



European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014

Country report Denmark

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	National legal framework, system or policy on validation	4
1.2	Skills audits	6
1.3	Relationship with qualifications framework and credit systems, and information on standards used for validation	6
1.4	National institutional framework	7
1.5	Governance and allocation of responsibilities.....	7
1.6	Examples of national regional, local or EU funded initiatives	11
1.7	Inputs, outputs and outcomes.....	13
2	Information, advice and guidance	15
2.1	Awareness-raising and recruitment	15
2.2	Role of information, advice and guidance networks / institutions	15
2.3	Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners.....	15
3	Quality assurance and evaluation.....	16
3.1	Quality Assurance Framework.....	16
3.2	Evaluation framework.....	16
4	Validation methods	17
4.1	Methods used and the validation process.....	17
5	Validation practitioners.....	18
5.1	Profile of validation practitioners	18
5.2	Provision of training and support to practitioners.....	18
5.3	Qualifications requirements.....	19
6	References	20
6.1	Organisations consulted.....	21

1 Introduction

The validation of non-formal and informal learning has been on the policy agenda in Denmark for about 20 years and is seen as a key element to promote lifelong learning in Denmark. In practice, validation of non-formal and informal learning in Denmark broadly speaking provides an individual the opportunity:

- to be granted access to formal education and training programmes if they do not meet the formal entry requirements
- to get exemptions for parts of a formal education and training programme and/ or have an individual tailored education and training programme
- to acquire a 'certificate of competence' leading to access/ exemptions in adult education and training programmes
- To obtain 'education certificates' for parts of/or a whole education programme on the basis of validation of prior learning.

Competence assessment and possible outcomes in terms of access, exemption and acquiring certificates varies between the different education and training sectors e.g. VET, HE and adult education and training. For almost all formal adult education and training a legal framework for validation of prior learning based on common principles has been in place since 2007.

Within this framework it is a right for individuals to request an assessment of their prior learning in relation to the standards of an education and training programme, no matter where and how competences have been required.

This procedure is known in Danish as the (individual) 'assessment of real competences' *realkompetencevurdering* (RKV) or *individuel kompetencevurdering* (IKV)¹.

Validation has been developed in Denmark both from a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach. The legislation and the formal framework have been set nationally, but the implementation is decentralised at the provider level. Financial constraints still pose obstacles to implementation and great differences still remain between the educational institutions with regards to their level of activity.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning has also been an important focal point for many years in the non-formal sector especially among organisations and institutions engaged in liberal education. Tools for documenting knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal education etc. have been developed.

In the field of adult learning, in 2010-2011, the Ministry of Education carried out an evaluation of the implementation of the 2007 Act no. 556⁽²⁾ which provides the legal basis for validation of prior learning within adult education and training programmes. The evaluation concluded that validation of prior learning within the adult education and training programmes receives broad support from relevant stakeholders (including social partners) and is seen as a very important instrument to promote participation in adult and continuing training. However, there is still considerable potential for development and improvement

¹ Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science recommend the following use of the terms: "When prior learning assessment systems are referred to in general and in relation to the educational institutions' overall task of assessment and validation of prior learning, the term RKV is used. In the case of prior learning assessments within the individual programmes both IKV and RKV are used, as the term IKV is used within all educational areas, with the exception of the further education system for adults, where RKV is used "(RKV Working Group Report, Annex 1, Ministry of Children and Education, November 2011). Source: <http://www.viauc.dk/viden-om-realkompetence/rkv-hvad-og-hvorfor/hvad-er-realkompetence/Sider/begreberne-rkv-og-ikv.aspx>

² <http://english.eva.dk/publications/validation-of-prior-learning-within-adult-education-in-denmark>

concerning information/awareness raising, standardisation, quality assurance and cooperation between stakeholders (educational institutions, job centres, unemployment funds, trade unions, third sector, etc.).

The government launched in February 2013 an ambitious plan for growth in Denmark ("Væktsplan.dk) including the strengthening of quality in public adult education and training and a reform of vocational education and training. A renewed legal framework for vocational education and training – also including further promotion and development of validation of prior learning especially targeted at adults - is now currently being prepared by the Danish government. This reform is expected to be implemented during 2014 and 2015.

1.1 National legal framework, system or policy on validation

In Denmark, the validation of prior learning is regulated by laws, as follows:

- The legislation for upper general education including executive order BEK nr 130 of 21/02/2011 entitles students to get credit transfers for prior learning on the basis of an individual assessment
- The legislation for VET³ (2003) includes a general principle of individual competence assessment as a basis for preparation of personal education plans for each individual. The personal education plan is based on an assessment of the pupils' competences and outlines an individual pathway through the VET system.
- Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007⁴, entitled 'Development of the validation of prior learning in adult education and continuing training', effective from August 2007 gives each individual the right to have his/her prior learning experiences validated in relation to specific goals of adult education and continuing training programmes⁵. Citizens from other EU countries are granted the same rights to undergo validation processes. Act no. 556 includes the following six educational fields as part of adult education:
 - Single course subjects in general adult education (avu);
 - Single course subjects in general upper secondary education;
 - Vocational training programme (AMU);
 - Basic adult education (GVU);
 - Short-cycle post-secondary adult education (VVU); and
 - Medium-cycle post-secondary adult education ('Diploma' programme).

According to Danish law, the assessment must be conducted by the educational institution offering the corresponding study programmes.

Since 2007, legislation⁶ admits individuals to gain access to short-cycle and medium-cycle Higher Education (Bachelor-level degrees) based on an individual competence assessment. The educational institutions are responsible for information, guidance and assessment of the individual. The Ministry of Education⁷ and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science⁸ are responsible for the legislative framework for assessment of prior learning and for taking national initiatives for implementing the legislation. The Ministries have developed policy guidelines and funded projects looking at developing tools, methods and procedures. The educational institutions are responsible for counselling/guidance, and for assessing and

³ Internet: <http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Erhvervsuddannelser.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/r0710.aspx?id=25349>

⁵ In 2001 the further education system for adults was established as a parallel system to the ordinary education system. It consists of Basic Adult Education (GVU) up to Master's level programmes and aims to award adults certificates for competences, and offer further learning and education.

