

Quality in Validation of Prior Learning

11

Experiences in researching the practice of the Nordic Model for Quality in Validation of Prior Learning

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Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) has been at the Nordic agenda for the past 15–20 years, and validation is well established in the Nordic countries. Validation in these contexts encompasses formal, non-formal and informal learning.

One of the historical reasons for this development is the tradition of strong adult education, strong labour unions and involvement of the social partners in development of education and lifelong learning initiatives. 'The Nordic countries are vastly different with regard to their way of organizing and embedding the validation work, and also in their way of handling each individual prior learning assessment. The Nordic countries, however, show a mutual interest in assuring the quality of the validation work' (Grunnet and Dahler 2013, p. 4). This interest in quality in validation was the background for the development of a Nordic Model for quality in validation, which took place from 2012 to 2013. Experts from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark decided to develop a common quality model. The development of the model was funded by Nordplus (www.nordplusonline.org/). The quality model was primarily developed for use in the educational institutions, however it can also be used by other stakeholders responsible for parts of the validation processes.

In this article, we present a study of quality work in validation based on the Nordic quality model. Initially we introduce the quality concept in the context of validation of prior learning as well as the Nordic model for quality. Our study of quality work employs an interactive approach, which is described briefly. Preliminary results from the on-going processes in three cases from Denmark, Finland, and Sweden are also presented. Finally, we draw some conclusions from the study this far.

1. The quality concept

Quality assurance of validation is about a large number of factors among which are

legislation, policy, financing, and co-operation between institutions and stakeholders. It is also a question about competence development for the practitioners working professionally with validation. Quality in validation has been defined by the Canadian researcher Joy Van Kleef as:

... the establishment of an environment and the implementation of policies, processes and assessment practices that maximize individuals' opportunities to fully and accurately demonstrate relevant knowledge, skills and competencies. (Van Kleef, 2014, p. 208)

If we go deeper into the quality concept, it should be acknowledged that the variation in how validation is organized in different contexts influences what could be seen as 'quality'. Firstly, there are a number of factors in the context that are important. For example, the educational system is organized in different ways in different countries, and the responsibilities of different actors in the labour market also vary between countries. Important are also the concrete stakeholders in different contexts. Furthermore, the way of defining quality depends on the purpose of a specific validation activity,

Basically, quality is a matter of validity and reliability in the validation practice. Thus, the basic questions to be put are: Does the validation process 'measure' or assess what is intended? And is this done in a reliable way? But what is the intention, and how is this intention negotiated and decided? These last questions show that what consists 'quality' in validation should not be taken for granted, but is rather a matter of negotiation of meaning, which could result in different situation- and context-dependent conceptions of quality. These conceptions could include varying ideas on what (knowledge and skills) should be assessed, and how this could be done in the best way.

We can then see two faces of quality in validation; faces that appear in practices as well as policies and research on validation. On the one hand flexibility, individualisation, and judgement are central concepts. This perspective begins from an intention to give recognition to individual knowledge and skills that have been developed in varying ways, and in different contexts, thus probably situated in specific practices. It is this variation that calls for flexibility and individualisation. A consequence is the need of individualised judgement, made by a qualified assessor who can see, understand and in a fair way value the qualities in knowledge and skills developed through varying – probably informal – prior learning processes.

On the other hand, side standardisation, reliability, and measurement are central concepts. This is a different perspective, where good validation is not a matter of fair assessment of the individual and his/her specific knowledge. Rather, the important thing is justice in terms of comparability, where the results have to be comparable, e.g. as the basis for fair ranking and selection processes in relation to higher education or recruitment for a position in the labour market.

On top of this distinction, yet another perspective must be added. In this perspective, a shared understanding is needed in order to develop quality in validation without confusion or misunderstanding between involved actors. Van Kleef (2014) thus emphasizes an approach where learning is seen as situated and as a transitional process. The social nature of assessment has to be recognized, and the candidates should get help in positioning their prior learning in the new context where validation is to take place.

