



OBSERVAL Case Study 2 2010 Norway [2]
Paul' Story

<p>The case study, the story</p>	<p>Paul's story. From the project <i>Validation of prior learning in prison education in Norway (2007-2009)</i>.</p>
<p><u>The context</u> <i>A landscape of the case study</i></p>	<p>The Norwegian system for validation of prior learning towards upper secondary education is established at county level in all counties throughout Norway.</p> <p>In Norwegian prisons, the education for inmates is provided by schools in the county, and the inmates have the same rights to education as other citizens, stated in the legislation governing imprisonment.</p> <p>This case study describes the story of one of the inmates who went through a validation process in the course of the project described in CS [1], <i>Validation of prior learning in prison education in Norway (2007-2009)</i>.</p> <p>Paul has committed a serious crime and was sentenced to prison for 6 years.</p> <p>Through different periods of his adult life he has worked as an unskilled worker at many different building sites, and he has built up a lot of experience from these jobs. He is good with practical work and has acquired a wide range of skills over time, whenever he has needed to learn something new in connection with work, leisure activities or mending things at home.</p> <p>He does not want to go to school for any further education, as he was never very fond of school.</p> <p>But he knows that the labour market demands official documentation as proof of his skills as a workman, so he realises that he needs to get some form of documentation.</p>

<p><u>The people:</u> <u>The candidate</u></p>	<p>Every prisoner in Norwegian prisons has to be engaged in some kind of work or education. Paul always chose the practical work; mending things, painting, woodwork, laying bricks and such like. It never occurred to him that he could use this competence as a basis for further education.</p> <p>But he was informed about his possibilities to go through a validation process towards upper secondary vocational education and became interested in trying his chances as a bricklayer. He then collected all his papers from his various jobs, described his experience in a CV and applied for a validation.</p> <p>The validation was performed in prison, by an assessor from outside. Paul was interviewed and tested practically in the prison workshop. Many of the learning goals in the curriculum were approved.</p>
<p><u>Results:</u></p>	<p>He was offered to get the remaining training in prison to top up the subjects he lacked, and went on to sit his final exam in prison. Among other things the exam included building an outdoor brick oven. Paul passed his exam with very good results.</p>
<p><u>The staff</u></p>	<p>The staff involved in this project were from two different systems within the prisons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prison school staff, who were responsible for providing the validation and the information and guidance linked to it, were employed by the local county school (outside the prison). • The guards and tutors in the prison workshops, who were responsible for the daily schedules and routines in contact with the prisoners, were employed by the prison authorities. <p>In Paul's case these two systems cooperated; the school staff gave him relevant information and guidance and the prison staff adjusted time-tables so that validation could take place.</p>
<p><u>Benefits</u></p>	<p>Paul got his diploma because he could use his prior learning as a basis for further input and finally pass the exam. He would not have entered the education system if he had been obliged to start from scratch. The validation process made it possible for him to use his lifelong learning as a basis for formal education.</p> <p>The validation itself proved to him that his experience and competences were valuable and that some parts of his background could actually be useful for his future career.</p> <p>When he has served his sentence and is released from prison, he will be able to enter the labour market holding a journeyman's certificate, which will open new doors to him.</p>

The process

Validation inside prisons follows the same procedures as elsewhere. The prison school staff organise co-operation with the validation system established in the county.

Information and guidance is provided by the prison school staff. They will also assist the inmate with mapping prior learning, as a preparation for the validation. When the inmate has decided to be validated, he or she has to apply for validation to the county education authorities outside, and they establish contact with an assessor. The prison school may assist the inmate in this application process. Most often the validation itself is performed inside prison, the assessor visiting from outside.

The county system of validation of prior learning in upper secondary education:

Regional authorities decide how work on the validation of non-formal learning is to be organised. Most regional authorities organise this work by means of one or more "centres". Adults can get information, guidance and help with the validation process from supervisors at these centres.

The following elements are recommended nationally in the procedure for validation of competence:

- Information and guidance
- Identification and systemising of all competences
- Assessment
- Public documentation

The methods

The following methods and tools have been developed for validation of non-formal learning in respect to the goals and requirements stipulated in national curricula.

- Dialogue-based method: The dialogue-based method is based on discussions between assessor/specialist and adult. The specialist focuses on the knowledge and experience of each individual and attends to specific problems and queries. The assessor/specialist can use a computerised or manual tool based on the curriculum in question.

This method requires individual preparation and a one-to-one meeting. The dialogue-based method is often combined with port-folio assessment, self assessment and testing. It has been tested out on a large number of candidates. The conclusion is that the method fits in with both vocational and general subjects; the degree of testing has to vary from person to person. A dialogue-based method covers tacit knowledge, and seems to be good for adults with literacy and number issues.

- Assessment of portfolio: Assessment on the basis of a portfolio is a method based on written documentation, photos, etc. The candidate sends a "charting" form to a "service centre" together with certificates and reports. Modules and

	<p>subjects are approved on the basis of the documentation submitted, and additional education is offered so that individuals can acquire the desired certificates.</p> <p>This method demands good written documentation of individuals' own skills and does not assume one-to-one meetings. Undocumented and tacit knowledge is difficult to reveal. After admission to upper secondary education, a discussion takes place in order to arrange the course according to the candidate's actual knowledge and skills.</p> <p>- <u>Vocational "testing"</u> starts off with an interview, where the background, training, work experience, language skills and objectives of the adult are charted. After the first general interview a professional specialist interviews the individual in the particular subject, after which the individual shows his/her abilities in practice, so that both the theoretical and the practical side of the trade is assessed. On the basis of this process, the adult may be offered additional education to bring him or her up to either journeyman's/trade certificate level or to the level of a public certificate (kompetansebevis) useful for job seeking. This method complements other methods in that the assessment of non-formal learning is also possible, and where required, parts or all of the practical side of the vocational subjects can be approved. Vocational "testing" provides adults – irrespective of their ethnic origins – with every opportunity to show what they can actually do in their own fields. This method picks up knowledge and experience which is not documented and works well irrespective of learning and language difficulties. Vocational testing, however, requires inter-departmental co-operation between the education system, the employment service and possibly also the insurance office and social security office.</p> <p><u>Tools</u></p> <p>Both manual and computerised tools have been developed and tested in vocational and general subjects. The tools are used in different ways for the different methods dependent on the needs of the individual. Sometimes the assessor supplements the existing tools with locally developed tools.</p> <p><u>More information</u></p> <p>The validation project that Paul took part in, is described further in OBSERVAL Case Study 2 (1) 2010 Norway and in the project report from January 2010 (in Norwegian only): Alfssen, Hanssen, Ramstad (2010): <i>"Din tur til å bevis"</i> <i>Realkompetansevurdering i opplæringen innenfor kriminalomsorgen (2007 - 2009) Sluttrapport</i>. Rapport nr. 2/10 Fylkesmannen i Hordaland.</p>
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