<http://uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne/Om%20uddannelse%20og%20undervisning%20for%20voksne.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=145524>

⁷ <http://eng.uvm.dk/>

⁸ http://fivu.dk/en?set_language=en&cl=en

approving validation within their educational and training programmes. The educational institutions also have the responsibility for quality assurance, review and evaluation.

Other stakeholders act as guidance institutions, e.g. the job centres, the trade unions, the unemployment security funds and the third sector.

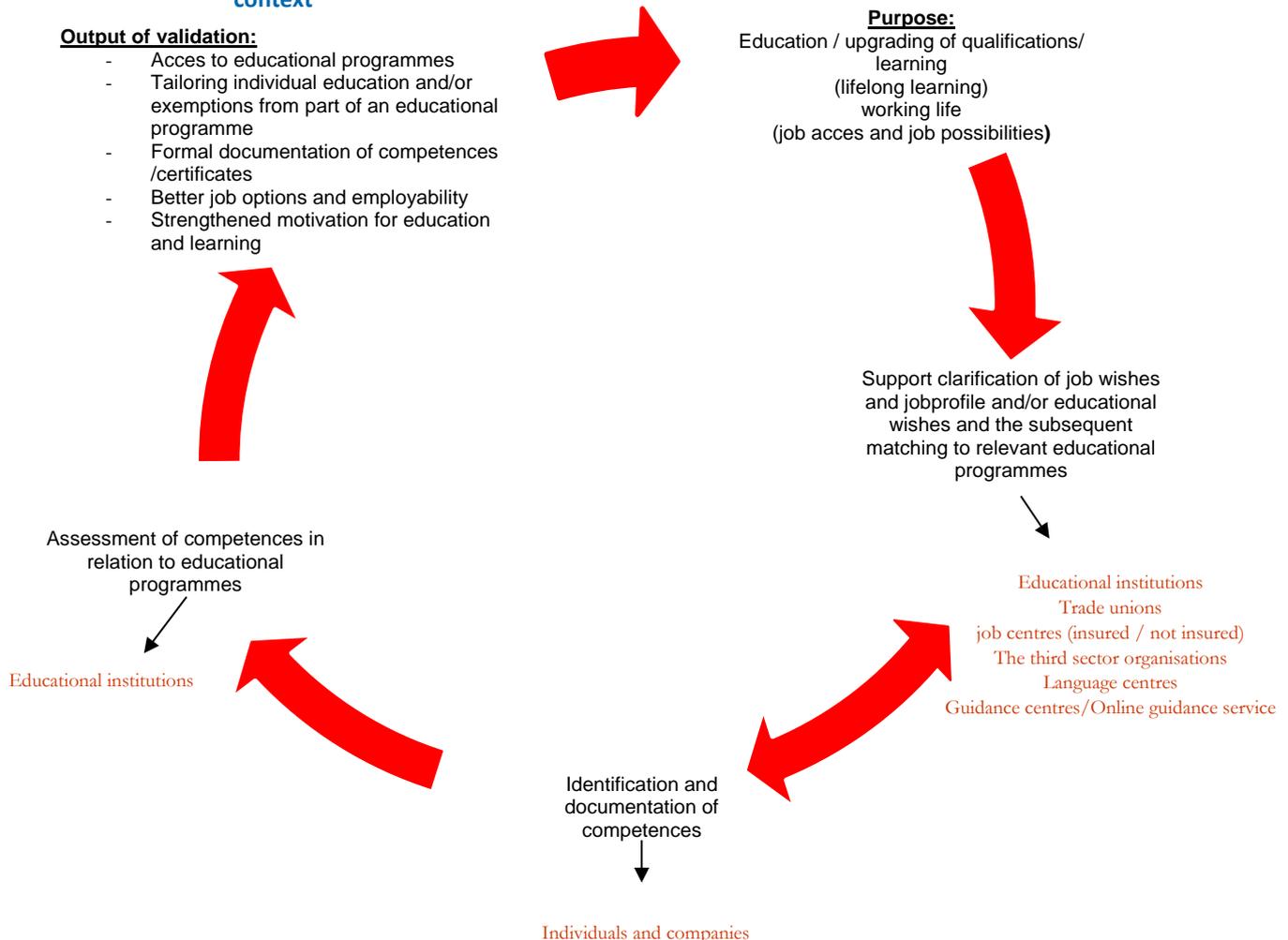
The implementation of the legislation is decentralised. The tradition in Denmark is that legislation provides a framework that outlines how the educational institutions have to act, to ensure quality assurance and to ensure evaluation with a view to developing quality systems, methods, etc.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education made a national action plan on validation of prior learning with four initiatives crossing all relevant adult educational areas:

1. Mapping out the players in guidance and counselling,
2. Examining the possibilities of applying a broader perspective in the RPL- programmes validating in the adult educational system, including a vocational- and employment- perspective,
3. Quality assurance with a special focus on developing a code of conduct for validation of prior learning,
4. A strengthened information effort in order to support a broader implementation of validation of prior learning in all adult educational areas.

In Spring 2011, a committee was established in order to prepare the action plan. In the report of the committee, the model for validation illustrated in Figure 1.1 was described:

Figure 1.1 The process for validation of prior learning in an educational perspective and a Danish context



The model describes a coherent process of four stages including identification, documentation, assessment and certification.

It is the educational institution which is responsible for identifying one or more study objectives or admission requirements against which a candidate is to be evaluated, providing the specific counselling and guidance and conducting the assessment.