The goal of the specific process is also central for deciding what quality is in a certain context of VPL. A validation activity could be employed for different goals – goals that imply varying ideas of quality. We can identify four different types of goals: a formative, a summative, a predictive and a transformative. Formative validation is intended to act as a diagnosis of prior learning, forming the basis for further learning. Here, quality should mean that the validation process provides the best possible basis. Summative validation is typically performed by simply gathering together grades, certificates etc., summing up the results of prior learning in relation to certain criteria. Thus, with this goal a validation process with high quality should measure or assess in relation to those criteria. With a predictive goal, validation is employed to predict who is most likely to success in a certain position – and the main dimension in quality is consequently to what extent this prediction is fulfilled. Finally, using validation with a transformative goal aims at some sort of transformation of the candidate. In other words, the learning dimension of validation (cf. Andersson, 2017) is central, and quality means that the intended transformation has taken place. Such transformation is often more likely to be a side-effect, and possible ‘side-goal’, of a validation process. But there are also validation processes where the main goal in making individual’s prior learning visible is to strengthen their self-confidence through making them aware of this learning, and maybe in addition ‘topping up’ this learning.

We also want to highlight two central concepts that should be considered in relation to quality in validation: communication, and recognition. Firstly, communication, ideally resulting in mutual understanding between candidate and assessor, is important for validity. Basically, the candidate has to understand what is required in validation, and how this knowledge is to be presented – and be able to do this presentation. The assessor (representing the responsible organisation arranging validation) has to be able to present the requirements in an understandable way, and to understand the way in which the candidate presents his/her knowledge. Thus, this is a matter of communication and mutual understanding. Secondly, recognition is important for quality not the least from the perspective of the candidate. Validation of prior learning can also be named recognition of prior learning, RPL; however, what is meant is often simply recognition of learning. But the process could and should also mean recognition of the person who has knowledge that is validated. To be admitted to an educational institution, or to be recruited and employed, would mean recognition for the

person. This recognition could be important for a transformative strengthening of self-confidence.

2. The Nordic Model

The Nordic Model for quality in Validation is described as a generic model to be used especially in educational institutions. The model can, however, be used by all stakeholders involved in validation processes. The ultimate purpose of quality assurance in validation is to GUIDE the system and assure the INDIVIDUAL an equal, transparent and reliable process.

The model includes three perspective on quality:

1. *Organisational Quality* in developing a holistic approach for institutions to work with validation of prior learning, as well as the development of evaluation cadences, feedback mechanisms and improvement initiatives on all levels.
2. *Assessment Quality* by using distinct criteria, substantiated choices of methodology, and establishment of evaluation and documentation practices.
3. *Procedural Quality* as distribution of responsibility and roles (who does what, when and for whom?). Clear information, presentations as website, brochures, professional document handling, etc.

(Grunnet and Dahler 2013, p. 14)

In this way, the model is targeted towards quality assurance at an organizational level, at a procedural level and at guidance and assessment levels. It means it is a holistic model including all staff engaged in the validation activities as practitioners working with validation, guiders and leaders in the institution.

Furthermore, the model is a dynamic and flexible model, thus an operational model. The model can be used in different institutional and sectoral contexts which differ from country to country.

The eight factors¹: Information, preconditions, documentation, coordination, guidance, mapping, assessment and follow-up have been selected to ensure an awareness of the entire process and essential features in the validation process including the three levels: organizational level, procedural level and guidance and assessment level. Each of the factors is connected to a number of indicators that can be used continuously in the validation process. The indicators can also be replaced if other indicators may be more relevant in the context.

