



Final observations from external researcher

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1. VET – Labour Market

What informs the definition, writing and reviewing of learning outcomes? There is an agreement that the interaction between labour market and education and training is important and that the labour market has a key role to play in this context. This seems to be important for boosting relevancy and credibility of qualifications.

Labour market intelligence and research are used for identifying professional roles, key activities, and work tasks. Although in the discussions during the workshops it was not always clear whether any differences are seen between work tasks and learning outcomes, the following questions need to be asked: How to translate work tasks into learning outcomes descriptions? Which methods are and can be used? How is this conceptualized in the national contexts? Who is doing this? The question on who participates and who is leading the process is also a question of ownership. How strong is the role of labour market stakeholders in the process of writing learning outcomes and what is their impact? It needs to be considered that a too strong influence of the labour market might lead to very narrow qualifications neglecting learners' social and personal competences or hindering permeability and progression. Furthermore, it should be reflected to what extent labour market representatives (such as employers) are actually able to clearly articulate the required knowledge, skills and competence and to predict future competence needs.

2. Vertical dimension

Several presentations referred to the use of specific action verbs for expressing the increasing complexity of learning outcomes and to the Blooms' Taxonomy (and its revised versions). Other taxonomies, concepts and references also exist and it might be useful to closer examine them to explore how they could be applied to compensate each other's weaknesses. Examples include: Structure of Observed LO or the model developed by Dreyfus & Dreyfus.

The consequences of focusing on the Blooms' Taxonomy also must be considered: what are the implications for the learning process? During the presentations and workshops we heard several times that at first, the focus is on theoretical knowledge or on the verbs 'remember' and 'understand' and at a later stage on verbs like 'apply' etc. However, practice-oriented teaching and learning methods, learning theories and didactical approaches do not necessarily follow this sequence. For example, the concepts of problem-based learning or 'reflective practitioner' (based on Schön) or the traditional apprenticeship model are based on different approaches.

The implications of the use of the Bloom's Taxonomy on teaching and learning could be addressed in further research.

3. Dialogue

‘Learning outcomes are here to stay’ – But do they really provide a common language as they are claimed to do?

Written learning outcomes are a communication tool (providing a common reference point) but they do not fully replace communication. A common understanding needs to be developed and sometimes – depending on the specific purpose – written learning outcomes statements are not sufficient: dialogue between stakeholders involved is needed.

This is in particular the case when it comes to assessment (as expressed by stakeholders interviewed for the Cedefop study on ‘QA of certification’): For example, learning outcomes might need to be contextualized for assessors at the work place or for learners. Dialogue which also involves learners can facilitate learners’ self-assessment and it can support the development of joint responsibility for learning and assessment.