

Denmark – VIA University College

Institution	VIA University College
Interviewed Person	Abadi, from Congo

I – Preparation

Abadi is 40 years old. He has lived in Denmark for seven years; originally, he comes from Congo. A studies pedagogic at the University College, finishing right now his bachelor project. Abadi applied for VPL in 2014. The year before, he finished the Preparation Course, FIF. Abadi is an educated primary school teacher from Congo, where he worked for eight years. Besides, he has worked as a school leader in a refugee camp in Kenya.

II - Awareness

Abadi tells that it was difficult to have his competences and qualifications recognized in Denmark. He has the impression that his former education from Congo *“was multiplied by zero”* as he expresses and that he had to start again from scratch. The guidance counsellor, the Employment Centre, asked him to start in primary school, ninth grade at the Adult Education Centre, which Abadi refused to do due to his education and profession as a primary school teacher. In his first years in Denmark, Abadi wondered why nobody really showed an interest in assessing his formal qualifications to help him make use of it – in one way or another.

He speaks fluent French, English, and a couple of other languages and he has been a language teacher for eight years.

Besides teaching, Abadi has worked with management. To his opinion, he should be an attractive employee as quite many Danish companies employ English-speaking specialists. He wonders why the Employment Centre did not introduce him to such companies.

Starting at the Language School, new opportunities appear for Abadi. He learns about the Preparation Course. Here got the support for having his former HE assessed by the Danish Ministry for HE and Science. With an extra one-year additional course, the education would be recognised as equal to the Danish Primary School Teacher education. However, Abadi chose not to take this additional course, as he felt uncertain that his Danish language competences were sufficient and that the language problems would overshadow his professional skills.

III - Starting up

At the language centre, Abadi finds out that he can have his prior learning assessed within a Danish context and here he comes to learn about the Preparation course and the opportunities to further develop his qualifications within a bachelor degree programme.

At the FIF Preparation course, a part VPL process was included, as Abadi was guided on how to apply for the Pedagogic bachelor degree based on his prior learning, together with his formal education. Here, he realized that his teaching and school management experiences were assessed as important and valuable.

Abadi expresses this *‘break through’* as a feeling of *“Finally being recognized as competent”*.

Looking back to the FIF-course, Abadi highly appreciates how the mindset of VPL helped him believe in a new future in Denmark. The teaching and the learning approach at the course was characterized by dialogue and reflections on each individual's prior learning and competences. Besides, students' study-related, professional and social competences were observed, together with language skills and an assessment on these was provided as a document to the further VPL process when applying for the bachelor degree programme.

IV – Documentation and support

Abadi had brought with him most of his formal documentation for his education. In the first phase, Abadi made the documentation for VPL by himself. Afterwards, guidance for the further process was provided from the Pedagogic Education, where Abadi received a feed-back on his application for the accession interview. Due to the guidance, Abadi felt well prepared for the interview. He also received written information about the interview as well as for the entire application process. To prepare for the interview, Abadi got an article, which formed the basis of the dialogue at the VPL interview – an article providing a relevant topic for the Pedagogy profession.

V - Assessment

The VPL dialogue was based on the pedagogic professional article, which Abadi was asked to prepare for. Abadi recalls the article as a difficult academic style with a high complexity in content. Furthermore, the topic was difficult to relate to as it - Abadi remembers- was more linked to a Northern European tradition and hence quite strange from a Congolese perspective. As the article brought many professional aspects in play, being an applicant to the pedagogic study, it was hard to comprehend which of the elements should be given specific attention, and which should not. The difficult article caused uncertainty for Abadi, as he feared:

“Do I risk not to be recognized for the Pedagogic Study just because I don't manage the style of the article?”

Despite all the worries, the validation interview went well, Abadi tells.

“We had a good dialogue about the topic of the article. The assessors were good to ask about the topic and there was a pleasant atmosphere”, he remembers.

“It was not like an exam! You were asked to express your opinion”

In his reflections afterwards, Abadi found that the article, forming the basic mean for the Validation dialogue was insufficient in order to provide the possibilities for the applicant to demonstrate all his competences.

“The use of the article had only one focus, while my competences and qualifications are much more than linguistic, academic study competences” “It was as if you became reduced whether to being able to understand the article – nor not!” This was worrying, Abadi recalls.

“Looking back on the dialogue, I would have done things differently”. Today, being close to my graduation as a pedagogue, I know the style, theories and not least the dialogue style of the study”. Four years ago, I didn’t!

VI – Impact

Impact, short term

“I had my competences recognized for the education and this was redeeming”, Abadi remembers. “I felt as if a path appeared for me, and a light was turned on. Now, I could make a living”. Abadi tells how important it was for him that all his prior learning, professional, personal and social skills were recognized in the new formal educational context.

” For me, this has been the perfect education. I might have chosen differently, had I had more opportunities at the time for the VPL – at the FIF course. Now, I am happy that I did not do it.

Abadi tells that he has a job when he soon graduates. It is his reflections that the entire VPL process raised his self-awareness. This counts especially for the linguistic importance. As Abadi says, *“It is so important to focus on the language throughout the entire process, both before the accession to the study and also during the study. You have to keep reflecting on how you use words to express nuances, for instance in the pedagogic profession. I have learned this, and I am sure that I will keep on using these skills in the future.*