The intention with both the factors and the indicators is to assure a transparent quality strategy for validation and a developing process for strengthening the

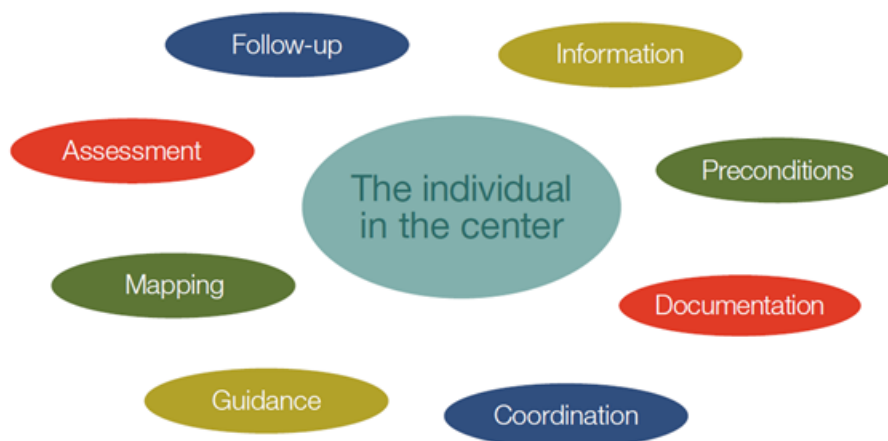
1 The eight factors and indicators are described in detail at:
<http://nvl.org/DesktopModules/DigArticle/MediaHandler.ashx?portalid=0&moduleid=3857&mediaid=1509&width=1250&height=1000&scale=0>.

quality in validation as such. It means that the validation process, by using well known factors and indicators, can be reflected, evaluated, ensured and continuously improved by the validation staff.

The quality model and the eight quality factors

A NORDIC MODEL

for work with quality in validation – a quality assurance model



An example of the eight factors is *preconditions*. The term “preconditions” (here) means the regulatory framework for the validation work, national and local policies in the area, if validation activities are funded, and how they are funded, how co-operation with other stakeholders is organized, and if validation is based on standards or competency criteria that are known. The validation staff and the educational institution cannot change the preconditions. But they can reflect on how preconditions influence the quality of the validations. The indicators used in the model are e.g. described as ‘Concepts and terms will be used, which are generally accepted and in accordance with guidelines and standards’ and ‘Assessments are based on standards/ criteria’ (Grunnet and Dahler 2013, p. 25). The idea with this dynamic quality model for validation is that you reflect on the indicators described in connection with each of the eight factors and decide how to use them and moderate them if it is needed in your own context.

3. Studying the quality work in validation

Starting from the Nordic model for work with quality in validation, we have initiated an on-going study of how this model could be put in practice. The study has an interactive approach (see e.g. Svensson et al., 2002), where we this far have

worked in interaction with institutions in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. The interactive approach means that we, together with representatives for the selected institutions, have established a common understanding of the quality model. Building on this understanding we have also defined areas for development work within the respective institutions. The institutions have worked on improving quality in validation within these areas. After a while we have met again, for a discussion on experiences and results that far, with an option to redefine or adjust the agreed development areas. After one more period of development work we have met again to identify and document experiences from the different institutions.

The interactive approach was chosen exactly for the opportunity of interaction between us as researchers and the validation practitioners from the involved institutions. This interaction has been necessary for identifying areas of development within the framework of the quality model, as well as initiating the actual development work in the institutions. Furthermore, the interactive approach has also been crucial to get a basis for our analysis of the on-going process.

The three institutions with which we have interacted this far, and that are providing the cases presented below, were selected and approached for involvement in the study based on their experiences of validation work. To be able to make comparisons between the cases we have chosen to involve institutions or cases that have two things in common: they have extensive experiences of validation work, which would provide a solid basis for further development work, and the focus of the development work is validation related to vocational education and training (rather than e.g. higher education). The different national contexts provide a variation within the material, and in addition to this we get variation through a sample including validation in different vocational areas.

