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Case Study: Work place learning and competence development related to higher education

<p>The case study, the story in Örebro Kommun, Örebro Municipality</p>	<p>Evidence, material – <u>Possible</u> content These are <u>pointers</u> as to the content of the case study and the evidence you may want or be able to bring</p>
<p><u>The context</u></p> <p>In which sector is it taking place?</p> <p>In which organisation is it taking place?</p> <p>The background to the case study</p>	<p>Public administration, The Municipality of Örebro</p> <p>This case study concerns a group of administrators in the municipality of Örebro and involves validation and competence development for the purpose of receiving credit towards higher education courses or entry requirements and/or for the purpose of retaining employment.</p> <p>The municipality of Örebro (www.orebro.se) initiated a project concerning modelling of competencies because of a reorganization within the municipality. The validation took place at Örebro University (www.oru.se).</p> <p>In Autumn 2003, Örebro municipality established a learning centre called the City Academy (in Swedish, <i>Cityakademin</i>; see www.orebro.se/cityakademin or www.orebro.se/english/validation).</p> <p>The City Academy, together with a unit made up of teachers supervising/counselling</p>

students from the age of 20 and up, also has a career guidance and validation centre for the public. The staff of the validation centre cooperate with all of the organizers of education within the municipality, and among these, Örebro University has been an important partner in developing validation within higher education.

Because of reorganization within the municipality of Örebro, a mapping process was conducted during the period of May 2007 to May 2008 among staff working with administration. The affected professions consisted of staff working in administrative services, planning, information and economy. The municipality conducted mapping processes of knowledge and competencies for 600 workers. In parallel with these mapping processes, profiles of vocational requirements emerged for different categories of professions within the municipal organization and also for the individual employees.

The purpose of the mapping process was to raise the level of competence among staff working with administration and to increase the level of service to public service departments or units. Another goal was to increase the quality of support to directors. In order to promote these aims, the competencies of the various categories of professions were identified.

Through the mapping process, a certain group of staff working with administration was identified. This group consisted of employees of relatively late middle age who had been working for a long time in public administration. Despite their work experience, they lacked adequate qualifications to handle their working tasks, which had changed under the re-organization. These employees were at risk of becoming unemployed. Their competencies were either not documented or consisted of competencies within a different area/profession than that required for the new working tasks. Some of the employees had a low level of education, and others had an academic level of education, such as in teaching or social work, but they lacked training in administration.

People

VNFL-IFL candidate (s):

AND/OR

**VNFL-IFL advisers/ staff: tutors:
The assessors/ evaluators:**

Through the mapping of the employees' competencies, 65 administrators were identified as being in need of readjustment, validation and competence development. This target group needed different kinds of support, such as educative support, and access to validation in order to become employable within the municipality or by other employers. The majority of the administrators were women. Some of them got new jobs within the municipality and some chose to leave their municipal jobs within a year. Others chose to accept lower level jobs in the municipality since they did not obtain any of the new posts advertised after the reorganization.

25 administrators were offered validation and 11 of them went through the validation process.

11 administrators employed by the municipality of Örebro. All were at risk of becoming unemployed. They can be divided into three groups:

- Extensive working experience but no higher level of education
- Extensive working experience but lacking some higher education courses required for a degree
- Extensive working experience and a degree, but not within the area of administration

The validation was organised by the City Academy, the municipal learning centre, together with Örebro University, and it involved career counsellors at the learning centre and the university. The validation was conducted by teachers and career counsellors from Örebro University. Below is a description of the actors involved:

Actors at the organisational level

The project group responsible for the competence modelling within the municipality of Örebro consisted of:

- A project leader and director/chief of staff in readjustment, from Örebro Municipality Personnel Office
- A validation development leader, from the City Academy
- A career counsellor, from the City Academy
- A career counsellor, from Örebro University

The relationships/interactions

The above-mentioned project group planned and outlined the structure of a custom-made competence development to be contracted for the actual target group. The group also planned the structure of the validation process and was responsible for identifying which of the 25 administrators were interested in validation of their competencies and which were interested in participating only in the competence development. The career counsellor at the Örebro University, was responsible for coordinating the validation commission by establishing contacts with the teachers who were to conduct the validation. The career counsellor at Örebro University met each of the candidates to give them individual guidance about possible study paths and to describe the purpose of the validation. These conversations were the basis for the forthcoming work with the validation process at the university, conducted by the career counsellor and the teachers. One of the teachers at Örebro University also took a specific course arranged by the City Academy for teachers in need of competence development concerning work with validation.

To sum up: the process

Besides the mapping process and the identification of candidates in need of validation, this case study consists of two separate educative elements and one validation process.

Description of the planning of the educative elements:

Because it was very important that the administrators be able to begin their educations in parallel with the validation, they were offered two courses. One of the courses was to contain content that offered the administrators new competence within an area they were not familiar with. It was deemed important that the course content not overlap with the competence they already had and which was supposed to be validated.

The first was to offer a broader competence and was called E-government.

