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A Case Study in the Industrial Sector

The case study	The story
<p><u>Description of the context</u></p> <p>In which sector is it taking place? In which organisation is it taking place?</p> <p>Explanation of the organisation’s function & purpose – The background to the case study/a landscape of the case study</p>	<p>Web links to institution/organization website or: As we do not want the persons involved to be identified we do not give links to websites.</p> <p>Case study: This case study is focusing on validation of non-formal and informal learning at the workplace. The validation is related to specific vocational competence requirements for different professions in a specific industrial sector. This report is based upon an interview with a responsible person from the industry. The text below is based upon a description of how this specific industry is working with validation.</p> <p>We have chosen to interact in the text, now and then, by giving some reflections. In order to separate our reflections from the report we have put them in small “clouds”. .</p> <p>Sector: At workplace</p> <p>Organisation where the validation took place: The Industry.</p> <p>Background to the case study: The validation concerns competencies of the employees, with reference to specific vocational competencies controlled and demanded by the trade union and the employers’ association.</p> <p>The main purpose with the validation is to identify “hidden gaps of competencies”, establish individual descriptions of every employees’ competencies, and also to create individual plans for competence development in order to create possibilities to bridge their lack of competencies with a “bridging program”. Another purpose with the current validation is to use it as a tool for recruitment. The validation is initiated by the needs from the company, and is also focusing on the “status” of the</p>

	<p>employability.</p>  <p>The employees have not chosen to join competence development</p>
<p><u>Description of the VNFL-IFL candidates:</u> Who are they?</p> <p>Description of the developers perspective of the validation-process:</p>	<p>The candidates are employees in the field of a Swedish Industry.</p> <p>Due to the report the validation-process in this specific industry differs in comparison to other industries. The work with validation in this industry is described as more similar with test of knowledge and they do not completely follow the official national definition of validation.</p>  <p>Differences in ideological and theoretical approaches</p>

Aims and professional/ personal project? Why the VNFL-IFL?

Already from the beginning when they started to work with validation, the industry made it clear, that they first of all wanted to use validation as a tool for checking the competencies of the employees, in order to identify hidden gaps of competencies. Secondly they wanted to use validation as a tool for recruitment. The validation is always initiated from the needs of the company, but when they create the individual plan of developing competencies with bridging programme, they also focus on the employability of the individual.



From the perspective of the industry it is not their main task to carry out the mapping of competencies in an investigating perspective of validation. It is rather a task for the Employment Service to investigate and identify whether the candidate should go directly to a work place or join a supplementary education.

If the mapping, carried out by the Employment Service, shows that a candidate has competencies similar to those required in the actual industry, they can assist to validation related to the specific competence requirements connected to different professions in the field.

The validation-process – description of tools

The process: Initially, the validation process started with competence-validation for all the employees in the actual companies. Competence-validation is described as “controlling whether the employees have the competences the companies are expected them to have”. An aim was to create a description of competencies related to the requirements made by the industry. According to the results an individual plan was created for competence development for each employee. This way of working is described as an effective way of competence development and consists of four steps:

- Validation
- Description of competencies
- Plan for competence development

- Education/Vocational training

First of all, staff from the industry made a specified description of professions in this industry. Nine different and most common professions were identified.

A network of experts from each profession was created. These experts defined the specific competence requirements for each profession. It was important to make this requirements as general as possible to involve as many employees as possible. Every competence requirement was then specified in several elements and after that the questions for the validation were created in cooperation between the experts in the network, researchers from the actual industry, and also from other industries, to receive questions of a more general kind.

The validation process is divided into one theoretical session and one practical session. The theoretical session is accomplished at the Swedish Association. A specific web-based tool, developed by the vocational expertise contains of 3000 questions. These questions are corresponding to vocational requirements to the nine different professions in the field. Every element of the profession consists of 30 questions. The candidate gets 10 questions randomly selected from each sector, of relevance to the candidate. Mostly there are about 10-12 persons joining the theoretical validation at the same time and the costs for each person is about 3000 SEK. The result from the questionnaire is expressed in percent to enhance comparisons towards different parts of questions and also to inform the candidates about their level of achievement. This session of the validation is carried out in less than one workday.

The practical sessions are carried out at those companies where the candidates are employed. These sessions are planned to take place when it is suitable for the companies. On these occasions one representative from the actual specific profession survey the candidate when the practical validation is carried out.

Each profession has its own educational compendium, were the candidate can join a bridging programme to develop his competencies related to the actual profession, and to every element of it.

When both the theoretical and the practical sessions of validation are accomplished, the results are put together in a description of competencies for each candidate and are later on reported to the leaders of the validation at the association. In the next step these leaders report the results to

the leaders of the actual company where the candidates are employed and also to representatives of the trade unions. The final step is to inform the candidates about the outcomes of the validation.

With reference to the outcomes, an individual plan for competence development is created for each employee, where missing parts in specific issues are identified. Thanks to the written document the candidates are offered to join a bridging program in missing topics.