This presentation builds on experiences and results from the first steps in this interactive process. In the future, the process will also include seminars where we as researchers, and representatives from the involved institutions, will meet each other as well as representatives from more organisations who work with validation in the Nordic countries. In these seminars, we will present and discuss the quality model, experiences and results from the development work, as well as results from our analysis of these experiences and results. This will possibly result in a deeper understanding of quality in validation, through the interaction between participants with varying experiences of validation work.

4. Denmark - Validation in Vocational education

The Danish case is a large vocational education college located in Jutland, Denmark. It has a very wide range of training courses distributed throughout more than 20 educational programmes and business colleges (hhx) and technical colleges (htx). The school employs approximately 525 fulltime employees and

educates approximately 3,350 full-time pupils/students. The school was established in 2010 as a result of a merger between two schools.

The project 'Quality in Validation' is a collaboration between the team leader of the student counselling office for technical educations, the validation coordinator and a number of managers and trainers in 4 technical training areas. The three selected programmes have validation of adult training courses of different size or frequency. The courses are: warehouse/logistics, welding, painting and industrial operator training. In total, seven people participate in the project.

Validation refers to Validation of Prior Learning and begins with and is coordinated by the student counsellor. Prior to the start of the project, the validation coordinator had developed and described a practice for validation of the technical education programmes of the school. However, the coordinator would like to strengthen the implementation of validation and further develop the school's validation practice. Therefore, the school wanted to participate in testing whether or not the developed quality model could contribute to this.

At the first meeting - 'the contract meeting' - the framework for the project was agreed. This included: a timeframe for the project, the training areas to be included as well as the contextual and procedural framework for the project.

The school also presented their current validation practices and shared various descriptions and documents to the research group so that they could get some insight into the school's validation process.

At the following meeting the focus was on the common basis for understanding and problem identification in relation to quality in validation. The school was the first to put into words their perception of what quality in validation is for them. The understanding of quality concentrated on two areas: 1) Uniformity in the school's process, procedure and assessment foundations and 2) The individual's experience of the process. An experience which should lead to the individual having an increased awareness of their own skills and to increased motivation for learning and education. Subsequently, the practice group identified problems or areas for attention in their own validation practices. This was done by using the quality model and the questions and criteria that are formulated to the model's 8 factors for quality in validation.

Although the school initially had expressed that it was particularly in relation to 1) planning and 2) assessment that there was a development need, it turned out that through dialogue and reflection on the current practice, problems and suggestions for improvement were identified within other factors of the quality model.

The school ended the first meeting by formulating the following development needs:

- Better information for the validation students through a short instructional introduction video
- Better datamanagement – for the whole school with regard to sensitive personal data

- Better coordination through longer-term plans for when validation is offered in the various courses.
- A clear plan for the validation process from start to finish (who does what?)
- More uniform mapping with the help of tests in the subjects: Danish, mathematics, English, social studies etc. at different levels.
- Better assessment to be achieved through explicit criteria/markers in relation to professional goals.

The development needs from the first meeting resulted in the production of concrete products. A number of additional development needs were mentioned in the dialogue, but were not selected at the first meeting. Perhaps due to time restrictions.

The next meeting took place about a month later. At this meeting those present took stock of the selected development projects. It was established that most tasks had started or been developed and solved. At the same time it emerged from the discussion that the work on the first development task opened the practitioner's eyes to other development needs and development tasks. These included some of the development needs which had been mentioned at the first meeting, but which had not been prioritised. The new focus areas included:

- Better conditions for the validation practitioners, - a desire for internal training of new employees in the work with validation.
- Information and further explanation of the current practice which currently exists as tacit knowledge, not least that of the coordinator.
- Better coordination through developed evaluation practices that will ensure continued and ongoing development.
- Better coordination and information through a validation network inside the school and externally with other schools and partners.
- Better coordination and sharing of the common flow.
- Better coordination through a clear management strategy for validating work.

This second meeting put much greater focus on ensuring quality through leadership and the prioritisation and organisation of validation work within the institution. The managers and school leaders involved in the project would take up these focus points with the school's seniormanagement.

