

Van EVC (2000) naar Valideren (2018)

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De Erkenning van elders Verworven Competenties (EVC) kent vele vormen, procedures en toepassingen. Dit is logisch omdat EVC binnen een brede waaier van doelstellingen kan worden ingezet, van persoonscertificering tot een integrale HRD-aanpak, van individuele loopbaanvorming tot inclusie van doelgroepen, van sectoraal opleidingsbeleid tot keihard civiel effect, enz. Om door de bomen het bos te zien in de betekenis van de term EVC stap ik over op het Engels omdat ...

... so many aspects of the Dutch EVC-process can be explained by clarifying the terminology from the meaning given to EVC in other learning cultures in the world. In Dutch, EVC is the only term used but in English the variety appears: APL, RPL and VPL. Through this threefold term for the same process, I aim at creating some clarity in the application of EVC in the Netherlands.

The global perspective

Across the globe, there is an enormous variety of terms available for utilising personal prior learning outcomes. It depends on the national learning culture, the main objectives and the division of responsibilities which meaning is given to the term for EVC in a country or world region.

UNESCO uses the acronym 'RVA' to refer to the **Recognition, Validation and Accreditation** of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning as a key lever for making lifelong learning a reality. It makes visible and values the amount of invisible knowledge, skills and competences that individuals have obtained through various means and in different phases of their lives. Increased transparency of these learning outcomes may significantly improve individuals' self-esteem and well-being, motivate them to further learning and strengthen their labour market position. RVA may help to integrate broader sections of the population into the learning process, build inclusive societies, and make better use of existing human resources.

The terms 'recognition, validation and accreditation' are used because they underpin the linkage of non-formal and informal learning to formal learning as well as the transfer of (competences) knowledge, skills and competences derived from work, family and leisure activities to mainstream education systems:

- **Recognition** is a process of granting official status to learning outcomes and/or competences, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value in society.
- **Validation** is the confirmation by an approved body that learning outcomes or competences acquired by an individual have been assessed against reference points or standards through pre-defined assessment methodologies.
- **Accreditation** is a process by which an approved body, on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes and/or competences according to different purposes and methods, award qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles), or grant equivalences, credit units or exemptions, or issue documents such as portfolios of competences. In some cases, the term accreditation applies to the evaluation of the quality of an institution or a programme as a whole (UIL, 2012).

The (many) other international used terms for RVA are all centred around one or more of the three terms that are incorporated in UNESCO's holistic interpretation of RVA (also see Table 1):

- **Recognition** focuses primarily on the identification and recognition of the competences that someone might have obtained in any period in his/her life and in any kind of learning environment. In this context the portfolio consists of all personal learning experiences. Only after collecting all the relevant, personal competences together with their proof, a choice is made by the person. In this way the personal ambitions

are better articulated and depending on the personal goal a specific choice for the kind of accreditation or validation is made. Recognition, therefore is more personal steered and might involve not only summative but also formative goals.

- **Validation** goes a step further than accreditation and recognition since it means a validation (or valuation) of prior learning measured against any learning objective and not just formalized standards; it can cover for instance also a validation for the sole aim of self-validation or justification of an activity. Validation therefore is covering both the formalised, top-down orientation of accreditation as well as the bottom-up process of recognition.
- **Accreditation** is favoured by authorities, social partners and schools because this term mainly focuses on the summative effects of recognizing and assessing prior learning. The most important element in accreditation is the assessment of the competences that are collected in a portfolio with the goal of getting exemptions or a diploma. The portfolio is in this context mainly a showcase of only the competences that matter for the standard itself; all the other personal competences are irrelevant. The choice for a specific standard is in practice more steered by the availability of an actual standard than by a free, personal choice. This is because most of the times a school - as the keeper of the standard(s) – tends to look more to the best chance of success when measured against any given standard than to the best match of a standard and personal ambitions. So, in effect, accreditation is mainly steered by qualification standards, which shows that accreditation is strongly steered by schools.

Table 1 : International terms for Recognition, Accreditation and Validation of Prior Learning

Term	Acr.	Focus	Origin
Accreditation of Prior Learning	APL	Accreditation	United Kingdom
Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning	APEL	Accreditation	United Kingdom
Anerkennung von Lernergebnisse	AvL	Accreditation	Germany
Anerkennung von Kompetenzen	AvK	Accreditation	Germany
Erkenning van Verworven Competenties	EVC	Validation	Netherlands, Flanders
Erkenning van Verworven Kwalificaties	EVK	Accreditation	Netherlands, Flanders
Prior Learning Assessment	PLA	Accreditation	United States of America
Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition	PLAR	Validation	Canada
Reconocimiento de Aprendizajes Previos	RAP	Accreditation	Chile (UNAB)
Reconocimiento y Certificación de Aprendizajes Previos para la Prosecución de Estudios	RCA	Accreditation	Chile
Reconocimiento, Evaluación y Acreditación de Competencias	REAC	Recognition	Spain, Latin America (Spanish speaking countries)
Recognition of Prior Learning	RPL	Recognition	United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa
Recognition of Prior Learning Outcomes	RPLO	Accreditation	United Kingdom
Recognition, Validation and Accreditation	RVA	[holistic]	UNESCO, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências	RVCC	Recognition, Accreditation	Portugal, Brazil
Validação da Aprendizagem Prévia	VAP	Accreditation	Brazil
Validación de Competencias	VdC	Accreditation	Bolivia