The benefits of the way of validating are less cassation, which means less of incorrectly done products caused by lack of knowledge. Another benefit is that the validation leads to higher efficiency for the companies. The individual descriptions of competencies function on one hand as a tool for quality assurance for the company, and on the other as a way for the candidates to achieve increased self-esteem. The outcomes from the validation are also used as tools for rewarding the employees, after having joined the supplementary education, by giving them a rise of salary. Another benefit mentioned as an effect of the validation, is that the company has been able to minimize their time-consuming conversations with the staff concerning their competence development. This benefit is also seen as a minimized risk for subjective assessment/judgment when persons in leading positions discuss competence development or salary with the employee.

The engagement from the industry is according to the report obviously high. In order to develop the production system, and to decrease the amount of cassations, some activities have been initiated. An effect of this engagement is that the industry has been focused in a positive sense, because of the ambition to meet new demands from the industry as well as from the labour market.

We have also noticed that the industry seems to serve as a model to other branches in the labour market. One essential part of the validation described above deals with competence development of the employees. The strategy is not to identify current competence that are lacking, so called "hidden gaps".

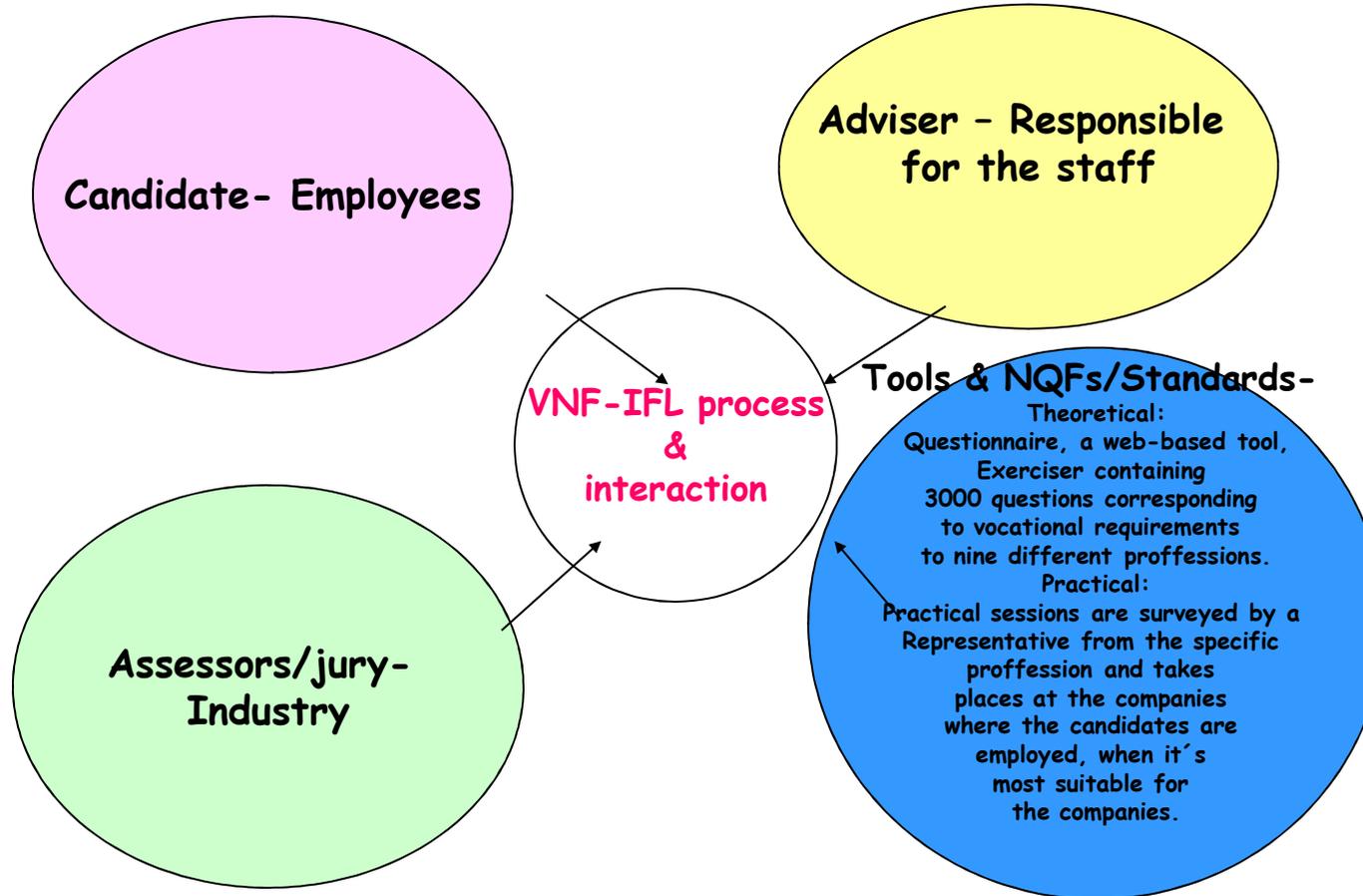


The next step is to afford competence development to the employees that are in need as an aim to reach high competence with all the staff.

One of our reflections is that thanks to the actual industry other industries have been inspired to intensify their own work with validation. Another reflection is that the described activities probably are consequences of a growing demand from both workplaces and employees.

Conclusions - Summary

Workplace



The case study – different stories