Another important discussion concerned the dilemma between quality and resources. The practitioners were very pleased to have spotted the potential for increased quality, but they also saw a problem in that the increased quality could mean the use of increased resources in the form of time and people. They could also see a competition problem if competing schools in the surrounding area could offer validation at a lower quality and in less time and therefore at a cheaper price for companies.

Validation is basically perceived as an activity that leads to poorer earnings for schools since the shortened training, which is a result of the validation process, leads to less revenue for the school by virtue of the school's taximeter system.

The last meeting will pick up on the initiatives which have been developed and also gather knowledge and data on how the school practitioners and managers have experienced using the Nordic model in quality development work.

It is also intended that the lessons learned from the vocational education college should be disseminated and discussed with a number of other vocational training schools in the local area and the rest of Denmark.

5. Finland - Validation in initial vocational education and adult education

The discussion on the Finnish case study started in NVL's national working group for validation. The focus of the research was defined to the vocational education level, which led the national working group to identify a representative case for the research. A rather large vocational education and training provider in Southern Finland was chosen in order to test the different aspects of the Nordic model on validation in a comprehensive way. It was seen desirable to analyze the model both in the organizational level and between different branches.

The negotiations with the school started with a hearing of the school's key personnel in validation process. After initial approval to participate in the study, the benefits of a research process for the school were discussed. The vice-rector, development manager and training managers saw that a case study could give a structure for developing validation processes further in the school level. The use of a structured model could also benefit in identifying development tasks and assist in trying to harmonize some of the differences between the branches.

The college provides training in 130 vocational qualifications and in 34 fields of study in general upper secondary education level. Over 20 000 young students and adults study in the college annually. The college has units in 4 municipalities and over 700 staff members, which of 450 in teaching and 270 in other work tasks. Validation is carried out throughout the organization, but there are varied ways of implementing the policies in validation for the students. However, the college stresses the importance of going through a comprehensive process of personal study planning with each student. This process is used widely in the Finnish education system, starting from the preschool and continuing all the way to higher education and adult education. The personal study planning process is also the starting point of the validation process in the college.

The first meeting with the college raised the question what way do the branches actually differ between each other. Validation or recognition of prior learning often involves a reflective discussion between the learner and a counsellor or a teacher. In some professions or fields of education this approach is well in line with the other pedagogical approaches. But are teachers and students in wood industry as

keen on such a dialogue as their counterparts in social sector? Do the sectors utilize different kinds of methods in guidance or documentation of prior learning? Are there differences in the roles and tasks of the personnel in validation within the fields of study? These questions lead the planning group to select different kind of branches to be included in the study. Health and Social Services, Wood Processing, Business and Administration, Household and Cleaning Services as well as Hotel, Restaurant and Catering fields were to be interviewed. The professions invited to the interviews were the study counsellors, teachers and training managers.

The case study in the college was carried out in two patches of interviews with the mentioned fields of study and the representatives of the professional groups. The Nordic Model for Validation was split in two groups accordingly. The first patch of interviews covered the first four dimensions of the Model: Information, Preconditions, Documentation and Coordination. The second set of interviews assessed the remaining four dimensions, Guidance, Mapping, Assessment and Follow-up. A third interview session was organized for the management of the school to get an overview on the college level. The last mentioned covered all the eight dimensions in the same occasion.

The participants received a briefing in written form a week before the interview with the research questions and the dimensions of the Model translated in Finnish. The researcher opened the discussion by repeating the aim of the case study - testing the use of the Nordic Quality Model of Validation in a school level - to the participants and then asked them to join an introductory round with a description of their role and tasks in the validation process of the college. The dimensions were then discussed and the interview was recorded for later analysis. In the interviews there were representatives from both the educational tracks of the school, the initial vocational education for the young and the adult education track. These informants also covered the branches mentioned earlier on.