Other bodies can be in charge of information, identification, guidance and counselling, in a broader perspective, in the phase leading up to the assessment process ('the pre-phase'). These include, among others, trade unions, employers' associations, job centres, unemployment insurance funds, civic education institutions, study committees and 'eVejledning' (online guidance service), who can all take care of this part of the process and often in collaboration with the educational institution.

Focus in the "pre-phase" is on establishing objectives, identifying needs, direction and wishes. Among other things, companies can do so by defining new tasks and future business plans with matching competence profiles. For individuals, both employees and jobseekers, this part of the process may include documentation of what they have previously learnt. For both companies and individuals, the pre-phase helps clarify and identify objectives and the direction for career development, and it helps create a potential plan for the types of formal education which would be relevant in future.

1.2 Skills audits

In Denmark, it should be noted that procedures for the validation of prior learning can also be interpreted as a form of competence assessment or skills audit.

A number of tools have been developed for the documentation of competences. They allow for a written, systematic mapping of competences divided into different categories.

In Denmark, a distinction is often made between general and specific types of competence assessment:

- A general or divergent assessment aims to identify all competences mastered by the individual. The focus of the process is for the person to clarify and describe all of his/her prior learning in order to identify future choices of job and education. Often, the process will follow a formative learning approach. Example of approaches include My Competence Portfolio: www.minkompetencemappe.dk and the tool for documentation of and dialogue about personal competences: <http://www.realkompetence-folkeoplysning.dk/>
- A specific or convergent assessment aims to identify which of the individuals' competences are relevant in relation to the standards of a specific qualification. This can be carried out after a broad assessment. An example of approach for technical professions and qualifications is the Misc. IT test tools, i.a. <http://www.knowentia.com/>

Most tools include *self-assessments* during which the individual is to grade his/her experience, knowledge or competences on a scale typically ranging from 1 to 6. Often, the individuals themselves describe their competences. In other instances, the competences have been described in advance, and the individuals are merely required to assess their competences on a certain scale. Documentation through self-assessment enables individuals to reflect on their own competences and makes it possible to describe them in a systematic way. In order for the documentation to be reliable, self-assessments cannot stand alone. Other methods used for documentation are tests, i.e. multiple choice or written assignments.

1.3 Relationship with qualifications framework and credit systems, and information on standards used for validation

Qualifications and qualifications frameworks

There is a comprehensive national qualifications framework (NQF) in place in Denmark, covering all types and levels of qualification awarded and quality assured by public authorities. The proposal for the eight-level framework was adopted in 2009 and the NQF

was referenced to the EQF in May 2011. Most qualifications in the Danish NQF are accessible /can be acquired on the basis of validation.

It has been considered that the framework may be opened up to qualifications and certificates in the private and non-formal sector, in a second stage of development / implementation⁹.

Credit systems

As noted in previous Inventory country reports for Denmark, there is a credit transfer system in general upper secondary education, which is based on assessment of an individual's prior learning. Students can get transfer (not credit based as ECTS) for previously completed studies, periods of study abroad, etc, and be granted admission to subjects at a higher level, to extra optional subjects, or a reduced advanced level course load (where the credit transfer is particularly substantial). Assessment is made after entry.

In HE, ECTS is in use and the modularised structure supports the validation process. Individuals can be awarded competence certificates on the basis of validation.

Standards

Standards are not used to support the validation process in Denmark, but qualification standards and general procedures and executive orders exists as basis for validation in public funded programmes.

1.4 National institutional framework

The Ministry of Education¹⁰ and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science,¹¹ are responsible for the legislative framework for assessment of prior learning and for taking national initiatives for implementing the legislation. The Ministries have developed policy guidelines and funded projects with the aim of developing tools, methods and procedures.

The implementation of the legislation is decentralised to a high degree. As mentioned above, the tradition in Denmark is that legislation provides a framework that outlines how the educational institutions have to act to ensure quality assurance and sound evaluation with a view to developing quality systems, methods, etc.

Educational institutions are responsible for counselling/guidance, and for assessing and approving validation within their educational and training programmes. Educational institutions also have the responsibility for quality assurance, review and evaluation.

In 2007, the NVR or National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning¹² was set up. It was until 2010 funded by the Ministry of Education. The aim of the knowledge centre is to collect, produce and disseminate information and documentation on existing knowledge about the validation of prior learning.

1.5 Governance and allocation of responsibilities

The key national bodies for assessment of prior learning are the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Both ministries are responsible for the legislative framework in the area and for taking national initiatives for implementing the legislation within its field. The Ministries have developed policy guidelines and funded projects with the aim of developing tools, methods and procedures for validation. The Ministry of Education has developed *My Competence Portfolio*¹³ as a tool for use by all

⁹ European Inventory on NQF 2012: Denmark. Internet:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/NQF_developments_2012-DENMARK.pdf

¹⁰ <http://eng.uvm.dk/>

¹¹ http://fivu.dk/en?set_language=en&cl=en

¹² Internet: http://www.nvr.nu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=105&Itemid=159

¹³ <https://minkompetencemappe.dk/>

stakeholders, especially the educational institutions. Furthermore, as stated above, the Ministry has partially funded the NVR.

In the area of Adult Vocational Training, as well as Vocational Education and Training, social partners are usually involved in decisions about the assessment of prior learning. They have contributed significantly and have influenced a number of areas within the legislation. Thus the Government works closely with social partners, for example with the Council for Vocational Education and Training (REU), the Council for Adult Education and Training (VEU-Rådet), the Council for Academy Profession Education and Professional Bachelor Education. These Councils advise the Government on their specific areas of education and training.

The 'National Trade Committees' define the contents of VET qualifications and competence frameworks. There are also trade committees that act at a local level. Vocational Training Committees play a similar role in relation to adult vocational training programmes.

As mentioned above, educational institutions themselves are responsible for counselling/guidance and for carrying the assessment against their educational and training programmes. Educational institutions also have the responsibility for quality assurance, review and evaluation. Other stakeholders act as guidance institutions, e.g. job centre; the trade unions and the third sector are also involved in guidance and counselling.

