

Denmark – VIA University College

Institution	VIA University College
Interviewed Person	A member of a Validation team for assessors at the Pedagogic Bachelor programme

I – Preparation

Elisabeth is a member of a Validation team for assessors at the Pedagogic Bachelor programme. She is a study counsellor too. Throughout the recent years – with the FIF program in VIA (Preparation course for refugees and migrants), Elisabeth has reached an extensive experience with this group of applicants - About 25-30 applicants per year.

The validation team is divided into three small groups with two assessors in each, which means, that all interviews and assessments are made by two assessors. Each month, the assessment team meets to evaluate special cases in order to secure quality assurance and development of the VPL practice.

II - Awareness

There seems to be a difference among those applicants who have passed the FIF preparation course and those who have not. Because, in the FIF course, there is an ongoing focus on HE, the applicants are guided very thoroughly towards the application procedure. They are aware of the types of documentation and they have a strong awareness of their competences. Hence, for this group, there is obviously a higher self-awareness of their qualifications and competences and besides, they know the requirements of a higher education in Denmark.

Prior to the access application for the HE study at VIA UC, the majority of applicants have had their education assessed by the Ministry for recognition of foreign educations.

III - Starting up

The applicants are guided to the usage of a portefolio tool, provided by the Ministry, “My Competence portefolio” to document and to present qualifications and competences. However, as Elisabeth says: “Actually, this kind of portefolios are difficult and redundant, if instead a well-documented and systematic CV and – not least – a motivated application was developed by the applicant”. Such documents would provide the opportunity for the applicant to present herself and – with her own words – to explain her motivation for the education and for the subjects.

For the assessor, the application provides an important platform for assessing the applicant’s reflections for the study itself and for the options during and after the education.

For the applicants with a FIF diploma, documentation for results, together with the assessment formed by the FIF-teacher, is attached to the application.

IV – Documentation and support

During the FIF-course, the teachers guide the students about the required documentation in order to prepare this prior to the validation process. As an important part of the preparation course, the

students are supported in their considerations and their reflections about their study competence, their personal competences and whatever is relevant for the education.

While some of the applicants have fled from war zones, many of them have missed their documents and thereby they face difficulties with the documentation of a 'claimed' educational level.

The validation-team manages this problematic with an alternative procedure for trying – by other means – to identify academic competences, equivalent to study requirements.

The dilemma is, that while this is part of the VPL assessment interview, the applicant still risks not to have her accession permission by the following application step with the accession team, due to the lack of formal documentation.

V - Assessment

The validation interview is carried out in a friendly and encouraging atmosphere to help the applicant feel comfortable.

After a brief introduction, the applicant is invited to choose three pictures from a large number of photos – three pictures, which illustrates the applicant's motivation for the education and the profession. The dialogue takes its starting point in the chosen pictures and the applicant's presentation of her life until now, her personal competence, motivation and – if possible – her experience with pedagogic practice – being formal, non-formal and informal. After the interview, the applicant is asked to summarize the dialogue, the content together with reflections of what the dialogue has provided for her.

Elisabeth explains that: *"the narrative method, taken its starting point by the chosen pictures, widens the possibilities for the applicant to have the interview on her own premises and initiative". "Thus, we experience that other types of associations and reflections appear in the dialogue, because the photos offer room for considering and for more freely expressions. Besides, the photos provides the possibilities to demonstrate competences like creativity and esthetic".*

VI – Impact

In the short 'summing up' which the applicants provide after the interview, they typically stress the benefits they have gained by the dialogue.

VII - Impact on the longer term

According to Elisabeth, the follow up procedure on applicants' VPL points out a need for a more systematic evaluation to identify requirements for further quality initiatives. Obviously, there is a need for a continuing evaluation practice to support assessors' reflections and to challenge the learning and experience, established during the VPL activity.

SPECIAL SECTION ONLY FOR VALIDATION PROFESSIONALS

VIII – Assessors profile and training needs

Elizabeth became a VPL assessor while she is also the only study counsellor in a small unit for the study programme. Each study unit must present a candidate for the internal VPL board. Therefore, Elisabeth felt it relevant for her to take on the task.

When asked, Elizabeth does not feel a specific need for further competence development for the VPL assessor function. However, She would very much like to widen her own insight within a broader understanding of VPL. This could be in terms relevant courses; and occasionally also to take part in conferences.

The perspective for competence development together with gaining more insight is important for Elizabeth in order to align with the purpose of the VPL board; this is defined as the aim of development of new knowledge within in the VPL area, and to improve practice based on the acquired new knowledge and insight. In this way competence development and sparring among the VPL assessors is an ongoing process. About the more general methods for assessment, Elizabeth also benefits on her previous job and work tasks with the assessment of parental abilities and children's level of development. Elisabeth concludes that, practicing assessment is not a new task for her. The purpose is different, but the ethical issues and reflections are the same.

IX – policy context

Elisabeth explains about the political context that this is supportive for the validation. Firstly, the legal framework establishes the field of the VPL practice and secondly, there is a strong will and intension in the municipal system as well as in the educational system to support the establishment of study and practice training facilities for the target group of students with a refugee or migrant background. Internal in VIA UC, resources are prioritized for the VPL activity.