Working with the model helped the school management and staff to identify features of their validation system. The college has a decentralized system of validation, where two important networks can be identified as a source of instruction on validation. Firstly, there is a group of study counsellors working with students in the level of initial vocational education and training. Secondly, there is a group of responsible teachers or head teachers in the level of adult education. These two networks have regular meetings where validation processes are discussed on a regular bases. Information on validation is given in a multifaceted way: in the net, handouts, brochures and study guides. Information days and guidance appointments give briefings on the policies both for external audiences and the students. The preconditions for validation are partly regulated by the National Board of Education and partly by the college. In guidance a clear process of personal study planning is carried out in both of the mentioned forms of education. However, the branches do have different ways of documenting the

validation process, mapping the learning outcomes and assessing the learning outcomes. The branches also differ on their practices on keeping a log on how the process has gone further in the student's level. There was not a clear coordination or a follow-up procedure of the validation system in the college level.

After gathering the interview data in the two sets of interviews with the personnel the Model dimensions were covered with the managers. Based on these the researcher then presented the managers a SWOT-analysis with preliminary findings in the college level. The informants in the branches had identified some challenges in the validation system and these were then compiled to groupings of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The researcher discussed the findings with the managers and in relation to the Danish case, a workshop was chosen to be organized in order to identify areas of development and to choose a pathway for the development process. This workshop was targeted to the planning group of the case study – the vice-rector, development manager and training managers. The study counsellors were also invited in order to involve the second key network in validation to the process. The workshop chose guidance in validation for the focus of development.

Regarding the Nordic Quality Model of Validation, the Finnish case highlighted the following features of the analyzed dimensions:

- Information: information was shared to students, parents, employers and other stakeholders in a multifaceted way. Interviews, information days, meetings and other forms of face-to-face encounters were used in addition to information in print and over the internet.
- Pre-conditions: validation was available for all the students of the college. Validation was also seen as a key element of the educational process by all staff members.
- Documentation: electronic systems were available, but were often not used. Some branches had developed good practices and these were decided to be taken into use throughout the organization.
- Coordination: there was no clear coordination, nor clear roles and responsibilities in validation. The two networks mentioned coordinated processes in their respective tracks of education.
- Guidance: guidance was less available and needed in the adult education track, where head teachers had a heavy workload. In education for the youth the study counsellors could better meet the needs of the students.
- Mapping: validation was clearly linked to personal study planning and preparing the student for competence-based examinations. However, the practices differed between the branches.
- Assessment: the assessment was carried between the teacher, working life assessor and the student himself. Triangulation in the procedure ensured the quality of assessment.

- Follow-up: there was no evidence of an extensive procedure to review the validation system as a whole.

In conclusion, working with the Nordic Model on Quality in Validation gave the college an opportunity to see areas of improvement and structure on how to proceed in the development work. The deeper analysis of the case study is to identify whether there are differences between the branches were based on the professions itself or on the different policies and procedures chosen by the training managers and the teachers.

6. Sweden – validation in building and construction

The Swedish case is a municipal institution with long experience of validation within the sector of building and construction. The main part of their validation work is commissioned from the Public employment office (PEO), but the extent of this depends on demand and on the procurement processes where different validation institutions ‘compete’ to be a provider for the PEO. The main target group is presently immigrants with experiences from the building and construction sector in their home countries.

The validation model in this institution has a clear focus on quality in terms of an extensive process to identify and validate candidates’ competences, including practical work-tasks, and the opportunity to ‘top up’ with context-specific skills that are lacking. Employability is seen as an important factor that is also a matter of credibility in relation to the industry. The representatives of the institution describes that an initial mapping should show that the candidates could fulfil at least half of the requirements for the more encompassing validation process to be meaningful – otherwise the main alternative is to take the full training programme. However, this is also a matter of time and resources available, which in the case of commissioned validation depends on the results of the specific procurement.