This course was given in parallel with the validation process as a competence-raising course. The course was suitable for job-seekers and did not overlap areas of knowledge that the administrators were about to validate. The course dealt with certain staff requirements within public administration/authorities that are imposed upon staff due to an increase in the use of IT, with respect to integration, efficiency, integrity and availability. The municipality encouraged the development of such a course in order to raise the level of municipal staff competence in working in a more customer-oriented manner, for example in working on the improvement of websites. Further reasons for the choice of this

target group for validation

- Designing/planning at the organizational level concerning the implementation of the validation in terms of time and structure
- Planning and conducting of seminars and lectures for the candidates
- The candidates conducted exercises in self-assessment
- Conversations between the career counselor at Örebro University and each candidate
- Meetings between career counselors and teachers at the university in order to design possible validation
- Validation was conducted for each candidate at the Örebro university, by career counselor and teachers
- Feed-back to the administrators/candidates concerning the result
- Registration of the result from validation in the computer system of the University
- Certificates were printed and sent to the administrators

Results:

The custom-made educative elements, together with the validation process, resulted in several benefits for the administrators. With the help of the Organizational Management course, together with their extensive work experience, the administrators were able to receive credit for the Örebro University course entitled Public Administration, 7,5 ECTS (European credit transfer system). Together with the courses E-Government, 7,5 ECTS, and Organizational Management, 15 ECTS, the candidates received in total 30 ECTS in the subject of Health- and Health Care Administration at Örebro University. The candidates also become qualified to enter further studies in the main subject Health- and Health Care Administration.

Validated and/or studied ECTS:

E-Government, 7,5 ECTS

Validation related to the course Public Administration, 7,5 ECTS

Organizational Management, 15 ECTS

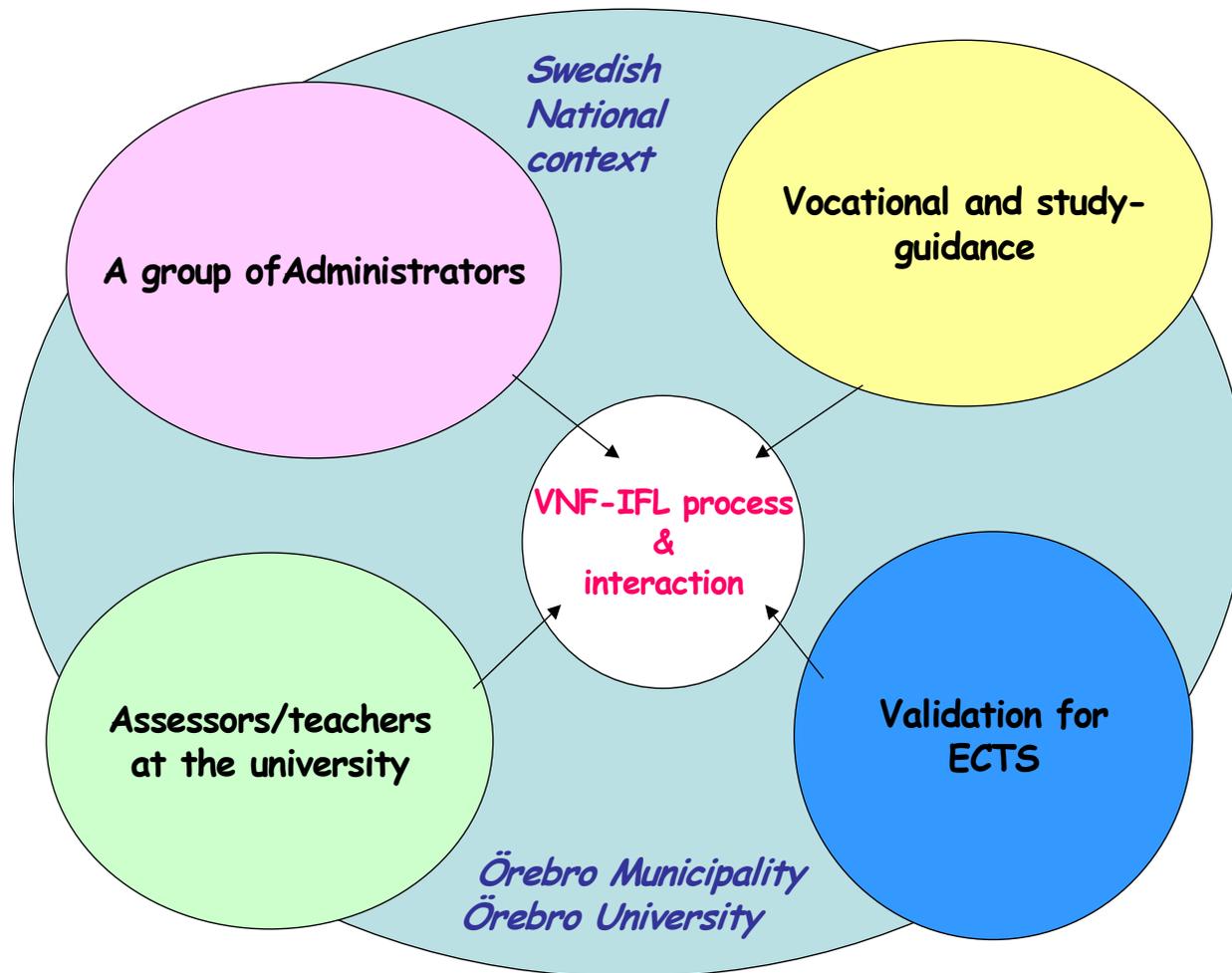
One of the candidates also validated 60 ECTS within the subject of the Medical Secretary Programme.

Advantages/disadvantages of the quick process:

The time available for the project, one year (2009), was very short. The advantage was that the education and validation started within two months of the initial planning meeting.

Some disadvantages were that some moments could have been better thought out; for example, the working group had difficulty agreeing on which courses should have priority.

Furthermore, summertime is the vacation period for municipal employees, so some of the administrators did not finish their exercises and as a consequence did not finish the E-government course in time.



The case study – different stories