Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL) the validation process in Sweden has mainly been focusing on the profession and profession area instead of being focusing on the educational criteria and curriculums (Andersson & Hult, 2008, p. 33).</p> <p>We also refer to the answers written under point 9, since we find the questions (or at least the answers) overlapping each other.</p>

III. Your analysis of the national situation regarding Validation

<p>8. Stakeholders' engagement: how would you rate the stakeholders' level of interest in your country regarding the VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders in particular are very interested? • Which ones are not so/ not at all interested? <p>Why is that so? Any particular or obvious reasons? <i>Reference to examples, documents?</i></p>	<p>1 to 5: Very Low to High? Estimation is given below, without giving any points, in order from high to low level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The individuals (as stakeholders) are the ones who are most interested in validation because of personal outcomes (some reasons are described in point 6). • There is often an economic discussion by organisers of validation and/or education. When they can see a possible way of “not losing money” on offering validation processes, they will be more interested. • The labour market and social sector may find validation more interesting, when a minimizing of society costs is obvious.
<p>9. Debates-discussions: Are there any (few/many) discussions concerning VNF-IFL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it stimulated discussion on specific issues (social inclusion, employability, learning society, accessibility for older learners, women, migrants...) • On the nature of assessment, knowledge...? • Between which stakeholders mainly/ or within which sector mainly? <p><i>Any evidence or references to those?</i></p>	<p><i>The government commission “Responsibility of ‘man’ (sic)*– with professional support” (“Egenansvar – med professionellt stöd”, SOU 2008:58), (http://riksdagen.se/shopping/R_ShowItem_16340.aspx) is focusing on the integration process for refugees and immigrants. The government commission gives proposal that the Employment Services should be given a more clarified commission to validate individuals’ vocational competence and validate the competencies of the refugees/immigrants. The National Commission on Validation emphasizes, in its Final report, the importance of not regarding validation as the overall solution because of the risk to marginalize certain groups.</i></p> <p><i>Consequently, on the 1 December 2010, The Swedish Public Employment Services, will have the principal responsibility for the integration process for refugees and immigrants (See the law 2010:197 on the following link: http://www.riksdagen.se/webbnav/index.aspx?nid=3911&bet=2010:197). There is an ongoing project, where validation is given great importance, with methods such as portfolios and validation related to specific vocational requirements. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education has been given the mission of coordinating the work with validation among immigrants and refugees, in corporation with the Swedish Public Employment Services. This is work in progress.</i></p> <p>In the national debate and political strategies there is a main focus on “the work-line” (arbetslinjen), on employability and matching individuals competences with available work.</p>

	<p>In the final report by The National Commission on Validation, validation is seen from an investigating and a controlling perspective. (p. 126). The report by Andersson and Hult, mentioned above (2008) the authors talk about validation from a convergent and a divergent perspective (pp. 26), and they also discuss the concept of formative and summative validation. Formative validation means: An individual is validating things she already knows, with the purpose of future studies. Summative validation means: An individual is validating things she already knows, with the purpose of getting a formal document describing his or her knowledge (ibid.).</p> <p>In the book “ Validation in the Nordic countries – Policy and practice” (Andersson & Hult, 2008) is written that the national policy on validation in Sweden does not focus on formal documents as the most important result, but “useful papers” giving possibilities to employability as the most important focus. On the national level the policy focus is divergent (p. 26).</p> <p>The National Commission on Validation emphasized, in their final report, the importance of the social partners on the labour market accepting the competence certificate had being valid and accepted. Validation related to grades has generally been more accepted. Even Andersson and Hult (2008) emphasize that validation within the labour market often looks at validation from educational sector perspective, but with the needs from the labour market. The fact that the labour market is using the educational system in validation processes, probably may be explained with the need of legitimacy (p.34).</p> <p><i>* note of the editor</i></p>
<p>10. Research and VNF-IFL: Does research feed these debates? <i>Are there examples of this? Reference to reports, research findings etc...?</i></p>	<p>Yes, the research feeds these debates, and a survey of example from research within this field, has been presented in the former data named “Publications”. There is also a description of research concerned with validation at the University of Linköping website: http://www.ibl.liu.se/vufo/validering?!=sv</p>
<p>11. Problems/ difficulties, and resistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any emerging? If so which ones? What type? (strategic, operational, organisational, attitudinal, cultural, financial etc...) <p>Is there resistance appearing?</p>	<p>It is of great importance that the several definitions and the diversity of interpretations of both the concept and phenomenon of validation will be clarified to all actors engaged. There are differences in the interpretations not only between organizations and sectors, but also within them. In some organizations there is a resistance towards validation among the staff because of the confusions about the concept and the indistinctive responsibility among the organizers. This understanding is</p>

- At which level?
 - In which sector in particular?
 - From which category of actors/ stakeholders?
- Evidence available? Some examples?*

based on “informal” discussions, where certain teachers within the field of adult education sometimes feel that working with validation is more work-loading and time-consuming, than working with education only, especially as financial support for the tasks with validation are not regulated.

There is also a problem with different sectors using the concept of “Validation” in a careless manner, without clarifying what they mean. There are even actors who are approaching the concept of validation with an ambition of making profit on validation processes.

In the Memorandum from the NVL expert network on validation “Challenges in the work of recognition/validation of prior learning in the Nordic countries”, several challenges are highlighted for the Nordic countries, also applicable on the Swedish system summarized as follows (pp. 4- 17):

- Recognition/validation of prior learning (R/VPL) as a matter of policy
- A national, coherent structure
- EQF/NQF/ECVET – different Nordic countries are at different stages of preparing a national qualifications framework, transparency; it is crucial that an approach of EQF should be based on allowing diversity and contextualization, rather than a steering tool of control.
- Investments, effects and sustainability: It is necessary to clarify the returns and gains from R/VPL. There is a need for making calculations and presenting gains at several levels, societal, organizational, individual level, both in the short and the long term.
- Statistics and identification of target groups for R/VPL
- Special target groups – R/VPL as a possibility to give the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups a helping hand.
- Information
- Strengthening of guidance towards R/VPL
- Competence development – it must be made clear what it takes to work with R/VPL, an improved professionalism of the field is needed including clearer descriptions of the responsibilities, job and standards for working with R/VPL.
- Development of methodology
- Interaction between the enterprises and the educational system
- Interaction between the third sector and the educational system/workplaces
- Interaction within the university/HE system

- Educational implications of R/VPL
- Change of attitudes within the formal education system and having prior learning accepted as equal to formal competences represents a challenge. Raising awareness in working life and in third sector of documenting competences from non-formal learning
www.nordvux.net.

Any other comments

Because of the establishment of the new authority in 2009 - the Swedish National Agency for Higher Vocational Education (HVEC)- there is a lot of work in progress, in order to develop a common framework for validation in Sweden.