1.5.1 Explain more specifically the role of different stakeholders

Education and training providers:

According to Act no. 556 (2007) each adult education institution is responsible for validation of prior learning. The institutions can assess and recognise prior learning in adult education and continuing training for the purposes of:

- Accessing formal education, i.e. using non-formal/informal experiences to meet the admission requirements;
- Tailoring an educational programme or to give credit for certain classes up to Master's level; and
- Awarding a 'Competence certificate' if the participant meets the requirements of part of an educational programme or an 'Education certificate' if the participant's skills are the same as those obtained by completing an entire educational programme¹⁴. The certificates have the same value as the certificates in formal education.

In Higher Education most validation of prior learning takes place at the diploma level. The qualifications framework is used to provide criteria for the assessment for admission or for the award of competence certificates. A network has been established between the University Colleges to ensure a common approach to validation.

In the mainstream education system there is currently action by the University Colleges to develop systems to ensure best practice in validation of prior learning for access to the Medium Cycle Higher Education.

The vocational education institutions providing AMU and the Adult Education Centres (VUC) all participate in 13 local Adult and Continuing Training Centres (VEU-centres). The 13 VEU centres were established in 2010 to provide a unified gateway to both general adult education and vocational adult education and continuing training, with greater focus on quality and effectiveness. The VEU-centres also have a responsibility for promoting the RPL-programmes and for improving the quality of the programmes in the participating education institutions.

Private sector actors (including social partners)

¹⁴ Certificates of admission can be used for GVU, VVU and Diploma programmes. Certificates of competency can be issued for all six education areas, while certificates of education cannot be issued for general adult education and general upper secondary subjects at VUC.

The social partners as well as private sector organisations are often involved in the development of the RPL-programmes. They have contributed significantly and have had influence in a number of areas within the legislation.

Private enterprises in Denmark use resources on competence development to a high degree, e.g. large enterprises such as Post Denmark(www.postdanmark.dk) and Novo Nordisk Scandinavia (www.novonordisk.dk). However, this is not common amongst small enterprises. Validation of prior learning is in use especially in the development of companies and the downsizing and closing of enterprises.

In the area of adult vocational education and training there is a tradition of collaboration between enterprises and formal educational institutions concerning competence development for employees. The social partners have an important role in strengthening this collaboration.

The social partners

Below follows a description of how some of the main social partners relate to validation.

Danish social partners and validation of non-formal and informal learning

LO, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions¹⁵, is very engaged and interested in the recognition of prior learning. This is especially relevant now following the government's latest proposal for a VET reform, where validation plays an important part of the effort towards adults.

LO sees validation as a very relevant tool in relation to educational policy that can move adults from unskilled to skilled workers and from skilled workers to higher education. This is also known as the two-fold educational improvement.

LO believes, that the main issue is for employees with vocational experience to gain recognition or merit for these skills that they have learned in practice. This way, the adult will be able to obtain skills that correspond to the normal established requirements of an education at a faster pace than young people without vocational experience.

LO is involved in the shaping of policies and strategies at the political level, performs tasks and is represented at central, regional and local level in the assembled organs that characterise the vocational education system.

It is evident that activity in the field of validation has been sparse and that the contribution of RKV to two-fold educational improvement has been poor. LO believes that the greatest challenge is defining a common set of norms for drawing up validation. Another challenge, that LO has had to focus on, is balancing the individual assessments and the collective/group assessments in certain types of business so that more people than before can gain credit for obtained skills and thereby finish a vocational education at a faster pace than the inexperienced.

LO believes that work still remains to be done in ensuring that the validation results in recognition, which in turn creates an educational process that improves the competences of each adult.

Although LO points out, that although Denmark has come far in its thoughts on and implementation of validation, the country still has a long way to go before being able to say that validation has been established both within institutions and in regard to the content that enables it to become successful among employees and contribute to two-fold educational improvement.

This requires a steady and conscious effort at both national and political level.

DA, the Confederation of Danish Employers¹⁶, is very focused on and interested in the recognition of prior learning, especially in the field of adult education and continuing training.

DA believes that prior learning assessments contribute to facilitating the access to continuing training and to creating the basis for abridging an education process or tailoring it to each individual. Also, prior learning assessments present an opportunity for the individual to obtain partial or full certificates.

Like LO, DA is involved in the shaping of policies and strategies at the political level, performs tasks and is represented at both central, regional and local level in the assembled organs that are characteristic of the vocational education system.

¹⁵ <http://www.lo.dk/English%20version/About%20LO.aspx>

¹⁶ <http://www.da.dk/default.asp>

FTF, the Confederation of Professionals in Denmark¹⁷, acts in this political field as a central organisation. The organisations under FTF take different approaches to validation due to the fact that they have different views on its applicability.

The organisations in FTF are concerned about the user fee the individual has to pay for validation in higher education. The FTF believe, that it is crucial to remove the fee.

Several FTF organisations list information about the options for validation on their websites and provide guidance for their members on validation possibilities.

There is a lot of focus on the possible progress in the use of validation in FTF, and many see the procedures of educational institutions, the actors primarily responsible for this task, as slow and complex. Many are also concerned with providing validation in relation to the labour market and jobs to a greater extent.

Several unions take part in working groups with other stakeholders in order to strengthen the effort and thereby enforcing the skills development of their members through validation.

Third sector organisations

The third sector¹⁸ and the non-formal education stakeholders fulfill two tasks related to validation of prior learning:

- providing information and guidance about the options for validation of prior learning,
- supporting participants in clarifying, wording and documenting their prior learning.

For the folk high schools and the production schools, the work related to clarifying and documenting the participants' prior learning has become mainstreamed. It is now mandatory by law for the production schools to issue certificates of professional competence to pupils¹⁹.

