



Application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe

Some preliminary finding from Cedefop study

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Aim of the study and research questions

- Tracks the extent to which and how the shift to learning outcomes is influencing education and training policies at national level (VET, HE, general education)
- Tracks whether and to what extent LOs approaches are used in institutions educating future teachers
- Interaction between different levels





Scope of the study an methodology

- **Comparative overview and analysis in 33 countries**
- **10 case studies in faculties educating future teachers in 9 countries: documentation review, interviews with 2-6 staff members, observations of the teaching lessons, focus groups.**
- **Focus on uses and users of learning outcomes**





How are learning outcomes defined?

‘Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.’

or

‘Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion and/or is able to demonstrate after completion a learning process, either formal, non-formal or informal.’

(Cedefop, 2014)



The structuring of learning outcomes

The horizontal dimension is crucial

- How do we understand the different domains of learning
- How do we balance between learning domains, between theory and practise, knowledge and skills, how do we understand competence?

The vertical dimension of LO is crucial

- How do we express the complexity of learning?
- How do we see progression in a learning domain?



Variety of LO's approaches across countries

- Diversity of LO approaches (concept, terms) across countries reflecting different origins, influences, national traditions, values
- Comprehensive national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) for LLL are evolving and have a stronger influence than in 2009
- Many countries do not have a single definition or the notion of LO or the same usage across subsystem
- In some countries – LO and competence-based approaches are used interchangeably



Main findings

- Significant progress has been made in recent years, but uneven across countries and subsystems
- NQFs have been the main driver of progress in many countries and many subsystems
- VET / HE often take the lead - on-going process
- HE: progress informed by Bologna + QFs but uneven
- General education: PISA, competences/key competences & educational standards, curriculum change, less assessment
- VET: continuation, extension of trends



Learning outcomes approaches in VET

- Many countries involved in VET qualifications and curriculum reforms geared towards learning outcomes in recent years
- Outcomes-based VET standards and assessment standards increasingly introduced
- Progressively aligned with NQF level descriptors – work in progress
- Most countries are institutionalising the participation of social partners in standard-setting procedures - sectoral skills councils
- Key role of EU processes, instruments and programmes



Implementation of LO: some important factors

- **Simultaneous & parallel use of macro & micro perspectives + top-down & bottom up**
- **Fundamental changes in daily behaviour individuals & institutions – complex processes of individual & collective learning**
- **Need for significant implementation capacities and resources, time**
- **Embedding of LO approaches is a non-linear processes – feedback-loops – mutual learning**



Capacity-building is a key driver of change at the micro level

- The LO approach has grown roots and is increasingly used in teacher education in several countries
- The teacher education sector may potentially play a key role in promoting change at the micro level
- Professional development for head teachers and inspectorates, teacher counselors/trainers, assessors is also vital



Challenges and tensions

- Need for further reflection and debate on writing LO and strategies and practices used for implementing them.
- LO approach has implications for assessment: alignment of assessment practices with intended LO still remains significant challenge in most countries;
- New innovative assessment approaches are emerging; reliability and validity; complex qualitative assessment with large-scale assessments etc.



One interviewee pointed out that ‘ it was not clear what was meant by ‘completion of learning’ when talking about LO. When is learning completed? This can be seen during assessments: there is a difference in the cognitive or operational (application) of outcomes right after the end of a course or if the learning outcomes are assessed after two years. This is related to the issue of: sustainability, especially in teacher education where sustainable professionalisation is a core issue. ‘

