# Municipal enterprises systematically describing job profiles in learning outcomes and developing validation procedures

Sobona – The Swedish employers' organisation for municipal enterprises – has recognised the member enterprises' need for support to secure future recruitment and development of staff in a sustainable way. It has been essential to find a method for identifying the actual competencies required to successfully perform a job. For many vocations in the branches where Sobona members are operating, much of the learning and training takes place in the workplace.

The methodology used is the Open College Network (OCN). This OCN-methodology was developed in the UK during the transformation of the mining industry in the 1980s. OCN provides a way to identify and describe the skills required to perform the key tasks of specific vocations. This includes learning outcomes and clearly defined criteria for validation of prior learning. Each *job profile* for a specific vocational role consists of several modules defining certain areas of skills required for the vocation and are developed by panels of experienced professionals.

These *job profiles* can be used for the design of preparatory courses for participation in the labour market and for development of education and training programs, as a benchmark in validation of prior learning. It also functions as a guiding principle in skills and career development and recruitment, for introduction in a workplace and in a job, in transition from one professional role to another as well as a basis for defining required skills in procurement of services.

Sobona oversees the process as well as related tools in this model that now has become established as a national model. The development process involves both the employer organisations and the labour unions, in accordance with the "Swedish model". There is also a close collaboration with other stakeholders. Besides the Sobona member enterprises, the Transition Funds also participate in the development of the validation model.
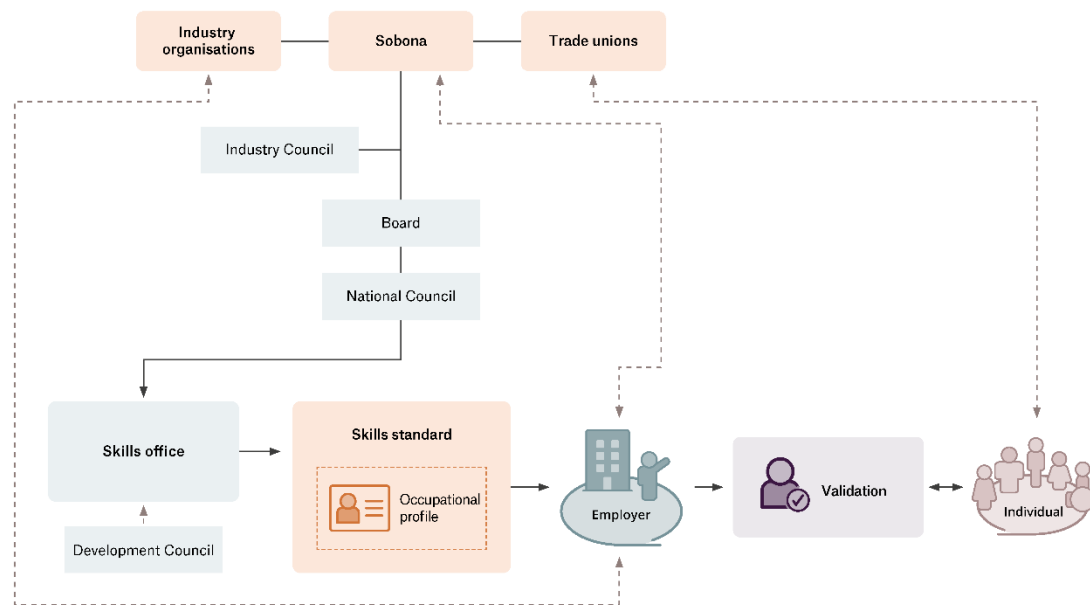
Currently the validation model developed by Sobona has been launched in six different branches and consists of 28 *job profiles*, of which five, so far, are also recognised as qualifications in accordance with the Swedish Qualifications Framework (SeQF) which is harmonised with the EQF. Three more profiles are planned to be levelled in accordance with the SeQF.

For further management and use of the Sobona validation model a national organisation has been established. It consists of a Steering group and a National Quality Board with representation of all essential stakeholders. The steering group reviews and confirms the results of the *job profiling* project.

Overview of process: using the OCN-methodology and expert support from Nordiskt Valideringsforum AB

- Pre-Study and preparations, collection of information about the specific vocation for which a *job profile* is being developed.
- Professionals describing the different core tasks in the specific vocation and the needed skills and competencies for performing these core tasks.
- Structured documentation according to the OCN in terms of different modules of competencies with learning outcomes and criteria for validation (assessment).
- Quality assurance by a panel of professionals and possible adjustments to profiles and modules.
- Matching the profiles in accordance with the SeQF and applying for levelling with the Swedish National Agency of Higher Vocational Education (MYH).
- Establishing a national standard with quality guidelines and organise maintenance and development of the sector industry validation model.

- Training of assessors and quality-auditors according to OCN.
- Implementation of the model and the tools connected to it e.g.,software with descriptions, learning outcomes, validation (assessment) criteria, checklists, documentation support, at each enterprise.
- Using the sector industry validation model and its content for the development of competencies and validation at the enterprises.

Description of the process

The job profiling is a pre-determined process. The analysis is conducted throughout structured meetings with stakeholders within the relevant sector, this requires active involvement from labour market stakeholders.

There are usually at least three development meetings. A start-up analysis meeting with core stakeholders requesting the profiling project, a regular analysis meeting with a larger group or experts working in the professional field, and then a quality assurance meeting.

The competencies are presented in incremental steps, focusing on the responsibility, independence, and complexity of the work.

The result of the competency profiling is a *job profile*, which is a brief description of the specific vocation, a list of core tasks and a description of the competencies, divided into modules.

The competency profiling is reviewed, and its relevance guaranteed by an additional panel.

A further review and quality assurance is required at least every fourth year.

Benefits, sustainability, and challenges

Since the process involves all essential stakeholders the validation model is very well anchored and agreed by all key actors. This is significantly strengthened by the fact that the descriptions of *job profiles* and competencies are created by the sector professionals for the specific sector.

The model encompasses well proven quality assurance principles, routines, and methodology. Guidelines and training for the validation professionals as well as quality assessment are also in place.

Implementation in the companies for regular and broader use of the validation model is a challenge. It is generally accepted on CEO-level. But, there seems to be a lack in actual practical set up with needed resources as well as mandates on department level. There is a need for more practical introduction on site, at the enterprises. A model for this has been developed and needs to be launched on a larger scale.

Possibilities for further developments

There is a huge potential and benefit using the validation model on a broader scale in all essential activities for skills development. Recruitment, introduction, mapping of competencies, setting up competence-development programs, developing and shaping education and training, and defining skills demands in procurement.

More information

https://sobona.se/vara -fragor/kompetensforsorjning/enklare-vag