A lot of folk high schools, independent vocational schools and *efterskoler* (continuation schools) focus on clarifying personal and social competences together with the professional profile. The evening schools and *Folkeuniversitetet* (adult education schools) see validation of prior learning as only relevant for a very limited number of participants, most of which are aged 50+.

In recent years, sports and youth organisations have not had a special focus on validation of prior learning. The particular tools for clarifying and documenting prior learning from associations, volunteer work and citizenship education, which have been developed at the central level, are to be revised in 2014. This process is expected to renew the interest in the field.

Two research projects on how to build motivation towards adult learning and engage with hard-to-reach individuals alienated from formal education suggest that a better identification and clarification of competences of participants is a success factor²⁰.

DAEA, the Danish Adult Education Association²¹ uses the *Realkompetenceforum* (Forum for real competences e.g as an informal network) as a meeting point for the exchange of news and experiences in a professional context amongst stakeholders within non-formal education. The forum convenes once a year.

¹⁷ <http://www.ftf.dk/index.php?id=33303>

¹⁸ <http://www.daea.dk>

¹⁹ Section 2, subsection 8: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=141721>

²⁰ Report available in both Danish and English (2009/2010). See: <http://www.daea.dk/themes/adult-learning-in-denmark/articles-on-danish-adult-learning/breaking-social-patterns>; Other report available in Danish (not available online): Steen Elsborg og Steen Høyrup Pedersen (2013): *Folkeoplysning og motivation for livslang læring. "Vi søger de virksomme stoffer!"* (General education and motivation for lifelong learning - searching for the effective elements).

²¹ <http://www.daea.dk/>

1.5.2 Coordination between stakeholders

Interaction and collaboration between stakeholders, from the policy level to the practitioner level, allows for the integration of a top-down strategy with a bottom-up strategy.

All active stakeholders wish to see more progress in relation to the validation of prior learning. They also agree that cooperation between the main stakeholders is important in order to make progress. Collaboration between stakeholders is expected to strengthen the use of validation of prior learning, to create stable and visible practice²² and to develop a common use of terminology and to exchange knowledge about each other's practices²³.

In order to strengthen validation work in some sectors of higher education in Denmark, the Danish Ministry for Science, Innovation and Higher Education initiated a Knowledge Platform for validation in University Colleges and Vocational Academies. The coordination of the platform is ensured by the knowledge centre NVR.

1.6 Examples of national regional, local or EU funded initiatives

Below is a presentation of different initiatives that aim to strengthen and develop the use of validation in Denmark.

About TUP, Tværgående Udviklingspulje 2012

The purpose of the Tværgående Udviklingspulje (Program on Transversal Development), TUP, is to improve the quality and effect of AMU by promoting transversal innovation, experiments and development of the pedagogics and the organisation of the teaching content in AMU courses. AMU suppliers, including the VEU-centers and the committees for continuing education can apply for funding from the pool.

In 2012, 10 projects were awarded financial support from TUP and each got a share of the pool of 13 million Danish kroner, allocated by the Ministry of Education to strengthen the use of individual competence assessments in labour market education (IKV in AMU).

The main topics of TUP 2012 were:

- 1: A better use of individual competence assessments in relation to the AMU educational structures.
- 2: Strengthening the AMU suppliers' work with individual competence assessments in AMU.

One of the projects, initiated by Education Centre Ringkøbing-Skjern aims to standardise the way in which educational institutions are working with individual competence assessment in the welding area. The aim is to develop an advisable, credible and reliable IT-enabled clarification of tools for RPL. The project is progressing well and is expected to finish in the summer of 2014.

About the project 'Fra ufaglært til faglært på rekordtid' (From unskilled to skilled in no time)

The project²⁴ is a significant educational initiative, and one of its main purposes is to improve the skills of the workforce to a level that matches the needs of both companies and society. The project is a comprehensive educational initiative that responds to the expected increase in unemployment among the unskilled and the future shortage of skilled labour in the capital region. The project will be carried out from 2012-2014 with

²² Ulla Nistrup og Anne Lund: Validation of prior learning – distribution, barriers and current practice. January 2010. www.Ncfk.dk.

²³ Focus on validation of prior learning, nr.3: www.NVR.nu

²⁴ <http://www.uffa.dk/default.asp>

financial development aid from the Capital Region of Denmark and the European Social Fund.

In this project, three vocational training schools and two adult education centres (VUC) that cover a large area of the capital region participate as project partners: CPH WEST, Erhvervsskolen Nordsjælland, SØPU København & Nordsjælland, KVUC and HF & VUC Nordsjælland.

Part of the answer to future challenges is the Basic Adult Education (GVU). GVU provides unskilled workers with practical experience documentation of their skills and the necessary complimentary education, which turns them into skilled workers. The validation allows for a tailor made training plan and personal study activities.

A regional action plan on the validation of prior learning in the Central Region of Denmark

Validation of prior learning is an essential tool in the efforts to ensure that businesses in the Central Denmark Region have the competencies which they require at any time. The Regional Action Plan sets out the aspirations for the research and development of validation of prior learning on a regional level²⁵.

The purpose of the plan is:

- To intensify activities regarding validation of prior learning and create a higher degree of visibility in the process;
- To enhance the collaboration among key stakeholders (educational institutions, job centres, unemployment insurance funds, trade unions etc);
- To develop a comprehensive perspective on education and employment.

It is meant to form the basis for collaboration among relevant stakeholders in relation to specific initiatives and tasks concerning validation of prior learning. It includes experiences and ongoing activities as well as target setting for future activities in the region.

A Knowledge Platform about validation with respect to the Higher Education sector in Denmark

In order to strengthen the work with validation in some sectors of higher education in Denmark, the Danish Ministry for Science, Innovation and Higher Education initiated a Knowledge Platform for validation in University Colleges and Vocational Academies. The coordination of the platform is led by the knowledge centre NVR.