Table 1 : International terms for Recognition, Accreditation and Validation of Prior Learning

Term	Acr.	Focus	Origin
Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience	VAE	Validation	Africa (French speaking countries), France, Switzerland, Wallonia
Validation des Acquis Professionnels	VAP	Validation	France, Wallonia
Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning	VNIL	Validation	Cedefop, EUCEN
Validation of Prior Learning	VPL	Validation	universal: www.vplbiennale.com
Valuation of Prior Learning Experiences	VPLE	Validation	universal: www.ec-vpl.nl
Validierung von Lernergebnissen	VvL	Accreditation	Austria

The Dutch perspective

At this moment the commonly used term for assessing and validating competencies is **Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)**. In Dutch this is '*de Erkennung van Verworven Competenties (EVC)*'. The authorities, as well as the social partners and the schools prefer this term because this approach mainly focuses on the summative effects of recognizing and assessing prior learning. The most important element in an APL-strategy is the assessment of the competencies that are collected in a portfolio with the goal of getting exemptions or a diploma, referring to a specific standard. The portfolio is in this context mainly a showcase of only the competencies that matter for the standard itself; all the other personal competencies are irrelevant. The choice for a specific standard is in practice more steered by the availability of an actual standard than by a free, personal choice. This is because most of the times a school - as the keeper of the standard(s) – tends to look more to the best chance of success when measured against any given standard than to the best match of a standard and personal ambitions. So, in effect, APL is more standard-steered, and as most standards are kept by schools (upper secondary and higher vocational levels) also strongly school-steered.

With **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** the primary focus lies on the identification and recognition of the competencies that someone might have obtained in any period in his/her life and in any kind of learning environment. In Dutch this is '*de Herkenning van Verworven Competenties (HVC)*'¹. In this approach the portfolio consists of all personal learning experiences. Only after collecting all the relevant, personal competencies together with their proof, a choice is made by the person. In this way the personal ambitions are better articulated and depending on the personal goal a specific choice for the kind of accreditation is made. RPL, therefore is more personal steered and might involve not only summative but also formative goals.

VPL stands for the process of **Validation of Prior Learning (VPL)**. In Dutch this is '*de Waardering van Verworven Competenties (WVC)*'. VPL embodies the necessity to make top-down processes such as APL meet the bottom-up process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). If combined, APL and RPL are constituting the integral or even holistic process of Valuation of Prior Learning. So, VPL is the real designation of developing, implementing and embedding lifelong learning in society, in the Learning Society so to say; VPL is for the sake of citizens as well as providers and organisations (profit, non-profit, voluntary work, labour-agencies, communities, etc). VPL is able to manage in a flexible way the diversity of goals all these parties and partners have in making use of lifelong learning strategies.

In Dutch this would entail changing the term 'EVC' in 'Waarderen of Valideren van eerder en/of elders Verworven Leerervaringen', kortweg Waarderen of Valideren van Leren (VvL). Zodoende kunnen alle stakeholders in en om VvL hun verantwoordelijkheid nemen en hun rol(len) invullen in het valideringsproces. De cirkel is dan terug bij de beleidsvisie van 2000 met als titel "De Fles is Halfvol" (MEZ, 2000) waarin naast EVK als

1 The term 'HVC' was introduced by mr. Sjoerd Stienstra at the *Curaçao Conference on EVC*, Willemstad, Curaçao, October 31, 2008.

vergelijkingsinstrument van formeel verworven leerprestaties (diploma's of kwalificaties) ook de verschillende varianten voor de erkenning van informeel of non-formeel verworven buitenschoolse of leerwegaafhankelijke leerervaringen werden gebundeld onder de noemer van EVC:

- Een *opleidings- of beroepsgerichte* aanpak die de erkenning van reeds verworven formele, informele en non-formele competenties koppelt aan opleidingen en/of diplomastandaarden,
- Een *functiegerichte* aanpak die de erkenning van reeds verworven formele, informele en non-formele competenties koppelt aan functieprofielen en de verdere (loopbaan)ontwikkeling.
- Een *sociaal activerende* aanpak die met behulp van de waardering en erkenning van aanwezige kwaliteiten de re-integratie, sociale activering en empowerment van specifieke doelgroepen ondersteunt. Te denken valt aan ouderen, vroegtijdige schoolverlaters, migranten, e.a.

Het verschil met 2000 is dat anno 2018 de tijd rijp is om het verwoorde brede, holistische perspectief te laten aansluiten op de geïntegreerde manier van de UNESCO. In het Nederlands resulteert dat in de term Waarderen of Valideren van Leren. Vanwege de meer internationale klank ligt de nadruk op Valideren van Leren (VvL).

Based on:

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UNESCO Research Project 2016-2017 on *the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of basic youth and adult education as a foundation for lifelong learning*. [not published]. Background document prepared by Ruud Duvekot, Guy Fortier and Jorge Jeria, as well as staff from UNESCO Section of Partnerships Cooperation and Research -Paris, France - and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning – Hamburg, Germany.

Further reading

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