Concerning quality, the conception of quality that is expressed in this case encompass: Resources and time is a precondition for quality. A validation process should include an initial mapping and pre-assessment of who will pass the more extensive validation. Quality in the process depends on being up-to-date in relation to current technology, i.e. industry currency. Important for quality is that the assessment of skills should be made by an experienced craftsman in the specific area. When the candidates have a foreign background, it is important to understand what skills they actually have. Quality could also be identified by employers being satisfied with employees recruited from the validation institution.

The following possible areas of development were identified in the initial visit at the institution:

- Information: Developing information to candidates before the validation process. What do they need to know? How could information to candidates with low skills in Swedish be developed?
- Pre-conditions: Improving the continuing professional development (CPD) for those who work with validation.
- Mapping: Improving the mapping for candidates who are newly arrived refugees/immigrants.
- Assessment: Improving the quality of the assessment in cases where the candidate is lacking communicative skills (but possibly have the vocational skills to be assessed).
- Follow-up: Developing the evaluations of the validation process to understand quality better.

The initial focus was put on the area of information, which is seen as very important to reach the target group – those who actually have relevant vocational competence. The institution could identify a need for more standardised information about validation, i.e. to give a correct idea of what validation is independent of who gives the information. But also with regard to giving relevant information for the specific target group. When the target group has a foreign background, interpreters also consist a key group concerning information – and here is the specific vocational language a challenge, as it includes many vocation-specific terms that could be difficult to translate, especially when the interpreter does not know the vocation in question. The place where information is given was also identified as important. Information to potential candidates is often given at the PEO, but it will be considered if more extensive information could be given at the validation institution, including the information of not only verbal and written information but in addition to this also show the material conditions, clarify the requirements, and answer questions in that context.

The next area in focus will be the CPD of the validation staff. The validation work presently seems to be organised in a way that gives space for professional development concerning the core of the validation process. But to improve quality, the representatives of the institution can see a potential particularly concerning competence that is relevant related to the validation process. Two specific examples mentioned are counselling skills, and how to write the documentation of the validation results in a correct way.

The experiences this far concerning the quality model is that it actually has put focus on the quality dimension in validation. The institution representatives initially had a good confidence in the quality of their work, and our interpretation was also that they were experienced in the area and made a good job. Still, the discussion based on the quality model helped them to identify relevant areas for development, and the process that has started shows an ambition to improve the quality of validation in building and construction. However, an extensive

procurement process in relation to the PEO, where it has been unclear for quite a long time what the institution will be commissioned to do in the nearest future, creates worries and makes the extent of validation work in this institution during the next year unclear.

7. Conclusion

The casestudies presented the interactive processes the researchers have undertaken with the managers and staff members in the vocational education and training institutions selected for this research. The preliminary findings reported speak for the usefulness of the Nordic Quality Model for validation as a comprehensive structure for developing the validation system. The study is focused on the quality work and the processes related to quality of validation, not the quality itself. The research process has already shown how motivated the managers and staff members have been for the quality management of validation and to identify development areas in their policies and practices.

Even though the research is still going on, a few remarks can be said at this point:

- Systematic documentation is paramount for the individual's case
- Coordination of validation ensures the policies and practices are carried throughout the various branches and fields of study of the institution
- The follow-up dimension can be seen as a broader review of the educational processes related to validation, covering performance in the organizational level
- The eight dimensions are relevant for a holistic approach to validation
- The use of the Quality Model mediated the interaction between the researchers, the managers and the practitioners and helped to identify areas of development
- The casestudies give implications for the Model to be used also as a means for competence development in the educational institution

The Nordic Countries are known for their commitment for providing education and learning opportunities for all. The learner is in the centre of the educational process. Lifelong learning is seen as a way for progress both for the individual as well as for the society at large. These values are also represented in the cases selected for the research. The research may give further implications for the interplay between the Nordic Quality Model of Validation and the communities and societies where it is being tested on.

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