The [online platform](#), which includes a forum for FAQ and debate, is meant to be a source of information for stakeholders on:

- Context, policies and legislative framework on validation in Denmark and in the EU.
- Organisational issues (information, guidelines and examples of good practice within educational institutions).
- Procedures for the clarification and identification of competencies with the applicants to support documentation, assessment and validation (with examples of good practice and tools, models and methods).
- Guidance (for different target groups) and ethical issues concerning guidance and counselling.

²⁵ Central Denmark Region is one of 5 regions in Denmark.
<http://www.centraldenmark.eu/english/centraldenmarkandmidjutland/>

- Cooperation with partners outside educational institutions.

Different stakeholders in Denmark are partners in Nordic and EU funded projects. The national knowledge centre NVR- a partner - is involved in the following projects:

- **IMPLEMENT** – Implementing Lifelong Learning Universities through training and development, Lifelong learning Programme, KA4. (2011- 2012).
<http://www.eucen.eu/current/Implement>.
- **AllinHE** – Access to lifelong learning in higher education, Erasmus European Project.
www.allinhe.eu (2011- 2014)
- **OBSERVAL-Net** intends to set up a stakeholder-centric network of organisations supporting the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNIL). (2012 – 2013)
<http://www.observal-net.eu/>

1.7 Inputs, outputs and outcomes

1.7.1 Funding

Validation of prior learning is financially supported by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry for Science, Innovation and Higher Education (tertiary level). Public funding covers assessment at educational institutions, but does not cover the information, or clarification in the process about the individual's application. Educational institutions can charge a fee for the assessment of prior learning with regard to the RPL-programmes covering higher education.

Organisations involved in the validation of prior learning must absorb the associated costs within their existing budgets.

1.7.2 Distribution of costs

Adult education and continuous training

The assessment of reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic and mathematical skills in Preparatory Adult Education, or in courses included in the ‘‘common competence description’ in the adult vocational training system, is free of charge for participants.

Within adult vocational training (GVU and AMU), validation is free of charge; the institutions are paid one-off taximeter funds²⁶ for competence assessment, personal study, training plan (GVU), and for the competence assessment (AMU).

Within general adult education, the validation of prior learning in terms of issuing a competence certificate (from August 2008), there are no user fees but taximeter funding will be used.

Within the AMU-programmes, RPL participants are entitled to a fixed VEU-allowance financed by the State (*VEU-godtgørelse*), corresponding to 80% of the maximum unemployment insurance benefit rate. As most participants are employed and receive full salary during the validation period, this allowance is primarily paid to employers as partial wage reimbursement. As with education and training within AMU, expenditure for the allowances is covered by the employers’ reimbursement scheme (*Arbejdsgivernes Uddannelsesbidrag*, AUB) to which all enterprises contribute a fixed amount regardless of levels of participation in adult education and continuing training activities, as well as State financing.

Higher education

User fees for competence assessment are only applicable for persons with higher education level qualifications up to and including upper secondary level. Higher education institutions

²⁶ For an explanation of taximeter funding, see: <http://eng.uvm.dk/Fact-Sheets/General/The-taximeter-system>

are paid one-off taximeter funds if the validation of prior learning results in the programme being shortened by 15% or more, or in the issuing of a certificate/diploma.

1.7.3 Data on flows of beneficiaries

The table below shows the development of activity for validation of prior learning from 2010-2012, based on data from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education.

Table 1.1

Annual students ^{*27}	2010	2011	2012
Vocational training (AMU)	279,3	197,4	53
Basic adult education (GVU)**	32,97	34,84	78,86
General upper secondary education (HF)			
General adult education (AVU)			
VVU - degrees and diploma degrees ^{**1}	24	29	38

It should be noted, that the method of calculation is different between the different educational programmes, and the numbers can therefore not be directly compared. There is still a need for more detailed statistics and registration of the activities in the VVU and diploma level. For example, the number of individuals who gain access to the diploma level through validation of informal and non-formal education is not registered. Validation activity is still relatively low, but the development of activity is increasing within VVU and GVU since 2010 and within HF and avu since 2008. Within AMU, the validation activity has decreased dramatically, which can be partly explained by a general decrease in the education activity in the AMU programme.

Within the diploma programmes, RPL often results in admission to or exemptions from part of an educational programme. Participants rarely receive validation for an entire educational programme. The number of individuals who gain access to the 'diploma' programme (higher education for adults) through validation of prior learning is not registered, which means that the number of individuals registered is underestimated compared to the actual activity.

1.7.4 Evidence of benefits to individuals

Studies addressing the evidence of benefits of RPL to individuals are very limited.

A study from 2013 of the basic adult education programme shows that about 75% of the completed validations result in validation of prior learning and work experience leading to exemptions of part of a VET programme. About 20 % of the validations lead to exemptions from almost an entire programme. It should however be noted that the overall activity within the basic adult education programme is very limited²⁸.

²⁷ * An 'annual full-time pupil' is a measure used to calculate the annual activity of a certain course or certificate. One annual full-time pupil equates to one student in full-time training for one year. The training-period of individual competence evaluation within vocational training (IKV in AMU) varies between 0.5 - 5 days, i.e. between 0.0025 and 0.025 annual full-time pupils. In 2012 there were 8683 participants registered in IKV in AMU.

** in contrast to the data from the 2010 inventory, the activity on GVU includes both employed and unemployed participants. The data can therefore not be directly compared to the activity noted in the 2010 inventory.

*** On VVU-degrees and diploma degrees the activity is shown in number of persons. The number is based on the paid taximeter funds to Higher education institutions for validations, that results in exemption of 15 pct or more of the educational programme. The number of individuals registered is a low estimate, since the individuals who get access through validation or exemption from less than 15 pct of the programme are not registered.

²⁸ <http://www.eva.dk/eva/projekter/2012/undersogelse-af-grunduddannelse-for-voksne-gvu-og-voksne-i-erhvervsuddannelser/projektprodukter/gvu-og-eud-for-personer-pa-25-ar-og-derover>

2 Information, advice and guidance

2.1 Awareness-raising and recruitment

The Ministry of Education provides extensive information about validation of prior learning on its website²⁹. The educational institutions that offer validation of prior learning also have a duty to provide information on their websites. Guidance bodies, e.g. Job Centres and Study Guidance Centres and social partners provide information on validation of prior learning.

While educational institutions are obliged to inform the public about validation of prior learning, based on experiences from practitioners in the field, there is still an inadequate level of information about the existing procedures in Denmark and too many people are not aware of the opportunities available to them.

In the fall of 2012, the Danish Ministry of Education launched an information campaign to increase the awareness of and promote the use of validation of prior learning. The campaign was carried out by the VEU centres³⁰ at the local level. The campaign was based on a recommendation from a report by the working group on validation of prior learning (November 2011). Both online and offline platforms were used to communicate the campaign's messages. The idea behind using different online platforms was to increase the visibility of the campaign and to generate traffic to the websites of the VEU centers. The campaign had a positive effect and increased the attention on RKV considerably.

2.2 Role of information, advice and guidance networks / institutions

A counselling web portal provides general information about prior learning (www.ug.dk).

Stakeholders including study committees, job centres, trade unions etc. provide general information and documentation and support clarification concerning the validation process, and also provide guidance to the individual about their choice of further learning and career.

Guidance, as one-to-one support and group support, in regards to the specific RPL-programmes, is provided by educational institutions and the Adult and Continuing Training Centres (VEU-centres). Job centres and trade unions also provide guidance as well as the non-formal adult education providers. However guidance is not currently coordinated between these different bodies.

eVejledning' (online guidance service) also provides information and guidance regarding validation of prior learning.

2.3 Measures to enhance the awareness of validation initiatives and practices amongst guidance practitioners

Within eVejledning (online guidance service), initiatives have been developed to educate the guidance practitioners with the purpose of enhancing knowledge and awareness of the RPL-programmes.

The adult and continuing training centres (VEU-centres) have also, for a number a years, focused on qualifying their guidance practitioners with regard to providing guidance and counselling on the RPL-programmes connected to general and vocational adult education and training. Furthermore, ten projects were initiated in 2012 through the transversal development pool (TUP) with the purpose of strengthening the use of individual competence assessments in the RPL-programmes in AMU, and a primary or partial focus in some of the projects is on qualifying guidance practitioners in regards to RPL.

²⁹ Internet:

<http://www.uvm.dk/Uddannelse/Tvaergaaende%20omraader/Temaer/Realkompetence/Om%20Realkompetence.aspx>

³⁰ <http://www.veu-center.dk/shared/findditguld.html>

3 Quality assurance and evaluation

3.1 Quality Assurance Framework

The validation of prior learning is always based on the objectives and admission requirements of a given educational programme. The Ministry of Education has set out some principles for assessment and quality assurance which states that educational institutions are responsible for quality assurance. These principles state that the methods used must ensure a reliable assessment, inspiring confidence in the outcomes, and that institutions are obliged to have an evaluation system. Educational institutions have to ensure transparency and quality in the process of validation of prior learning.

In the national action plan (see p. 4), quality was one of the initiatives cutting across all relevant adult educational programmes and sectors with a specific focus on developing a code of conduct for validation of competences. In 2012, the RPL committee decided however not to recommend the development of a code of conduct but to recommend the production of a booklet about examples of good practice in all educational areas. The committee asserted that there was a higher need for developing concrete tools to support best practice. The NVR published the booklet *Anerkendelse af realkompetencer - sådan gør vi* / Validation of prior learning – how we do it (only available in Danish)³¹. This booklet includes examples of good practice about the validation of prior learning at the workplace and also individual experiences.

Denmark has also been involved in the development a quality model with respect to the validation of informal and non-formal learning in the Nordic Countries (May 2013)³². The Nordic Expert network³³ for Validation outlined quality as a key issue in the validation of prior learning. Experts from five Nordic countries – Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark cooperated as part of a Nordplus project (led by the NVR) with the aim of developing a common model for quality assurance.

Quality assurance systems / procedures

As stated above, each individual educational institution has to build its own system for quality assurance. With the new development contracts between the local Adult and Continuing Training Centres (VEU-centres) and the Ministry of education, it is intended for the VEU-centres to play a role in supporting the development of common procedures and quality standards between the participating institutions in the VEU-centers.

3.2 Evaluation framework

According to the principles set by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education on assessment and quality assurance, it is stated that each individual educational institution is obliged to have an evaluation system.

Some evaluations have been carried out at the national level. The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) has provided an overview in the Status Report from May 2010³⁴ on quality assurance in relation to assessments of prior learning within adult learning (see pp. 13-14 of the English version of this report).

³¹ <http://www.viauc.dk/projekter/NVR/nyheder/Documents/Eksemplering%20om%20Anerkendelse%20af%20Realkompetencer%20-%20s%C3%A5dan%20g%C3%B8r%20vi.pdf>

³² <http://www.viauc.dk/projekter/NVR/aktiviteter/Documents/QAmodel%20UK%20June13.pdf>

³³ <http://www.nordvux.net/page/601/>

³⁴ "Validation of prior learning within adult education in Denmark. Status report regarding Act no. 556 of 6 June 2007. Summary and perspectives". The Danish Evaluation Institute, 2010. www.eva.dk

4 Validation methods

In Denmark there is a variety of assessment methods in use, with the educational institutions using different methods which supplement each other. Some are developing their own methods and are tailoring methods to the context and the experiences of the individuals.

The methods are not standardised and an exchange of experience would be helpful. In some areas of the education system there are established networks which are working to develop a more common approach to ensure credibility and validity in the use of methods.

4.1 Methods used and the validation process

According to the evaluation prepared by the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) in 2010, the dialogue-based method is the most common assessment method all over the Danish training and education system.

The declarative method is also very common. It means the individuals are also responsible for making the prior learned competences visible. The table below refers to validation in relation to the adult education sector as covered in Act no. 556 on the 'Development of the recognition of prior learning in adult education and continuing training'.

Table 4.1 Assessment methods

Education	Interviews	Observation Practical assignments	Simulation Auth-entic cases	Tests and exams	Written assignments	CV documents Portfolio	Self-assessments
AMU	95%	65%	34%	75%	49%	83%	57%
GVU	98%	64%	35%	75%	55%	87%	53%
AVU	88%	22%	22%	100%	77%	88%	22%
Common academic gymnasium	94%	33%	33%	94%	77%	94%	17%
Academies	100%	25%	50%	62%	62%	100%	50%
Diplomas	100%	22%	44%	0%	44%	100%	77%

(Source: Ministry of Education³⁵)

The method can be a combination of the declarative method, written test, examination, and self-testing. It can be supported by the use of electronic or manual tools. It is common in Denmark to combine different methods in order to secure or strengthen the validation and the reliability of the assessment (triangulation)³⁶.

Oral assessment or dialogue-based methods involve a one-to-one discussion, dialogue or interview between the individual and assessor, according to the pursuers of the oral assessment or dialogue-based method. Sometimes it will take place in the beginning and will

³⁵ <http://www.eva.dk/projekter/2010/undersogelse-afudmoentningen-af-lovgivningen-om-anerkendelse-af-realkompetencer-paa-veu-omraadet/rapport/anerkendelse-afrealkompetencer-paa-veu-omraadet-mv>.

³⁶ Aagaard, K & Dahler, A.M. (ed.): *Anerkendelse af realkompetencer – en grundbog* (Validation of Prior Learning – a basic reader.) ViaSysteme, Denmark, 2010

be the primer method. Sometimes it will take place after a test, written assignment or the self-assessment and will be a supplement to different methods. It can support the reflection and verification of individual competences.

Interviews are often combined with tests and exams and practical assignments at AMU and VET. Practical assignments are mostly used at AMU and VET levels in Denmark.

Written assignments are often combined with interviews concerning general qualifications.

Concerning the 'diploma' and higher education qualifications, interviews are often combined with a portfolio/CV, self-assessments and written assignments.

Practice-oriented methods (i.e. observation of problem solving in practice in the workplace, solving practical tasks and problems in a simulated workplace and solving real cases) have been to some extent applied for validation of prior learning in Denmark, although they may be difficult to apply. Such methods are therefore often combined with other methods, such as tests, interviews or written assignments which reflect on problem solving.

5 Validation practitioners

5.1 Profile of validation practitioners

'Validation practitioners' in Denmark include counsellors/advisors, assessors, teachers, administrative staff and staff from guidance organisations such as job centres. The main practitioners involved in the validation of prior learning are counsellors/advisors and assessors. The assessors are teachers and counsellors from the educational institutions.

5.2 Provision of training and support to practitioners

A number of different initiatives have been undertaken to support practitioners' professional development.

The national umbrella organization DAEA, the Danish Adult Education Association provides a training programme for teachers and guidance counsellors acting as 'prior learning guides'. The objective of the course is to help participants from the field of non-formal adult education and the third sector:

- To work with guidance and counselling in relation to the process of clarification and documentation of prior learning based on the latest research
- To use tools for clarification and documentation of prior learning, including the tools developed by the Ministry of Education
- To teach and support others in how to work in a professional way as a 'prior learning guide' "(sparring partner)".

The course consists of two days of introduction, a hands-on phase, one day of research presentation and sharing of practical examples, some role play on how to act as a sparring partner and one day of talks from representatives of the formal educational system and the labour market.

As a working tool for clarification and mapping of competences in the third sector, the Danish Ministry of Education in 2005 initiated the development of a web-based competence mapping tool. This tool is in many ways demanding to use, especially for low-skilled people, and this has called for innovative approaches to the mapping process. To meet this demand DAEA has developed a set of *competence cards*, which are based on the structure and content of the web-based mapping tool. The purpose of establishing a set of 'prior learning guides' is that the target group needs support in order to acknowledge, identify and describe competences. The aim of the training is to make the prior 'learning guides' able to help participants in the non-formal learning sector to clarify and document their prior learning.

The National Knowledge Centre for Validation of Prior Learning NVR has also organised several seminars, courses and conferences for 'validation practitioners' in past years. In 2011, the NVR was asked to develop a higher education course (module) on validation of

prior learning. The module has been approved in the formal educational system and can be offered by University Colleges. The module covers both theory and practice – its objective is to allow participants to gain an understanding of validation of prior learning as an extended road to competence development, how to support validation of prior learning in all phases of the process, and use methods and tools for identification, documentation, certification of prior learning and quality assurance.

The target group consists of employees in educational institutions who work with validation of prior learning, e.g. counsellors, teachers, coordinators and managers, counsellors at Job Centres, youth counsellors, counsellors in trade unions and third sector. Participants must have a short-cycle or medium-cycle higher education and minimum 2 years of relevant vocational experience (applicants with other experiences and equivalent backgrounds may gain admittance through validation of prior learning).

Before developing this module, the NVR has made a pilot course for the setting of SCK, The Agency for Competence Development in the State Sector³⁷. About 100 practitioners participated; the evaluation was very positive and pointed out that competence development for practitioners is needed.

5.3 Qualifications requirements

There are no specific mandatory qualification requirements regarding validation for the advisers and counsellors.

Concerning assessors, according to the Danish legislation, the qualification requirements of the assessors are the same as for those required to teach in the formal educational system. Educational institutions are responsible for ensuring that assessors possess the appropriate qualifications and are able to attend the necessary courses and training.

³⁷ <http://www.kompetenceudvikling.dk/node/477>

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